

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 22 August 1989
Wednesday 23 August 1989
Thursday 24 August 1989

Tuesday 29 August 1989
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Thursday 31 August 1989

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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH SERVICES

HEALTH SERVICES

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 22 August 1989

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the following message has been received from His Honour the Administrator:

I, James Henry Muirhead, 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 appropriate certain sums out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending 30 June 1990.

J.H. Muirhead
Administrator.

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER OATHS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table a commission from His Honour the Administrator to administer to members oaths and affirmations of allegiance of office.

Commission read.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR WANGURI

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table a letter addressed to the Speaker from Hon D. Dale resigning as the member for Wanguri. I received this letter on the morning of 27 July 1989.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I wish to inform honourable members of a change to ministerial portfolio responsibilities and to the administrative arrangements. On 31 July 1989, His Honour the Administrator appointed me as Minister for Health and Community Services, which portfolio I now hold in addition to the ministerial offices of Chief Minister and Treasurer. The remaining ministerial offices and responsibilities have not been changed. On the same day, His Honour the Administrator made an Administrative Arrangements Order to reflect this change. For the information of honourable members, I lay on the Table a copy of the Administrative Arrangements Order.

COMMONWEALTH DAY MESSAGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table a copy of the Queen's Commonwealth Day message 1989. With the concurrence of honourable members, I will have the message incorporated in Hansard:

Commonwealth Day reminds us year by year of all that our unique association of nations stands for and does. Many Commonwealth activities are of value chiefly to the members themselves. But we also form a distinctive element in a world which grows more and more

interdependent and which more than ever needs tolerance and cooperation to deal successfully with its problems.

Perhaps nothing during the past year has underlined this interdependence more forcefully than the dramatic growth in our awareness of the serious dangers to the environment posed by man's own activities. The threat to the environment takes many forms, of which some are so far-reaching that it is difficult to grasp them. We hear, for example, of the possibility of radical changes in our climate leading, among other things, to a rise in the sea level, with all that that would mean for small islands and low-lying regions.

The Commonwealth has a particular part to play in facing up to such issues as these. A concern for the resources we share in common means partnership not only across the oceans but also between generations. A recognition of what our predecessors have bequeathed to us increases our responsibility to transmit these gifts unspoilt to the future inhabitants of our planet.

Our concern to safeguard long-term prospects for our children and their children does not conflict at all with the pressing need to come to grips with the problems of the present, like poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment and underdevelopment. Rather the present and the future are brought together and linked by our efforts to deal with all of these problems together in a realistic way. We must all pray that diminished political tension, particularly among the world's great powers, will provide opportunities for better international cooperation and swifter progress in dealing with environmental, political and economic problems within the Commonwealth and beyond.

Elizabeth R.
13 March 1989.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

In presenting this, the Northern Territory's twelfth budget, I need to stress at the outset that the tradition of Territorian self-reliance and the ability to achieve against the odds will again be in demand through this financial year. Our strengthening private sector and its partnership with the public sector in meeting the economic challenges that confront us will be critical. So too will the cooperative effort of every Territorian.

This is a time in our history when individual, community and Territory interests will best be served by a united and common purpose and a clear recognition of what that purpose is. Our need is Australia's need. Our common purpose needs to become one which removes federal restrictions on Territory endeavours if we are to reach our ultimate potential. This will benefit not only every Territory community but will be a positive benefit for the nation. In this one-sixth of the Australian continent, we possess potential for substantial new resource exports. Kakadu, for example, has resources with a dollar value which is nearly 75% of the national debt

of \$130 000m. We have enormous oil and gas reserves to be developed. The Challis and Jabiru oilfields will be producing the equivalent of one-third of Bass Strait production by the end of this year, and that is just a start.

The strategy of my government is to encourage by every means at our disposal the final removal of the heavy hand of Canberra so that the Territory may flourish as every one of us has long envisaged. It is a goal to which all Territorians should aspire, no matter what their political beliefs. Until the Territory fully takes charge of its economic development destiny, it will remain a junior partner within the Commonwealth and at the mercy of a Labor government which has no will to guarantee north Australian development by the provision of a national tax share to the Territory at the levels required. There is no other conclusion, given our treatment in the past and again this year, when every Territorian has once more been hit harder by the Commonwealth than any other Australian.

Given the economic difficulties confronting the national Labor government, we cannot rely on any relief from that quarter in the short term. Indeed, that was confirmed in the Commonwealth budget last week. Economic policies that may be thought appropriate at the national level are all too often the opposite of what is required here. While the Commonwealth chases Australia's future with a high interest rate strategy to cool down an overheated economy, the Territory government is striving to encourage and promote economic activity. We have encouraging signs of improvement in the Territory economy, particularly increased levels of employment but, against that, we must cope with the effects of interest rate hikes and ill-directed expenditure cuts by the Commonwealth.

Successive CLP governments have put in place effective strategies to broaden the economic base and to encourage population growth. However, compared to the states, the Northern Territory's revenue base is restricted and, at the same time, we incur unavoidably high costs in the provision of basic infrastructure services and amenities, especially within remote communities. Because of these features, Commonwealth decisions on the division of national income remain the most important element of the Northern Territory budget and, when those decisions restrict funding, local economic management is confronted with difficulties.

In the medium to longer term, our need is to unlock the wealth of the Territory so that local economic activity can fill the chasm that has been created between expenditure requirements and Territory government receipts from the Commonwealth. That gap has been widening in recent years. The effect has been to constrain the Territory government's ability to maintain state-like services and to expand the economy sufficiently to allow us to become fully self-reliant. In real dollar terms, in the light of the latest estimates for inflation announced last week in the federal budget, Commonwealth payments to the Northern Territory this financial year will be down 5.6%. The year before, they were cut by 4.6% and the year before that the cut was 8.6%. Four years ago, we lost 5%, and 5 years ago it was 5.1%. Over 5 years, the reduction in Territory funding from the Commonwealth amounts in real dollar terms to a massive 26%. That compares with a much lower average reduction of 16% to the 6 states over the same period.

Mr Speaker, put simply, the Northern Territory and Territorians this year will receive from Canberra the equivalent of only \$74 for every \$100 of Commonwealth funding received in 1985. Put in perspective, if funding had been maintained at 1984-85 levels, the Territory would have received an extra \$1100m over the last 5 years. A major element in this decline in

Commonwealth funding has been in capital payments. Since 1985-86, the level of general purpose capital funding to the Territory has fallen, in monetary terms, by over 50%. While the Territory has done what it can to counter the reduction in adopting sensible budget priorities, the consequence has been a downturn in the vital construction sector and a loss of jobs.

These Canberra-based decisions have dealt the Territory a succession of painful body blows. Not only have Commonwealth funding cuts affected current levels of economic activity, they have jeopardised new and future development options. The degree of our reliance on Canberra is further illustrated by the fact that Commonwealth decisions this year influence about \$1000m of Territory government receipts into the Consolidated Fund and an additional \$81m in borrowings. This represents over 60% of total public sector expenditure. Furthermore, the reduction we have suffered has been aggravated by the imposition of Commonwealth priorities on part of its allocation to the Territory. In effect, this means that, to get 20% of its allocation, my government must spend it on programs determined by the federal government. This distorts our priorities, limiting options available if we are to accept the money.

In total, the Northern Territory has about \$200m in Commonwealth tied grants. Road expenditures are a classic example of distortion of priorities. The Kakadu Highway has been a high priority road for a number of years but, because it is not classified as a national highway, the Territory government has been unable to divert resources from national highway allocations to this key tourism road. Similarly, there are many special health programs for which we receive a total of \$28m from the Commonwealth. The Northern Territory must spend additional Territory funds to receive this Commonwealth money. These programs are not necessarily of the highest priority and are generally expensive to administer.

On a positive note, Territorians will be aware that my government has already announced a freeze on electricity prices as a result of the agreement negotiated with the federal Treasurer prior to the May Premiers Conference. Failure to have secured this agreement would have led to higher tariffs. The agreement provides for a \$40m subsidy for electricity generation costs this year, continuation of a declining subsidy until 1992-93 and writing off the \$37.5m debt remaining against the Territory electricity assets transferred from the Commonwealth in 1978.

The fact that we have been able to hold electricity prices at 1986 levels has drawn favourable community comment. My government pursued the negotiations vigorously because of its keen awareness that an increase in electricity bills could have been the straw that broke the camel's back for many Territory families and businesses battling the environment of escalating interest rates now ranging from 17% to 21%. On behalf of every Territorian, my government acknowledges that, in this instance, the Commonwealth has accepted its responsibility to the Territory. For that, we give credit. We would like to see this recognition of our special needs reflected in all Commonwealth payments to the Territory and for there to be bipartisan political support for this objective.

Mr Speaker, it should now be clear that my government's task in framing this budget was undertaken under difficult circumstances. Every Territorian needs to be aware of this reality. After successive years of reduced Commonwealth funding and another allocation well below inflation this year, the most obvious option for some to consider would have been a major cut to the services sector of government. That sector includes public order, safety,

education, health, welfare, recreation and community amenities. Collectively, these account for over 50% of all budget outlays. They are not wealth creating in the sense that they do not directly stimulate new economic growth which in turn makes a contribution back to government in the form of increased revenue. However, most people rightly regard the services sector - education, health and so on - as an essential sinew of the Territory community. To reduce the standard of service by increasing student-teacher ratios or cutting the numbers of nurses and police would rightly be regarded as a retrograde step by most Territorians and it was an option rejected by my government. That being said, some lower priority programs, even those in key areas, have necessarily required adjustment as a result of the constraints imposed on us. Our capacity to make further cost savings through tighter management, after 5 successive years of reductions, is limited.

Another option in the budget planning strategy was to cut areas that are more closely aligned to promoting direct economic activity. In broad terms, these account for a little less than half the budget outlays. I refer here to expenditure on transport and communications, mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, electricity, fishing and construction. These are key elements in our strategy for economic growth and a real reduction was not an option that this government could countenance. It would lead to economic stagnation and wipe out the positive gains that have been achieved in recent years.

All honourable members will appreciate the difficult circumstances that we face. In real terms, our federal allocation is \$59m less than last year's. Despite this, we have elected not to reduce expenditure by axing major services. To do so would cause pain to every Territory family and economic disruption through public sector retrenchments and reduced capital works in an already fragile economy. That left only one course open to us: to maintain real expenditures and do whatever was necessary to fill the gap between expenditure and available resources.

My government is firmly of the view that, given the state of the economy and previous cuts to government services, it is essential to maintain expenditures. Our economy has gone through a difficult time. The current trends, particularly in employment, are promising. Employment is now back at the peak levels of 1987. However, a large part of the increase has been generated from higher participation rates in the work force rather than additional people arriving in the Territory. If the Territory is to achieve real economic growth, we must increase the total size of the population. This means that there must be jobs and more jobs. This requires a budget which will maintain the momentum now evident. This budget will do just that.

Expenditure in 1989-1990 will rise by 7.7% or \$128m over the 1988-89 amount. These additional outlays have been allocated to 2 broad areas. First, an additional \$80m has been directed to areas that will stimulate the economy, mostly by increasing support to construction, trade and manufacturing and tourism. Consequently, there have been substantial increases in allocations to the Department of Transport and Works, the Power and Water Authority, the Trade Development Zone and the Tourist Commission. Secondly, nearly \$30m of the total increase has been allocated to health and education. The remaining divisions in the budget account for the balance of approximately \$20m, including \$11m in the Advance to the Treasurer for inflation and unforeseen expenditures.

We have been able to maintain real expenditure by selectively increasing taxes and charges and utilising some of the Territory's cash resources. The periodic review of cash assets has identified some \$33m which can be

redirected to capital related programs, rather than remaining in investments. Operation on a leaner cash basis can be achieved without affecting the levels of liquidity necessary to conduct the business of government. In addition, as a result of expenditure on natural disaster assistance in recent years, the government has decided to call on \$7.9m of self-insurance reserves built up for this purpose. Honourable members will be aware that these funds will not be available to us again next year and, if there is no relief from approved Commonwealth allocations, 1990-91 will be a much tougher year. I am confident that this strategy will put us in a far better position in 1990-91 to cope with the circumstances at that time whilst, in the meantime, protecting jobs and services.

I turn now to taxes and charges. Some increases are required and these have been determined using 2 broad criteria. First, increases will apply where the Territory's taxes and charges are well below those in the states and where the increase will have least impact on the Territory's economy. Secondly, charges for some services have been adjusted to keep pace with inflation. There is one exception - tobacco. Tobacco licence fees in the Territory are already above those in the states and they will increase further. Specific new revenue measures are that the licence fee paid by persons selling tobacco products is to be increased from 35% to 40%. This will add about 10¢ to the average price of a packet of cigarettes. The additional revenue raised will be in the order of \$1.5m in a full year and just over \$900 000 this year.

The licence fee for selling petroleum products will be increased from 3.5¢ to 4¢ per litre as from today. The Territory fee remains below that in most states and represents a very small proportion of the cost of a litre of fuel. By comparison, the current Commonwealth excise paid on a litre of petrol is approximately 22.4¢. The New South Wales government recently increased its fee by a full 3¢. The ex gratia diesel fuel rebate scheme for off-road purposes has been retained. However, the rebate has been reduced from 3.5¢ per litre to 3¢ per litre, a move which will help spread the revenue burden more equitably. These last 2 changes will produce an estimated \$2.3m additional revenue during a full year, and just under \$2m this year.

Turning now to stamp duties, changes contained in this budget will provide an estimated \$1.7m new revenue in a full year and \$1.4m this year. Rates for conveyancing duty will be increased for the first time since 1985. There will be no change to the rates which apply to average residential properties. However, the 2 top rates will be adjusted from 3.5% and 4%, to 4% and 5% respectively. Thus, the duty on a property with a transfer value of, say, \$200 000 will increase from \$7000 to \$8000. I must emphasise that these changes apply only to higher value properties, and also that the first home buyer concession of no duty on the first \$80 000 still applies.

The present maximum duty of \$1000 on motor vehicle registration certificates has been removed. This means that vehicles with a market value exceeding \$50 000 will be charged duty on the total value of the vehicle. For example, the duty payable on an \$80 000 vehicle will be \$1600 as compared to \$1000. This decision will produce \$250 000 in 1989-90 and \$300 000 in a full year.

Transfer duty paid on share certificates is to be raised to a level closer to that imposed by the states. It will rise from 30¢ per \$100 to 60¢ per \$100 and will produce increased revenue of approximately \$100 000.

Duty paid on documents initiating action in Territory courts will be increased for the first time since 1982. The increases, which will be detailed in the amending legislation, reflect changes in the level of jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court and also the increased cost of court services in the 7 years since the present rates were set. An action in the Small Claims Court to recover a debt of \$2500 will now attract duty of \$20, compared to \$5 before the change.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission has attributed to the Territory a capacity to raise revenue from a financial institutions duty, a tax now imposed in the states and the ACT. FID was introduced initially in all other jurisdictions as a neutral, broad-based tax. It is imposed on receipts by financial institutions and on receipts by short-term money market dealers. The government has decided to introduce such a tax from 1 December. The new tax will be levied at the rate of 2.5¢ per \$100 on banks, credit providers and certain management and trustee companies. As an example, here in the Territory, a payment to a bank of \$600 will attract a duty of 15¢. This rate of tax is marginally below the average rate in the states, but is expected to yield as much as in the states because of the simplified administrative arrangements. The states allow many exemptions which lead to avoidance and expensive inspection activities. The Territory will have no exemptions. It is estimated that the net revenue contribution in a full year will be \$2m, with \$1m being raised this year. As a result of the introduction of the financial institutions duty, the government will abolish a number of existing stamp duties. These will include credit card duty and hire-purchase duty. The net revenue forgone will amount to approximately \$300 000 in a full year.

The budget also provides for a rise in bus fares. A 60¢ ticket will rise to 80¢ and a \$1.10 ticket to \$1.40. Pensioner and schoolchildren concessions will be maintained. An additional \$400 000 is expected to be raised and will be used to offset the heavily subsidised operational cost of this service. Driver licence and motor vehicle registration fees have been adjusted, broadly in line with CPI movements. Even so, Territory registration charges will remain below those of the states. For example, the registration fee for a middle-of-the-range 6-cylinder vehicle will be \$275 compared with \$285 for the same vehicle in the states.

Housing Commission rentals have been adjusted to reflect CPI movements. There has been no increase for 2 years and, while the new increase will add about \$8 a week to average rentals, the rebate scheme for low-income earners will be maintained. This is a moderate increase given the CPI movements over the past 2 years. Water and sewerage charges will rise by about \$29 per year for the average household. This will contribute an additional \$800 000, taking the total tax collection to \$22.9m. Despite this increase, the full costs of water and sewerage services will not be recovered and the charges remain below those of the states.

The TIO will make a \$2m contribution to revenue this year, which is evidence of its increasing strength as a financial institution.

These are the areas of significant change. Every effort has been made to keep the increases to an absolute minimum and revenue sources such as payroll tax, tourism marketing duty, liquor fees, and the energy resources consumption levy will remain pegged at last year's levels. The net effect on total receipts as a result of the various increases will be \$10m which, in per capita terms, amounts to \$65 per annum or approximately \$1.25 weekly for every Territorian. The various papers which accompany the budget documents clearly illustrate that the level of Territory taxes and charges compares more than

favourably with those in the states. The 6-state average of state taxes and fees per head of population is \$906. In the Territory, that figure is \$742 or 18% below the average.

Turning to broader revenue issues, in overall terms total sources of funds will rise by \$128m to match expenditure decisions. Of that increase, a total of \$117m is from Territory sources. The increase in Commonwealth-sourced funds was only \$11m or 1.2%. While there was a \$27m increase in financial assistance grants as a result of the Grants Commission update of relativities in 1989 and increases in selected special purpose payments, there were several offsetting adjustments. These included reductions in special revenue assistance of \$13m and \$11m on the cash component of the electricity subsidy.

With regard to expenditure, I have already announced that total outlays will rise by 7.7% or \$128m. Total expenditure for 1989-90 will be \$1795m. Consistent with the budget strategy, \$71m must be used for cost increases and other non-discretionary influences. Of the remaining \$57m, \$25m has been allocated to new programs and \$32m to capital works.

The Territory has traditionally had a large construction sector although, since the mid-1980s, this has had significant setbacks. Last year, the government decided to stimulate the construction sector by the use of fiscal policy through projects such as State Square. This policy will continue. Cash for capital works has been increased by 14%, from \$228m to \$260m. This translates into an injection of about \$5m per week into the construction sector. The bulk of this substantial amount of cash will be directed to roads, public works, housing, power and water.

More than \$100m will be spent on roads this year, including \$50m on construction. \$9m is allocated for the upgrading of the Litchfield Park loop road, Kakadu Highway and the Olgas Road. All are important for tourism development. Other new projects include \$4.5m for upgrading the Stuart Highway north of Tennant Creek, \$1.9m to duplicate the road from Bees Creek to the Arnhem Highway and \$4.9m to allow entry from Tiger Brennan Drive into the central business district thus easing peak hour traffic problems in Darwin.

In public works, a total of \$73m will be spent, an increase of more than 20% or \$13m more than last year. Year 2 of the State Square project will involve a cash injection into the economy of \$32m, making a significant contribution to the construction industry. New projects to commence will include \$10.7m for a laboratory at Royal Darwin Hospital for joint use with the Menzies School of Health Research, \$5m in expanded school facilities at Alice Springs, Batchelor and Palmerston, and \$6.5m for the Marrara Sporting Complex.

Total cash for housing works across the Territory will rise from \$44m to \$56m. In addition to completing the \$24m of works carried forward in 1988-89, \$24m of new work will commence as part of the general public housing program and for the upgrading of old stock. A further \$32m has been allocated to Aboriginal housing programs.

The Power and Water Authority will spend \$32m on capital works, \$25m of which will be on programs already under way. New projects include \$2.2m for work on the transmission line from Hudson Creek to the McMinns Zone Substation, \$1.2m to commence the upgrading of water reticulation at Palmerston, \$1m to upgrade Katherine's water treatment plant, and \$800 000 on design work for the new \$15m flood mitigation dam in Alice Springs. There are a number of other programs and initiatives that deserve mention.

Trade Development Zone Authority: Total expenditure in the zone will increase by \$9.6m to \$19.6m. The Trade Development Zone has clearly reached the stage where it is becoming the fastest job generator in the Territory and additional factory space is required to meet the demands of new manufacturing activity. The persistence of this government in creating Australia's first trade development zone is paying off. \$9.8m will be spent to construct an additional 12 000 m² of factory space, taking the total to 20 000 m².

Police, Fire and Emergency Services: The allocation is \$57.6m. Provision is made to recruit an additional 10 police for the electronic recording of prisoner and witness interviews and to provide a 24-hour coverage within the Alice Springs Communication Centre.

Conservation Commission: Total expenditure by the commission will be \$35m, of which \$16.4m has been allocated for park management and development. The commission's capital works expenditure for the year will total \$8.4m which will be spent on the commission's behalf by Transport and Works. The budget includes the program announced a fortnight ago to beautify Darwin. This program will rejuvenate Darwin by enhancing its attractiveness to both residents and visitors. \$1m has been allocated to start the program.

Health and Community Services: My government will spend nearly \$1500 per Territorian this year, reflecting the importance of these vital services. New programs, totalling \$3.5m, include funds for 73 additional staff. Of these, 40 are new hospital staff at the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Royal Darwin Hospitals to meet increased patient demand. A further 19 additional staff will be deployed throughout the Territory in mental health, alcohol and drug services, communicable diseases and environmental and primary health care. The remaining 14 extra staff will strengthen child and family services, and aged and disability services.

Education: The allocation to education this year is \$260m. This represents \$4700 for every student from preschool to university, higher than in any state. An additional \$5.5m has been allocated to expand education services. \$400 000 is for an expanded Master Teacher Program, the aim of which is to provide a new career structure for outstanding classroom teachers. It will allow them to gain professional and career advancement while remaining in the classroom rather than accepting administrative duties. Details are yet to be finalised and will be announced by the Minister for Education. This scheme will be an Australian first.

Other major new education programs are: the establishment of the Alice Springs Language Centre, offering Indonesian, Aboriginal and other languages; capital grants to mission schools; broadening the range of TAFE courses in tourism and business; additional adult educators in remote communities; industry restructure training to address multi-skilling; and assistance for research activities at the Northern Territory University. The \$32.6m provided for the university in this budget includes \$5.9m funded from Territory sources for higher education. In the states, this amount would be funded by the Commonwealth. It remains an objective of this government to achieve full state-like funding for the university as soon as possible.

Power and Water Authority: Total expenditure by the Power and Water Authority will rise by some \$18m to \$303.3m. A significant part of this increase is the operational cost of providing electricity to mines in the Pine Creek area. The Power and Water Authority has undertaken an extensive augmentation program over the last year and will continue with the program this year. This will lead to increased revenue that will more than offset the

higher costs. It is a good example of how the government can and does facilitate economic development by sensible allocation of resources.

Tourist Commission: The importance of tourism to the Territory is acknowledged by all. However, the industry nationally and internationally is extremely competitive and, to maintain market share, it is essential to inject more funds into marketing activity. The total allocation to the commission is \$20.3m, an increase of \$3.8m. This includes increased funds for advertising, product development and promotional activities.

Industries and Development: Expenditure on industry development will increase by \$2.7m, including provision for the Territory's participation in the Hong Kong Expo in November.

Primary Industry and Fisheries: The allocation to this department has declined by \$2.4m to \$43.7m as a result of reduced requirements of BTEC. This year, BTEC outlays will be \$13.8m, down by \$3m. The department's support of plant and animal industries will continue and, in addition, it will undertake further development of the recreational fishing industry by improving access to waterways and promoting game fishing.

Mines and Energy: Expenditure this year will total \$15.3m, with \$10.3m being spent on mining resource development. \$3.5m of this amount will be spent on further research on the nature and extent of the Territory's mineral resources, providing essential information for future mining operations.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, this budget will sustain the Territory economy despite the continued harsh treatment received from Canberra. While the national economy faces severe challenges, including the high current account deficit, an uncomfortable level of foreign debt, overheating and problems of micro-economic reform, including transport and shipping, this Territory budget will do much to insulate the Territory from the adverse effects generated by national policy decisions. This budget reflects sound management of our scarce financial and human resources and will maintain the positive and encouraging trends now evident in our economy. It is a budget which will maintain services, encourage growth and protect jobs. It will be a balanced budget. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (INCORPORATION) BILL
(Serial 184)

Continued from 17 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to indicate at the outset that the opposition supports the bill and we do so for the reasons the Attorney-General indicated in his second-reading speech in which he enumerated the benefits to accrue to legal practitioners were they able to incorporate in the same way as other small businesses. This provides advantages by way of taxation arrangements, workers' compensation insurance and so on, and the opposition is quite happy to support that.

In fact, we have done some investigation into the question of the impact of incorporation on the liability of individual practitioners and the results of those inquiries indicate that there is no effect on the extent to which an individual practitioner would be liable for his actions and for the ability to ensure that the public is protected against the possibility of malpractice. Mr Speaker, in those terms, I indicate the opposition's support for this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS' SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 208)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, before us we have the Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Amendment Bill which contains, I think, 8 major changes which I will go through in a moment. We are able to support most of these changes at present without taking into consideration what might happen in the committee stage. There is only 1 change that we are not happy to support.

The first change provides for the automatic vesting of pension benefits after 10 years service instead of the present 15. Secondly, the legislation provides more flexible reversionary benefits to spouses and dependent children. Spouses' reversionary benefits may be converted to a lump sum benefit within 6 months of death of a member and spouses' reversionary benefits will take into account additional salary received by members of the Assembly. Thirdly, a lump sum benefit equivalent to twice the accumulation benefit will be provided where a member dies in office leaving no spouse or dependent children. Fourthly, the trustees may provide lump sum reversionary benefits to dependent children where a member dies in office, where it is considered appropriate. Fifthly, the commutation of ill-health, retirement pensions and continuation of spouses' reversionary pension after a marriage will be permitted. Sixthly, there will be the creation of individual accumulation accounts in the name of each member of the scheme. Seventhly, the pension calculation formula will reflect an accrual rate of 0.02% per month rather than 2.4% per annum. Eighthly, cessation of the contributions for basic salary will apply after 20 years membership. Hopefully, Mr Speaker, I will never find myself in that position.

The actuarial advice on these matters as presented in the second-reading speech - and I have been able to confirm it elsewhere - is that essentially the scheme is cost neutral. For those reasons, we are happy to support changes 2 to 8. However, we do have some major concerns and, in fact, are not prepared to support the first recommendation on my list: the automatic vesting of pension benefits after 10 years. At present, members have to wait 15 years before they can voluntarily take their money and run. The proposed change is that, after 10 years, a member can voluntarily take his or her money, either in pension form or in lump sum form.

It is the lump sum aspect of the proposal that concerns us because, essentially, on these sorts of matters, the parliaments of Australia need to show a lead. Quite clearly, what is being proposed here is contrary to the direction that the federal government, with the support of the union movement and employers, has been moving Australia-wide: to make it harder, in fact, for people at a relatively young age, as most of us are, to take lump sums to do with what they wish. Let us not forget that most of us are part of the problem that Australia will have in the 1990s as we cease our useful working lives and ...

Mr Coulter: Speak for yourself!

Mr SMITH: ... become a potential part of the welfare system. There is a growing realisation that, as it stands, the welfare system will have incredible difficulty providing for the welfare needs of older people in the late 1990s and the early part of the next century.

One of the ways that the federal government is attacking this problem is to say, quite clearly and deliberately, that it expects superannuation schemes to move away from lump sum payments at an early age and towards a system whereby security can be provided to people in their old age. This proposal will do the reverse. It will make it possible for members of this Assembly to take a lump sum payment earlier than previously. At the minimum, that will be \$200 000 for a backbencher who has never received any additional payment and he will be able to take that after 10 years, not after 15.

Mr Perron: He can also lose endorsement!

Mr SMITH: That is a different issue, and I am glad you raised that. In fact, I will comment on that. We make a clear distinction where members lose endorsement or are defeated at an election, and we have no dispute with ...

Mr Hatton: It was not risky at all, was it, Danny?

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

Mr SMITH: And we have no dispute with the recognition of the fact that it is a risky business. But, when the risk is taken out and, after 10 years service instead of 15 years service, members are allowed to take their full benefit as a lump sum, we think that that is contrary to the way that the rest of Australia is moving. We believe that we have a responsibility in this sensitive area, and let us not avoid the fact that this is a sensitive area in which we should show a lead.

Let me indicate the directions indicated by Hon Paul Keating last week in his speech on the federal budget. Among other things, he said: 'The federal government has a long-term goal of ensuring that superannuation benefits are not able to be withdrawn before genuine retirement from the labour force at an age closer to the aged pension age, except in special circumstances such as permanent incapacity'. He went on to say: 'It is the federal government's intention that the vesting and preservation standards applying from 1995 will be monitored and reviewed with a view to determining the feasibility of further enhancement of vesting and preservation to age 60, after the year 2005'. That needs explaining. What, in fact, the federal government is saying is that, from 1995, there will be a requirement in allocating superannuation moneys to an individual that a minimum sum equivalent to the employer finance benefit be kept as a pension and not be available to be taken as a lump sum.

Mr Finch: No more free choice in this country, eh?

Mr SMITH: That is right, and for a very good reason. That good reason is the increasing burden that older people will place on the Australian economy over the next 20 to 30 years. That is the reason ...

Mr Hatton: A bloody death tax and everything else.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nightcliff will withdraw that remark.

Mr HATTON: My apologies, Mr Speaker, I certainly withdraw that remark. It was totally uncalled for.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr SMITH: There is a reason for our opposition to this, and let me state it once again. We have a situation where the federal government, along with the broader Australian community, recognises the need to ensure that superannuation funds are used for the primary purpose of ensuring that people have an income when they retire. They are not golden eggs to be laid and hatched at an appropriate time prior to that. The commitment at the federal level is that the prime purpose of superannuation is to provide for retirement. That is reflected in the changes which the federal government is implementing in relation to superannuation.

Mr Perron: Why do they tax it?

Mr SMITH: Some significant changes were made to the taxing provisions in the budget last week, as you would know if you had read it.

Mr Speaker, we cannot support this particular aspect of the legislation. We cannot support a scheme which will enable members of this parliament voluntarily to leave the parliament 5 years earlier than they otherwise would have, with a golden nest egg of between \$200 000 and \$300 000 depending on the sort of service they have offered this Assembly and what positions they have held. That is contrary to the community expectations that are being developed by the federal government and the broader Australian community on this very issue. If we want to go against those community expectations and if we want to hold ourselves up, once more, as being selfish and beyond the standards that apply to the rest of the Australian community, let us do so. However, the government should not expect members on this side of the House to be part of that.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, that was one of the most outrageous speeches that I have heard for a long time. The Leader of the Opposition prattles about community standards and setting a lead, whilst quoting the policy and attitudes of the federal government. If the federal government's attitude was as the Leader of the Opposition described it, one would assume that it would apply that standard to itself. Of course, it has not done so. If my memory serves me correctly, federal members can take a full lump sum superannuation benefit after 7 years service in the Commonwealth parliament. The Leader of the Opposition conveniently has ignored that. If the federal government is so concerned about this issue, he would have raised that in this House. He has never done so.

I am sure that the member for Stuart, who is taking copious notes, will stand up and complain bitterly about the federal Labor government not taking action in relation to its own superannuation scheme. If members opposite feel this way, I look forward to the next General Business Day when, no doubt, they will bring forward a bill to ban vesting in the Public Service Superannuation Scheme and to ban lump sum payments from the Public Service Superannuation Scheme. I did not hear any objections from the opposition when those provisions were introduced into this House. If they feel so morally bound, let them tell every public servant in the Northern Territory that he or she should have no right to lump sum payments. Let us see whether members opposite have the courage of their convictions or are merely grandstanding in the knowledge that, after 2 or 3 years of debate among members of this Assembly and an agreed position having been reached on the content of this

legislation, they can score some cheap political points by changing their position at the last minute. Of course, this change would not have anything to do with the result of last Saturday's by-election and the possibility of a bit of political point-scoring today - of course, not at all!

The fact is that this still leaves members of the Northern Territory parliament with the longest period of any of the parliaments before they obtain any vesting rights out of their superannuation scheme. The fact is that almost all superannuation schemes throughout Australia, many of them negotiated by the ACTU, with the exception of the 3% productivity deal which the Northern Territory parliament does not get, require and include vesting periods, sometimes after 12 months, in the form of lump sums of employer contributions to the employees. Members opposite do not want to discuss that because their trade union masters might not like them exposing that fallacy in their argument. That is the reality. The trade unions have argued for vesting after 1, 2 or 5 years, whatever they could get away with, of employer contributions in many superannuation schemes. I know that only too well because, in many of the cases, I had to argue the employer cause in those debates. The public service in the Northern Territory has lump sum payments, and it has vesting rights, if my memory serves me right ...

Mr Finch: 10 years.

Mr HATTON: ... after 10 years. In fact, the public service superannuation scheme, if my memory serves me correctly again, is a more generous scheme than the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Scheme, for people on equivalent salaries.

Mr Finch: Yes, they start at 5.

Mr Perron: To 10.

Mr HATTON: That is what I thought. I thought vesting started at 5 and increased to full vesting after 10 in the Public Service Superannuation Scheme. I will look forward to members opposite arguing that we should amend the Public Service Superannuation Scheme to remove vesting rights until 15 years ...

Mr Coulter: Yes, that would be good.

Mr HATTON: ... and to arguing that public servants should not have the right to lump sum payments. I will look forward to that to see if they really have the courage of the principles that they are espousing in this House. I do not think they do. I think they are indulging in a bit of political grandstanding in this House, and they are looking forward to stirring things up in the community and saying that politicians should take the lead. I have heard this argument time and time again in this House: 'Let the members take the lead. Let the politicians take the lead'.

I will pose a question. Politicians take the lead many times. They seek to set an example to the community in restraint or to follow particular leads that the government is setting. If, in the end, the rest of the community does not follow that lead, should the politician who took the decision to create a lead for the community be left behind forever and a day? Or, having given the lead, and that lead not having been followed by the broad community, shouldn't the politician be able to come into line with everyone else?

I do not apologise. I think that politicians, who work very hard for the community, have the right to have access to the same sort of superannuation rights as other members of the community. I do not believe that it is appropriate that politicians, who are in a far riskier, far less secure position than other members of society, should have less vesting rights than members of the vast majority of superannuation schemes that exist in this country. It is a nonsense to argue that that should be the case.

I make one more point and that is to deal with this issue of lump sum versus ongoing payments. The fact is that it happens to be socialist governments which promote the view that we must leave everybody in a state of dependency on somebody, whether it be in the form of pension payments or ongoing weekly payments. What you cannot do is give people who may have the ability, the capacity or the opportunity to develop a form of independent income which does not depend on other people. That is contrary to the whole socialist philosophy. Perhaps, after 10 years of service in the pressure cooker of politics, when members finally call it quits for whatever reason and go out with a reasonable payment in the form of superannuation, they may well be able to develop their lives. They may choose to invest it in an annuity scheme or something similar in order to provide for their old age. They may choose to invest it in some form of business activity to develop a future life for themselves, independent of government or an insurance company. Let us hope that the electors are smart enough to have elected politicians of sufficient calibre to be able to astutely manage their finances to prepare for their old age. I do not think that is wrong.

The community generally has access to these sorts of benefits. The public service of the Northern Territory has access to better benefits. Every parliament in Australia has access to benefits of an equivalent or better standard. It is not fair that members of this parliament should be left behind because of the crazy argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition which is that we should follow the words but not the actions of the federal government.

The opposition has changed its mind during the last 24 hours. Its arguments are a nonsense and should be ignored. There is no doubt that 10 years is an appropriate period. It is recognised throughout this country in terms of vesting of superannuation schemes. In terms of rights to superannuation entitlements, particularly in the harsh pressure-cooker world of politics, there is a strong argument that the lump sum entitlement gives people freedom of choice in deciding how to prepare for their future lives. I believe that is a better approach than locking money away and leaving people in a state of permanent dependence on an insurance company or the government. Pensioners often come to my electorate office seeking assistance. They do not come from my electorate but from the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition. These people, who are locked into weekly superannuation payments, find themselves receiving reduced benefits under the aged pension and losing the federal government pension and concession card.

There is continuous pressure to keep people in a state of dependence and poverty, and our country should be ashamed of that. We should oppose it at all stages. We should give people freedom of choice and the opportunity to prepare for their futures and to live with dignity. We should get rid of some of the nonsensical rules imposed by the federal government, particularly in relation to the old-age pension. They cause untold problems for people. Every time a means test is imposed, inequities are created.

I do not accept the socialist claptrap put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I believe that 10 years is a well-established community standard for full vesting of superannuation. Secondly, I support the opportunity to convert that lump sum payment, thus giving people freedom of choice to develop their future lives rather than leaving it to Big Brother. I oppose the amendments proposed by the opposition.

The bill deals with many other matters. The opposition has not referred to the fact that the various adjustments and actuarial assessments show that there is nil cost to the community. I ask the community to deal with that. There is nil net cost to the community from the actuarial assessments of these adjustments because of the realities of our superannuation scheme.

Mr Ede: It is the superannuation fund.

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart says it is not for the community. He continues to demonstrate his ignorance because he must know that, for some time now, his benefits and his accruing benefits have come from government appropriations to the superannuation scheme to meet the emerging obligations of the scheme as the employer contribution. The employer happens to be the Northern Territory government and the Northern Territory government attracts its funds from taxpayers.

Mr Ede: What are you saying?

Mr HATTON: What I am saying is that the changes to this superannuation scheme will have a nil net cost effect on the employer and therefore, ultimately, on the Northern Territory taxpayer. But, they are bringing the Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Scheme in line with community standards and not quite in line with public service benefits. They will overcome a number of anomalies such as definitions of dependencies and other matters which have been dealt with extensively. There will be nil net cost, it will not exceed community standards in respect of vesting and it will continue access to lump sum payments. Despite their mouthing off in this House about it, members opposite have not put forward any formal amendments to remove access to lump sum conversion of superannuation schemes. All they have said is that it should be kept at 15 years. Forget what the Leader of the Opposition says ...

Mr Ede: At 10 years, it will not be on.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, given the interjection, it is not inappropriate to refer to the proposed amendment which seeks to insert in paragraph (a) of clause 12: 'section 19 or 22 and who has been entitled to a salary as a member for an aggregate period of 15 years or more'. They are certainly accepting the right to lump sum payments ...

Mr Ede: Because it was there before.

Mr HATTON: ... irrespective of the time. There is no issue of principle there. It is a matter of whether it is 10 years or 15 years. It is a nonsense. You either support lump sum payments or you are opposed to them. You cannot have 2 bob each way as the members opposite seek to do. The reality is that you either say that you will have full vesting of superannuation after 10 years or you will not. If you are not going to have full vesting on completion of 10 years, you do not have full vesting until 15 years. I think 10 years is a well-accepted community standard and is reflected in the Northern Territory Public Service superannuation scheme.

Mr Dondas: It is 7 years in New South Wales.

Mr HATTON: As the member for Casuarina says, it is 7 years in New South Wales and the federal parliament has a similar provision. There is certainly plenty of precedent for earlier periods for vesting which we have not adopted. We have kept to the upper scale.

Mr Speaker, I am sure you are aware of the debates about superannuation schemes within parliaments, the public service and the private sector throughout this country. The opposition is grandstanding. Its own proposals do not support its arguments. It is doing nothing except trying to score a few cheap political points given that these variations to the scheme have nil net cost to the employer and, through the employer, the Northern Territory community.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, let us be clear what we are talking about. Under the current law, if a member were to leave, for whatever reason, after 5 years or 6 years or whatever, the amount accrued in that fund would be available to him. However, under current legislation, after 15 years, people have the right to gain a pension which is worked out under a formula which is provided in the act. Given movements around the country, we have agreed with the government's proposal to make that available after 10 years. What we will not wear is the ability to commute that pension, during that extra period from 10 to 15 years, into this \$0.25m lump sum. That is the principle that we are seeking to preserve.

The message that we are giving to the people of the Northern Territory is that we are not working on feathering our own nests, when just a couple of hours ago, the government told them that it would take a further week's wages off them and put it into government coffers. How does the government dare to align those 2 points and stand up or, in the case of the Chief Minister, sit down with a smirk on his face and say that they intend to ram it through, and expect this side to cop it? Mr Speaker, we will not cop it.

The basic point is that we do not want a situation where people receive lump sums and, after spending that money, receive a sickness benefit, standard pension or whatever from the public purse. If people remain on the pension that they receive after 10 years or 15 years, there are several things that they can do with it. For example, if they do not require the money, they can use it to pay off a loan that they may have obtained to start a business which the minister spoke about earlier. But, the money will still be available to keep them from coming back to the public purse at a later stage. That is the principle that we need to look at as we develop superannuation in the latter half of the 20th century. We must see superannuation as a way that people can fund their own retirement without coming back to the Australian taxpayers to fund them.

The Minister for Transport and Works asks where the free choice is. Free choice of what? Free choice to be able to commute your pension into a lump sum, get your \$0.25m, blow it and be back on the pension next month? That is not the sort of free choice that I look at - free choice to rip off the taxpayer! No way, Mr Speaker. That is not what I believe in.

The member for Nightcliff says that the Commonwealth, New South Wales and various places have more generous schemes. If he crosses the floor - and I am not saying he has to convince all his colleagues to do the same because he will not be able to - and votes with me on this point, I will sit down with him and we will draft something for General Business Day whereby we will start

putting some propositions to the federal government and to other governments around Australia that they move in the direction in which we are moving and remove the right of commutation ...

Mr Hatton: I will not support you.

Mr EDE: You won't? Mr Speaker, there is no sense in his turning around and criticising me if he does not have the courage to make the move himself.

Mr Hatton: I do not agree with it. It is your nonsense, not mine.

Mr EDE: He talks about vesting. Vesting can also refer to portability and movement of money when moving from one job to another. Within that talk of vesting is a sub-topic of commutation. Commutation is what we are talking about, not the pension. The vesting for transfers is an acceptable part of being able to obtain the portability that we require in a highly mobile work force. That can still be done with our amendment. If people wish to use those portability provisions, they should be able to do that.

The member for Nightcliff is not taking a lead from the Commonwealth or from New South Wales or wherever; he is taking a lead from the pilots. He is saying: 'We have the power because we have the numbers in this place and we intend to use those numbers to screw the people of the Northern Territory and the taxpayers of Australia'. He says that it is financially neutral. It is only financially neutral as far as that particular fund is concerned. As long as the person stays on the pension entitlements, under this provision, it will stay financially neutral. However, if the person commutes it into a lump sum, blows that lump sum and goes on the old-age pension, it is no longer financially neutral and no one can tell me that it is. He is then back on the public purse.

Mr Coulter: He puts \$0.25m back into the economy.

Mr Manzie: It is all right for him to blow it after 15 years. He can do it then.

Mr EDE: Listen to them, Mr Speaker. They sit there smugly. After ripping off the Territory people this morning, they intend to turn around and rip off the rest of the people of Australia.

The member for Nightcliff said that we should be given all this money because then we can create business and generate wealth.

Mr Hatton: I did not say that. I said they could look after themselves. They are moving ...

Mr Dondas: What a load of nonsense.

Mr EDE: It is not a load of nonsense and the honourable member can stand up next and have his say, Mr Speaker. It is a movement in that direction, and this parliament is moving in that direction at a time when we are saying to the people of the Northern Territory - and it was in the Chief Minister's speech this morning - that we all have to pull together. There is no way that the people in the community will accept the need for them to tighten their belts, for them to give up another week of their salaries to fund the public purse when, at the same time, we are turning around in this House and are voting for the ability to be able to give ourselves a \$0.25m lump sum golden handshake at the end of 10 years. At least, after 15 years, you could say:

'That is the condition that pertained when we first became politicians and that was the basis of our coming into parliament'. If members are so worried about their payouts, they can hold that line. However, on the same day that we are moving to take money away from Territorians, we are moving to put more into our own pockets. I find it disgusting, and it is something which will be opposed by this side of the House.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart has certainly made a fool of himself today. If we talk about our superannuation fund, which has been in existence retrospectively since 1974, in another 12 to 18 months or less than 2 years, the fund will become self-funding for a start. There are only 3 members in this parliament that, within another couple of months, will be entitled to walk away, as the honourable Leader of the Opposition says, with ...

Mr Hatton: Four.

Mr DONDAS: Three. I will tell you who the 3 are so that you may know as well.

Mr Hatton: You are right.

Mr DONDAS: There are only 3 members in this parliament who, in a couple of months time, will have the capacity to walk away. People's circumstances change. Those members who were elected to this parliament in 1974 have seen many changes occur at the various levels within this parliament. We have seen changes in ministry holders, office holders and backbenchers. People have lost their electorates or people have not gained preselection, and I highlight the circumstances of the member for Nhulunbuy, for instance, who has not been preselected. But, more importantly, if that provision of 10 years did not apply and he was able to walk away, where would the member for Nhulunbuy stand today?

The point that I am trying to make is that people's circumstances change in 2 areas: their financial circumstances and their own personal circumstances. Look at the marital situations that have occurred within this parliament and the number of members whose marriages have broken up perhaps as a result of long terms in parliament. We do not know whether it is something that has happened over 10 years, 8 years, 7 years or 15 years, but it has happened and perhaps, if there was a capacity for a member to walk away after 10 years, it is possible that some of those marriages would have lasted longer than they did.

More importantly, let us look at the federal Labor government that honourable members opposite support. It has had 3 elections - in 1983, 1984 and 1987. Under the terms of the legislation applying to the federal parliament, after 3 elections a member can gain obtain his superannuation and walk away. He can commute it to a lump sum. In this instance, that is in 5 years. What we are saying is that the qualifying period should be at least 10 years, unless a member is not preselected or is ill, which has happened to members from both sides of the House.

More importantly, the honourable member fails to make a particular point of the fact that the members of this House contribute 11% of their salary each year. They do not take it out and put it in the bank, which they could do, and compound the interest over a period of 10 years. In some cases, probably \$90 000 to \$100 000, over a 10-year period, would accumulate in a private financial institution. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition and the

member for Stuart say that we will walk away with \$200 000 of taxpayers' money. That is a load of nonsense, because each member of this House has contributed. For those who do not reach the 10 years, after a certain 6 years or 7 years or 5 years, they will have their contributions back plus interest. They fail to qualify.

More importantly, members opposite cannot have a double standard. They will let this side of the House make all the moves because, if the politicians cannot make a decision to help themselves in some small respect, how can the public expect to be looked after? There would be no balance. You do not know what the community needs. The federal Labor government was elected in 1983, 1984 and 1987 and it has not changed the federal legislation. Why can't members opposite support this? They will let the CLP make the running and then pick up the benefits. I bet that, after this legislation is passed, not one member opposite will declare that he will stay here for 15 years. I will bet \$10 000 now that not one of them will stay in for 15 years.

Mr Speaker, the situation of members changes and, after 10 years, I believe that members of parliament, who have worked very hard for the community, should be able to leave this place with some dignity. I believe that the member for Nhulunbuy has served this parliament well. He has worked hard. He has not shirked his responsibilities but, because he has not found favour with his parliamentary colleagues and his union colleagues, they have said goodbye to him. What does that man have to do? For the next 2 years, the honourable member will have to walk around the place with his tail between his legs. I do not believe that is right. I do not believe that position can be supported by any member of this House.

I have nothing to lose because, in 2 months time, I can say: 'Goodbye. See you later, alligator. Give me a cheque for a couple of hundred grand. End of story'. But what about the member for Nhulunbuy? Are we going to make him sit around for another 3 years? I do not believe that that is right. I do not believe it was right in the case of some of my parliamentary colleagues on this side of the House who, after serving in this House for some time, were not preselected. If they could have left with dignity after 10 years, they might still be in the Territory rather than being forced to leave because their own party did not support them or because they did not happen to agree with a particular political leader at the time. Let people leave this House with dignity. Let them leave after 10 years. In New South Wales, they can go after 7 years. In the federal parliament, they can go after 3 elections. Why should it be any different in the Northern Territory? I believe that 10 years should be supported.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it appears that the Leader of the Opposition has done an about-turn on this matter, as he is entitled to do. I appreciate that all individuals can change their minds. I understand that, some time ago, he was well aware of proposals to amend the superannuation legislation. Those proposals arose from discussions in the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Trust, of which the Leader of the Opposition is a member. I understand that debate in that forum led to the government's proposals to amend the legislation which contains a number of deficiencies and inequities. I recognise the Leader of the Opposition's right to change his mind. However, I note too that he did not have the courage to say that he once supported it but has now changed his mind. I believe that he is trying to score a political point. Knowing that the government is quite firm on this matter, he will be able to tell the press that the bill was preposterous, that the ALP opposed it vigorously and fought hard for the poor old taxpayer.

Mr Speaker, like the member for Casuarina and yourself, I am not particularly affected by this legislation because of the length of my service as a member. However, I would like to make a point in relation to the costs of the scheme which have been the subject of considerable comment in this debate. I am advised that lump sum benefits are cheaper for the scheme than pension benefits because the conversion factor of 10 undervalues the true worth of an indexed pension, payable for life and passing to a spouse.

Mr Ede: It is not cheaper for the taxpayer.

Mr PERRON: If the honourable member will listen, it is cheaper for the taxpayer. The more often members take a lump sum, the cheaper the scheme will be for the Territory.

Mr Ede: Yes, but not for the taxpayers of Australia.

Mr PERRON: If it is cheaper for the scheme, I would think that it would have to be cheaper for the taxpayer. If a member elects to take his entitlements in the form of a pension, and then lives for another 20 or 30 years, under this scheme he has an indexed pension for life. If he seeks to commute and takes his 10-year lump sum, he is cut out of the system. He has his money and he is away. If he lives for much longer than the 10-year period, the demand on the scheme or the taxpayer is much greater.

If you visit your accountant on the day you retire, provided that you are in reasonable health and are likely to live for more than 10 years, I can assure you that he will advise you to take the pension rather than the lump sum. It is not compulsory. The Public Service superannuation scheme, which has also been mentioned here today, provides for commutation on a sliding scale, starting at 5 years and continuing to 10 years. When that scheme was first implemented, Treasury officers advised me that commutation benefits had 2 advantages. Not only would many public servants find it attractive to be able to convert employer contributions to a lump sum - which they could not do under the Commonwealth scheme at that time - but it would also be cheaper to the Northern Territory taxpayer who will be footing the bill for the scheme for the next 100 years. I can assure honourable members that the high-level advice given to me over the years has been that lump sum payment is cheaper for superannuation schemes, as well as providing an attractive option for the retiree.

I must expose this charade about being able to retire voluntarily after 10 years and still receive benefits. As we all know, at present, if a member of a political party puts his hand up and says that he has lost endorsement after 3 terms or 10 years, he is able to obtain his benefits. The Leader of the Opposition says that different principles apply in that situation. Do we think we are fooling anyone in the community about how hard it is for a member of parliament to lose endorsement?

Mr Collins: It is very easy, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: I can assure you, Mr Speaker, and any members of the public who may be listening, that any member who goes before a preselection committee and indicates a reasonable degree of disinterest in the job, tiredness or a wish to live in greener fields on the other side of the country, will certainly lose endorsement. More than one member of parliament may well have taken that course of action in the past. But, on what grounds can an independent member of the Assembly elect to take the same option after 10 years under the current act? He has to lose an election, which also can

possibly be arranged if a member works at it hard enough. Under the current scheme, a member can lose an election after 10 years of service and collect all benefits. To that extent, it is a charade. I am disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition because I really think that he is simply trying to score a political point today. He supports this scheme basically, as it was introduced into the House, but he wants to get some mileage out of it.

I foreshadow 2 small amendments, Mr Speaker, which have been circulated to honourable members in schedule 75. One is a technical amendment about inserting the period within which a person can make an election to the Superannuation Trust. The other is to commence these provisions from 1 July 1989, and I circulate that amendment in fairness to a member of this parliament who, tragically, became gravely ill and was forced to resign from this Assembly after the introduction of this legislation. I believe that sheer equity dictates that this Assembly must allow that member to have the benefits that the parliament is about to agree to - benefits that were proposed in this Assembly prior to the unfortunate and untimely ill-health which has compelled his resignation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 75.1.

This amendment is to insert a provision which will deem this legislation to have come into operation on 1 July 1989. I have indicated to the House the reasons for this. The government has no further arguments to put forward on the matter. However, I would be interested to hear what the opposition think of this proposal.

Mr EDE: The opposition is in an awkward position with this amendment because the information regarding it was circulated only last night or this morning. We sought further information which has only just come to hand and which leaves unanswered a number of questions to which we would have liked to have answers. I am quite prepared to suggest that we report progress on the bill, at this stage, and that we get together and find out that information.

If members opposite are not prepared to agree with that, we will be forced to oppose this amendment, first on the basis that it is retrospective legislation which is legislation which we generally oppose and, secondly, because, on the information given, we have been unable to find out what the situation is ...

Mr Perron: You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Coulter: You know what it is about. You are not that dumb.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, obviously members opposite are now trying to convey some information.

Mr Coulter: This is sick.

Mr EDE: If the Leader of Government Business, who is still interjecting, is prepared to stand up and move that we report progress on this until such time as we are able to have a further discussion on what it is, we may be able to come to some solution. The fact of the matter is that, as it stands, it is against the principle of what we have proposed in our amendment ...

Mr Coulter: What are you talking about? It has nothing to do with your amendment.

Mr EDE: It has actually. Okay, report progress.

Mr Coulter: It is going through. Sit down. You have had your say.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the member interjects that this is going through and that I should sit down. As far as I am concerned, in that case we oppose the amendment.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I did not quite think that the opposition would reach these depths on a political basis. I ask members opposite what their attitude would be if it were one of their number lying out there dying and ...

Mr Smith: Adjourn it and give us a chance to look at it.

Mr Coulter: Don't be stupid.

Mr PERRON: ... who had been sent to hospital after these amendments had been introduced into this House? What would be their attitude then, if their dependants stood to be denied benefits which this Assembly is likely to pass through this House shortly? I think it is disgusting, unfair and immoral for these people to get on their high horse over this matter at this stage.

They have a letter explaining exactly what it is that we are proposing to do. There is a former member of this Assembly who is affected by this proposition to backdate the commencement of this legislation from when it would otherwise take effect to 1 July, and I think it is disgusting that the matter has even been challenged on the floor of the House. I ask members opposite to put forward some substantial reasons if they have any further argument.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I direct my remarks to the Chief Minister. I must say that I do not oppose the proposition in any way at all. I would make the point that, whilst the legislation has been in the pipeline for some time and has been discussed, and it has been in the House for a time, it has also been known for a considerable period that the honourable member was sick and that it was likely that he would be a beneficiary of it. I do not think anybody is contesting that at all. Certainly, I do not.

I ask this simply to have the matter put on the record. Could the Chief Minister give a brief outline of the type of advantages, pecuniary or otherwise, that might accrue to the honourable retired previous member as a result of this amendment passing through?

Mr Smith: Did you have a letter from him?

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition has just asked, Mr Chairman, whether I have a letter on the matter, and I do not. If the Chief Minister could put it on the record, I would be grateful.

Mr SMITH: We have come to the nub of the problem. The government is asking the members on the crossbenches to vote on this matter without having given a full explanation.

Mr Coulter: They have just had it from the Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH: That was not a full explanation.

Mr Coulter: What do you mean?

Mr SMITH: There is a letter that I have in front of me, and I do not think it particularly appropriate that the Chief Minister read it out, because it does have some information ...

Mr Perron: I was prepared to read it out. I think this matter is important enough.

Mr SMITH: ... that is possibly not appropriate.

The second thing is that, despite receiving the letter, we still have some concerns and reservations that we would like to take up with the government privately. We are being denied that opportunity, and I cannot for the life of me see the rush. We could do it tomorrow or we could do it on Thursday.

Mr Coulter: You have already said you do not support the retrospectivity.

Mr SMITH: We are talking about a matter of retrospectivity, and it could be quite a sum of money that we are talking about. We simply do not have the information that would enable us to make an intelligent decision. All we are asking is that we be given the information.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I will give some more detail. In a nutshell, of course, it is proposed to ensure that the former member of the House enjoys the same rights as other members will have once this legislation is passed. By way of explanation, the relevant portion of the letter that I sent to the Leader of the Opposition says:

If the former member were to die before the date of commencement of the provisions we are now discussing, the option to commute his ill-health retirement pension to a lump sum would not be available. Instead, either a spouse's pension or possibly only dependent children's allowance would be payable. While both of these benefits may be converted to a lump sum, they would be of a lesser value than the member's original entitlement.

Mr Chairman, nobody knows how long the member I refer to will be with us. I am sure we all hope that he will live for a long time and, indeed, he may. However, he resigned when his health reached a stage which led him to believe that, even if he recovered significantly, he would not recover to an extent that would allow him to resume his duties as a member of parliament. He did not have to resign at that stage. He could have refused to hand in his resignation for any period of time he wished. He could perhaps have had a relative lodge a letter of resignation just prior to his death if it appeared that his death was imminent.

However, the man did the right thing. He resigned from parliament when he knew he could no longer do the job. He may continue to live for many years, and I hope that is the case. This legislation was introduced at the last

sittings at which he was in this House. To make an issue of this matter and to propose that we deny him and his beneficiaries the benefits which we are proposing to give to the rest of us is immoral. The government proposes to pursue this matter now.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister has not addressed the points that I raised. I am not making an issue of this, but I asked a simple question. It would have been simple for the Chief Minister to read the letter out or to hand me a copy if its contents are too delicate to be recorded in Hansard. My question was not unreasonable and I simply ask the Chief Minister to answer it.

Mr Coulter: You can have a copy of the letter. Does anyone else want to score some political points?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, let me point out that the government has made this particularly painful debate necessary by not discussing the matter with members on this side of the House and on the crossbenches at a much earlier stage so that the problems could have been sorted out.

Mr Perron: Previously, we had agreement on the 10-year provision. That did not do us much good.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the fact of the matter is that we have no problems with people getting the benefits that they would have received under the old legislation. We have no problems with the pension provisions under the new legislation. We have a problem in relation to commutation and we are upholding that principle in relation to this matter.

There is an old saw that individual cases make bad law. As is every other member on this side of the House, I am extremely sorry that this situation has arisen and I feel deeply for the family of the retired honourable minister. As everybody knows, people find themselves in such circumstances from time to time and, I am afraid to say, the fact that a person was a member of this House does not entitle him or her to special treatment beyond that to which other people are entitled. That is the sad fact of the matter and it would apply equally if a member on this side of the House found himself in the same situation. The fact is that my car might hit a beast and roll next time I go bush. Any member of this House could pass away suddenly or slowly and it is not fair to ask us to vote on a provision when we are not sure of the implications for family law actions that may occur in relation to the various parties. On the basis of that principle, which we have already outlined in debate on the general issues, we are forced to oppose this amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 10 agreed to.

Clause 11:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 75.2.

This amendment inserts a period within which an election can be made by an applicant to the Superannuation Tribunal.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I do not intend to go over old ground. Once again, consistent with the amendment that we have proposed, we oppose this particular amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 12:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 77.1.

I will not speak at length because I canvassed the issues during the course of the second-reading debate. It was very clear that the honourable members opposite were not prepared ...

Mr Perron: Tell me how the lump sum is more expensive. I cannot understand it.

Mr EDE: Once again, I will explain to the Chief Minister that it is more expensive to the taxpayers of Australia if a member receives a lump sum as a relatively young person, utilises that sum until reaching the age of 65, and then spends the next 15 or 20 years on the pension. The principle of superannuation is that it should be utilised so that the taxpayers of Australia do not have to support people under the pension scheme. That is the principle we are arguing for. We are supporting that principle whether the pension involved is an old age pension or, as in this particular case, a sickness benefit.

Mr PERRON: There is a fundamental flaw in the honourable member's argument. People taking lump sums are liable to blow them. Sadly, that happens on many occasions. People win lotteries, receive lump sums for disablement or, as in this case, lump sums on retirement, and find that the money does not last them forever as they first expected. One cannot live forever on \$300 000 or \$400 000, as some people believe they can, and many people who receive such sums end up destitute or receiving social service benefits. That is all true, but how does changing the eligibility period from 15 years to 10 years make any difference? If commutation occurs at 10 years, how less likely is a member to blow a lump sum than if it is received after 15 years? I simply do not comprehend the opposition's argument.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we have agreed that amendments are required to the legislation. In determining our attitude to this amendment, we operated on the principle that the standard had been accepted and set by this Assembly. The movement of that standard from 15 years back to 10 years will set a new standard in the Northern Territory. This amendment will identify for the people of the Northern Territory where we stand on issues when it comes to putting large amounts of money into our own pocket. If an honourable member opposite has to work for another 5 years at this job because he wants to be able to commute, so be it. I think that people in the community would expect that of him. That is the principle, that is the aim and that is the cause of the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

BUSHFIRES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 187)

Continued from 17 May 1989.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I advise the minister that the opposition has no difficulties in respect of the proposed amendments. As he correctly stated, the amendment will correct an anomaly in the present act. It allows Fire Control Officers to have authority at the scene of a bushfire. It gives statutory recognition to the Chief Fire Control Officer and his officers. It provides for their appointment by the minister and details their powers and functions. Those are the main provisions of the bill and, as I indicated earlier, the opposition has no objection to them.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to support this bill, my remarks more or less mirror those of the previous speaker. The amendments are common sense. Previously, there was no position of Chief Fire Control Officer or Senior Fire Control Officer. These have now been inserted in the legislation as have the functions of the Chief Fire Control Officer and the Senior Fire Control Officer.

For those honourable members who perhaps are not as au fait with the legislation as I am, the Bushfires Council consists of representatives from all the fire control regions in the Northern Territory. I have had dealings with the Bushfires Council and also the regional committee over the years. Our area is in the Vernon region which is an extremely difficult region to administer because of the difference between, say, a 5-acre block and a pastoral station in relation to fire control and management and all permutations in between.

It is very important that, in a situation of stress such as a bushfire, it is very clear to those who are fighting the fire who is actually in control. I do not think there have been any real barneys about this matter in the past, but I think there have been some discussions about it among those concerned in the Bushfires Council. Last weekend, the Environment Council conducted a seminar in the rural area on the very subject of bushfires. I was asked to speak as also were representatives from the Northern Land Council, the fire services, the pastoral industry and the Bushfires Council and others. It was a very friendly meeting. My views have not changed as a result of the meeting. Over the years, I have maintained the same views about burning off. However, it was a very friendly meeting and much information was gained by people of disparate interests with regard to fire control and management.

I also had an invitation from the Bushfires Council to be a guest at the opening of its seminar at Batchelor recently, as did the member for Victoria River. Unfortunately, I was not able to be present at the meeting and perhaps it was not appropriate for me to be there. However, I believe that the Bushfires Council, in the administration of its duties in relation to control and management of bushfires - and also the Fire Service in that part of the rural area that it controls - is working very well.

I cannot finish speaking without again putting in a plug for the volunteer brigades that come under the control both of the Bushfires Council and the Fire Service. These people are volunteers, as the name suggests. All their

training and all their work in relation to bushfire control is done in their own free time. They have my highest regard. In this whole matter of fire control in the rural area, they stand paramount because the very fact that they work so hard in their own time to help members of the community goes a long way towards educating other people.

Mr Speaker, I digressed a little there. To come back to the legislation, the Chief Fire Control Officer has the power to delegate to his Senior Fire Control Officers. He will also be able to implement measures of fire prevention and control from advice given by the Bushfires Council. Knowing the way that the Bushfires Council works with public servants in the Conservation Commission and with members of the public from all walks of life, I believe that the correction of the anomaly will make only for a better working of the whole scheme.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members for their support of these amendments and to add to the comments from the member for Koolpinyah regarding the volunteer firefighters. Indeed, the growth of settlement in our rural areas brings the problem of bushfire control out into the open. As more people are living in these areas, the problems of uncontrolled fires pose greater danger, both to property and to life. The work of the volunteers in these bushfire brigade groups is very important. Without them, we certainly would have a great deal of loss of life and property. I endorse the member for Koolpinyah's comments in that regard.

The work of the Bushfires Council should be commended too because it provides training, assistance and support to the volunteers who really make the difference between a clean, green country and environment for native animals to live in and a blackened landscape. We all know which we would rather have. I thank honourable members for their comments and endorse the amendments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 196)

Continued from 18 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in rising to address the series of amendments to the Liquor Act that are before the Assembly at the moment, I make an initial apology. I was under the impression that this bill would be debated later. Although I am prepared for the debate, Mr Speaker, my comments may not be quite the usual seamless oratory which I am sure you expect from myself.

Mr Collins: Do you mean seamless or meaningless?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, in response to the interjection from the member for Sadadeen, he should be well aware of the fact that my contributions in all debates in this House are never frivolous but always deep and meaningful, never meaningless.

The opposition has serious problems with this bill and, in the time available to me, I propose to explain to the Minister for Tourism exactly why the opposition has such reservations. I think I need go no further than to say that, in the opposition's belief, the Minister for Tourism should not be the minister in charge of the Liquor Act. The opposition has said consistently that the responsibility for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission should fall within the purview of the Minister for Health and Community Services. In his second-reading speech, the honourable minister made that abundantly clear. His basic failure and his government's basic failure to understand the purpose of the Liquor Act were apparent when he referred to some of the major concerns of the government with respect to the operation of the commission and of the Liquor Act. I refer to the somewhat bold claim made by the honourable minister in his second-reading speech where he said: 'A workable system of regulating the sale and consumption of liquor in the Northern Territory has been developed by this government'.

The plain fact of the matter is that we do not have a workable system of regulating the consumption of liquor. We may have a workable system for regulating the sale of it, in the sense that the government obtains a certain amount of revenue from the operation of the act, and I really think sometimes that that is all this government cares about. I know that, in private conversations with the Minister for Tourism, he indicates a glimmer of compassion for the people whose lives are being ruined. There would be few people in this House who have a better understanding than I of the problems of alcohol abuse and its impact on their constituents. Week in and week out, I go to funerals or I attend the scenes of homicide that are a direct result of alcohol abuse. So don't let us have any of this claptrap that we have a workable system for the regulation of the consumption of liquor in the Northern Territory. The plain fact is that we have a system for the consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory that is a national disgrace.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Oh rats! It is not.

Mr BELL: I notice, Mr Speaker, that the member for Koolpinyah was tempted to interject, but she pulled herself up half way. I do not think there is any member of this House who would disagree with me.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I do.

Mr BELL: I am not laying the blame for that at the feet of the government entirely. There are broader social forces at work, that have frequently been the subject of debate in this House and that are not fully understood by me. I do not pretend to understand. I hope that I can outline now, and in the committee stage of this bill, some steps in the right direction. But, as I said at the outset, the steps taken by these amendments by and large are in the wrong direction. There are a couple of aspects that the opposition finds unobjectionable, but there are other areas that we object to most strongly and I trust that will become quite clear from my comments.

The opposition position in respect of these amendments is not wholly clear cut because they are very varied amendments. As I have said, we will be supporting some of the amendments proposed because we find some of them to be unexceptionable. We are opposing some amendments on the basis of promoting a review of the Liquor Act. I will speak more of that later. Finally, there are some aspects of this bill where we will be seeking to amend the proposals put forward by the government and, in due course, we will circulate a series of amendments.

In the time available to me, I urge on the government a full review of the Liquor Act. I think that there are some shortcomings and I put this proposal forward in the hope that it will be taken up in a bipartisan way. For example, and this was certainly a factor in the opposition's deliberations on this bill, there are aspects of the Liquor Act that require more thought. Not only the honourable minister but most members of this House will be aware of the concern about the proliferation of takeaway licences and of the opposition to that proliferation in the Territory. In my home town of Alice Springs that has been a very live issue. However, I believe that the Liquor Act would be ameliorated were there some consideration, within the machinery of the act, of the social impact of different classes of licences.

I mentioned a moment ago the disastrous impact of some of the takeaway licences in Alice Springs. At the other end of the scale, the social impact of bring-your-own restaurants, for example, is not in the same street. I am quite happy, by and large, to see free market forces apply as far as bring-your-own restaurants are concerned. I do not believe that there is the same deleterious social impact and encouragement ...

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr BELL: I am not sure which particular bring-your-own restaurants the honourable Attorney-General frequents. Perhaps he should give me a list a bit later so I can avoid them and avoid his association with them.

However, I stand by that. There are different classes of licences in the sense that different licences to sell alcohol have a different impact on people's lives. I mention in passing that there was considerable concern about the impact of the off-licence at the Gap Motor Hotel in Alice Springs. I think that, because of the application by the management, with the understanding of the Liquor Commission, takeaway sales at that establishment are available only to people driving motor cars, which has meant that the impact in that respect has been less severe. I contrast that with the much more desperate and dangerous circumstances that apply at the takeaway at what used to be called the Riverside Hotel. It has changed its name several times over the period that my family and I have lived in Alice Springs and I am not quite sure what it is called these days.

Mr Firmin: How about the Todd Tavern?

Mr BELL: It is referred to as the Todd Tavern. I have serious reservations about public safety in respect of those premises.

I believe that there needs to be some overall consideration of different classes of licences and their number. I notice that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a question on notice with respect to the number of outlets and various important information in that regard. I think that I need to explain to honourable members that there is a well-established relationship between the number of outlets and alcohol abuse and problems caused by it and that the opportunity for purchasing alcohol has a direct relationship with the problems that occur. As far as Aboriginal people in my electorate are concerned, there are deeper problems associated with alcohol abuse that perhaps cannot be addressed by the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, but I do not believe that those deeper problems of unemployment, dislocation of traditional culture and so on that are common to fourth world minorities from Alaska to New Zealand to South America should prevent us from doing what we can actually do as far as alcohol policies are concerned.

Let me turn then to the more specific proposals in the bill, and indicate the opposition's position. The government proposes to licence vehicles and include vehicles in the class of licensed premises. I presume that this will apply to tourist buses, for example, plying their trade between Darwin and Kakadu, and Alice Springs and Uluru, and that already overworked drivers will be required - I see the honourable minister shaking his head and saying that is not what is envisaged, but I will look forward to hearing his explanation of why that is not the case. On my interpretation of the legislation, that will be possible. It may not be envisaged by the minister, but it is possible. He may even regard it as being undesirable, but it is possible that it will happen.

We already have a problem and I draw this to the attention of the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Transport and Works, and I mention it only in passing. I have received some disquieting evidence that some drivers between Alice Springs and Ayers Rock are being required to work 14, 15, and 16 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week on that route, with their 1-day tours. Although I do not intend to produce that evidence at this stage, I point out to the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Transport and Works that we have a problem and let us hope that that problem can be solved before we have a fatality.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I point out to you that, contrary to the comment from the member for Sadadeen, that is not breaking the rules.

Mr Collins: Hey, don't you misquote me. Wash your ears out.

Mr BELL: There is some sort of bodgie contract arrangement that allows this to operate. The fact is that, if buses were working to the TWU's awards in that regard, it would not happen. I suggest that, in spite of the anti-trade union rhetoric that we hear so often from government members, in this particular case the unions have acted in a socially responsible way and it is about time the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Transport and Works looked at that. The reason I raise that is that, with this bill, we are will impose on those people a responsibility for buying and selling booze on their buses and putting up with the odd obstreperous passenger. Terrific!

A second area that is of concern to the opposition is the proposal for licences under construction. The honourable minister made the comment in his second-reading speech that a recent Supreme Court decision 'had found that, under existing provisions of the Liquor Act, it is not possible to grant a liquor licence where the applicant does not intend to be the end operator'. I contend that that is not a loophole in the Liquor Act. I would say to you, Mr Speaker, that it is desirable that there not be a liquor licence granted to somebody who does not intend to operate.

In saying that, I bear in mind that the Minister for Tourism has received ardent representations from the principals of Northcorp Pty Ltd who were knocked back, I understand, by the commission on their application for a takeaway licence on a similar basis, and I have serious reservations about the motives of the government and the minister in putting forward this proposal. The only caveat I would put in respect of that is that the opposition believes that where, for reasons of population growth, a new licence is deemed necessary in a new area or something like that, I think that it is desirable that such premises be purpose-built and that a prospective developer have the comfort of knowing that a particular class of licence is able to be granted to him. If somebody wants to build a licensed restaurant or a bring-your-own

facility, it is not unreasonable that he have the comfort of knowing that he will receive a licence. However, with this Northcorp amendment, I do not believe that it has been well enough thought through, and this is one of the areas where I believe that the legislation ought to be reviewed. There ought to be a consideration of different classes of licences, but there ought also to be, subject to the sort of review that I have proposed, an ability to assure a builder or developer that a particular class of licence will be granted in a particular area. In that context, the proposal to allow a takeaway licence in Alice Springs only a drop kick's distance from the Flynn Drive supermarket was somewhat less than desirable. There needs to be an overall consideration of takeaway licences and different classes of licences.

Before I pass on to the next point, I will draw to the attention of the minister that there is an internal contradiction in this proposal to grant a liquor licence to somebody who is able to construct a building and pass it to somebody else, completely unknown to the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the general public. The government of the Northern Territory has no control ...

Mr Poole: That is not true at all.

Mr BELL: The minister tells me that that is not true. I draw his attention to the fact that this raft of amendments will affect the transfer of licences in such a way that the public will find it more difficult to be informed about the identity of licence holders. The amendments remove the requirement that a person transferring a licence advertise that transfer. That bothers me. I am concerned that there will be an uncontrolled proliferation of licences. In his second-reading speech and the accompanying press release, the minister indulged in all sorts of free market rhetoric without addressing any of the very real social problems to which I have referred. Pending a review of the Liquor Act, we strongly oppose this proposal.

The opposition also opposes the proposal to remove the requirement to annually renew a licence and the implied review of licence operations. In his justification for the removal of the annual renewal requirement, the minister said in his second-reading speech: 'This procedure is administratively time-consuming and, in fact, unnecessary'. I strongly challenge that and the only evidence I need adduce is the very strident public debate that flowed from the Curtin Springs Roadhouse licence renewal hearing earlier this year.

Mr Poole: That could have happened at any time.

Mr BELL: The minister may believe that but, in fact, it is not the case. Once the annual renewal process is done away with, the only thing left is the complaint process. There is no opportunity for input from public interest groups like the Pitjantjatjara Council and the Tangentyere Council which have attempted to bring a little sanity into liquor policy in the Northern Territory. The annual renewal process is one of the few opportunities available to them. The annual renewal process has not prevented the liquor industry from expanding in the past. The fact is that the number of outlets in the Northern Territory needs to be reduced and this annual renewal process provides one avenue for achieving that.

Mr Speaker, I refer the honourable minister to the commission's enthusiasm for the annual renewal process. I see the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission in the advisers' booth and I am sure that he will be pleased to hear me quote him in respect of the annual renewal. In his determination

on the successful application for a takeaway licence at the Erldunda Roadhouse, the chairman of the commission said: 'Of course, all these licences come under periodic review and, should we find that there is any further or any obvious difficulty arising from the grant of this licence, then the matter would need to be reviewed'. What is now being proposed is that the government will remove the only effective review procedure. The opposition is not prepared to accept an amendment of this sort.

Having said that, I hope that the minister and Mr Peter Severin, the licensee of the Curtin Springs Tavern and one of my constituents, and his counsel, will hear what I say next. I am concerned about the legal costs involved in licence renewal processes. I believe that that is a matter which needs to be addressed. This is literally a life and death issue and, although in one sense a 6-figure sum is not too much, I believe that a more cost-effective solution is required. I suggest that the minister not proceed with these amendments and that the overall process of review, to which I have already referred, be carried out. I believe that the opposition is taking a responsible attitude in this regard. We are not seeking simply to promote the views of one side of this debate. I believe that we are adopting a balanced approach. The minister has gone about these amendments in the wrong way. If I had been the minister with responsibility for the Liquor Act, I would have called for public submissions and sought the views of people who want to make a dollar out of selling booze. I would have sought the views of people like myself, the Pitjantjatjara Council, people living at places like Ernabella and Amata, and the South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Terry Hemmings. I would have collected views from such people in relation to an appropriate and cost-effective renewal, review and complaint procedure. The government has not gone about this in an appropriate fashion.

There are some other aspects which need to be considered in the review process and I will deal with them together. I believe that it would be desirable to require the commission to establish a clear procedure for investigating complaints. Feedback to me indicates that some complainants are not being advised of the consideration of their complaints. I appreciate that, in the case of frivolous complaints, the time of the commission need not be wasted. Even in the case of frivolous complaints, however, which still cost \$20 to lodge, people deserve at least the courtesy of a form letter stating that their complaint has been considered and is not regarded as being of substance. There needs to be a clear procedure, not necessarily construed in legislation, but certainly put into place administratively.

Also in need of review, in the view of the opposition, is the provision for the cancellation of a licence in the public interest. Under section 72 of the act, there is provision for the cancellation of a licence, but I think that, where enough people in a community say that we have too many licences of a particular class, and obviously takeaway licences may be one of those, that should be considered. There are different sorts of takeaway licences with different impacts and different standards. I think that the possibility of the cancellation of a licence needs to be the subject of review as well if the public says that there are too many of them. I think we ought to be hearing about those much more than we do.

I note that the honourable minister is proposing some amendments in respect of returns, in particular from wholesalers. I cannot recall whether the honourable minister mentioned this in his second-reading speech, but obviously, in order to calculate the impact of booze on the Northern Territory community, it is important to have accurate figures. I believe that some thoroughgoing consideration by way of a review should be carried out in

respect of those proposals about returns from wholesalers and licensees. I am sure the minister would appreciate input from researchers in that regard and I would like to be assured that accurate figures are able to be kept. Those are the areas that should be the subject of a review and I trust the minister will take those on board.

I turn now to the unexceptionable and supported areas. The opposition has no problem in supporting the proposal that a fee be payable on the lodgment of an application for a licence. The quarterly payment of licence fees also is not a problem. In addition, we will be supporting adding the basis for complaint about licensed premises that the licensee is not a fit and proper person. If the minister goes ahead with removing the annual renewal process, this will become even more important and is certainly to be supported.

I note that the commission refused to consider a complaint on the basis of the licensee's policy on sale to Aborigines having changed, because there had been no breach of licence conditions. This applied particularly in respect of the Curtin Springs renewal hearing and concern about the change of policy by the Curtin Springs Roadhouse about allowing open slather sales of alcohol that has had such an unfortunate ...

Mr Collins: How can you do otherwise? It is a legal ...

Mr BELL: I realise the member for Sadadeen takes a very literal approach to his responsibilities for his fellow man and, along with Abel, raises his hands to the heavens and says: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' However, there are some members in this Assembly with a slightly better developed moral sense, and I include the Minister for Tourism among them.

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker, I take offence at the words at the member for MacDonnell and I ask him to withdraw them.

Mr BELL: If the honourable member would like to repeat them, I would be more than happy to do so, Mr Speaker, but I am not sure which words he refers to.

Mr Collins: Come on!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I support the point of order. The member for MacDonnell was impugning the moral standing of the member for Sadadeen. That is a reflection on a member of this House.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the honourable member for Stuart wish to address the point of order or not?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I heard what the honourable member said.

Mr Collins: You just said you did not.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, by interjection, I asked the honourable member who raised the point of order whether he heard what was said because it was quite unexceptionable. He did not refer at all to the moral standing of the member for Sadadeen. He simply drew attention to the sense and the degree of moral outrage which the honourable member for Sadadeen was expressing.

Mr Collins: You do not even know what you are talking about.

Mr EDE: The member who made the point of order is himself cackling with laughter and was when he made the point of order. I think it is a frivolous and unnecessary point of order. It is ridiculous.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, we are short of time. What I said was that the member for Sadadeen had a less well-developed moral sense than some others. If the member for Sadadeen takes offence at that, I will withdraw it. He has an excellently developed moral sense the equal of which I have rarely encountered in any other human being.

In relation to the Curtin Springs takeaway, there is concern because, in that case, the commission refused to consider a complaint on the basis of the licensee's change of policy. If we are removing the annual renewal, it bothers me that this complaints process is evidently such a pusillanimous process that no justice will be done. Thus, we support the added basis for complaint in that sense.

There are a number of areas where the opposition will be moving amendments. Because there are several of them, I will not attempt to address those in the few minutes that remain to me. I will address those questions during the committee stage. I will simply close by passing judgment generally on these amendments. I think they are ill-considered. I think they head in the wrong direction. I think they fail to take seriously the government's responsibility for what is one of the most serious social problems in the Northern Territory. I believe that amendments to the Liquor Act, by themselves, will not solve all the problems, but I do not believe that that should be an excuse for allowing open slather for the sale of alcohol in the Northern Territory. I think I can do no better than close where I began. I completely and utterly reject the opening contention from the Minister for Tourism that we have a workable system for regulating the sale and consumption of liquor in the Northern Territory.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I am rising to speak in support of this bill because, over the years, a number of matters that are reflected in it have been brought to my attention, and I will be addressing some of those in a moment or two. I want to reflect on what I would call 'vintage member for MacDonnell'.

Mr Bell: Just as long as you take lessons and take them to heart, Rick.

Mr SETTER: You cannot teach me any lessons, pal.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Jingili will refer to members in this Chamber correctly.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to refer to the member for MacDonnell provided he is prepared to reciprocate and do the same for me.

Mr Ede: Withdraw!

Mr SETTER: I withdraw the remarks that he found objectionable, Mr Speaker.

The member for MacDonnell, being the lead speaker for the opposition in this debate, went to great pains to take up his 45 minutes of the time of this House but, regrettably, only 15 minutes of the time of his speech had any

substance. The other 30 minutes consisted of his unfortunate waffle. Regrettably, we have to tolerate that in this place time after time. We would all have appreciated it if the honourable member for MacDonnell had told us what he was talking about instead of umming and aahing and waffling which I can assure him does not please anybody, including members on his side of the House.

We heard his social concerns about the effects of alcohol on people, and I take it he was referring particularly to Aboriginal people who make up the majority of his constituents. I can assure him that he does not have a monopoly on concerns such as those he expressed. We all share those concerns. We can see what alcoholism is doing to many people in the Australian community at large and we are attempting to address those issues. But let me make the point that, at the end of the day, a fair responsibility for these matters rests with the individual, himself or herself. When a person can exercise a little self-control with regard to the consumption of alcohol or whatever it might be, then you have just about solved the problem. I would suggest that those people who are consuming alcohol to excess should do just that: exercise a little self-control.

He went on to tell us that - and this was the inference that I gained from his remarks - he was a prohibitionist. He was inferring that we should in some way limit the ability of some of the people who are affected by alcohol from gaining access to it. In the 1920s and 1930s, prohibition was tried in the United States of America and it failed miserably. All it did was send the industry underground. I trust that he is not suggesting that we attempt to do that. I can recall that, when I was a young fellow in Queensland, there was a system that I think was called prohibition against individuals. The police would apply to a magistrate for prohibition in respect of a particular individual. In other words, licensees would be unable to serve that person alcohol. A warrant was issued which was placed on the wall of every hotel in the town in which that person resided stating quite clearly that he was not to be served alcohol. Is that the sort of approach we want to return in our society?

The member for MacDonnell will have the opportunity to put that forward by way of the amendments that he foreshadowed. But, in the next breath, he was telling us how he is a free marketeer. How can a committed socialist like the honourable member for MacDonnell expect us to believe that he is a free marketeer? Come on, Mr Speaker! He called for a review of the act. Of course, all acts should be reviewed from time to time, but what does he think is reflected in these amendments?

Mr Ede: A very one-sided one, isn't it?

Mr SETTER: Nonsense. A review of the act is represented by the amendments that are being debated today. As I pointed out earlier, they reflect a number of concerns that have been expressed to me by my constituents and people who live in this community. I am very pleased to see that the minister has proceeded to effect these changes.

Let me run through several of the matters that have been raised in these amendments. Firstly, developers seeking an assurance that a liquor licence will be granted before they invest their money in the development or construction of a property is fair and reasonable. If I were a developer and I was going to erect, for example, a shopping centre which would include a supermarket and I needed to provide a licensed area in the design of that supermarket, it would be fair and reasonable that I approach the commission

for some sort of assurance that I would have a reasonable chance of gaining a licence. If I could not obtain the licence, I would not provide the area within the building to allow for the holding and merchandising of liquor. That is fair and reasonable.

I will quote the example in the Hibiscus Shopping Centre which was constructed a decade or so ago. Woolworths, the major occupier of those premises, took up a large section and conducted business as a supermarket. For a long time, it was denied a liquor licence. I could understand why the commission did not grant a licence because of the regulations and legislation that it was working under, but the community at large could not understand that and I personally believe that Woolworths was disadvantaged quite dramatically during that phase. I do not go out to those premises any longer. I think Woolworths have closed down out there.

Mr Palmer interjecting.

Mr SETTER: It is still there? There you go, it is still there. Does it have a liquor licence? Perhaps the Minister for Transport and Works might be able to tell me. It has. There we have it: the system works. I do not get over to Hibiscus Shopping Centre nowadays, but I recall the trauma that was created in those earlier days because Woolworths was denied a licence even though an appropriate area for its storage and sale was designed into the premises. It thought it would obtain a licence. I am pleased to note that that matter has since been resolved.

The other matter that I would like to raise is objection on the basis of the commercial viability of other licences in the area and, indeed, the licence that is being applied for. I have been objecting to this provision for a number of years now because I fail to understand how an operator who is currently operating licensed premises can object on the basis of it affecting his business if another licence is granted just down the road. We live in a free marketplace. Free enterprise is the philosophy of this government and I think it is most unfair that, in the past, we have prevented licences from being granted on that basis. I am very pleased to see that this is now being withdrawn.

But, it was not only that, Mr Speaker. It was the fact that the people who were objecting to the licence would appear before the commission complete with their QCs, solicitors, advisers, you name it, and at horrendous cost. In some cases, those hearings went on for days or even for several weeks. If the person who was objecting arrived with all those legal advisers, the person who was applying for the licence would also have to appear with an entourage of legal advisers. You would know, Mr Speaker, that the cost of having a QC stand up in front of the commission for you is more than \$1000 a day. It is absolutely crazy stuff. I am pleased to note that it is now to be rectified.

A further amendment with which I agree is that the hearings of the commission will not have to be presided over by the commissioner himself. He will be able to deputise a person on his staff. That is fair and reasonable too. I can recall a particular supermarket owner who applied for a licence a few years ago and was desperate to open the premises in time for the Christmas rush. He found that the commissioner decided to go on holiday at the crucial time. The end result was that this person had purchased stock and it was sitting in his premises behind locked doors because the licence had not been granted. That was because the commissioner was away and nobody else could hear the case. It was not until after Christmas, when the bulk of the business had slipped by, that the person was eventually granted the licence. He has been operating very successfully ever since.

Some play was made by the member for MacDonnell about the fact that tourist operators, particularly bus operators, will now be able to sell liquor whilst on their tours. I think that is fair and reasonable because, in this modern day of developing tourism in the Northern Territory, when we have national and international visitors coming to the Northern Territory, we should be able to service the needs that they expect to be able to have satisfied.

Once again, the member for MacDonnell made this point quite fervently, but I am pleased to see that licences no longer need to be reviewed on an annual basis. That is very important because, once again, we find that operators have to appear before the commission annually, complete with their entourage of QCs, and expend large sums of money to have their licences reviewed. The reality is that those licences are reviewed on an ongoing basis because the commission has inspectors who continually visit premises and inspect the operations of those licensees and, if they find fault, then of course that person is called up to answer why there has been a problem or a difficulty. If there are complaints about a particular premises then, of course, that person has to respond to those complaints and satisfy the commission that his premises are being operated in a reasonable manner and according to the act. I think that that is very sensible.

The fees that are charged currently on an annual basis will now be paid on a quarterly basis, and these can be submitted with the quarterly returns that licensees are required to submit to the commission.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that we debated section 106 in November 1988, when an amendment was passed that prevented minors from entering licensed premises, except for particular exempted premises. In other words, the licensee could apply for an exemption for a particular area where parents could take their children. That was designed to attack the problem that we have with underage drinking and, indeed, that is a major problem. It has addressed that, but has also caught up within its net parents who want to have their toddlers with them with they go to a lounge bar or other area that has not been exempted.

I have had several complaints from my constituents who unwittingly have taken their small kiddies into such areas and have been shown the door. They have come knocking on my door asking what is going on. They tell me that they are not going to feed alcohol to their children, but they want them there under supervision. They do not want them running around in the carpark. We caught up that group of people with that amendment. That matter is to be addressed in these amendments. That provision will still apply in respect of a public bar, which is hardly an appropriate place to take a young child anyway, and to nightclubs, discos and such places where, of course, one would not normally take young children.

I support the amendments proposed by the minister. I think they are a move in the right direction. They will be widely supported in the community because they cover various issues that have been raised with government members over a period of time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, not so long ago, the honourable minister undertook a trip to Canada, and we were told that he would look at matters related to liquor. He was to come back and we were to have the benefit of that particular trip. If these are the results of that trip, I will be most disappointed because ...

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Well, he certainly has not learnt anything because what this does is look far more at the problems of the provider than the problems of the consumer.

What is becoming perfectly obvious is that this government is not interested in the public interest. It has ignored what has been occurring in Western Australia and South Australia and other places with regard to taking the public interest into account. It does not give us any hope about the massive problem we have with the number of outlets in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek and with the need to reduce that number. It does not constitute anything that in any way could be construed to be a workable system, which the honourable minister maintained that we have in the Northern Territory. Any person in this Assembly who can go around the Northern Territory, see the ravages of alcohol on all sections of the community and say that we have a workable system in the Northern Territory, must walk around with his eyes closed or else he is dead drunk. The fact is that alcohol is one of the major problems that we have in the Northern Territory, and every one of these amendments is designed to make it easier to possess, to sell and to obtain a licence.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I hear \$78m being interjected by the Leader of Government Business. Possibly the sole purpose of this is to utilise alcohol as a means of filling the coffers of the Northern Territory while, at the same time, reducing the health and well-being of the people of the Northern Territory.

We do not have a workable system. The level of interest in this legislation is demonstrated by the number of representations that I have had. Before I go further, I would like to pay tribute to organisations such as the Tangentyere Council, especially the liquor committee, and the Pitjantjatjara Council. Whilst honourable members opposite may not agree with what these people have to say and, obviously in pursuing these amendments they have not agreed with the submissions, at least they should acknowledge that these organisations are trying to act in the best interests of their people, that there is a serious problem and that proper controls need to be instituted to deal with it.

When I talk about controls, I cannot go past the member for Jingili's absurd remarks. He said that all the problems that were referred to by the member for MacDonnell's problems would be fixed simply by self-control. That is one of those ridiculous statements the absurdity of which can best be demonstrated by taking it a little bit further. Obviously, under his regime, we would be looking at 24-hour availability from every store or every person who wished to sell alcohol in the Northern Territory and availability for people of all ages. Obviously, the only problem is self-control. If self-control is to be the means by which we are to solve all of these problems, why worry about licensing hours or about having a licensing commission at all?

Obviously, we do not need consumer legislation because it is people's own fault if they buy something which is not good for them. Obviously, we do not need the Companies Act because everybody will do the right thing. They will use their self-control instead of ripping off companies. We could also look at welfare because clearly it is people's own fault if they are in need. It

is all the victim's fault, according to the member for Jingili. He decides that, if the victims are suffering, that is their fault. It is all a matter of self-control and we should not be looking at legislation to try to control this problem.

He also made another enlightening comment about how the system apparently works, and it was of some concern to me. He said that a storekeeper that he knew had purchased a considerable amount of liquor and was unable to obtain a licence to sell it because the hearing could not be held while the chairman was away. What does that say for the operation of the system? How was it that that person had so much confidence in the ultimate decision of the commission that he or she felt quite comfortable about purchasing large amounts of alcohol before the application was even heard? I would certainly like to hear a bit more about that, and it may be that the member for Jingili can enlighten the minister between now and when he sums up so that he can tell us a bit more about that.

We then had a long explanation from him showing that there were no problems. We have a complaints procedure. We have all these things in place that allow us to do away with annual reviews. We do not have to look at the complaints procedure and we should not be worried about the various classes of licence, and people should be able to obtain them before construction and so on and so forth. But, let us have a look at how that system has worked. I have a series of questions on notice for which I have not received answers as yet. These were prompted by some rather amazing answers I received to a previous question that I placed on notice. I asked how many complaints had been received by the liquor commission in respect of breaches relating to serving alcohol to intoxicated persons and underage persons. In respect of intoxicated persons, the answer, for each of the last 5 years, was nil. In respect of underage persons, the total for the last 5 years was 3.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I submit to you that the problem of underage drinking and the serving of alcoholic beverages to intoxicated people is a massive one in the Territory. One only has to look around the pubs in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and everywhere else to see underage drinkers and people in various stages of intoxication being served alcohol. We all know that that is the case. Obviously, there is something very wrong with the complaints procedure and the system generally.

I asked the minister how many complaints had resulted in legal action being taken against licensees. I was told that a licensee had been placed on notice until renewal time. What a major slap across the wrist! I then asked how many of the complaints resulted in convictions and how many resulted in the forfeiture of liquor licences. The answer in both cases was nil. If I construe that answer correctly, in the last 5 years there has been no conviction or forfeiture of licence because of a complaint laid under this system. In one case, a person was placed on notice until renewal time. Under the new procedure, there will be no renewal time. The complaints system is obviously failing. We have a massive problem and all the minister can do is propose a series of amendments designed to make it easier to obtain a licence, easier to hold a licence and easier to continue the horrendous results of the high alcohol consumption levels that we have in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we will be moving a number of amendments during the committee stage. Given that the member for MacDonnell has provided the minister with the details of those amendments, I will leave any further remarks until that stage.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. I fully endorse the remarks of the member for Stuart. It has long been apparent to everybody in this House that one of the major social problems that we face in the Northern Territory is the rate of consumption of alcohol. Far be it from me to be a wowsler, but the rate of the consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory is, as the member for Stuart put it, truly horrendous. The consequences are equally horrendous. One has only to look at our motor vehicle accident rate. The statistics are absolutely terrifying. How the minister can preside over a system which will make it even easier for alcohol to be consumed beggars the imagination. What is the point of having a liquor commissioner? What is the point even of issuing licences? What is the point of having reviews? They have served no purpose to date. We have not been able to engender a sense of responsibility in either the purveyors or the consumers of alcohol in the Northern Territory, so what is the point to having a liquor commission?

As an aside, I would point out to the minister that governments in Australia have had at least some impact on patterns of behaviour by affecting the good old hip pocket nerve. I have put this to the Assembly on previous occasions and I would ask the minister again to consider the idea of levying licence fees on the basis of the alcohol content of liquor sold. At present, the licence fee is the same whether the customer buys light beer, standard beer or water. The opposition does not have the resources to generate the calculations that would be required to ensure that such a step would be revenue-neutral, but I am sure that the commission has them. I am sure that it could create a licensing regime which would give very positive incentives for the consumption of lighter alcohol beverages. I am sure that that would make some contribution towards reducing the intake of alcohol in the Northern Territory.

The present situation is virtually wholesale carnage. We have a holocaust on our roads. Random breath-testing had a marginal effect in its early years, but the road toll continues to rise. An incredible number of young people are in our jails because of alcohol-related crimes. Basically, these are crimes of violence. Alcohol consumption is the greatest social problem in the Northern Territory, yet the minister has introduced a piece of legislation which will do even less to address the problem than is being done at present. I would ask him to rethink his bill or to come up with amendments which in some way indicate to the Northern Territory that this parliament and he, as a minister, are conscious of the consequences of the over-consumption of alcohol and the subsequent cost, both financial and social, to our entire community.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, this has been a very interesting exercise for me. It is customary at this stage of a second-reading debate to thank honourable members for their contributions, but I must say that the contributions of members opposite indicate that they have not even read the amendments. I will take up some of the points which they have raised.

The member for MacDonnell must have received the same proposed amendments from the Pitjantjatjara Council that I received. He practically reiterated them page by page, supporting the amendments that it supported and not supporting the amendments which it did not support. That was very disappointing. When I finish speaking today, I will ask that further consideration of this legislation be postponed until the October sittings. I will do that by moving that the committee stage be taken later and I will do so precisely because, despite the fact that this legislation has been before the House for many weeks, in the last 2 days I have received a large number of suggested amendments from the Pitjantjatjara Council and some comments from

the combined Aboriginal organisations of Alice Springs. Whether the opposition acknowledges it or not, I do accept that the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory causes considerable distress and many social problems, not only among Aboriginal people but among other Territorians also. I believe that it is probably one of the biggest causes of disharmony between the races in the Northern Territory.

I heard 3 different opposition speakers make the same statement about the proliferation of pubs and off-licence outlets in Alice Springs. They are not even interested in the facts. Since 1979, we have reduced the number of takeaway outlets in Alice Springs by 5. Over the past few years, the Gap Hotel has been added to the list of takeaway outlets. However, the Alice Springs Hotel and the Stuart Arms have been removed from the list. Such comments show that members opposite did not even try to understand the proposed amendments. I can appreciate that some Aboriginal people might have difficulty in looking at a piece of paper to work out the exact meaning of proposed legislation, particularly when they do not have the advantage of looking at second-reading speeches.

The member for MacDonnell commented that the Gap Hotel does not have as many problems because it is a drive-through facility. Whilst that certainly is far more convenient for everybody in the community, let me say to him that drive-through facilities are a major cause of Aboriginal people being served alcohol when they are already intoxicated. This is because, in response to police action in ensuring that takeaway outlets do not serve people who are intoxicated, such people simply travel by taxi to a drive-through facility and purchase alcohol without the person serving them even realising that they are intoxicated. That is why I have great difficulty in accepting general statements such as that made by the member for MacDonnell.

Despite the fact that the legislation has been available for a number of weeks, the opposition has asked no questions about what is intended exactly by licensing of tourist buses. There is no intention to set up bars on tourist buses. The amendment to the act is primarily concerned with legitimising something that has been occurring for donkey's years. For years, tour operators throughout the north of Australia and, I suspect, the rest of Australia, have been selling alcohol as part of the price of the tour. They serve people a glass of wine or a can of beer from an esky with their lunchtime meal. We have no intention of allowing coach drivers in the Northern Territory to retail alcohol in the open marketplace and the commission certainly will not be approving, to my knowledge, anything like that.

I noted the comments in relation to the hours of operation of coaches in the Northern Territory, because they are of concern to me. I will ask the Minister for Transport and Works to investigate that matter.

The member for MacDonnell commented on the amendment relating to the approval of licences in principle. Let me make it quite clear that, as in most places in Australia, in the Northern Territory we need a provision that will enable the applicant for a development - whether it be a restaurant, a supermarket or a hotel - to know whether or not he will be able to obtain a licence for the class of operation that he wants. The idea of approval in principle gives no guarantee whatsoever that, at the end of the day, whoever he wants to operate the building that he has built will be acceptable to the commission. The commission will hold a hearing to ensure that the company concerned and the individual nominee is a fit and proper person to operate such an outlet. All we are doing is bringing the commission into line with principles that already exist throughout the rest of Australia.

Comments were made about changes in the requirement to advertise. Let me prove that the member for MacDonnell has not even read the legislation. There is no requirement to advertise and there never has been a requirement to advertise. We are not changing anything in that regard.

With regard to complaint procedures, I will ensure - and I already have the assurance of the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission on this - that complaints are considered and formally replied to and are not just thrown in the bin.

Much has been made today of the review on the renewal of licences. We are talking only about a procedural matter. It does not involve commission hearings. Under the current system, it involves simply filling in a form and paying the licence fee. That is all we are talking about. Nothing has changed with regard to complaints or objections to licences. Under section 48 of the act, anybody can raise any matter arising out of the conduct of the business that is carried out on licensed premises. Nothing has changed.

The member for Stuart made some remarks relating to something he thought the member for Jingili said about a supermarket owner purchasing liquor prior to even having a commission hearing in relation to a licence application. The supermarket owner cannot buy liquor without a licence so let us put that little furphy to rest. Apart from that, if there was a supermarket in Darwin that planned on applying for a licence, it must have been many years ago because I am informed that, in the years that the current chairman has been supervising the commission, we have not issued a supermarket licence.

Mention was made of the needs and the wishes of the community. That is exactly what we are talking about. We are talking about the public interest. There were comments made that we should cancel licences under section 72. If we start attempting to reduce the number of licences, who will compensate all the people who have built up their businesses in good faith and made commercial decisions? Where will we get that money? Will that come from the public purse?

There were other comments in regard to perceived problems over the renewal of the licence at Curtin Springs. Let me make it quite clear that the licence conditions at Curtin Springs have remained the same for 32 years. The argument that was put forward by the Pitjantjatjara Council at the hearing was that an informal written agreement existed between the operator and the Aboriginal communities. The commission decided that there was no evidence of any such agreement because it could not be produced by either party. Obviously, therefore, there was no breach of the licence conditions. With regard to the takeaway facility, Curtin Springs has held a takeaway licence for 32 years.

Periodic review does not refer to the annual review or renewal period. It means exactly what it says. All licences in the Northern Territory are constantly reviewed. The period would really depend on why the commission felt it was necessary to look at such a licence.

No mention was made by members opposite of one of the positive aspects: the removal of the \$20 fee to enable people to lay complaints. Not a mention of that was made and that reinforces my belief that the opposition has not even read the amendments.

The member for Stuart made spurious remarks about underage drinking and public intoxication etc. He has just come back into the Chamber. Anybody in

the community would realise that it is normally the police who prosecute underage drinkers and people who serve intoxicated persons. In the Territory, we have only a couple of liquor licensing inspectors. They move constantly around the community and cannot be expected to check every pub in Alice Springs and Darwin and points in between every night of the week. Let me make the point that there have been a number of occasions where almost every hotel frequented by younger people in Alice Springs and Darwin has had checks made on it in the past few months - certainly, since I have become minister - and there have been very few cases of underage people even being found on the premises, let alone drinking.

Mr Ede: You need to check your system.

Mr POOLE: I know what the system is.

Mr Ede: It is not working, is it?

Mr POOLE: The system is working quite reasonably.

Mr Ede: It is working in terms of how you may want it to work but not the way that Territorians want it to work.

Mr POOLE: It is typical of the Cyanide Sam approach whereby the member for Stuart stands up occasionally and makes wild allegations without having any facts about dates or places with which he can prove those allegations.

Mr Speaker, I make a commitment that I will sit down and discuss this with the Pitjantjatjara Council, the Tangentyere Council and with anybody else who is interested. In fact, despite what members of the opposition said, I have already held some discussions with regard to a few things that have emanated from my trip to Canada that I would like to do on a trial basis around the camps in Alice Springs to see whether we can achieve some results.

I have listened to a number of arguments that they have put to me, and I assure the member for MacDonnell that, far from a glimmer of hope coming from me, I believe that, with some of the ideas that we have, we can start talking about a ray of sunshine in respect of alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities. One of the ideas that we have been talking about, which seems to be accepted at least by some representatives from the liquor committee at Tangentyere, is that of utilising a provision of the current Liquor Act which allows the liquor commission to have a team of Aboriginal assessors, both in the Top End and in the central Australian area, with whom the liquor commission can regularly consult before any commission hearings that relate directly to Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal areas. I think that, in itself, will be a very positive move.

From what has been said today, I think I have demonstrated that the Northern Territory government is very conscious of the problems of alcohol in the Aboriginal communities. It is obvious to everybody that nobody has an easy answer. If I do one thing whilst I am in the Northern Territory representing the people of my electorate, I intend to ensure that I contribute something towards solving the social problems that arise from alcohol consumption in Aboriginal communities. I believe that, if we work together with the communities, we can achieve a great deal of progress, but it will not be an easy row to hoe. It will probably take a couple of years.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

TABLED PAPER
Standing Orders Committee - Fifth Report

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table the Fifth Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Speaker): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving forthwith 2 motions, (a) to rescind the sessional order agreed to on 25 May 1988 relating to the debate in the committee of the whole when considering the annual Appropriation Bill and (b) to amend standing order 77.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Sessional Order

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the sessional order of 25 May 1988, relating to debate in the committee of the whole when considering an annual Appropriation Bill, be rescinded.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to advise members of the House that there has by no means been bipartisan support for aspects of the Standing Orders Committee report that has been tabled, and the consideration of the Appropriation Bill has been one of those areas where the government and the opposition have failed to agree. I regard this as a particularly spineless approach on the government's part. I believe that the consideration of the Appropriation Bill is one of the most important debates in this Assembly and that honourable members have a responsibility to their electorates and, in addition, the members of the opposition have responsibility as opposition spokesmen for various portfolios. We put a great deal of time and effort into preparation for Appropriation Bill debates and I believe that those debates have been a constructive, conscientious invigilation of the most important money bill that passes before this Assembly in any 12-month period.

For the benefit of honourable members who are not members of the Standing Orders Committee, I remind them of the effect of this motion. This House has adopted several approaches to debates on the Appropriation Bill and we are returning, with this particular proposal, to the situation that applied prior to the amendment of the standing orders in 1986.

Mr Leo: 1985.

Mr BELL: My colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, assures me that it was 1985. Prior to 1985, every member had the opportunity to make 2 speeches of no longer than 10 minutes each to any question in the committee stage of any bill. A very sensible change occurred in 1985 when unlimited contributions to questions in the committee stage of any bill were permitted. That applied to all bills, including the Appropriation Bill, because the Appropriation Bill is no different legislatively from any other legislation that passes through the Assembly.

It is my view that, although the number of opportunities to speak were unlimited, that in nowise increased the length of the committee stage of the debate on any bill. I do not believe that there was any conscious or unconscious attempt on the part of the opposition or any other members of this Assembly to filibuster or waste the Assembly's time. In fact, what used to happen when each member had two 10-minute speeches was that notes would be passed from one to the other and, as a result, there was a great deal of reiteration and time wasted. I do not believe that any minister or any government member can rise in this Assembly and say that such-and-such a debate was a waste of time, that there was tedious repetition and they were not prepared to put up with that. I remind the Leader of Government Business and all government ministers that if, at any stage, they believe that there is tedious repetition, they are able to ...

Mr Dondas interjecting.

Mr BELL: There is certainly tedious interjection from the member for Casuarina, Mr Speaker.

If there is tedious repetition, the government has the ability to call a point of order or to move the gag. If honourable members believed that was the case, whether it was justified and whether the opposition believed it was justified or not, does not really matter. The government has the numbers to do that. As far as I am concerned, the move back to the pre-1985 arrangement on the Appropriation Bill is very silly. I believe that the opposition's approach to the Appropriation Bill has been a sensible one. Where there have been lengthy committee stage debates, I do not believe that at any stage these could be regarded as being characterised by tedious repetition.

During the lengthy committee stage debate that we had on the sacred sites amendment legislation, for example, I did not hear a word from any government member suggesting that there had been tedious repetition on my part or on the part of any other opposition speaker. It was certainly a lengthy process and that lengthy process was chiefly - not 'chiefly', Mr Speaker, I retract that - it was entirely the fault of the government. I suggest that, if government members think that, by moving this amendment, they will have a shorter debate on the Appropriation Bill in the committee stage, they are in for a rude shock because the opposition will return to its pre-1985 approach. There will be two 10-minute bursts from several opposition members on every motion. I can guarantee that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: It is handy to have your strategy down in Hansard.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, to pick up the interjection from the Leader of Government Business, I suggest that, if he had taken a constructive attitude to the approach to the Appropriation Bill that the opposition has quite happily adopted in the last 2 years, this would not be necessary. However, if the government intends to make the going harder for us, it can rest assured that we will make it harder for it. That is a negative note, Mr Speaker.

In the context of this debate, let me sound a positive note. I suggest that, since the government has introduced this anomalous approach to the Appropriation Bill, a little creative thought should be given to the approach to the bill and its consideration by this Assembly. In other debates on this subject, I have drawn the Assembly's attention to the practice in the South Australian parliament which allows a full week for the committee stage of debate on the appropriations. Both Houses of the South Australian parliament are occupied for 5 full days on that committee stage. Furthermore, members are able to ask factual questions of senior public servants. Ministers are able to have the direct assistance of senior public servants in that regard. I suggest that there might be some merit in considering that approach.

Today, we received a publication from the Public Accounts Committee which I will read with interest. It was a report on a seminar which I attended. The seminar was jointly convened by the Public Accounts Committee and the Government Accounting Group and it related to standards of reporting by public sector organisations in the Northern Territory. I found it most valuable. One of the most interesting aspects of being a member of the Legislative Assembly has been coming to terms with the public accounting process. I do not claim for a moment to have a thoroughgoing knowledge or an egregious expertise in the area but, as shadow minister for lands and housing, health and community services and legal affairs, I do my best to ensure that appropriated moneys are applied in the prescribed manner. I am aware that there are better and better ways of ensuring that that happens.

Obviously, the government wants the opposition to be in the mushroom club, kept in the dark and fed excreta. I suggest that that is a symptom of a government on the ropes. If the government were confident about its actions, it would be encouraging a more open approach to debate on the Appropriation Bill, not a less open approach.

Mr Perron: You have more information than you can absorb now.

Mr BELL: I suggest to the Chief Minister that that is not the case.

Mr Collins: That is part of the mushroom club.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Sadadeen. It is indeed rare that he and I are of one mind.

Mr Speaker, let me throw something else into the ring. The Northern Territory Government Gazette announces various government decisions and I read it with interest. One of the sections which always interests me is that which details contracts arranged. A great deal of interest is taken by the various organisations which have such contracts arranged and I presume that other honourable members do precisely as I do in order to find out what contracts affect their electorates. In replying to the Chief Minister's interjection, I point out to him that I would be very interested to know exactly where Cabinet decides to draw the line in relation to contracts which proceed and those which are rolled back. I would be very interested to have information on the basis on which those decisions are made. I would like to be assured that, in making such decisions, the government conscientiously considers the interests of all Territorians and makes a full and complete assessment of the needs right across the board. Mr Speaker, I am not suggesting for a minute that there are crude political decisions or anything as awful as pork-barrelling ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps the honourable member should be aware that he presently appears to be debating the wrong motion. At this stage, the minister has only moved for the rescision of the 6-hour rule. I think that the contents of the honourable member's speech might apply more appropriately to the other motion to be moved by the minister.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, perhaps I can set your mind at rest by assuring you that I will not be repeating myself. I believe that I am making appropriate general remarks about the debate on the Appropriation Bill and I do not intend filibustering when the second motion is moved. I will deal with the question of the 6-hour rule because it was obviously and demonstrably an absurdity. To its credit, the government recognised that the first time it tried it.

To return to the consideration of general issues of concern in relation to debate on the Appropriation Bill, I point out to the Chief Minister that the opposition does have reservations and would like to make a positive contribution to the consideration of all bills in this Assembly, including the Appropriation Bill. When members were able to speak in an ordered fashion and ask simple, ordered questions that were answered, not answered or put on notice, we had a sensible, objective process. I think it is very unfortunate that this committee stage will descend into a subjective mishmash. There will be a series of 10-minute speeches and ministers will pick up the odd point here and there. There will be no precision and that is unfortunate. For that reason, the opposition intends to vote against both motions.

Mr Coulter: You don't want to rescind the 6-hour rule? If ever there was a reason why the motion should be passed immediately, this is it.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the Leader of Government Business, I have already indicated that I do not intend to repeat my comments. I thought that they were worth making in one fell swoop. Of course, the opposition will be supporting the rescision of the 6-hour rule. We said at the time that it was absurd and even the government accepted that it was absurd. What it will propose in the second motion is equally absurd.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I can appreciate that, on occasion, the government wishes to gag debate, especially when one remembers the debate on sacred sites legislation during the last sittings when, in what I felt was a bloody-minded way, the opposition opposed every minute aspect of the bill despite the fact that it had not really studied it. Its behaviour on that occasion did not enhance the standing of this House and, when he looks back at his contribution to that 9½-hour debate, I do not believe that the member for MacDonnell can be very proud of his efforts. One can appreciate the government's feelings about that sort of approach.

On the other hand, I was one of the few members who remained in the House for virtually the entirety of that debate and, when I have something helpful to say on behalf of my electorate or some contribution to make, I like to have my say. On that basis, I object to the 6-hour rule. I understand that the rules proposed by the minister will operate on a trial basis and I believe that they allow reasonable time. If I were a minister, which I probably never will be although strange things happen in this world ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Casuarina made a remark several minutes ago. I am sorry to have taken so long but I will ask him to withdraw it. He has made it across the Chamber on 2 occasions.

Mr DONDAS: I do not wish to question the authority of the Chair, Mr Speaker, and I unreservedly withdraw the remark. I would have thought, however, that the Leader of the Opposition would have asked me to withdraw had he found the remark offensive.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I think the proposition is quite reasonable. It gives members who are well-organised reasonable time to ask their questions and to make their contributions to the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. I welcome the motion.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I speak in support of the rescision of the sessional order of 25 May. Honourable members who were in the House at the time will recall that it was the subject of some very vociferous debate. It was rammed through by the Leader of the Government Business and he was not supported by any member on his side of the House in that debate. In the face of continued interjection from the other side, the member for MacDonnell and myself attempted to point out the injustice and the damage that that sessional order would cause to the fabric of parliamentary democracy. I am glad to see that, at least, the Leader of Government Business has seen the error of his ways in that respect and has moved the rescision of the 6-hour rule.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to make an explanation under standing order 54. The member for Sadadeen accused me of tedious repetition in the debate on sacred sites legislation. He clearly fails to understand the circumstances in which I debated the legislation. I want to draw to his attention the fact that members of the opposition had no opportunity to see the bill they were debating until they rose to their feet to speak in that debate. The debate took 9½ hours because it all had to be done at the time. I completely and utterly reject any suggestion that I was involved in filibustering, tedious repetition or any other attempt to unreasonably or unnecessarily prolong debate in this Assembly. Any fault in relation to that debate lies entirely with the minister concerned and the government of which he is a part.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION Standing Order 77

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that, unless otherwise ordered, the following amendment to standing order 77 be adopted on a trial basis as a sessional order:

Omit the part headed 'In Committee' and insert in its stead:

In Committee

Annual Appropriation Bill -

Each question before the Chair

Minister in charge No limitation

Other Members 2 periods each not exceeding
10 minutes

All other questions before the Chair -

Member in charge of a bill No limitation

Other members Unlimited, each speech not to
exceed 10 minutes.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, once again, this is an outrageous use of the government's muscle.

Mr Coulter: Come on, will you sit down.

Mr EDE: I have said it before and I will say it again, and I will continue to say it until it gets through or you are thrown out of this place and we are on the government benches and can correct this problem.

Mr Speaker, in fact, I was a member of the Standing Orders Committee at the time when we corrected this problem in 1985. The Leader of Government Business at that time, who at least had some claim to being a parliamentarian, was one of the proponents of this provision in standing orders. He, Senator Bob Collins, myself and a couple of other members from the government, whose contribution I cannot recall, agreed at that time that, because of the size of the House, because of the number of sitting days that we had and because of the importance of some of the legislation that came before us, it was important that we allow for the development of the parliamentary process by providing for people to have more than the two 10-minute speeches.

That situation is now being reversed and the government is proposing we revert to 2 speaking periods of no more than 10 minutes for any member on any question during the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. That is absolutely outrageous. For example, one division that we will be debating is division 35 which relates to \$181m of government expenditure. That is one of the areas for which I have shadow responsibilities - education. That division covers all the areas of corporate management, central administration, information systems and regional administration. All those areas are covered in that division. Preschool and primary education, including urban schools, remote schools, School of the Air, area schools, assistance to missions and Commonwealth funded programs are covered. There is also secondary education: the comprehensive secondary schools, junior secondary schools, senior secondary schools, secondary correspondence schools, residential colleges and the educational support services.

A member: Open college.

Mr EDE: Open colleges come under another division relating to TAFE.

Educational support services also come under the same division: information systems, teacher support services, student support services, Commonwealth-funded programs and non-government educational organisations, the Menzies School of Health Research and the NT assistance schemes. I have shadow responsibilities for all those areas and it is proposed to give me 2 periods of no more than 10 minutes each in which to ask questions about that division.

Mr Coulter: That side of the House will have 2 hours and 20 minutes in which to ask any questions it wants to on that division.

Mr EDE: I will have 2 opportunities.

Mr Coulter: You have 2 hours 20 minutes!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, honourable ministers opposite would not be prepared to say that they will pick up the jobs of all the other ministers around the place when they are trying to concentrate on their portfolios. To say that, because there will be 7 members on this side of the House, that is sufficient justification for imposing this limitation is absolutely ridiculous and makes a mockery of the original reasoning behind proposing it. If the reasoning for it is that 7 members of the opposition can speak twice, making available a total of 14 speeches of 10 minutes each, and that arrangement is quite acceptable to the Leader of Government Business, why does he not allow 14 questions from myself alone, the person who is responsible for that division? That would produce the same effect, but even that would not permit me to ask 1 question on each subdivision covering allocations to the Department of Education. That is outrageous.

There are massive problems in that area. There is a substantial reduction in secondary education. The allocation for the whole comprehensive secondary schools area has been reduced by \$99m. It is not an area to be glossed over lightly. It is an area that will require substantial debate and we will have to try to elicit from the honourable minister why, in that area, in 1987-88 there were 314 staff, 322 last year and it is now down to 283. That is a question on its own that I will want to ask, quite apart from the \$99m reduction, in dollar terms, not in real terms, which is obviously far more substantial. We heard the honourable minister agree with me this morning about the need for extra money for wages and salaries to attract people to work and remain in the Territory. But, the budget allocation is being increased by only a very marginal amount and staff numbers are falling. However, that is nothing compared to what is happening in junior secondary colleges where the allocation has been reduced by \$411 000 in actual dollar terms.

Those are just 2 areas that require questions so that we can obtain some elucidation. How am I able to cover that with 2 questions, Mr Speaker? That is ridiculous. It is the result of the absolutely abysmal way that this government is attempting to use its muscle to shut up the members of the opposition.

Mr Manzie: That would be right.

Mr EDE: 'That would be right', the Attorney-General says, and that is true. This is just an attempt to slam through the budget without allowing full and proper debate on it. As the member for MacDonnell said, if that forces us to use strange and extraordinary methods to attempt to point out the stupidity of the position that the government has taken, then on the government's head be it.

Last year, it introduced this stupid 6-hour rule, and we did not complete the debate in that time. We did not examine the whole of the budget. At least, government members had the honesty to acknowledge that that was absolutely unworkable. We have got rid of that, Mr Speaker, but let us not put in place something which is almost as equally stupid and incomprehensible. It is absolutely ridiculous. It is uncalled for and there is absolutely no ...

Mr Dondas: The government worked under it. Jon Isaacs worked under it. Terry Smith worked under it.

Mr Smith: No, I am going to oppose it.

Mr Dondas: Pardon?

Mr Smith: That is what I thought of it.

Mr EDE: We also know what the Leader of Government Business at the time thought of it. He too thought that it was stupid and unjustified. He had it removed, and now this Leader of Government Business is seeking to reinstate it because he has absolutely no respect for his position and he has no respect for this House. That is sufficient grounds in itself for him to be censured, at some stage over the way that he conducts procedures of this kind.

In this debate, we will confine ourselves to opposing most vigorously this unwarranted restriction on our ability to represent the people who put us here. Honourable members opposite have other avenues through which they can find out more about some of these areas, which are not available to us. This is one of the major avenues available to us. Mr Speaker, do you remember when we were talking about setting up the Public Accounts Committee and the Chief Minister used to talk about the tremendous opportunities we have in the debate on the Appropriation Bill, saying that we could ask unlimited questions? He used to stress that we could ask unlimited questions about money when the Appropriation Bill came up in the committee stage. He is now aligning himself with the Leader of Government Business and saying that he will remove that right.

This is an unwarranted restriction on parliamentary practice, and it will not last. It is stupid and farcical to propose it and try to ram it through this House and then expect people on this side of the House to cop it sweet while the government hides its budget.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, nothing will save this government from itself. At the weekend, this government experienced a 17% swing against it in a by-election - and let us not forget that the swing in Bass that brought down the Whitlam government was 11% - and yet it has not learnt its lesson. That lesson is that no longer will people put up with the arrogance that the government shows on all issues, inside this House and outside this House.

The question that we are debating is about arrogance, the use of numbers and the use of muscle in this House. Forget the concept of a parliamentary democracy, Mr Speaker, and forget the concept of the Appropriation Bill, the most important bill that we comes before us, and the right of this parliament to scrutinise that bill adequately. Forget all that, and simply remember the arrogance and the born-to-rule mentality that the people opposite think that they have.

I have a message for government members, from the constituents of Wanguri who spoke on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory: they are not prepared to put up with it. If I were a CLP member in a seat in the northern suburbs or indeed a CLP member for Palmerston, I perhaps ...

Mr Coulter: Highly unlikely. Hypothetical ...

Mr SMITH: Yes, it is highly unlikely that you will continue in that seat.

If I were in that particular situation, I might go back at night and sit down on my own and think about what is going wrong. He could do no better than start right here with this debate.

To come back to laws, the debate on the Appropriation Bill and the rules governing it are probably the most important debate and rules that we have in this House. It is the opportunity that we have, as a parliament and on behalf of the citizens of the Northern Territory, to debate where the government spends its money and the results that it obtains for that expenditure. For reasons that we on this side of the House do not understand, members opposite do not want that debate to take its natural course. They are saying to members on this side of the House, who have been allocated special responsibilities in those areas, that they are afraid to put themselves under the spotlight to account for their handling of those special responsibilities and special interests. They are afraid to subject themselves to scrutiny and to stand up in this Assembly and be thoroughly accountable.

I can understand that fear because of the mess that they have made of it from time to time over the years. Who can forget some of the memorable jousts that have occurred in here on such matters as the Trade Development Zone? The point is that, although it might have caused temporary embarrassment to members opposite, it certainly led to better government and to a better parliament.

Mr Coulter: You are the one who wanted to close it down.

Mr SMITH: What we have now is the continuing arrogance of the members opposite. I hope that you keep it up ...

Mr Coulter: Not half as much as we hope you are still there in another year.

Mr SMITH: Every time you interject, you are keeping it up and the people of the Territory see that. Keep it up. That continuing arrogance is the prime note of this debate and it will be the cause of the downfall of this government at the next election.

The proper and the appropriate thing to do is to go back to the system that worked and allow the formal opposition and members on the crossbenches to go about their job and properly represent their constituents in this most important debate. Members opposite are selling the people of the Territory short by this artificial attempt to limit debate on this most important issue.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the absurdity of the proposition put by the honourable minister will be clearly evidenced at some time in October when we debate the committee stage of the bill. As all members of this House know, because of their size and because all the details cannot be supplied in any budget paper, some portfolios require more questions than others. I do not doubt - and my colleague may contradict me if I am wrong - that expenditure of moneys within the portfolio of the Attorney-General will be quickly and easily understood. However, there are other portfolios where that is not necessarily the case and more than 2 questions will almost certainly be required from any member on this side of the House. On the other hand, some divisions may require only 1 question.

There is no logic in the approach being taken by the Leader of Government Business. It assumes that the process of scrutinising of legislation, which is what this House is supposed to be about - and the Appropriation Bill is legislation - can in some way be contrived. If we are to be able to do our job in this House, we have to ask the government questions. If, by some artificial mechanism within the standing orders of this parliament, we are not to be permitted to ask questions, then the point of the legislative process,

the point of self-government, is being usurped by the standing orders which are supposed to be a tool of this House, not its dictator. Standing orders are supposed to be the tool of the Assembly. Instead, it is proposed that standing orders will dictate to us what we are required to do in terms of questioning the most important piece of legislation that any parliament passes each year. I ask the Leader of Government Business to reconsider this motion. It is ludicrous and it will not succeed. Let us hope that we can get through at least this budget session without the acrimony that we have experienced in the past.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, after listening to honourable members speak to the motion moved by the Leader of Government Business ...

Mr Coulter: It is from the Standing Orders Committee.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, but your name is on it.

Mr Coulter: It is actually Mr Speaker's name on the back.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Well, put him in as well.

Mr Coulter: Not 'as well'. It is his name.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not often make remarks similar to those of members of the opposition. However, on this occasion, I have to say that I support their point of view. For the life of me, I cannot see the difference between an Appropriation Bill and any other bill. If members are permitted an unlimited number of questions, each not exceeding 10 minutes, on any question before the Chair in relation to any other bill, why cannot the same conditions apply in respect of an Appropriation Bill?

I think that honourable members opposite have lost sight of the fact that what is not said openly or questioned openly here will be said and questioned not so openly in the community. I would like to say to honourable members opposite that the power of rumour, the power of words passed from one person to another, is very strong. They cannot have it both ways. It is either that or everything must be thrashed out openly here. I do not think it is material to the question whether it takes 4 hours, 6 hours, 10 hours or 2 weeks. The fact is that we are elected by the people to represent their views. I believe it is in the interests of open government that we speak and we ask questions as often as we like about certain matters until everything is put clearly to us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in all conscience, I cannot support the motion.

Mr Coulter: You spoke for a total of 10 minutes during the committee stage of the last Appropriation Bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not care how long I spoke. I want the opportunity to speak for as long as I want to. How long I actually speak is immaterial to the question.

Mr Coulter: Your great contribution was a total of 10 minutes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That does not matter. I want the opportunity to speak as long as I want to in support of my constituents and neither you nor anybody else will tell me otherwise.

Mr Coulter: We look forward to your contribution this year. See if you can get past 10 minutes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise because I had hoped the government might introduce a different system this year to cover the mechanics of the debate on the budget than that which we had last year. As I recall, we had a 6-hour limit. We dealt with about \$500m in 5 hours, found that we could not complete debate on the other \$500m in the last hour and had to have an extension. Quite clearly, that 6-hour limit did not work and the government had to do something. I accept the government's concern that it does not want the budget debate to be a filibuster that lasts for days and simply amounts to a stupid point-scoring exercise. However, I think there needs to be a balance that gives members who are not on the government benches an opportunity to raise any issue they wish to about the budget as often as they like until they obtain satisfaction from their questions.

The member for Stuart has to face his responsibilities of dealing with the education appropriations. In terms of the limitations placed on him in this motion, any reasonable person would have to regard that as a joke. It is not reasonable, it is not fair and it brings the House into disrepute in the community. I say to the Leader of Government Business that I do not think it unreasonable that he take this away and come back with a proposition that is more likely to suit the needs of members.

I do not want to speak on everything that is raised in the budget, but there are some items on which I would like to ask perhaps 6 or 10 questions. These new rules will preclude me from doing that. I do not think that that is reasonable, given that I will not be involved in delaying the budget in a time sense or protracting the debate simply to make it difficult for people.

I join with the member for Koolpinyah and other members in saying that there needs to be a respectable formula for dealing with the mechanics of this debate that not only we are happy with but that the community feels has been fair to its interests. This is not a fair and reasonable proposition. It will not stand up and it will bring not only the government but the House into a fair amount of disrepute for the way the budget is handled. I would be pleased if the Leader of Government Business would take this motion away, consider what other people have had to say, redraft it and bring it back at the next sittings when it will probably be more relevant.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, may I just say that I find this rather amazing. We are reverting to a method that was tried and tested in this House for 11 years and worked very well. In 1985, we decided to change it. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned that he was on the Standing Orders Committee at that time, together with a number of other people.

The government has placed on the public record how it intends questions to be asked in respect of each division. In terms of debate on previous Appropriation Bills and use of the gag, let us look at some examples. In the committee stage of the 1987-88 Appropriation Bill, let us look at how many minutes honourable members spoke for on each division and the extent to which they were gagged.

On division 14, the member for Nhulunbuy spoke for 1 minute and the member for MacDonnell spoke for 1 minute. Under the rules which will apply when this

motion is passed, 7 members could speak for 2 hours and 20 minutes. Those rules allow for an increase from 2 minutes to 2 hours and 20 minutes on a division. Is that gagging debate? What a load of nonsense! If there was ever any arrogance on the government's part, what the opposition has offered is sheer ignorance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me go on. On division 15, the member for Stuart spoke for 1 minute. On division 16, the member for Stuart spoke for 10 minutes, the member for Millner for 1 minute, the member for Arafura for 4 minutes, the member for Koolpinyah for 4 minutes and 30 seconds, the member for Sadadeen for 1 minute, the member for Nhulunbuy for 1 minute, the member for Barkly for 4 minutes and the member for MacDonnell for 30 seconds. Who will be gagged under the terms of this motion? Not a single member of this Assembly! Not 1 member would speak for 10 minutes. Mr Deputy Speaker, I could go on ...

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Stuart to listen to the Leader of Government Business in silence.

Mr COULTER: The member for Stuart spoke for 15 minutes on division 11. Under the terms of this motion, he would have 20 minutes. He spoke for 2 minutes on division 31. Under this provision, he would have 20 minutes. Who is being gagged here? Where is the blatant arrogance we are being accused of? The numbers simply do not stack up.

Let us look at divisions 30 and 51. The member for Stuart spoke for 30 seconds and the member for Araluen spoke for 30 seconds. Under the terms of this motion, they could speak for 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Mr Ede: Table the document.

Mr COULTER: The document was prepared by the Clerk for the Standing Orders Committee. There have been no complaints about this. The member for MacDonnell was present when the Standing Orders Committee discussed this matter. He was well aware of what we proposed to do. He is now being awakened so that he can contribute to this debate.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Leader of Government Business has just informed the House that he is using material that was made available to the committee. I would ask him whether or not the committee has seen fit to make that material available to this House. If it has not, the honourable minister is in breach of privilege.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the facts are in Hansard for everybody to read.

Mr LEO: If that was supplied to the committee and the committee has not made it available to the House, you are in contempt.

Mr COULTER: You want me to stop reading out the facts, do you? You are so embarrassed by the argument ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not a matter of whether or not I am embarrassed. It is a matter of simple procedure. Information is made

available to committees of this House, including a number of which I am a member. None of that information is made available to this House by myself or any other member of a committee unless that committee deems it fit. If the Standing Orders Committee has not recommended that that document be made available to this House, I would suggest that the minister is in breach of privilege.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I clarify this? This information was supplied in response to a request from myself. I made the information available after receiving a letter from the member for MacDonnell. I circulated it to every member of the backbench in order to get positive input to this debate. The information was then made available to the member for MacDonnell. He could have circulated the information if he wished to do so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I then forwarded the information to the committee. I was trying to resolve the ridiculous situation which arose in the debate on the Appropriation Bill last year. I will continue because I see that I have hit on one of the opposition's raw nerves.

Let us have a look at debate on the 1988-89 bill and the contributions of members who claim that they are being gagged. Division 31 was agreed to without debate. On division 30, the member for Stuart spoke for 74.4 seconds, the member for Stuart for 1.6 minutes, the member for Nightcliff for 1.7 minutes, the member for Sanderson for 27.2 minutes and the member for Koolpinyah for 3.1 minutes. Where is the gag there? Where is the restriction on asking questions? Under the terms of this motion, 2 hours and 20 minutes will be allowed for each division and each member will have 20 minutes. The member for MacDonnell spoke for 14.4 minutes on division 30 last year. He would have had more than 5 minutes up his sleeve if this motion had applied.

On division 86, the member for MacDonnell spoke for 30 seconds. The member for Nhulunbuy spoke for 40 seconds. Mr Speaker, I could go on, but I will not.

Mr Ede: What about division 35?

Mr COULTER: The member for Sadadeen spoke for 40 seconds and the member for Stuart spoke for 9 minutes and 9 seconds ...

Mr Ede: How many questions?

Mr COULTER: That is the total speaking time.

Mr Ede: There could have been 5 questions in that.

Mr COULTER: So what? You will be given 20 minutes this year. Surely you can organise your questions within that time, remembering that this is not the only facility for asking questions. Honourable ministers are quite prepared to take written questions from members opposite at any time. They are prepared to provide briefings with government officers to address any concerns that members opposite might have. Debate on the Appropriations Bill is not the only opportunity for gathering information. There is a whole range of options open to members opposite if they wish to seek information. They have to get their act together. They have to coordinate their questions and plan them.

To suggest that we are trying to gag debate when, in some cases, we are increasing debating time from 30 seconds to 2 hours and 20 minutes is a load of nonsense. We have wasted a considerable amount of the House's time this afternoon and, if there was ever a case for returning to the model that was used for 11 years, this afternoon's debate provides it. The opposition is talking nonsense.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

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

Noes 10

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

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, today I had the sad duty of attending the funeral of one of the finest gentlemen that I have had the privilege of knowing, Babe Damaso. Many of my colleagues, particularly those on this side of the House, asked me to express their condolences to the family. I am sure that they would have preferred to have been able to be present to do so at first hand and to show their respect for a great Territorian.

In the relatively short 15 years that I have known Babe Damaso, I have never heard anything but the greatest respect, praise and affection expressed for him. He was a great Territorian, a great family man, a great sportsman and a true friend to all. Balanced with that very polite and gentle manner for which he was so well-known was a keen sense of humour and a deep commitment to his fellow man.

Basil Damaso - or 'Babe' as he was known - was born on 5 April 1910 and passed away in Darwin on 15 August 1989 at the age of 79 years. His father was Ceceba Damaso, a Filipino sailor and pearl diver who arrived in the Territory in 1898. His mother, Annie Palarlura, was a Yanula Aboriginal woman from the Borroloola region. Babe was actually born on a lugger in the Limmen Bight in the Gulf of Carpentaria. His mother died when he was a boy and his father brought the family to Darwin. Thereafter, Babe grew up largely with the well-known Bonson family whilst his father continued to work on boats, pearling and shipping cattle. His father also worked for a time as a storeman with A.E. Jolly and Company and, for some 3 years, was the manager of the Filipino Club at Broome. Most of Babe's education was received at the

Darwin convent. In 1934, Babe married Nancy Farrar, a member of a well-known family from Nutwood Downs. Babe is survived by his wife, Nancy, his 2 sons, John and Cecil, his daughter, Nancy-Anne, 15 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren, all of whom are a great credit to Babe and Nancy.

Babe's early days as a young man were spent fishing, which may be attributed, of course, to his seafaring father. Jack Doolan, a well-known Territorian and a past member of the Assembly, recalls that later Babe worked as a labourer on the construction of the Stuart Highway. According to Jack, Babe often commented to him as they travelled the Stuart Highway between Darwin and Adelaide River: 'I helped build a section of this road and I can tell you that it was tough digging'. And it would have been, of course, back in those days. Babe's contribution to the Territory was made in many and varied forms.

In post-war Darwin, for example, the provisions of the old Aboriginal Ordinance still applied. This meant that part-Aboriginals were subject to the restrictions of that ordinance unless they were deemed to be fit and proper persons to earn full citizenship rights, when they were issued with a certificate of exemption known by the people concerned as the 'dog tag'. In the late 1940s, moves were afoot among the part-Aboriginal community to protest against this system and have it abolished. In 1950, at a meeting in Stuart Park, what was called the Australian Half-caste Progress Association was formed and Babe Damaso was appointed as its secretary. Thereafter, he was very active in furthering the aims of the association and, in 1953, those people won their battle when legislation was introduced removing all reference to half-castes from the ordinance.

Babe was appointed as a welfare officer with the Welfare Branch, NT Administration, in the late 1950s. He was one of those people to whom the expression 'all people are equal' was not merely a catchphrase. He was at ease in any company and gave his advice and counsel with generosity and compassion, irrespective of race or colour. He worked mainly in the Darwin district but was called on occasionally to do patrol-type work away from town. Ted Evans recalls that Babe was important because people could go to him with confidence and discuss their problems freely. On one occasion, he worked among the people of Cobourg Peninsula and, in the mid-1960s, he accompanied a working party to the Borroloola district, the country of his birth, to select a site for a possible settlement on the Robinson River.

Harry Giese, the Director of Welfare Branch for many years from the mid-1950s, recalls his memories of Babe very fondly. He recalls that Babe readily used to discuss and develop significant policies to improve conditions, particularly in the urban Aboriginal communities. A major achievement he attributed to Babe was the introduction of housing for Aboriginal people in the late 1950s. At this time, there was no Housing Commission as such and the initial assimilation of the Aboriginal people into what we now consider a normal home was viewed with some circumspection by Aboriginal families. Babe Damaso was the person who coerced, assisted and ensured that persons moving into housing were comfortable and satisfied with their new environment.

In the early 1960s, Harry and friends nominated Babe as a member of the prestigious Darwin Club, and his nomination as the first Aboriginal member was accepted unanimously. In 1977, Babe was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for his service to Aborigines.

In summing up today, Harry Giese said at Babe's funeral service: 'The stamp of the man is measured here today. The crowd is larger than at an NTFL Grand Final'. Certainly, many of my personal memories are of Babe at the football. Almost every week, he could be seen sitting in the front row of the grandstand, along with Don Bonson and Leo Castillon and a few other old-time Buffalo supporters, enjoying the football.

There was another instance, probably not very pleasurable for either of us, where Babe and I were in cubicles alongside each other and shared the Coronary Care Unit facilities at the Darwin Hospital some 2 years ago. Of course, much to the distress of the nursing staff, there was a fair bit of yak about football and probably not a great deal of the rest and relaxation that the staff were keen for both of us to have. It is very sad that Babe's illness at that time, from which apparently he recovered over the last 2 years, recurred.

In respect of Babe's own sporting achievements, of course Aussie Rules was one of his keenest sports. He first played with Wanderers Football Club in about 1928 and transferred to Buffaloes, the Darwin Buffs, in 1933, where he remained until the end of his playing career. Thereafter, of course, he was a staunch supporter and occasional committee man. He was present at the Gardens Oval last year when Darwin won last season's premiership. He was described as being a better-than-average footballer himself, and he was awarded life membership of the Darwin Buffaloes Football Club.

I remember also that, following last year's Grand Final, when the players paid their traditional visit to the clubs and pubs of the northern suburbs, Babe went along with the players, took his rightful place on the players' bus and entertained them with a number of tales and the odd song.

From those 15 years involvement as a Buff supporter and, more recently, as patron of the club, I certainly enjoyed the fellowship and the very warm company and companionship of Babe and, of course, sharing the occasional cold beer at the footie as well, but none was more enjoyable than the day after the last Grand Final when I am sure that Babe would have been pleased because, when your number is up and you have to go, it is great to go on a high note. I am sure that every Darwin Buffalo football player and supporter would join in the condolences that are being forwarded to his family.

In last Sunday's Sunday Territorian, an article was published covering some of Babe's history. There was a very interesting photograph from the 1930s including some very well-known footballers - the McGuinnesses, Bonsons, Ah Mats, Tybells, Muirs, Cubillos, Angeles, Lew Fatts, Villaflors and others. Of course, the Darwin Football Club now has a fine historic photographic display which one day we would hope to place in an appropriate clubhouse to enable newer footballers to recognise and remember some of their forefathers.

Another well-known interest Babe had was his fishing. Not only was it a great love of his but he was widely recognised as being a master of the sport. His knowledge of the best fishing grounds in Darwin Harbour was legendary and many visiting VIP parties enjoyed successful trips there with him. There are countless people in the Territory today who learnt their fishing skills from Babe.

In 1929, Babe was the Territory amateur bantamweight boxing champion. Today, I guess people might wonder how a chap with a nature as gentle as Babe's could have been involved in such a tough sport, but the man did have a great deal of inner strength and great athletic ability.

Apart from his sporting achievements, of course, Babe was a excellent cook and those who had the pleasure of eating food prepared by him will remember that experience. And Babe will be remembered by many for his rendition at parties and elsewhere of that song 'Manana' which, of course, means tomorrow. He would introduce topical subjects or local personalities appropriate to the occasion and he would create a theme around them. His performance was always received with thunderous applause. Mr Speaker, I am sure that, in Buffalo circles, that song will probably be tucked away and no attempt will made to try to match the wit and the skills of Babe. It will be long remembered, mainly quietly and silently, as Babe's song.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions from Ted Evans, Harry Giese, Jack Doolan himself and Fred McCue, who married one of Babe's granddaughters, and others who provided me with some historical information on Babe's earlier life. In closing, Babe Damaso, may we all say to you: thank you for your life and contribution and perhaps it is appropriate for us to say to you 'Manana' just this one last time.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, 14 August 1989 was a day of some note in Alice Springs. I guess that, if my wife ever sees this Hansard, she will probably think I am talking about our wedding anniversary but, in actual fact, I am not. Mr Speaker, 14 August was the day that a world famous train, The Flying Scotsman, arrived in Alice Springs. It arrived at 4.15 in the afternoon and, at that time, I was actually on my way out to the airport. It was interesting to see that, at the junction of Bradshaw Drive and the Stuart Highway, there were hundreds of vehicles parked on each side of the road. At the time when I was turning right to drive to the airport, the police closed the road to allow a wide-load, low-loader with a bulldozer on the back to come through The Gap and, therefore, I had the pleasure of sitting in the traffic, watching The Flying Scotsman come right across the causeway. It looked absolutely tremendous.

Obviously, the Ghan Preservation Society should be congratulated for the community effort that was put into making the visit by The Flying Scotsman possible. That was possible only as a result of the organisation of members of the society. Indeed, Mr Speaker, your good self should be congratulated on being part of that society which should be congratulated for giving Territorians, particularly Centralians, the opportunity to see that train. I am told about 10 000 people welcomed the train on its arrival. There were huge crowds at various points from the airport and also at the station. Apparently, 6000 people clambered around the train whilst it was in the station at Alice Springs and hundreds of people actually went for a ride down the track on the train, and I guess enjoyed what will be a one-off thrill because it is unlikely that The Flying Scotsman will make a return journey to a town like Alice. The photographs of the parallel run where the most famous train in the United Kingdom and one of the most famous trains in the world was running alongside central Australia's most famous train, The Ghan, will certainly be worthy of collectors' records in the years to come.

It is appropriate to note that, on this trip, The Flying Scotsman established a world record on 7 August 1989 for a non-stop run by a steam locomotive. That was on the fairly flat, straight section from Parkes in New South Wales to Broken Hill. It travelled 700 km.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Did you write this?

Mr POOLE: I had a co-author on this, I must admit.

Mr Speaker, it was interesting for me because I had seen The Flying Scotsman on a number of occasions in the United Kingdom when I used to holiday at an uncle's house. I saw it on the run down from Edinburgh to London on numerous occasions.

The event was extremely beneficial to the tourist industry in Alice Springs because it brought 300 train buffs to the town on the train and they stayed there until 20 August when The Flying Scotsman left at 9.00 pm. Certainly, from that point of view, Mr Speaker, your society contributed to the economic well-being of Alice Springs as well.

I understand that Victoria and the Northern Territory are the only places that purchased a small brass plaque which will be mounted on the side of the tender. It will read:

This plaque was presented to the honourable W. McAlpine by the residents of the Northern Territory and the Ghan Railway Preservation Society during The Flying Scotsman's historic and world-record-breaking journey to Alice Springs, central Australia, August 1989.

That plaque will be read by literally hundreds of thousands of people as that train makes its journey around the world and is displayed in various countries.

Mr Speaker, may I ask you to pass on my compliments, as Minister for Tourism, and the compliments I am sure of the citizens of Alice Springs, to the Ghan Preservation Society and to thank it for its contributions not only to our way of life in central Australia but for its contribution to the tourist industry.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise in this adjournment debate to speak about some inaccuracies in the reply to a question I asked this morning of the Minister for Lands and Housing. Since he is the minister in charge of such a large portfolio, it is inconceivable that he would know every detail about the planning process, but I did expect him to be a little more au fait with the matter of the subdivision of Gunn Point as it has received considerable attention in the media. I have been intimately connected with this, not only because it is in my electorate but because I was very concerned about certain parts of the subdivision on the cliff top and down to the beach. I objected on environmental grounds to that subdivision on the cliff tops, as did the Environment Centre and the Litchfield Shire Council.

In answer to the question, the minister said: 'I advise the honourable member that any request for subdivision along the cliff face has been withdrawn from the application while appropriate environmental investigation work is carried out'. It is my understanding that an environmental impact statement was not prepared. There was only a preliminary environmental report and that has been done already. I am assuming that nothing further will be done in the future because all the work has been done. I think that he is not quite correct there.

The minister also said: 'I think that suggestions that somehow or other the government is intending to override that process should be struck from people's minds'. Perhaps the cynical answer to that would be that it never entered my head. 'It never has occurred and it will not occur. The process will go through the normal channels. The recommendations from the Planning

Authority will be received and any decisions I make certainly will take into account the appropriate processes'. I was very pleased to hear that sentence.

The minister went on to say: 'The present applications regarding planning approvals do not include the area along the cliff top which has been the subject of great contention in some quarters and of some very misinformed statements and claims'. There were 2 applications: 1 was a rezoning and the other was a subdivisional application. The rezoning took into account the actual rezoning for subdivision so that really did not take into account in detail the planning along the cliff top. The other was singular, not 'applications'. It is my information that the current application certainly did include the area along the cliff top. It is my educated guess, as these decisions are confidential, that the recommendation to the minister from the Planning Authority would have been that the subdivision go ahead except the subdivision of those 34 blocks on the cliff top.

The honourable minister went on to say that the present applications 'have been the subject of great contention in some quarters and of some very misinformed statements and claims'. The implication that the honourable minister is making is that I made misinformed statements and claims. It is not in my interest or in the interest of my constituents to issue misinformation or make misinformed statements. Any statements that I made on this matter were strictly ridgy-didge, strictly to the point and strictly about the matter in hand. I was not misinformed and did not put out misinformation.

The honourable minister went on to say that I was the one who stated that there would be 10 000 people living on the cliff top. For the minister's information, it was not I who said that initially. The applicant, which was the government, stated in a document that there were plans for a town of 10 000 people in this area at Gunn Point. At the hearing into this subdivision and rezoning, which I attended, I was unable to ascertain what the government's intention was. It could not make up its mind whether this subdivision at Gunn Point was for weekenders or whether it would be for a small town of 10 000 people. On the one hand, it was talking about weekender occupation and, on the other hand, it was talking about a small town of 10 000 people. For the minister's information, if he refers to the application from his own government, he will see that it says that the maximum number of people in this town will be 10 000.

Mr Manzie: For future planning purposes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For future planning purposes, but still there was information that there were to be 10 000 there.

The minister went on to say that I claimed that the government would 'ignore totally any environmental impact on the area'. I did not say that the government would ignore completely any preliminary environmental report, but it certainly was not going to pay much attention to any objections ...

Mr Manzie: That is total rubbish.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... until I objected and the Environment Centre and the Litchfield Shire Council objected.

Mr Manzie: That is rubbish, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The minister says that that is rubbish. For his information, I still speak to a few people in government circles and I still know quite a few public servants, who shall remain nameless, whom I telephoned in about 4 government departments. Roughly, their view was: 'We were told that this subdivision was going ahead and to make it right'.

Mr Manzie: Making it right is getting it right environmentally for starters.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The honourable minister went on to give an assurance to me 'and all other members of the community who may have taken heed of some of the more extreme statements' I have made, implying again that they were untruthful. I think that was his nice way of saying it. My statements were not extreme. They were strictly truthful and they were strictly according to the information given to me, the information that I gained at the hearing that I attended and the information that I gained from relevant people who put forward the planning proposal. He went on to say that the 'area along the cliff top is presently being investigated with regard to the effect on the whole environment there'. Well, it is a pity that was not done in the beginning. It is a pity that it is being done only now, after all the objections have been raised. It should have been done ...

Mr Manzie: It is part of the process, and you just jumped the gun, which you normally do. It is part of the process, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I did not jump the gun. The development application was made public and I objected as well as the other 2. The environmental impact statement should have been done then. It should have gone further and not had just a preliminary environmental statement.

He went on to say: '... the effect on the whole environment there that the proposed subdivision could cause and, until such time as that process is finished, that particular area will not be going before the Planning Authority'. For the honourable minister's information, it has gone before the rural planning authority already. I ...

Mr Manzie: Noel, if you listened to what I said, that area has been withdrawn from the application to the Planning Authority.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am reading what you said, not listening to what you say. You said that it will not be going before the Planning Authority.

Mr Speaker, I am assuming that the new subdivision will be going before the Planning Authority or the last part of the minister's answer is incorrect. I would like to quote this answer to other interested people, but I will be asking the honourable minister's office if what he said is correct as the situation stands, because I believe that he has stated several inaccuracies there which I have done my best to correct.

Mr Manzie: You have got it wrong, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For the information of the honourable minister, I have probably forgotten more about conservation issues than he will ever know, but we will ignore that, and I do not get many things wrong that I work on. Sometimes I am wrong, but not on this. However, I will be very generous in my thoughts of him and I will concede that, if the honourable minister says that the subdivision of those blocks along the cliff top and going down to the beach is to be withdrawn from the application, that will be the end of the story, and I congratulate him on seeing reason.

Mr Manzie: Thank you, Noel. That is what has happened.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, at the weekend I attended a seminar, conducted by the Environment Centre, on fire in the rural area. It was very well-attended. About 50 people were there. Unfortunately, I could not wait until the end because I had other commitments, but it was quite unique actually. I was asked to be one of the guest speakers, and that was not unique, together with Mrs Groves, representing pastoral interests, and representatives from the Conservation Commission, the Fire Service, the Northern Land Council and others. It was unique in that there were people there who, historically, have said that you must burn off every year and other people who claim that the environment is completely destroyed by any burning whatsoever. It is clear now that those 2 historically opposed points of view have come together. From the questions asked by people at this seminar, it was quite apparent that there has been an appreciation of the part fire control and management plays in the life of those living in the rural area, both residents and people engaged in primary industry.

Again, the views put forward by Fire Service and Conservation Commission personnel were very relevant to the situation. The representatives from those bodies to be commended for the time that they spent, out of hours, at the seminar. I only hope that, from the Environment Centre's point of view, it does not end up as simply a talkfest where everybody talks about these matters but does nothing concrete afterwards. The most admirable way of doing something positive afterwards would be for all rural people who attended the seminar to show an interest in, if not actually join, one of the 16 or so fire brigades in the rural area.

I will conclude by saying that I have consulted with the Environment Centre on other matters of environmental concern in the rural area, and my working relationship with the members that I have spoken to is very cordial. I hope that cordial relationship continues in the future.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a subject that concerns me greatly and it relates to lawlessness. We had an example recently in Alice Springs. After a football game, there was a most serious disturbance, which I would term almost as a riot, where a number of supporters - women and children - of a particular football team were bailed up in their club rooms by people from an opposing side. It was quite a nasty scene. Many people were very upset and concerned about it. I think it reflects a sign of the times in the Territory and I believe that it is time that the government started thinking a little more seriously in terms of what is occurring in relation to lawlessness.

I would like to point to an article written by no less a person than Grant Tambling who made some startling statements earlier in the year in the Centralian Advocate in Alice Springs. He said: 'The Northern Territory is the crime centre of Australia. Murders, assaults, robberies, house breakings and drug busts fill our newspapers and remind us that no one nowhere is immune, even in Alice Springs'. He went on: 'Our murder rate, for example, is 3.8% for every 100 000 people, compared with 0.76% in New South Wales, 1.11% in Western Australia ...'. That indicates, I believe, that much more of the government's attention is required to try to combat this problem.

Most of the people whom I speak to say that the Aboriginal people are the cause of our high crime rate. I do not think that is an acceptable excuse or an adequate reason for the government not to do something about these statistics. Mr Tambling went on to say: 'I see law and order, especially

youth lawlessness, as one of the big social and political issues of 1989'. My comment would be that perhaps the Territory government should consider doing something rather more positive in relation to this. My suggestion would be that this government have something similar to what Bob Hawke had with his tax summit. It could have a crime summit, involving the legal fraternity, Aboriginal organisations, the judiciary, Correctional Services and, of course, more importantly than all of those, the police.

Mr Collins: Plus the criminals and those assaulted.

Mr FLOREANI: Yes, that is interesting.

The most common complaint or concern put to me by my constituents relates to the number of bashings, rapes, housebreaking, car thefts etc that are occurring in the central Australian area. I believe it is time that the government addressed this problem in a more positive manner and I suggest a crime summit.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is that time again. We are holding the first sittings after the Yuendumu Sports when I always give my report on how things went there. The Yuendumu Sports have been held for 28 or 29 years now and it is certainly one of the major sporting events in the Northern Territory. Once again, it was a great success. However, the crowds were somewhat down on those in previous years because there has been an inordinate number of deaths of very senior people in central Australia. A contributing factor to that may have been the long cold winter that we have been experiencing. As a result, the crowds were down but, in spite of that, it went with a very good spirit and prizes were distributed fairly evenly among communities such as Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Nyirripi and Kintore.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in previous years, you yourself have expressed a desire to visit the Yuendumu Sports and I was sorry that you could not make it there this year. Obviously, you had other commitments but, once again, my wife and I found it most enjoyable to take our swags and camp in the scrub down south of the community for a couple of days, talk to the people, enjoy the sports with them and hear about various issues.

We were very glad to have a visit from Mr Dawkins, the federal Minister for Education, Employment and Training, who came out to the sports and sat down to talk to a large number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers from central Australia and other people who have an interest in education, training, outstations and so on. It gave them a rare opportunity to be able to put directly to him the problems that they see in education, employment and training, and to ask him to take on board problems which revolve around matters such as secondary education, specifically Yirara College and the real and major problems that we are having with this government in that regard. There are problems also in relation to trying to get many more Aboriginal teachers into the education system. People are seeing that as one of the ways that we can make a substantial breakthrough in terms of providing more education in very remote areas. The point was made very strongly that many outstations are still missing out on educational services. Hon Gerry Hand, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, also paid an unscheduled visit for a couple of hours between some other meetings he had to attend in town, and held discussions with some people.

There were some unfortunate asides in some other discussions that I had. People referred to a visit by the Chief Minister which occurred not so long ago. People are still very irate about that visit, which was a blow-in

blow-out affair. They contrasted that with the style of the federal Minister for Education, Employment and Training, Hon John Dawkins, and Hon Gerry Hand, who has now attended the last 3 sports days and was making his fourth or fifth visit to Yuendumu.

Mr Dondas: You said Mr Hand was there for 2 hours!

Mr EDE: Even though he was only there for a couple of hours, that was still about 4 times the amount of time that the Chief Minister spent on what I believe was his only visit ever to Yuendumu. He came in by plane. At least Hon Gerry Hand came by car and was able to experience the road conditions at first hand. The Chief Minister flew in, was picked up by the police, made a flying visit to the community, berated the council for not having picked up the rubbish and then departed.

The council would be the first to admit that it has had some problems over time. Some of those problems are financial. I questioned the Chief Minister about this and wrote him a letter. He replied that the council's funding had not been cut and supplied me with figures which demonstrated very clearly that, both in real and actual terms, Territory government funding had been cut very substantially. There had been an increase in federal government funding to the community but that was not enough to make up for the cut from the Territory government. At Yuendumu, that point was made to me again.

I had further discussions with councillors and interested people in the community. We were able to discuss various aspects of the problems and the people now have a reinvigorated approach to the council. They intend to try to narrow its focus to a smaller range of municipal activities and establish stronger organisational structures.

Mr Dondas interjecting.

Mr EDE: You can stand up next. If you want to carry on, stand up and speak. You are gutless.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it has often been put to me that the council has not concentrated on immediate problems. These involve such basic things such as the provision of a basic water supply and even firewood for some old widows who camp at a distance from the permanent housing. I have explained to the council that the provision of basic services to those old people is the sort of action that will lead the community to see it as a responsible organisation which can address immediate problems. Only in that way can the council gain credibility and the acceptance which will allow it to talk about the ends that it wishes to achieve. In a council organisation, that sort of power has to grow from the grassroots up. It has to be given to the council so that the council can exercise it. It cannot flow from above. No organisation has the resources to enforce that sort of power in an Aboriginal community.

The Walpiri Media Association has major problems. This is most unfortunate. As I understand it, it has had to cease broadcasting. It was one of the Aboriginal pirate television stations set up without a licence by the people out there who suddenly found that, when they went into it, there was not a great deal of magic and high technology in a television station. They found that it was a relatively easy matter to obtain basic equipment and to set up a television station capable of making local broadcasts. They broadcast colour television programs for a couple of hours a day for nearly 3 years, well before the ABC or Imparja were able to provide services in that area.

Unfortunately, the various sources of assistance seem to have dried up at this stage. Francis Kelly has given sterling service out there. In fact, I was told that, if a certain publicly-funded national television network had a few more Francis Kellys working for it, it could do things for 2¢ a day. He has been snapped up by DEET, which wants him to do training programs in the other BRACS communities so that people can learn to do the sorts of things he was doing on his own with the Walpiri Media Association. At the moment, it appears that the association either will have to move into the public domain or obtain contributions from some local organisations and thereby become a commercial television service. Those options are presently being considered in consultation with the ABC and DAA.

Another major problem which was brought to my attention repeatedly was the removal of the fire tender. I wrote to the Chief Minister after being approached to do so, but I had to tell the person who approached me that the Chief Minister was not being very helpful. The person showed me the site where a brick house behind the office had burnt down just 2 days after I had forwarded a copy of the Chief Minister's reply to my letter.

The condition of the Lajamanu to Rabbit Flat road is another major problem. I have been trying to obtain some more information, but it appears that petrol tankers are still coming down from Katherine to the mines. The road is not sealed and is virtually a track in most areas. Those heavy vehicles are churning the road surface into thick bulldust and conventional vehicles have no chance of getting through. I am told the dust is between 18 in and 2 ft deep in places. Even when it is dry, it is almost impossible to get through. The speed at which these vehicles travel creates a real danger to any other person who is travelling on the road. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you are travelling behind a vehicle across bulldust, the dust remains in the air for a considerable time. If you are suddenly confronted with a vehicle coming out of the dust in the opposite direction, your only hope is to swerve in the right direction and avoid making contact with anything as you head bush.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those are just a few of the matters which arose at the Yuendumu Sports. As I said, it was again a very enjoyable occasion and I would like to pay tribute to the people who organised it.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, listening to the member for Stuart talking about Francis Kelly brings to mind a little story. Francis Kelly was one of the leading health workers at Yuendumu. He specialised in dental work. For someone who had had no formal training, he was very competent. In fact, he was so competent that the dental profession sent somebody up to see me, when I was Minister for Health, to argue that something should be done about this Francis Kelly who was practising dentistry without having been to university. We discussed what the people at Yuendumu might do if Francis put down his pliers and his pick and stopped carrying out dental work. No member of the dental profession was prepared to go to Yuendumu and therefore its representative and I parted on what might be called cool terms and Francis continued with his work.

Some time later, Jennifer Adamson, who was the Minister for Health in South Australia, visited the Territory to see what health workers were doing. We thought Francis Kelly would be a good person to start with. We took the her to the health centre at Yuendumu and introduced her to Francis. She sat down in the chair and he said: 'Mrs Adamson, while you are here I had better check your teeth'. He put a bib around her neck, tilted the chair and began to inspect her teeth. After a while, he said: 'You have a small cavity in

the upper left 3, and a little bit of calcium is forming on the bottom set. When you go back, you should see your dentist about it'. Jennifer Adamson was very impressed. She got out of the chair and said: 'Francis, how long have you been doing this?' He told her. She said: 'Have you ever taken any teeth out?' 'Oh, yes', he said and with that he turned around and took from the shelf a big jar containing all the teeth he had removed over the years. When Jennifer Adamson saw it, she nearly fell back into the chair. She had never seen such a disgusting jar in her life. I always think back on that as a great tribute to Francis Kelly. If it were not for people like him, the people at Yuendumu would have had very little dental assistance over the years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise a couple of matters this afternoon. I was stunned to hear the Minister for Education say the other day that he was proposing to move from Tennant Creek to Katherine the facilities which administer education in the Barkly region. My immediate reaction was that no one in his right mind would do something like that. I thought about it for a while and it occurred to me that there is nobody in the government who would remember the early days when there were no education administrative facilities in Tennant Creek to support schools and teachers in the Barkly.

I am glad that the minister has returned to the Chamber because this is a very sensitive issue and there will be many burrs and prickles if he proceeds with this proposal. In the days when we tried to operate 20 or 30 schools in the Barkly region without the support of the education adviser in Tennant Creek and the truck driver who delivers all the supplies, education was an absolute disaster. Schools were never open on time. They did not have books. There were never enough pupils and teachers had no accommodation. Contracts were never in place and the buses never ran. The whole thing was an absolute disaster from beginning to end. As I recall, and the honourable minister can check this, the boost to the infrastructure for the administration of education in Tennant Creek came in the period 1977 to 1979. People became so fed up that they were not prepared to take any more and I think the Commonwealth started the move and then, at self-government, the Territory government increased the effort of administrative support systems from Tennant to the Barkly region.

I think it is fair to say that, except for the odd school that we have not built at places like the Nicholson and the couple of teachers that have gone missing from time to time, education support in the Barkly region has been pretty good for those teachers and pupils in the remote areas. The idea of taking that support group away from Tennant Creek and shifting it to Katherine would have to be the joke of 1989. I say to the minister that, if he is seriously contemplating or even if people in his department are thinking about it in a stray moment, he should knock the idea on the head because it will cause so much trouble, not only for the people who have to teach but for the students who are entitled, in my view, to have a reasonably steady education process during the year.

The big disability that the remote schools have to face is that they need support from the major centres that have an interest in them. All the schools in the Barkly region travel into Tennant for sports days and they go there for their special functions and their inter-school exchanges etc. There is a relationship, and it works very well. Education there is like a big family arrangement and to break that up would cause great dislocation for the students. I say to the minister that, if that idea is even running through his mind in the slightest way, I think it would be a terrific idea if he knocked it on the head from day 1.

Another point that I would like to raise concerns Imparja Television. Without any doubt, Imparja has provided a service to the outback that is unparalleled in terms of communication. During my years in the Territory, I thought Christmas had come around a little early when we got a radio station in Tennant Creek in 1960 as a part of the centennial celebrations. That was an enormous communication first for us - to have a radio station that gave a news bulletin and talked about things that the Territory was interested in. The Imparja Television signal has had an even bigger impact for people who are more remote now than Tennant Creek was in 1960, and I am very concerned at the level of uncertainty that surrounds the Imparja Television operation and its possible continuance as the transmitter of a commercial television station to the remote areas of the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was one of the original opponents of Imparja. My concern was that Imparja might be run like the CAAMA station in Alice Springs which I did not think would be terribly helpful to the image of the Territory. But Imparja has been set up well, it is administered well and it provides terrific programming arrangements. Most certainly, it lives on a Commonwealth contribution that is totally outside the bounds that most normal people could contemplate paying, but the fact is that it has demonstrated the absolute need for such a signal in the remote areas. I think it behoves all parties involved - the Territory government, Imparja itself, the Commonwealth and perhaps other commercial operators - to sit around the table and work out a system to ensure that Imparja continues.

I see Imparja expanding in the coming years, not necessarily in terms of commercial television, but as a medium for education, for training and for transmitting commercial information to the rural industries such as mining, cattle and tourism during the day. It is a great facility that the Territory can only afford to develop, not lose. We got off on the wrong foot with Imparja because we built it around a government subsidy and not around a commercial principle or premise in the beginning. The opportunity to do it commercially was there but, for political reasons, it was supported by the government as an Aboriginal organisation and transmission set up ...

Mr Collins: Federal government.

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, the federal government and with federal funding to keep it going.

Now any reasonable person would understand quite clearly that the Commonwealth will not continue to fund that indefinitely. What concerns me is that, rather than have an arrangement where the commercial stations to work with Imparja to give it continuity or longevity or whatever we want to call it, the Commonwealth might simply walk away and see the signal shut down. That would be a disaster for the Territory.

I think that it is fair and reasonable that I put on record this afternoon that, whilst I had my differences with Freda Glynn and others at Imparja during the early days of its establishment, they need to be given credit for what they have achieved. It is pretty significant and they are entitled to that credit. They will find it extremely difficult to keep going because government funds will not keep up the level of support they need. I think that it is important now that we move to the next phase and that is ensuring that Imparja is weaned off government support and, slowly but surely, becomes a natural and proper commercial television operation within the Territory. Whereas, in the early days, discussions were held with Channel 8 to persuade it to get into bed with and do something on a joint basis with Imparja,

perhaps it is time for those associations to be picked up again and put in place. Certainly, as a Territory community, we cannot afford to see Imparja just disappear.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a few minutes left and I would like to raise one other matter tonight. I refer to a temporary need that we have in Tennant Creek. Many houses in Tennant Creek were built before the Building Code was put in place. In fact, I can remember that, in the early days, when you built a house you had to wait for 12 weeks for a building inspector to come and look at it. Quite often, many houses were finished before the building inspector ...

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is right, and many of the people could not have read the Building Code anyway, but that is not the issue.

The issue is that some people are looking now to sell their houses in the future, and they would like to have certificates from the building inspectorate to cover their houses. The difficulty they have is that quite often to get a structural engineer to come to Tennant Creek to inspect a home costs up to \$300 a day, plus the travel and any other incidental expenses that are incurred. There would be quite a few people in this category. I have written to the Minister for Transport and Works about it and he has referred it to the Minister for Lands and Housing. I would like to emphasise tonight that it would be extremely helpful if, between them, those 2 ministers could organise for a structural engineer, on his next visit to Tennant Creek or at some appropriate time in the future, to be made available to assess these buildings and have them declared satisfactory or not satisfactory so that people know where they stand. It is very difficult for the local people. Many of them do not speak English terribly well and do not have a great understanding of how government works and, under those circumstances, it is very difficult for them to obtain the help that they need. If the ministers could look at that and do something positive to help the people concerned, that would be greatly appreciated.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to correct something that the member for Barkly commented on in relation to the so-called shifting of the administrative centre of the Barkly region from Tennant Creek to Katherine. I was astounded to hear the member for Barkly state that he had heard the Minister for Education - myself - say that I was looking - at moving ...

Mr Tuxworth: I said you were considering.

Mr HARRIS: Or considering - well, I do not know where he has heard me say that because I have never said that the administrative centre was to move from Tennant Creek to Katherine. Might I say that I was also concerned to note some time ago that the member for Barkly was promoting that suggestion in the media. I responded at the time to the Tennant Creek Times and made it very clear that the Barkly region was still being administered from Tennant Creek. I do not know who is putting this about but it is the sort of nonsense that you hear ...

Mr Tuxworth: Your own officers are putting it about.

Mr HARRIS: I am sorry, but I am telling you what the situation is.

The reality is that the comments that have been made have been responded to repeatedly. The situation at present is that the administrative centre is to remain at Tennant Creek and it will not go to Katherine. I make it very clear that I have not said that it would. I am sorry that the member for Barkly said this evening that he had heard me say that the administrative centre for education was to move from Tennant Creek to Katherine. As I said, I do not know how he could make that statement because I have not made such a comment on the radio or anywhere else. I do not see where he could have heard me say that.

I would also like to touch on Imparja. At present, considerable work is being done to try to ensure that services continue to be provided to people in isolated areas throughout Australia. Indeed, the Department of Education is very keen to look at utilising the satellite for educational purposes. It is not only the Department of Education in the Northern Territory that is looking to do that. Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia all have regions remote from the major centres which need to be serviced. It is obvious that, by use of the satellite, those areas can be covered. The Department of Education is looking at that issue and is hoping to be able to tap into Imparja to ensure that we can provide educational services to all students in the remote areas. It would save the Commonwealth government a great deal of money if we utilised that service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I too offer my condolences to the family of Babe Damaso. The Minister for Transport and Works paid a fitting tribute to a true Territorian. Babe Damaso has been part of Darwin. His involvement in the community has been noted by many people who have visited Darwin. It is indeed a sad passing and I pay my tribute and convey my condolences to the family of Babe Damaso.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I too would like to comment on the visit of The Flying Scotsman to Alice Springs. Unfortunately, because of other commitments, I did not see it in motion either coming into the town or going out. However, it certainly was a pleasure for me to be able to visit the railway yards at Alice Springs and see it looking just as it did in a picture book which I had when I was a kid, with its green and gold and the brass all shining. It was quite a pleasure to see it and touch it. I too noted the plaque that the Victorians had placed on the locomotive and I thought that the Territory would be certainly missing out if we did not do something too. I could see the potential. It was quite pleasing to mention this to the Speaker earlier today and hear him say: 'We have an arrangement. The plaque has been accepted'.

I congratulate the Ghan Preservation Society and the band of workers who have devoted tremendous efforts to The Ghan and to The Flying Scotsman. I did not get a ride as my mother, who is 82, was staying in Alice Springs and she went for a ride on Sunday. It certainly gave her a great deal of pleasure to have had a ride on The Flying Scotsman and also, when it left on Sunday night, to place a 50¢ piece on the line and have it squashed by the train. She was pleased to have that little keepsake. I do not think she was the only one to do that. The train was not derailed and I dare say that was a good thing.

While it seems that most other members of the Assembly were in Darwin concentrating on the Wanguri by-election, I had the pleasure of going out to the Jindalee receiving station of the radar set up outside Alice Springs. After going through the hills to the north of the town, it is 25 km to 30 km along the Yuendumu Road. The new buildings there were opened by the Minister for Defence, Hon Kim Beazley.

I first became aware of Jindalee a good number of years ago when it was still being run as an experimental station by people from Salisbury Weapons Research establishment in South Australia. That facility, which really is state of the art, has a great array that sends out signals which hit the ionised layer about 300 miles up and come down and hit the sea roughly 1000 miles away from the point from which they were sent. Hence, its location is roughly a thousand miles inland. The very weak reflective signals come back off the sea, hit the ionosphere and return to be picked up at the detector station just north of the MacDonnell Ranges on the Yuendumu Road.

The RAAF has taken it over now. It has gone through the experimental stages and is being upgraded to an operations unit. It was halfway through that process when the Kangaroo 89 exercise, which has affected mainly the Top End, began. I certainly welcome that exercise. People were not saying so, and I do not think they were allowed to, but I got the clear impression that, in spite of the sun spot activity with which HF radio experienced a problem during exercise Kangaroo 89, this radar seemed to come through. However, as I said, I am reading between the lines, but I was very pleased to hear Minister Beazley say that Australian defence capability has been enhanced tremendously for the few million dollars expended at Jindalee. We can now see what we are trying to get. We do not just put aircraft in the air and then go hunting in the hope that we might find something. We will actually be able to see what our problems are, who might be coming to attack or who is running drugs and so forth. I believe that 2 other stations are being planned and, when they are operational, for a few million dollars we will have a pretty good coverage of our northern area.

I am sure everybody in the Top End has been acutely aware of just how vulnerable we have been to all sorts of things, from potential foot-and-mouth disease, to drug running, to the illegal export of our flora and fauna and smuggling in general. I welcome the Jindalee project and I am sure that, if other members had been able to be there, they too would have been impressed. That is one of the good things. In fact, Minister Beazley congratulated the people of the Territory on having this facility there. It is one of those facilities which often are not welcomed in some of the city areas. He said that he could envisage it actually becoming a part of our tourist itinerary. I dare say the top secret room may not be, but the general facility could be. There could be an area where the system could be explained in general terms. I am sure that many people from around Australia would be interested in what has happened there.

I am pleased by the tendency to lift the general veil of secrecy from a number of things, and one of those is the JDFPG, which is the new name for the Joint Defence Space Research Facility. It has been commonly called the JDSRF but has been renamed. Therein lies a rather humorous story. I was at a cocktail party. I shall not name the wife of a prominent member of this Assembly who rather innocently said: 'What does this JDFPG stand for? Is it the Joint Defence Facility Peace Group?' Knowing the honourable member's general feeling towards Pine Gap, this caused quite a degree of polite amusement among people.

That brings me to a point I have discussed with the American fellow who is the chief of the Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap who has an Australian deputy. Apparently, the new rules for Pine Gap have broken down many of the divisions. They are working hand in glove. Both men assured me that this was the case. Something that has always impressed me, because I have known most of the Australian and American people in charge at Pine Gap, is the sheer personal conviction that they have that the work that they are doing is

contributing to world peace. The Australian fellow has not been here all that long and he said to me: 'Look, I am disappointed. Our relationship with the Territory government is such that it just does not seem to want to know us. What we are doing here is in Australia's interest. It is in the world's interest. It is helping towards peace. It is helping to force Mr Gorbachev to his glasnost and perestroika and is making sensible gains'. He said that we should be shouting from the rooftops that, at Pine Gap in central Australia, we are making a real contribution in company with our American allies. I undertook to bring to the attention of this Assembly and particularly to the attention of members of the government, the feeling that that Australian gentleman, the deputy commander of that facility, had that members of the Territory government were acting as if they did not want to know the people at that facility. There is a change ...

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Well, that was his perception and, as we know, politics is somewhat about perception. I am sure that can be altered. I certainly went in to bat and said that I knew the Minister for Tourism had always been very supportive of Pine Gap, and he was pleased to know that. But I think there is an opportunity for members of the government to go out and make themselves more at home.

Another point which was brought to my attention was a speech made by the Prime Minister in which he freely admitted that Pine Gap is an information-gathering centre, and all these factors are helping to remove some of the mystery about the facility. People say that the Russians know what we are doing, but that the people of Alice Springs do not. It is good to see that situation changing.

No doubt the so-called peace group in Alice Springs will not be happy with it, but I am pleased to note that the new agreement looks to a future for that facility, not just a year or 2, with contracts renewable or terminated, but for 20 to 30 years down the line. That is the talk, and also considerable expansion of the facility is envisaged. I am pleased about that too because there is potential for the builders in Alice Springs and the building industry there if they are competitive. The deputy commander said that, although it would not be handed to the local industry on a plate, it should have an advantage, by virtue of being established in the area, over any competition having to come from a distance. If they are competitive, the builders of Alice Springs will certainly have an opportunity to build the expanded Pine Gap Base and I certainly welcome that.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to float an idea. In the last couple of weeks, there have been many announcements about the former Administrator, Commodore Johnston, being in charge of various functions and boards. I am sure that the government always intended to use his skills and knowledge, his wide experience of the Territory, and the fact that he is known to and accepted by almost all Territorians. He has been to virtually every population centre over the years. The idea that I would like to float for consideration by the parliament as a whole is that it might be a great deal cheaper and a darn sight more effective, if Commodore Johnston was agreeable, for him to replace the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. He has played his role in a non-political way as Administrator and I believe that he is accepted by all people across the political spectrum. He would be an excellent ambassador. He appreciates the benefits that will accrue to Territorians, irrespective of which party is in power. No doubt the government would have to put the ideas forward, but I think that the whole

Chamber could consider that suggestion seriously as a very useful way to promote statehood.

I cannot think of anybody who knows the Territory better than the Commodore does. He is accepted right across the board. He is the sort of person who can mix with every type of person in the Territory. I think such a move could be useful to us all. Although I have not sounded him out, apart from a brief comment at a cocktail party, I think that is something that the Commodore might relish.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Yirara College

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 169 citizens of Australia requesting the Assembly to review the accreditation of courses taught at Yirara College. 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 Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in parliament assembled, this petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of this House that we are concerned about curriculum issues at Yirara College, and therefore request the House to direct the Chief Minister and his government to direct the Secretary of the Department of Education: (1) to request the Northern Territory Board of Studies to consider secondary accreditation courses taught at Yirara College currently called post-primary; (2) to allow work done by Year 10 students at Yirara College to be part of a total assessment package and moderated with work done by students in Northern Territory high schools; and (3) to ensure that students in Year 10 at Yirara College receive the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate this year and in the future in accordance with the demands of the Yirara College Council motion passed on 27 April 1989.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today be granted to the Attorney-General on account of ill-health.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT
Progress of Local Government in the Northern Territory

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the progress of local government in the Northern Territory. Unlike the situation in most of the states of Australia, local government in the Northern Territory is currently in a growth phase. While most of the states are amalgamating councils and reducing their number, in the Northern Territory we are watching more and more communities becoming responsible for the day-to-day management of their own affairs. In fact, the Office of Local Government has just upgraded its office in Tennant Creek to regional status as part of this government's commitment to local government.

It is no secret to honourable members that I have a strong commitment to community self-management at the grassroots level. That is why I see the establishment of community government councils throughout the Northern Territory as being so important to our future growth. Although community government is available to all small towns and communities, it is particularly relevant to Aboriginal communities. Only when they have the power to manage their own affairs will Aboriginal people really achieve self-management. That

power is being instilled in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory through community government councils.

The Northern Territory has 2 branches of local government: municipal government and community government. Municipal government includes city, town and shire councils. There are 6 municipal councils in the Northern Territory: Alice Springs, Darwin, Tennant Creek, Litchfield, Palmerston and Katherine. Community government covers a diverse range of communities in the Territory and community government legislation is unique to the Northern Territory. Indeed, it has attracted a great deal of interest from state governments which are looking to our legislation as a role model for their own. The advantages of community government are numerous. Basically, it allows local communities to draw up a council constitution and to make bylaws to suit their community. I believe our community government legislation is the best in Australia. At present, 14 community government councils are established in the Northern Territory and 4 new community government councils could be established in the near future at Numbulwar, Belyuen, in the Batchelor/Adelaide River region and at Mt Liebig. Another 17 communities are considering establishing their own councils.

Mr Speaker, I table a document that summarises the progress made by communities towards incorporation under the Local Government Act. This document shows that some communities have been considering community government for a long time. That is a process which this government considers to be extremely important. It is the policy of the Northern Territory government not to rush communities into taking on community government. They must proceed at their own pace to ensure that community government is really what they want.

It is a matter of deep regret to myself and this government that some organisations, including the Northern and Central Land Councils, continue to take a divisive and confrontationist stand on matters of Aboriginal self-determination. The NLC, in particular, has been running a deliberate campaign of misinformation and disruption of local community aspirations. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of local government. Attempts by communities to work towards their own community government councils have been continually frustrated by the bureaucracy of the Northern Land Council. Just why the Northern Land Council seeks to obstruct the introduction of community government is a mystery to me. It claims to have legal advice that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and part VIII of the Local Government Act, which refers to community government, cannot coexist. But, despite many requests from myself and the Office of Local Government, the Northern Land Council has been unable to make that advice available to us. On the other hand, the Office of Local Government has received a legal opinion from the Commonwealth Attorney-General stating that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the Local Government Act are compatible. This opinion is reinforced by the Northern Territory Department of Law.

Mr Speaker, there is something else that I cannot understand. The Northern Land Council claims to have this legal opinion saying that the Local Government Act is inconsistent with the Land Rights Act and says that that is the reason for its opposition to it. Yet, at a hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs held in Darwin on 18 May this year, the Director of the Northern Land Council, John Ah Kit, said: '... the message we are trying to get across is that, if people accept community government ... then that is their choice; we do not have a problem with that'. The Northern Land Council appears to be confused about the issue of community government in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, it is also

trying to confuse many people in Aboriginal communities who are striving to take control of their own affairs and are interested in taking on community government. At several communities, the Northern Land Council has asked residents to sign letters or petitions against community government. However, many residents did not know the implications of what they were signing. They believed that the letters related to land council business or matters totally unrelated to community government.

As I said before, the stand taken by the Northern Land Council is of considerable regret to me. It does not appear to be representative of the people it claims to represent and I imagine that that is why Aboriginal groups across the Northern Territory are now seeking to form their own breakaway land councils. I will not dwell on the merits of the breakaway land council movement, which is a matter for Aboriginal people to discuss in their own forums. Local government is also a matter for communities. When those communities come to me and say that they want to form their own community government council so they can have some control over their future, I will do everything within my power to help them.

On 8 September 1988, I addressed the Combined Local Government Conference in Darwin. During that speech, I called for municipal councils and town camp organisations to get together to talk about the provision of services to their residents. My concern is that, where we have town camp organisations in municipal areas, we actually have local governments within local government. Separate development is not acceptable to the Northern Territory government. Elected local government must move towards providing an appropriate and equitable level of municipal services to all residents, whether they are on Aboriginal town camps or not.

In line with my wishes, the Office of Local Government is undertaking a study of all Northern Territory town camps. The aim of the study is to provide an inventory of the physical, socioeconomic and management aspects of town camps and recommend suitable funding arrangements and relationships with local government bodies. The study is being undertaken by an officer based in Alice Springs. Work has already started on the preparation of research documents and discussions have commenced between town camps and councils at Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek. This major study is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The information will then be assessed and recommendations will be made. This is a complex and challenging issue that will require goodwill from the Northern Territory government, local government bodies and Aboriginal organisations which have a legitimate interest in town camps. However, Mr Speaker, I assure you that I am committed to the resolution of this difficult issue.

I turn now to the issue of funding responsibility for Aboriginal communities. I am deeply concerned that the Commonwealth is transferring responsibility for functions on Aboriginal communities to the Northern Territory government without relevant funding or reasonable notice. I will outline some areas of particular concern. The Commonwealth significantly reduced its funding to Tangentyere in 1985 and the former Northern Territory Department of Community Development picked up the tab. The Office of Local Government is now filling much of that gap, even though it could well be argued that some of the functions being performed with that money are not local government services.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has unilaterally decided to cease funding Kalano from 31 December this year. With virtually no consultation, it has identified the shortfall as a local government responsibility. The

Department of Aboriginal Affairs has now asked the Office of Local Government to find an extra \$109 000 in operational funds and \$15 000 in capital assistance to make up the shortfall for the remainder of this financial year. I do not believe that all the services we are being asked to provide are the responsibility of the Office of Local Government. Even if they were, it is completely irresponsible and unreasonable for the federal government to pull out halfway through the financial year and leave the Territory government to pick up the tab.

These issues are of great concern to me. Increasingly the federal government is withdrawing services to Aboriginal communities and expecting the Northern Territory government to fill the void. I certainly have no intention of shirking our responsibility to Aboriginal people. Indeed, I know that the Northern Territory government is one of the best providers of services to Aboriginal communities. The federal member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, who is also the Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, supports my view. He has stated publicly that the Northern Territory government 'has done extremely well in terms of administration of Aboriginal affairs'. However, it will take both dollars and consultation to ensure that the federal government's withdrawal from these services does not leave the communities high and dry. That is just not happening.

I wrote to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on 28 February this year expressing my concerns, specifically in relation to the situation at Tangentyere. Not unexpectedly, Mr Hand has not extended the courtesy of a reply. This is typical of the federal minister's lack of consultation and his insensitivity to the concerns of Northern Territory Aborigines.

Mr Speaker, as you are aware, 9 separate acts - collectively known as the satellite acts - were passed over to my portfolio on 1 January 1989. These are: the Dog Act, the Cemeteries Act, the Caravan Parks Act, the Litter Act, the Nudity Act, part of the Crowns Land Act, the Hawkers Act, the Towns Act and the Places of Public Entertainment Act. All of these acts are now included under the arm of the Office of Local Government. Since taking control of these acts, I have moved to review them to bring them into line with the needs of Territorians.

Of course, the review of any act is not an easy process. These particular acts require a great deal of care and responsibility. They include legislation which covers areas which sometimes can be emotional. That is why, in my current review, I have taken great pains to consult widely and thoroughly with people and organisations who may be affected by any changes. The Northern Territory Local Government Association and the Northern Territory Community Government Association are and will continue to be instrumental in helping to conduct this review and I thank them for their help to date. There is still some way to go before the review of all these acts is complete. I can, however, bring members up to date on progress so far.

The review of the Dog Act has produced a detailed list of drafting instructions which are now with the legislative draftsman. Once the draft bill is completed, it will be open to further public debate and comment. I am firmly of the view that local government councils have a vital role to play in administering the satellite acts. The Dog Act will particularly reflect that role and I am confident that it will receive the support of the Local Government and Community Government Associations. The main proposal in the bill is to give councils authority to enact their own by-laws for the control of dogs. Those by-laws can replace the Dog Act and can be suited to local government conditions and needs.

The Cemeteries Act is one of those pieces of satellite legislation which falls into the emotional category. The unfortunate fact is that people rarely think seriously about the final resting place of their loved ones until the time comes to lay them to rest. For this reason, it is very difficult for people to understand why the Cemeteries Act insists on or restricts certain activities. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that the regulations under the Cemeteries Act are in place for very good reasons. I insist that, if people are to be laid to rest in a grave, that grave should receive the respect it deserves. I also insist that family members and friends should have guaranteed access to the place where their loved ones are buried. These are things which most people expect but the current legislation does not guarantee automatic protection of heritage areas and skeletal remains when they are discovered accidentally. There are other improvements in the new bill which I am sure will make the Cemeteries Act more responsive to the needs of individuals.

The Caravan Parks Act is also under review at present while work on reviewing the other satellite acts proceeds.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that the need for, and the very existence of, the Grants Commission is dictated by the Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act. That legislation contains a number of important matters including: the establishment of state grants commissions, determination of the funds to be made available, states and territory sharing arrangements, the requirement to formulate principles for the purpose of allocating grants, and the possibility of a review of the scheme after 30 June 1992.

For the 1986-87 and the 1987-88 distribution of local government funds in the Territory, there were 2 pools of money: municipal and non-municipal. This was in accordance with distribution principles agreed between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth minister for those 2 years only. In early 1988, the Northern Territory agreed to cooperate in a review of the grants allocation process by a Commonwealth task force consultant - Morton Consultancy Services. Following the release of the consultant's report in April 1988 and discussions with both the Local and Community Government Associations, a revised 1 pool principle of funding was proposed to the Commonwealth and approved. As I told the House yesterday, we are having some problems with this.

Turning now to the distribution of Commonwealth funds for the states and the Territory, honourable members would be aware that the present arrangement is one of a simple per capita breakup. This is grossly unfair to Territorians. It is quite obvious that the cost of providing the standard range of local government services is, per head of population, far greater in the Northern Territory than in the more densely populated states. The Premiers Conference in May announced that the Commonwealth Grants Commission would begin a review of this distribution process. I will ensure that the Northern Territory's strong case for a more equitable sharing arrangement is presented to the Commonwealth Grants Commission for consideration.

As I said earlier, the role of the Northern Territory Grants Commission is to ensure the equitable distribution of funds to local government organisations throughout the Territory. To do this, the commission undertakes extensive consultation with cities, towns and communities. In 1987, the then chairman, Mr Jim Robertson, and the then chief executive officer visited all 56 local governing bodies in the Northern Territory. In April and May of 1988, a rolling program of visits started with an intention to complete the

full cycle within 4 years. Unfortunately, the programmed visits for May this year were not fully completed, mainly as a result of unseasonable weather. An expanded visits program is high on the commission's agenda for this year.

The work of the commission to date has been exemplary and I give full credit to the previous chairman, Mr Jim Robertson, for the role he has played. Mr Robertson, who recently resigned from the commission to take up a new position, has given the Northern Territory Grants Commission excellent service and leadership. I am sure all honourable members will agree that the same quality of service can be expected from the new chairman, the former Administrator of the Northern Territory, Commodore Eric Johnston. I know his distinguished record in public life will stand him in good stead as he takes on the considerable complexities of the Northern Territory Grants commission.

One of the great success stories of the Northern Territory has been the Anti-Litter Committee. A special partnership between the government and private enterprise has seen this committee set up and funded to the tune of \$200 000 a year. This money comes from representatives of the packaged products industry. It is an important example of how industry and government can work together on community projects. The money is used to fund public relations campaigns which play a great role in keeping litter in the Territory to a minimum. These campaigns are extremely important. It is far better to stop people from littering than to clean up after them. Notwithstanding this, cleaning up the rubbish which already litters the Territory is a priority.

I know that all honourable members were extremely heartened by the spectacularly successful beach-front clean-up organised by the Darwin City Council in April this year. The Darwin community is to be congratulated on the spirit in which it supported its council in this activity. It will become an annual event and it will receive strong support from this government. Funding for the Keep Australia Beautiful Council is also one of my responsibilities. Its major campaign each year is the promotion of the Territory Tidy Towns Competition, another success story in itself and one which I am sure all members fully support.

Another important initiative in the local government field has been the review of functions carried out by the Northern Territory government and local government. A working party was set up in November 1987 to carry out this review and to prepare a report. The report was to identify the possible reallocation of responsibility between the 2 levels of government to ensure there is no duplication of services or undesirable allocation of services. In carrying out this exercise, matters were divided into 2 categories: items of interest to the Darwin City Council and the government, and items affecting all municipal councils generally.

The working party's first meeting was held in February 1988 with representatives from the Darwin City Council, the Office of Local Government and the Departments of Lands and Housing, Health and Community Services, Transport and Works, the Conservation Commission and the Power and Water Authority. It was decided to address the Darwin City Council's issues as a first stage of the exercise with consideration of Territory-wide issues to be the second stage. The officers at the first meeting felt that the experience with the Darwin City Council would enable implementation of more effective changes on a Territory-wide basis. A wide range of responsibilities were considered, including the botanical gardens, the tourist caravan park, the Cavenagh Street car park, the old Darwin Primary School, East Point Reserve, health survey functions, the Rapid Creek Water Gardens, the Casuarina foreshore area, the Women's Information Centre, the Marrara Community Centre,

the Northern Territory University Child-care Centre, the Gardens Park golf course, the Marrara golf course effluent disposal system and the Pandanus/Tracy Village lease. A further 5 meetings have been held, the most recent in July this year. Late last year, a draft was prepared and agreed to by the parties. That report has since been circulated to all ministers and to the Local and Community Government Associations.

This orderly examination of the respective roles and functions of each tier of government parallels similar exercises at the Commonwealth-states level. It demonstrates the responsible attitude of this government in ensuring maximum efficiency and performance coupled with the most effective use of the available dollar. The ultimate benefits which will come from this exercise will undoubtedly be felt by both the Northern Territory government and the many local government councils in the Territory. There is further scope for progress in this area, and that is in our relationship with the Commonwealth government. This is being pursued.

The Office of Local Government provides special purpose grants and operational subsidies to about 100 organisations throughout the Northern Territory. Those organisations include municipal councils, community government councils, incorporated bodies, reserves and other organisations such as the Keep Australia Beautiful Council. As part of the Office of Local Government's financial management planning, periodic reviews are conducted to ensure that Territory government money is being spent effectively.

The Northern Territory government currently funds 3 mission organisations: the Church Missionary Society, Catholic Missions and Aboriginal Resource and Development Services. Some funds are provided directly to these organisations through departments such as Education and Health and Community Services. In 1988-89, the Office of Local Government provided \$497 000 to the 3 mission organisations to help provide local government services in communities. As part of the ongoing review of funding by my department, a review team comprising representatives from the Departments of Health and Community Services and Industries and Development, together with the Office of Local Government, was established in May this year to consider the role of mission organisations in local government. The review team will report to me shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as you can see, the functions of the Office of Local Government are many and varied. Its arms reach across the whole of the Northern Territory into our smallest and largest communities. Providing such a wide range of services to so many different people is both a difficult and demanding job but I am proud to say that my staff in the Office of Local Government carry out that task effectively and efficiently. The Northern Territory Office of Local Government is recognised Australia-wide as one of the most effective service providers in government circles. About 90% of the money provided to the Office of Local Government is channelled directly into the cities, towns and communities of the Northern Territory. That is a distinction of which I am proud, and it is one which should be a source of pride to everyone in the Northern Territory government.

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

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the minister's statement on local government. The statement is an interesting collection of all sorts of things that relate to local government, but it is not clear to me why the minister has seen a need to stand up and cover so much ground on so many different issues. For example, yet again it appears to me to be an opportunity to attack the land councils. I have spoken with the

minister about that before, and I say again that there is no need for that. The opportunity is there to work with the people, and to try to talk to the land councils on the matters that we are discussing now.

I am in full support of the establishment of community government in Aboriginal communities, and I have said that many times in this House and in public. I see that it provides a way for Aboriginal people to have a real say about their needs and their communities, but not only do they require this right to speak, they also need money and resources. I was pleased to hear in yesterday's budget speech that more money will be provided for Aboriginal housing. It is this area that concerns me greatly in Aboriginal communities. Once the essential services have been established, the people can get on with managing their communities.

I welcome with open arms the minister's decision to undertake the study of all Northern Territory town camps. I will be very interested to receive a copy of the report and to be involved in discussions with the minister on the most suitable funding arrangements.

The minister discussed a number of acts for which the Office of Local Government is now responsible and which previously were the responsibility of the Department of Health and Community Services. I am pleased to see that they have finally been placed with local government which is where they properly belong. I am surprised, however, that it has taken such a long time for this to happen. They should have been transferred when government departments were restructured 2 years ago. I welcome the minister's decision to review the acts. The Dog Act is of particular concern. The proposal to give councils the authority to enact their own by-laws is long overdue.

The Northern Territory Grants Commission has a very responsible role to play in ensuring that community needs are addressed adequately, but it is important that the commission keep in touch with the communities by visiting them. I would like to extend my appreciation to the previous chairman, Mr Jim Robertson. He did a fantastic job as chairman. I welcome the new chairman, Commodore Johnston, to the Northern Territory Grants Commission.

On the review of functions carried out by the Northern Territory government and local governments, given the geographic locations of towns in the Territory, it is very important to have clear lines of responsibility for different levels of government. It is essential that services are not duplicated. It is also important that service areas are not ignored, and that services are located within the appropriate levels of government. I will be very interested to hear the final outcome of the review process.

In relation to staffing in the Office of Local Government, last year there was a serious problem with finding a suitable number of staff to enable the Office of Local Government to operate. I would be interested in obtaining an up-to-date briefing on this matter in order to determine whether, in fact, the office is able to undertake all the functions for which it has responsibility.

Yesterday, the minister made several points regarding delays in funding from the federal government. I am led to believe those delays have occurred as a result of the Minister for Local Government requiring additional information from the Northern Territory government. I can only encourage the Northern Territory government to cooperate in providing this information.

Finally, as I said, I support the move for local government in Aboriginal communities but, with regard to the minister's statement about the land

councils, I think he needs to make an approach to meet the land councils and discuss this very matter. It will not hurt the government to discuss this matter with the land councils. As I have said before, this matter can be solved without the continuing conflicts between the land councils and this government. There is no problem. All it requires is that appropriate arrangements be made to meet them. The people in the communities are interested in becoming involved with local government. I have told the minister that before. I will say again that the right approach is to see the land councils and talk with them. It will not kill this government to talk to the organisations and find out what they are complaining about. The minister said that they are complaining about this and that, but he makes no attempt to see them or, alternatively, to have them make arrangements to discuss their problems with the Office of Local Government. There is no need to be constantly putting down the land councils. I am sure that, with the right approach, this matter can be resolved in a proper manner.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister has given the House a very timely update on local government. It is some time since we have received an update on the progress of the Community Government Scheme and the number of communities now involved in it.

I was first elected to local government in early 1979 and was subsequently re-elected on 3 occasions. Until late 1983, there were only a few municipal authorities: the councils in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. During that period, it was suggested that community government councils might be formed. I was very pleased to be involved in May 1980 when the Lajamanu Council became the first community government council to take part in that scheme. We brought members of the Lajamanu Council to Darwin and invited them to a joint meeting with the Darwin City Council so that they could see how it operated. They also joined us at the annual conferences of the Northern Territory Local Government Association, as did the Angurugu and Milikapiti Councils which joined in 1982 and 1983 respectively. In those days, there was a great deal of support for community government and I believe that that is also the case today at the community level.

I was interested to hear the member for Arafura give the minister a serve in respect of his comments about the activities of the land councils and the way in which they are not supporting the move to community government. I found his comments a little unrealistic. He is as aware as I am of the feelings of some of his brother communities in respect of that matter. I understand that, because of his political alignment, he has to apologise for the land councils. I know that, in his heart, he finds that difficult to do because he certainly understands, as do I, the problems which are being alluded to by the communities themselves. His colleague who sits in front of him also understands those problems. They were drawn to our attention when we travelled around the Territory recently as members of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, particularly in the East Arnhem region where the local communities felt that the land councils were not only obtrusive but actively engaged in working against them in relation to community government. The member for Arnhem certainly knows that. In fact, those communities have invited us to go back later in the year to discuss the matter further.

It is a nonsense to argue that we should go and talk to the land councils. We have attempted to talk to the land councils already but the communities themselves are saying to the land councils: 'Keep out of it. We know what we want. We want to take part in this move towards local government. Stop trying to subvert our people and stop trying to send us information which is neither accurate nor true'. Perhaps the land councils ought to wake up to

that. Members opposite are certainly aware of what the communities are saying and they should reflect that in their speeches in this House.

The minister raised several other matters in his statement, including the issue of funding. Although the minister states that he is unaware of the reasons why the federal government is playing games with funding to local government, I firmly believe that it is part of its hidden agenda.

Mr Ede: Socialism!

Mr FIRMIN: It is not a socialist agenda; it is a hidden agenda of federalism. It is federalism, not socialism.

For some considerable time, this federal government has provided the financial wherewithal to enable many varied schemes to commence. Once those schemes are in operation, it withdraws funding and leaves somebody else holding the baby. Its funding of local government through the Commonwealth Grants Commission is part of that pattern, as was highlighted by the minister in answer to a question yesterday in this House.

I support the minister's comments in respect of other facets of his portfolio. I congratulate him and his department on their support for the anti-litter campaign, both through the KAB and the Anti-Litter Committee. The change in the Territory attitude towards litter in the last few years has been absolutely incredible. Those members who have lived in the Territory for any length of time and used to travel the Stuart Highway may remember how, only a few years ago, it was almost impossible to drive along the highway in the late afternoon because of the reflection of sunlight on broken bottles and cans on the roadside from Alice Springs to Darwin. It was simply unbelievable.

Mr Ede: Are you saying that it is better now?

Mr FIRMIN: Yes. Have you driven the full length of the Stuart Highway recently, as I have?

Mr Ede: Yes.

Mr FIRMIN: Within the last 6 or 7 weeks?

Mr Ede: Has it all been picked up in the last 6 or 7 weeks?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FIRMIN: You will find very little litter on the side of the highway. You will certainly find very little litter on the roads entering and leaving the local government areas or the small towns and roadhouses along the highway. Clearly, there is a very keen awareness among the local communities of the need to keep their areas clean and tidy. I was quite pleased to see the changed attitude over the last few years as a result of the campaigns. This year, I saw some of the results of the Territory Tidy Towns campaign on some of the Aboriginal communities. Some of the communities that had been abysmal in this regard in past years certainly have cleaned up their act as a result of the introduction of Territory Tidy Towns prizes and assistance. Of course, there are still some dreadful examples and probably that will be the case for a number of years. Nonetheless, there is a marked improvement in many communities and that is to be commended.

Before I close, I would like to touch quickly on a couple of other matters raised in the minister's statement today. The first relates to his intention to amend legislation such as the Dog Act and the Caravan Parks Act. In this area of responsibility, no act evokes more discussion and passion than the Dog Act. No matter where you go, south, north, east or west, whether you are in the Assembly or in local government, you cannot avoid the problems relating to dogs. It is probably the most passionate subject that is raised when you visit communities throughout the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: Take a stand.

Mr FIRMIN: Take a stand and get rid of them all? I have never had one and I do not think anyone else should either.

Mr Ede: Thank you. We have got that on Hansard.

Mr FIRMIN: That is all right. People should get themselves a rabbit or a cat, like the member for Koolpinyah.

The problem caused by dogs barking late at night or roaming in the streets is raised in the electorate office every week. The sooner we give the town councils enough teeth to sort the problem out, the better.

There are also some problems with caravan parks that need to be attended to. I have had several complaints from tourists. Recently, I had a complaint from people who came to Darwin to work. They had rented a caravan on site in a park. They complained bitterly to me about the standard of the accommodation provided by the park operator in some of the caravans on the site. This needs to be controlled. I am pleased to note that the minister is actively engaged on bringing the caravan park legislation up to date.

In closing, I would like to join other members of the Assembly today in paying tribute to the previous Chairman of the Northern Territory Grants Commission, Jim Robertson, and also in welcoming the Commodore to the position.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I would like to welcome Commodore Johnston to the commission. I am sure that most members in the Assembly will appreciate the assistance that he will give during his time as chairman. I would also like to thank the former chairman of the commission, Jim Robertson, for making such a fine job of the very hard task which he was given initially when the incorporation of local government throughout the Territory was at its inception.

I would like to comment on a few matters raised by the member for Ludmilla and also by the honourable minister in his statement in relation mainly to matters affecting local councils in remote communities. As was mentioned by the member for Arafura, often we hear the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government speaking very strongly on matters relating to land management in local areas. I would like to explain to him the infrastructure that is out there in relation to land matters and management as far as Aboriginal people are concerned. What we are looking at is a concept that is given to them totally by an act of this parliament. They are trying to work within a system that has been totally alien to them from a traditional point of view. Even though this legislation allows members of community government councils to make local government decisions, they still have responsibilities and obligations as traditional people to traditional landowners of that area.

I have quite often said to councils at the local level that they should try to work matters out with the landowners because the land councils have a responsibility to specific traditional landowners in a given area. For example, at Ngukurr, the land council is responsible for the traditional landowners. The landowners of that specific area had no authority whatsoever where the mission was based. The missions like Daly River, Ngukurr, Angurugu and Galiwinku were virtually put in there by the missionaries who did not go to the traditional landowners specifically to obtain the excision of the area. Thus, we have a conflict where the Territory government of the day recognises a community government at the local level and totally ignores the rights of the traditional landowners for that specific area. I accept the fact that, under the legislation, they can bring people in from certain clans within that area and also give rights for traditional landowners to sit down within the council.

Mr McCarthy: But local government has nothing to do with land or land ownership.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I would like to correct the honourable minister. That is where he is creating a conflict between 2 groups of people. I have seen this happen at Galiwinku, Milingimbi, Roper River and Yuendumu. This government has created a conflict between 2 groups of people. You have a group of Aboriginal people from an area outside of one tribal ground who came in during the mission stage or welfare stage because of the medical and educational facilities within an area. At that time, the traditional landowners would not have had much authority to voice their opinion but, given the fact that land rights have given them that authority, they are now starting to exercise that right. Of course, their agents are the land councils and they can go only to them for advice, and the land councils have an obligation under the act to provide it to them.

I would urge the honourable minister to study what the honourable member for Arafura said earlier. He needs to sit down and talk with those people. The fact is that we will be talking about land as long as we live here. I think it is the only commodity that we have that cannot be created elsewhere and, from our point of view, it is important to get together on matters such as land issues in order to ensure that the needs of the community and the traditional landowners are met. If that does not happen, there will be ongoing debate and argument and I am sure that the land councils will hold out for their rights under the legislation.

I would like to comment also on the honourable minister's proposed revision of the Dog Act. I visit many communities in my electorate and it is clear that there is a dog problem there. I encourage the honourable minister to ensure that local community government councils are given the authority to have as many dogs as possible registered and put down those that are sick or simply wandering around without any responsibility being taken by their owners. This may create some concern in my communities, Mr Speaker. However, I believe that sickness will be reduced in Aboriginal communities if this review leads to appropriate authority being granted to local governments in those communities in that respect. I will certainly welcome that.

One of the minister's responsibilities is to look after the Territory Tidy Towns Competition. Members of this side of the House have been asked to cooperate with the Territory government by giving bipartisan support to this competition. However, the minister himself and the Minister for Lands and Housing are the only members who appear on television encouraging the Territory people to take part. I hope that the minister will consider that

and will take steps to ensure that a wider range of people are involved in a bipartisan approach to what I believe is a very good program for the Northern Territory. We should be involving as many people as we can.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr Alan Hunt MLC

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Hon Alan Hunt, President of the Victorian Legislative Council. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to Mr President a warm welcome and hope that his stay in the Northern Territory will be a pleasant and informal one.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to participate in this debate. In my electorate, there are 2 local government organisations: the Katherine Municipal Council and the Mataranka Community Council. I will refer first to the Mataranka Community Council which I believe was established in 1985. Over the past 4 years, the existence of the council has seen tremendous improvement in the appearance of and the community involvement in the Mataranka community. The achievements and the programs of the council can be held up as an example for other community councils throughout the Northern Territory of what can be achieved under this scheme.

The council has brought the community together. It has engendered a feeling of pride and responsibility within the community. I speak not only of the European community, but also of the Aboriginal members of the community. I believe that it has played a significant role in drawing together both sections of the community. It has resulted in an improvement in the appearance of the town to the benefit of locals and visitors alike. Over a period, there has been an upgrading of roads and subdivisions. On a recent visit, I noted additional works, particularly in relation to cleaning up the approaches to the town and also on vacant and undeveloped land within the township. This has done much to improve the town's presentation to tourists. It is particularly important for a town whose economy is based principally on the tourist industry that it present itself in an organised and aesthetic manner. The appeal that this has for tourists will do much to enhance future visitation and develop the local economy.

Prior to the establishment of a community council in May 1985, the presentation of the town was not particularly appealing, and there was definitely opportunity for considerable improvement. I am pleased to say that, at least by my observation, this has been achieved. Mataranka is now a well presented town. I would like to congratulate the business houses of the town and local residents for the effort that they have put into their community and for the support that they have provided to the Mataranka Community Council which is reflected in the results that I have indicated. Particularly, I would like to extend my congratulations and, on behalf of the people of Mataranka, my appreciation for the contribution that they have made not only to the economy and the tourism industry in the Mataranka area but to the quality of life for Mataranka residents and also of course to that of Territorians who visit Mataranka. It is a fine example of what can be achieved by community councils. It is an achievement of which it can be justly proud and that other community councils could well use as an example of what can be achieved under the community council program.

I will turn now to the achievements of the Katherine Town Council over the years. The council was established in 1978 and, prior to that, I recall that

the town was managed by a District Officer. He was a man who encompassed all powers and everyone had to deal with him, not only on local government-type issues but also on matters that required a response from the federal government prior to self-government. I guess he was the focus of attention in the community and, following the establishment of local government and the passing of the District Officer, I think that anyone in Katherine would have to agree that the town has seen an incredible change. The services that are provided now by local government are much better and more extensive than those that were provided previously.

The improvements, the facilities, the sports grounds, the showgrounds, the roads are all good, and I must congratulate the Katherine Town Council on the fact that, following the extension of the town boundaries in recent years, it has moved with the times. It has addressed the needs of people in the outlying areas beyond the original town boundaries. It has undertaken the improvement of roads, and I refer particularly to Helena Road and Hendry Road on the Florina Road rural subdivision and also, closer to town, the Emungalam Road. In the past year, the council has undertaken some improvement works and demonstrated that it is capable of moving with the times and addressing the needs of people in the rural areas. That is very encouraging. I believe that the council's works program has been fairly responsive to community needs. I would like to pay tribute to the Katherine Town Council, not only members of the present council but all who have served since the council's establishment in 1978.

I would like to touch on one particular aspect of the council's activity and that is its support for the tourism industry in Katherine. I mention this because it is so fundamental to the economy of Katherine and the region. I consider it most important that the council maintain its present support for the tourist industry. In recent years, it has adopted the practice of supporting the local Tourism Promotion Association. I think that is most important and I have certainly encouraged it, not only as a member of this Assembly but also as a member of the Tourism Promotion Association in years past. In interstate towns of a similar size and structure to Katherine, I have noted that the local government organisations are very supportive of the tourist industry and the part it plays in the local economy. I hope that the Katherine Town Council recognises the importance of its role and that it decides to continue the support that it has offered and, indeed, provided to the tourist industry in past years. Not only has it provided financial support, it has contributed also to the establishment of a tourist information centre in Katherine in conjunction with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. I hope that this cooperation can continue. Indeed, I think that it is essential for the future of tourism in Katherine that the council's participation continue in this regard.

I believe that there is no better organisation than local government for providing assistance to the tourist industry in a town. If local government cannot project the virtues of a town and its potential, as it represents the residents of the town and the community, then no one else can. In the future, I would like to see an extension of this service and the involvement of local government in the tourist industry because it is fundamental to the continuance and prosperity of the tourist industry in local and regional centres.

The honourable minister referred to the Territory Tidy Towns Competition and anti-litter campaigns. I believe that those programs have made a significant contribution to the appearance and aesthetics of the Northern Territory. If we all think back 10 or 15 years, we can recall the image we

had of the Northern Territory. There was litter all along the highways and virtually everywhere that one went. We had a very low awareness of the impact that litter had on our society and on visitors to the Northern Territory. I think that the anti-litter campaigns and the Territory Tidy Towns Competitions have had an incredible impact on this aspect of Territory life. The improvement has been immeasurable and I would like to think that these programs will be continued and, if the resources are available, expanded. Whilst the achievements have been very good, we still have some way to go and therefore it is an area that we must continue to focus on. We can do this principally, I suppose, through schools and, of course, by setting an example in our communities and throughout the Northern Territory. I hope that these programs will continue to proceed with the emphasis that they have had in the past and I hope too that they continue to produce the valuable achievements that they have in the past.

I conclude, Mr Speaker, with those few comments. In doing so, I pass on my appreciation to both the Mataranka Community Council and the Katherine Town Council for the achievements that they have attained in recent years since their establishment, the impact that they have had on their respective communities and the benefits that they have provided to those communities.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to add a few comments on this statement in addition to the comments made by the Labor spokesman for local government, the member for Arafura, and the very eloquent comments from the member for Arnhem. The minister has raised many varied issues and some of those are worthy of comment.

It is apparent that the minister is attempting to take into consideration the views and aspirations of Aboriginal communities in relation to local government. In the time that I have been in the Assembly, the government has not always done that. In that context, the minister is to be congratulated on some of his efforts. I must qualify that by reiterating what the members for Arnhem and Arafura said in relation to the minister's blind spot as far as the Aboriginal land councils are concerned. I have made this point in previous debates of this nature and I do not propose to repeat myself at great length. However, I will say that the minister does his positive efforts no credit when he denigrates the land councils and supports breakaway groups simply on the basis that the land councils have been critical of the Northern Territory government on various points, the most recent and spectacular being the passage of the government's sacred sites legislation at the last sittings of this Assembly.

I do not wish to dwell on this theme but I point out to the minister that, if community government is to be a success, he must recognise that the role of community governments is intrinsically different to that of the land councils. The minister's stress on administrative forms ignores the most important element of community government which is the people who are involved. The minister would do well if, in addition to promoting community government, he took the step that I urged him to take during the last sittings and considered the human resources - both indigenous and expatriate - which are available to Aboriginal communities.

Mr Collins: Expatriate? Apparently, we do not belong here.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if I might enlighten the member for Sadadeen, I use the terms 'expatriate' and 'indigenous' in a pretty exact fashion. I remind him that members of the CLP government continuously use the made-up word 'patriate' in reference to the Aboriginal Lands Right Act. If the member for

Sadadeen is concerned about semantic exactitude, I suggest that he direct his interjections to the government rather than myself. When I talk about 'indigenous human resources' as opposed to 'expatriate human resources' in the communities in my electorate, I am referring to people who were born there. I think of people like Gus Williams at Hermannsburg, Charlie Walkabout at Docker River, Alison Anderson at Papunya, Smithy Zimran at Haasts Bluff, Tony Petrick at Harts Range, and Phillip Wiljuka and his father at Maryvale. I could go on and on.

When I talk about 'expatriate human resources', I think of people who are providing community development advice and support who were not born in those communities and who are derided frequently as 'white advisers', generally with a scowl on the faces of the people who use the term. The people I think of in that regard are people like Tony Ray at Finke, and Geoff Langford and his wife Carol at Imanpa. The list could go on and on. The question of human resources for those communities is important. I think of the people who have provided that advice to some of those communities previously. Some of them probably have ceased to qualify as expatriate and are becoming pretty indigenous. There is a bit of a grey area in between. Like most of the CLP members of this Assembly, they were not born here and they have adopted the Northern Territory.

Mr Reed: Including yourself.

Mr BELL: Yes, including myself. I make no bones about that. I am quite happy to tell the member for Katherine that I was born in Melbourne. Probably, that is cause for my eternal damnation in the eyes of the member for Katherine, but I will live with that.

Because of his background, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government would be well aware of what I am saying. I will make a generalisation and, as with all generalisations, there may be exceptions to it. The generalisation is that the expatriate human resources that have been available to the community governments and the community councils in my electorate in 1989 are not as good as those that were available to them 10 or 15 years ago. I suggest that the distrust that the CLP government has evinced towards white advisers in Aboriginal communities has meant that they have pulled back on recruiting people to those positions. I remember that, when I first came to work in central Australia in 1974 ...

Mr Reed: As an expatriate.

Mr Setter: It's a worry, isn't it?

Mr BELL: No, it is just boring, particularly when one has to listen to interjections like that from the member for Katherine. When I came here in 1974 - and bear in mind that this is the sort of short history that community government with a small 'c' and a small 'g' has had in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Reed interjecting.

Mr BELL: Look, shut up, will you? You might learn something.

In 1974, it was a novel experience for those people to be involved in decisions about their own communities. In many cases, communities themselves had been relatively recently founded. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that after the equal pay case decision, many Aboriginal people no longer had places to

work on cattle stations and were forced into the Welfare settlements and ration depots. That process of community development saw the development of a system of elections and community councils only in the early 1970s. They continue to have all sorts of problems. I certainly cannot explain the reasons for that in the time available to me, but I suggest that structures of that, community government or otherwise, are not indigenous structures. It is very difficult for Aboriginal people to make decisions over one particular place. It is hard enough in the whitefellow communities where the history of local government dates back 100 or more years. However, in those communities where they are struggling to come to terms with so many other problems of cultural dislocation, it is immensely difficult.

I urge the minister to look at those human resource problems. I note that he is conducting a review of the town camps and I support that. I note that he is critical of the shortage of funds for the Tangentyere Council and I support him in that regard. One of the advantages that the town camps and the Tangentyere Council have is that they have some excellent indigenous and expatriate staff working for them. I remind honourable members of the contribution of people like Geoff Shaw and Bob Durnan to organisations like that. Over the last 10 years, those town camps have developed a very solid physical and human resource base. This issue is important to me because I am concerned that that physical and human resource base should be extended and built up in the Aboriginal communities in my electorate. That is the reason why I speak with some vehemence and, I think, some understanding of the circumstances.

Let me highlight one developing community in my electorate that is an example of this. I refer to what has come to be known as Atitjere, which was a relatively recently negotiated excision from the Mount Riddock head lease at Harts Range. It has been one of the satisfactions of being involved with that particular community to have seen the housing programs go ahead and to see the Aboriginal Development Commission build an excellent store facility there. The school at Harts Range is probably funded by the Commonwealth Schools Commission.

A member: Yes.

Mr BELL: Yes, it probably is. I am not sure ...

Mr Collins: It is all paid for by the taxpayers at some stage.

Mr McCarthy: We will end up picking up the cost, that is for sure.

Mr Hatton: Dead sure.

Mr BELL: I do not want to get involved in that ...

Mr Hatton: Oh, you do not want to get involved in it.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, given the depths of the problems that those communities face, it is pretty absurd to get involved in the nitpicking arguments about Commonwealth and state funding that people over there get embroiled in. However ...

Mr Hatton: You raised it.

Mr BELL: Yes, and I am going to finish it.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to see that, at last, the Minister for Health and Community Services is building a clinic in that community.

There is a subject on which I have received representations and on which I have made representations to the honourable minister. I think that the Alice Springs Office of Local Government has been advised of it. I refer to the fact that the Atitjere Council is keen to have some focus by way of an office, a telephone and facilities of that kind.

Mr Firmin: Sure they are, but do they contribute? How much do they contribute to yours?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I can hardly let that interjection from the member for Ludmilla go. I expect that the community will be contributing according to its capacity to do so which, I suggest, is rather less than the capacity of the member for Ludmilla since that community enjoys an unemployment rate of some 80%. However, we will address that question at some later stage.

To complete the comments that I was making ...

Mr Firmin: But you pay them not to work.

Mr Hatton: That is right.

Mr Reed: That is the socialist philosophy.

Mr BELL: Gee whiz, you cannot ignore that either.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: This is going to look terrific in Hansard. The member for Katherine obviously sleeps through most of my speeches but he has woken up today. I refer him to Hansard and to the many comments that I have made about the need for employment programs on the communities in my electorate. I regard long-term dependence on the dole as being destructive.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I do not regard it as an indulgence, nor do any of my constituents. As far as I am concerned, the patronising and paternalistic attitude that comes from those characters over there, Mr Speaker, suggests to me that they have had a look at ...

Members interjecting.

A member: Let's have a look at who is dropping the dollars on the ground out there.

Mr BELL: Not you blokes, that is for sure, as I have just indicated.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A call to order includes both sides of the House. Honourable members on the government side of the House have had a fair run. The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, let me conclude on this note: community government is simply a framework. It is not something that should be trumpeted. It is

the human and physical resources that accompany it that this Assembly, the minister and his department ought to be concentrating on.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I must say at the outset that the statement delivered by the honourable minister was certainly all-embracing. It touched on many subjects, far too many to comment on in one speech. Not only did the honourable minister touch briefly on different forms of local government, he touched also on local government as it applies to Aboriginal settlements and town camps, and the satellite acts connected with the Local Government Act and the review that he intends to conduct of those acts. As well, he gave notes on the operation of the Northern Territory Grants Commission. All in all, it was quite a thought-provoking statement and, coming from me, that is a compliment, honourable minister.

Mr McCarthy: Thank you.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not often give them.

Mr Speaker, I would like to direct my remarks to some of the satellite acts that the minister has in his portfolio and about which he promised a review some time ago. I think that it is past the time for them to be reviewed. I refer initially to the Dog Act.

Looking around at the honourable members assembled here, probably I have forgotten more about dogs than they will ever know. I hope that, when the honourable minister's officers review the Dog Act, they will make a better fist of it than a previous minister did when he introduced the present Dog Act. It is a very difficult act to read. It is difficult not only for those people who want to obtain information from it, but also for local governments to work from. I hope the minister takes advice from somebody who knows something about dogs and makes the legislation very simple.

Mr McCarthy: I will come and talk to you, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you.

The subject of dogs and dog breeding, like the Cemeteries Act and other matters that I will be talking about, is a very emotional one. There are people who consider dogs to be merely things that are covered in fleas and ticks, that you can kick, ill-treat and allow to breed indiscriminately. The animals belonging to such people are the ones that cause most of the problems in communities. There are other people in the community who take good care of their dogs. They feed their dogs properly and ensure that they do not cause trouble to neighbours or to people in public places. It has been my observation that it is these people who are most often penalised for the irresponsibility of the people who do not look after their dogs properly.

An example of that is a decision made by the Palmerston Council some months ago. It was decided to raise the fees for keeping dogs to an exorbitant level. That affected most directly those people who had pedigreed dogs and who were easily traced. Those dogs could be seen behind fences. Those people were paying the fees but there were still many dogs roaming loose in the street, causing problems to the community. I hope that this matter will be dealt with when the Dog Act is reviewed so that those people who do look after their dogs are not penalised.

I turn now to the Cemeteries Act. This legislation also relates to a very emotional subject: where one will lie when one is dead. It does not

really worry the person concerned because, when one is dead, one is past worrying. However, when one's loved ones die, one is usually concerned about where their bodies will be buried. As the minister knows, there was a recent case in my electorate where a family wished to bury a loved one, a father and husband, on its own land. The minister's department had some objections to this but, in the end, the family won out and I was very pleased about that.

Mr McCarthy: Subject to certain controls and certain agreements. It was not as simple as all that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I understand that. If the minister wants to hear them, I can give him all the details about that afterwards because I am very well-informed about them.

In my review of the Cemeteries Act, the last thing I would wish to see would be the minister making hard and fast rules that every burial must take place in a cemetery. There are many people in the community who express their wish to be buried elsewhere than in a cemetery and I would like to see the honourable minister take that into account, given the diverse ethnic origins of people in the Northern Territory.

Mr McCarthy: Are we going to bury them in the backyard now?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, there is nothing wrong with that!

Mr McCarthy: There is.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Not in my backyard.

Turning to the review of the Caravan Parks Act, I hope that the minister does not treat small business operators, such as owner-managers of caravan parks, in a heavy-handed fashion. You do not strike it rich when you set up a caravan park. There is one very large caravan park operator in the Top End and his job is not an easy one because his operation is so large. Caravan parks in the Northern Territory meet an important need among the travelling tourist public. I hope that the minister will listen carefully to the industry during the course of his consultations and will not create overbearing regulations which will make its job more difficult.

The minister also spoke about the Nudity Act. An interesting letter appeared in the NT News a couple of days ago.

A member: Have you been to the Sun Club?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have been to the Sun Club. I have been a member of the Sun Club. I make no bones about it.

Mr Speaker, I hope that the minister will pay attention to the wishes of the community in relation to nudity in public places. A letter which appeared in the NT News was written by a lady who observed that it was not in the best interests of the community for people to disrobe at a particular beach - and I am not sure whether it was Mindil Beach or Fannie Bay Beach - frequented by the general public. She bowed to the wishes of the community and went out to the free beach. When she disrobed there with her daughter, a clothed gentleman was - I do not know quite how to put this.

Mr Coulter: He was lost.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: He was 'lost' very close to these 2 ladies.

Mr McCarthy: Where do you think he will be when they start stripping at Mindil? He is not going to stay at the free beach.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You wait and listen to what I have to say. You can have your say when you sum up.

Mr Speaker, I believe that there are those in the community who wish to take of their clothes at places like the free beach and there are those ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, there are those in the community who wish to take off their clothes at the free beach to sunbathe and swim in the nude, and good luck to them if that is their wish. They are not offending anybody because they are all together in one location. Some people are offended by people disrobing in public. Indeed, I think the Minister for Education expressed some views along these lines about people disrobing at Mindil Beach.

There is a time and a place for everything. If it is quite clear that people can disrobe in some places and that they cannot do so in other places, members of the community could make a choice about where they wished to go. If people offended community sensibilities by disrobing at Mindil Beach or at Fannie Bay Beach, the police would probably be called to ask the offending people ...

Mr McCarthy: It is the responsibility of council inspectors.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The council inspectors would ask the people to get dressed again. If it is good enough for that to happen, it is good enough for people who choose to go to the free beach and disrobe there to be similarly protected from people who go there to perv.

Mr McCarthy: What are you going to do when they start stripping at Mindil Beach? Are you going to take all the clothed people off Mindil Beach? What are you going to do, Noel?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You were not listening to me! I said that, if Mindil Beach is a place where people are not supposed to disrobe, people who do so should be told to put their clothes on again. You are as thick as 2 short planks on this. I think that it is all too much for you.

Mr Speaker, the next satellite act that the minister is thinking of reviewing is the Pounds Act. I would like to be kept informed of what the minister intends to do in relation to the Pounds Act. Some time ago, when many large animals were roaming loose in the rural area, I was keen to see the establishment of either a large animal pound or a small animal pound. It did not come to anything but I still believe that it is a subject worthy of consideration although it certainly has to be cost effective.

The last act that the minister intends to review is the Places of Public Entertainment Act. This must be considered very deeply in view of some community concerns that the strip shows at some of our licensed premises are offensive or undesirable. I believe that there is a time and place for everything. I believe that licensed premises in public places are not the

place for strip acts. At the same time, the minister and his officers who prepare legislation have to consider carefully whether they maintain, raise or lower community standards and what is acceptable to the community generally. If standards are raised or lowered on matters such as this, they must have regard to possible future consequences.

Mr Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on the minister's statement that the distribution of Commonwealth funds to the states and Territory has been on a simple per capita basis. He said that this is grossly unfair to Territorians. That is probably true because we do have greater per capita costs even living up here, let alone living and working here. I think it is time that the government realised - although it will probably be too busy trying to drum up votes to listen - that governments cannot buy votes because the people are not that silly. Neither can local governments buy votes. Other local and community governments could well take a leaf out of the book of the Litchfield Shire Council. That council set out - and I think it will maintain this in the future - a certain standard of services that will and will not be extended to the community. Our rates are at rock bottom, but the services that the council provides in the rural area are minimal. It is a case of you get what you pay for. We do not pay high rates but we do not get many services.

Before they think of raising rates dramatically to cope with the rising cost of living, which is happening all the time, community governments should look at cutting back some services because many of the public have adopted a mentality of gimme, gimme. They hear of something and they want it. They want free this and free that, free services here and free services there.

Mr Collins: Free beaches.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, that is one of the things that is free actually. However, it is very important that, in these times of community austerity, community governments should adopt a little frugality in their approach to offering services to the community.

I am pretty cynical about the implementation of the Litter Act. We can drive along the highway now and not see rubbish littered at the side of the road. We say to ourselves that it is good that people are paying attention and not chucking their litter out of their cars. That is a load of nonsense because people still chuck rubbish out of cars and they are still letting things drop off the back of vehicles and leaving them on the side of the road. The only difference, Mr Speaker, is that you and I as taxpayers are using more of our money to clean up this litter because it does not look nice at the side of the road. Unfortunately, the people who are responsible for the litter are not being dealt with. I do not know whether there is an on-the-spot fine system or not, but the litter is still there on the side of the road and we are paying more and more to have it cleaned up.

An example of community effort was the successful beach clean-up organised by the Darwin City Council and the Lord Mayor, Mr Alec Fong Lim. I believe that was an admirable idea that was very well carried out at minimal cost to the community. Community groups cleaned up the beaches, and I understand that this will be an annual event. I heartily applaud such activity which has community input and minimal cost.

The honourable minister mentioned a reallocation of responsibility between the 2 levels of government: the state-type government here and the third tier of government, local government or community government. The honourable

minister knows that there are many facets of government that the local governments would like to have greater input on - and I do not mean have complete control over - and one of those is planning. The local governments do not want to control planning completely. I am speaking for the Litchfield Shire Council here and I have seen letters from the Local Government Association also wanting a much greater input to planning decisions than it has currently.

In conclusion, I would like to compliment the minister on his statement and, when he is looking at the review of those satellite acts, I would appreciate copies of proposed legislation so that I can comment on them.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister on his statement. Community government provides a framework within which a community can have quite a degree of liberty in deciding how it will run its affairs. I have always been of the view that the best decisions are those made at the local level where the people who are making the decisions can be got at by the people who are affected by the decisions and the people who make the decisions are attuned to the attitudes of the people around them and take more care over the decisions that they make. Expenditure of funding in the communities is far better done by the people themselves.

One of the problems which is always there, and I am sure that the minister has it and, no doubt, his department has it too, is that when you give responsibility to somebody to do a particular job, you would be well advised to ensure that he knows what is required and leave him to it. As a fairly young teacher, I was advised by the principal of the school where I was working. He gave me this advice and I think that it is excellent: 'When you give somebody else a job, make sure that he knows what he is on about and then turn your back and let him get on with it. Even though you feel you could tell him how to do it 10-times more efficiently, you must have the courage to turn away and let him get on with it'.

People will make mistakes. I know that some of the good people involved in the community government department in Alice Springs are very concerned at times about how decisions will be made, but they have the courage to turn away. It is no good standing with your hand on people's shoulders telling them to do it this way or do it that way. Whether they are young people of the European race or Aboriginal people, people will learn only when they know that the responsibility is there and that they have to live with it. That is the other point too. If a community government does make a mistake, the worst thing that can happen is for anybody - the federal government, the Territory government or anybody else - to rush in and clean up the mess that has been made.

We all learn and become mature. When we make mistakes, we have to work our way out of those mistakes. It is a learning process and a growing process. I see it in my own life and I am sure that everyone of us knows that there is a great deal of truth in that. In giving the responsibility, we have also to step aside and not be waiting there so that, at the first sign that they might falter in some way, we can rush in to help. They have to learn to stand on their own feet. That will make those communities so much better. It will give the wisdom of experience. Experience has to develop. It is not something that can be handed out; it is something that has to be acquired. If people are protected from experience, including bad experiences, then you are not serving them and helping them in any way. They have to learn to do it themselves and they will.

I believe that is the important thing even if we might become worried. I have teenage children who will be moving into the work force within the next couple of years. I worry about them but, if we look back at our own experience - and our parents worried about us, too - we realise that we made it without being propped up. To this day, I thank my parents for not being over-supportive. They were there if I sought advice, but they did not tell me what to do at every step of the way. I really believe that the government is on the right track, and I put to the minister that this idea should go through his department. We will have to stand back and let people make the mistakes, and not rush in and pick them up. We must let them learn to extricate themselves from the problems that they may create, and they will. They will then be a shining success,

The other thing that I would like to mention is attitude. I think everybody in government of whatever form, myself included, would be well advised to remind ourselves that we are not gods. We are, in fact, servants. While we serve the people who put us in this place, there is a fighting chance that we may continue in this role. We do have privileges and there is a certain degree of status and esteem associated with being a member of the Assembly, but really we are simply ordinary people and, in a real sense, we are nothing but servants.

Mr Perron: Some of us are more ordinary than others.

Mr COLLINS: I agree, and I may be one of the most ordinary. However, it appears that that tends to suit my electorate. I stand proud when I serve my electorate, but I certainly do not see myself as better than anybody else in the electorate. I am simply a person who is privileged to have this role as their representative. I am their servant. I believe that this attitude should be conveyed also to the people who are elected to those councils. They too are servants of the people and they have responsibilities. If they take those seriously, their esteem in the community and response from the community will be far greater.

Having been a school teacher in the days when teachers interacted with students by means of prefects, I believe that this is a real problem. There would be 2 entirely different groups of prefects. One group saw their role as serving the student body, setting a good example, obeying the school rules and promoting the school. Those people learnt a tremendous amount. They had no power over other students apart from that which they gained through setting an example. They did not ask any other student to do something which they were not prepared to do themselves. I believe that they gained a great deal in terms of leadership experience. The other group were people who adopted the attitude that they were pretty tough because they had become prefects and they would throw their weight around and generally give prefects a bad name.

In my view, this is the problem with our land councils. The land councils were set up to serve the Aboriginal people and to be responsive to their wishes. That is how I see it. The reason for breakaway land councils is a fairly normal reaction of Aboriginal people saying that the land councils are not serving them as they should be. The councils have become self-interested and nothing more than powerful bureaucracies. It was stated in The Australian today that the Central and Northern Land Councils, powerful bodies, were in agreement with the federal government on excisions etc. If they were powerful in serving the true wishes of Aboriginal people, that would be fine, but they have become self-serving, and it is as natural as what is happening in Russia today that eventually people will not put up with that sort of power-grabbing and self-serving behaviour.

Mr Speaker, let me remind people of the saying that 'sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'. From childhood memories, the first time I heard that saying was in a tale about Robin Hood. As I recollect it, Little John was introduced to Robin's group and Robin and his men were practising their skills in archery. They were shooting at a target and, if a man missed his mark, he received a thump on the earhole. Robin shot and missed and, to Little John's amazement, he bent down and took his cap off and received his whack behind the ear too. Robin said to the amazed Little John: 'Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'. I am sure members of our federal government tell themselves that they are pretty good on fair play ...

Mr Palmer interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: If the honourable member for Karama can keep his tongue quiet, he may see the point of my story.

Mr Finch: There is an obscure message there somewhere.

Mr COLLINS: He might like the message and, if he will be quiet, I will get on and tell it, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I was reminded of the story when I received some tax papers as a group employer within the last few days. If I receive a letter from the Department of Social Security telling me that I have to deduct maintenance payments for a potential employee of mine who has not been paying maintenance, then I am obliged to deduct those maintenance payments. I am sure that the minister would agree that there is something of an analogy here with the man who fathers children and then leaves his responsibilities behind and shoots through. Looking at that as an individual case, the federal government is saying that this situation is costing the general public a great deal of money, and I think we would all agree that people should be forced to pay for their responsibilities.

I am sure the honourable minister would see the analogy of a federal government that is ever keen on starting up schemes, obtaining the kudos and putting money into schemes. In relation to Aboriginal communities, the federal government starts up a scheme, receives the kudos and then pulls out and leaves the baby for someone else to look after. That may be rather convoluted, but I think it would be rather nice if the minister were able to list the schemes that the federal government has started and later pulled out of. He could then submit an account to the federal government for the operation of those schemes so that they can be paid for by the body that fathered them in the first place. Members of the federal government tell us constantly that they are fair-minded people and, if that is indeed true, they should be able to appreciate the comparison that I have just made. They are hard on men who have abandoned their families yet, in a sense they are abandoning ...

Mr Finch: It is the fashion over there, mate.

Mr COLLINS: It is indeed the fashion, but fair-mindedness would demand that they should not be initiating something and then pulling out and leaving someone else to carry it on and finance it.

The matter of litter was mentioned in the minister's statement and I would like to put in another plug for deposit legislation. I was very pleased to receive word a few days ago that I have the support of a number of cattlemen and people living in bush areas for my campaign to have deposit legislation in

relation to cans and bottles in the Northern Territory. Deposit legislation encourages the purchaser of a container to return it and thereby retrieve the deposit. Hopefully, the container can then be recycled. Alternatively, if people drop such containers, others can pick them up and receive the money when they return them.

In South Australia, there is a deposit of 5¢ per can and even of 10¢ on some cans. One cattleman told me that it is possible to drive through the Flinders Ranges and not see any cans or bottles. Whilst it is good that can and bottle manufacturers put thousands of dollars into clean-up campaigns, those campaigns mainly affect the major cities. There are prizes for the person who brings in the largest quantity of glass and so forth. However, with deposit legislation, no matter where a can appears, whether in a national park or in the bush, somebody will pick it up, whether that person be a child or a pensioner.

A couple of months ago, I saw an article in The Australian which said that the annual cost of deposit legislation across Australia would be something like \$4.5m. I presume that would be the cost to the industry. I bet that councils and governments spend much more than that on cleaning up and I would strongly urge the government to consider deposit legislation. It is a good way for kids to make a few bob and some pensioners would certainly welcome the chance to clean up after some people who are not prepared to do the right thing. It puts the penalty where it belongs - on the person who buys the container. If he does the right thing, he gets his money back. If not, somebody else will get the money. Meanwhile, the place is cleaned up. I believe that the government should act in this regard.

In closing, I indicate that I appreciate the minister's statement. I believe that community government has great potential. It allows local communities to make their own decisions and to live with the results without being propped up. If they are not propped up, they will mature and become far more efficient. Let them live with their mistakes. I am sure that we will find, as the years roll by, that the people of Australia will be looking at the Territory example to see how community government is implemented. They will want to follow the same route.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in this debate. Initially, I approached the Leader of Government Business and advised him that I had reasons for thinking that it might be best to adjourn the debate. I then approached the minister and advised him that, if he were to give me a copy of the legal opinion from the federal government to which he referred at page 5 of the circulated copy of his statement, I was prepared to have discussions with both the Northern and Central Land Councils in an attempt to reconcile the differences that exist in the interpretation of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and part VIII of the Local Government Act.

As you would know, Mr Speaker, I have had many years of experience in local government administration. Indeed, I was working with community governments well before the federal government or, indeed, the Northern Territory government instituted them in this country. The legal position is difficult and there are various views on it. It appeared to me, however, that there was a possibility of reconciliation. I thought that the minister might have been interested in pursuing that possibility and perhaps even resolving some of the issues so that, when debate on the statement resumed, we might have been discussing a situation which had developed to some extent. Whether the problem was due to bloody-mindedness on the part of the government or the

land councils, we could possibly have put that behind us and moved on a little further.

Mr McCarthy: You will get a copy. The land councils already have it.

Mr EDE: We have heard from the minister. He is not interested. He does not want me to intervene on his behalf and attempt to make some progress. Instead of directing my efforts immediately towards trying to resolve some of the areas of conflict, I will simply point out to the minister that there is one more basic source of conflict that I do not believe that he has either the wit or the confidence to begin to resolve.

I refer, Mr Speaker, to the matter of distrust. I am talking about the distrust which the land councils and many people out bush feel towards this government and, more particularly, for a number of ministers who serve this government. This distrust is compounded when the people in those communities, which are considering moving towards community government, find that the government is unwilling to provide them with any resources to assist them in developing their own constitutions under the community government legislation. As the minister would know, if he knows anything about his own act, that is the most fundamental aspect of community government. Each community is responsible for the development of the constitution which sets out the powers and functions of its own community government body.

The fact is that, where communities have asked for resources to enable them to independently develop an interpretation of the act in simple English, into tapes in Aboriginal languages, or in any other form, those resources have not been forthcoming.

Mr Coulter: Give us an example.

Mr EDE: Yuendumu.

When the government itself changes a draft constitution which has been developed in a community, people begin to get matters in perspective. People in communities do not appreciate it when, after arguing staunchly with the Office of Local Government and pointing out that they definitely want particular things, those things are changed in Darwin or Alice Springs and the draft constitution comes back again and again after being changed. They are frustrated when their basic problems are not understood. For example, there is frequently competition and even conflict between communities and outstations in efforts to obtain resources.

Communities become very frustrated when attempts are made to force them to incorporate outstations in their community government proposals. They become even more frustrated when, after accepting community government for a town area, they find that the government has changed the scheme so that it just happens to cover the land trust area. Suddenly, things start to fall into place. There is considerable distrust out there. People say: 'Why the land trust area?' This applies particularly in respect of a community such as Yuendumu, which is surrounded on 3 sides by Aboriginal land which is the home country of the Walpiri people and includes outstations which operate from Yuendumu but are not included in it. The boundaries of the community government area are drawn so that it comprises the land trust area even though the community asked that they cover just the community itself. Somehow, the boundaries are enlarged.

Is it any wonder that there is potential conflict between the powers and functions under the Land Rights Act and those which can be conferred under the Local Government Act? Is it any wonder that people start to query why it is that, when a land trust covers a certain area, the Northern Territory government forces the community government boundaries to change by constantly referring them back to the community ...

Mr McCarthy: That is quite appropriate because it is of community interest after all.

Mr EDE: Oh, it is not the community's wish but the minister's determination of what is a community of interest. If there is a community of interest in that particular group, why doesn't it apply to the whole of the Walpiri?

Mr McCarthy: You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will have his opportunity to reply.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, when they intervene on behalf of parts of the community to push other organisations within the community to lose their corporate identity and submerge themselves within the community government organisation ...

Mr McCarthy: You show me where that has happened.

Mr EDE: When that is argued very strongly by officers of your department ...

Mr McCarthy: Name names.

Mr EDE: I have it on tape, on video.

Mr McCarthy: You can stand up there and make those sort of comments and not name names. You know that it is not true.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is recorded on video at the Walpiri Media Centre.

Mr McCarthy: Let me see it.

Mr EDE: You should ask it for a copy, just as you have informed me to go to the land councils for a copy of the legal opinion.

Mr McCarthy: I did not. I said that I would get you one.

Mr EDE: You said ...

Mr McCarthy: That is an untruth. I said that I would get you a copy and it will be here this afternoon.

Mr EDE: Okay. Thank you, now I am getting a copy. Excellent.

Mr McCarthy: I told you 10 minutes ago and I told you before lunch.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, you heard him tell me 10 minutes ago that I could have a copy because I could get one from the land councils.

Mr McCarthy: I did not say that. I said the land council had one, but I would get one for you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government will refrain from interjecting. He will have his opportunity to reply in a few minutes. The member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, as many honourable members know, there are very good reasons for the development and the continued survival of a variety of organisations and communities. That has to be taken on a case by case basis and it has to be treated with an exemplary degree of tact, not with some ham-fisted desire for power. As I said the other day, power grows up; it is not to be imposed from the top.

When the Chief Minister visited a particular community for the first time, he did not take up the issues that the community wished to discuss and there were many issues that community wished to discuss with the Chief Minister on his first visit. They relate to problems of employment and problems with water supplies, housing, disease, hygiene, sanitation, education and crime. Those are the things that community wished to discuss. But, all the Chief Minister wanted to talk about was litter. It shows the depth of his mind.

Mr Perron: You should have seen the depth of the litter.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, that creates distrust.

There are areas where land councils, land trusts and community governments have similar or, in fact, the same functions. The problems are compounded in certain situations. For example, in places such as Maningrida, 8 different language groups exist in the same community. These are problems that have to be treated very carefully. It is possible for distrust to build on distrust. The actions of the government have promoted within communities a very unfortunate mistrust of the honourable minister and of the efforts that he is making towards establishing community government.

On the other side of this equation, when this government funds breakaway groups, you must understand that land councils will believe that there are hidden agendas within the movement towards community government. Too often, what the minister says and what the government thinks are 2 completely different things. The distrust is there. People in many communities and in the land councils believe that the government wants the community governments to take over the functions of the land trusts and then to be the nucleus for picking up the land council system in the Northern Territory. That is a commonly held belief by the land councils and, if the minister has not been able to understand that that is the basic problem that they have with it, he is either living up to his reputation of being able to wallow through the depths of his thoughts without getting his toenails wet or he has something in his ears.

I am afraid that I do not trust the minister or this government not to try to play land councils against community governments. Given that, and given the reaction of this government to my genuine offer to attempt to move this debate forward by going to the land councils and trying to find out the basis of this problem ...

Mr McCarthy: What do you think we are going to achieve by that? They have had the opinion for years.

Mr EDE: If they do not need me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not need them. I have very grave doubts about providing the honourable minister with the results of the discussions that I will be having with the land councils because I have very grave doubts about how he would handle it from there and how he would develop it. It is unfortunate that, in this regard as in many others, there may be many communities which will have to wait on the results of the next election before we are able to get this matter sorted out.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to speak for very long in this debate. I was prompted to rise to my feet by some of the more outrageous comments made by the member for Stuart. I will deal with some of those. But, before I do that, I will address some of the other issues raised in this statement.

I note the series of satellite legislation the honourable minister referred to in his speech - the Cemeteries Act, the Dog Act etc - which some members have commented on. I would like to place on the record my view, which is in line with the general view expressed by the minister in his statement that, within areas covered by local government, it is almost an anomaly and an anachronism that legislation such as the Dog Act is passed by this parliament and administered by local government. It seems to me that, if there is to be any form of Dog Act or Cemeteries Act or whatever, such legislation probably should apply only with respect to areas which lie outside some form of local government operation. Within areas of local government or community government, such functions should be devolved to become the responsibility of that level of government. For example, the Darwin City Council should be obliged to accept responsibility for enacting by-laws for the the control and management of stray animals, be they pet cats, dogs, horses, kangaroos or crocodiles, within its municipal area. These are matters that could quite successfully and appropriately be dealt with by local government.

It has been a source of continuous frustration for both local government and the Northern Territory government to have this running debate on the control of stray dogs. This parliament enacted the law and local governments were to enact by-laws. There is a tangle of red tape and bureaucracy between those 2 matters and that seems totally illogical. I support the moves by the minister to have such legislation removed from this parliament in so far as it relates to local government areas. The Territory government should tell local governments that it has stepped out of the field and has devolved on those local governments the responsibility for and authority to make decisions on control of dogs and other stray animals within their own areas. For the benefit of members representing Katherine communities, the Mayor and aldermen of Katherine and members of local governments in Katherine can then have the clear responsibility to deal with the problem of stray cats. Rather than seeking to gain administration and management of an international airport in Alice Springs, perhaps the council could find \$20 000 to look after the stray cats in Alice Springs. It could do something to ameliorate an important local problem for the people of Alice Springs and to clarify the demarcation between Northern Territory government responsibilities and local government responsibilities. I encourage the honourable minister to continue with those developments.

It is also very pleasing to see recognition of the significant concerns in respect of the Cemeteries Act and the protection of cemeteries. It is all very well for us to ask why people cannot bury their loved ones where they want to bury them. Emotionally, we all support that view, but what is important is not only the right to bury a person in a particular place, but the protection and the consecration of that burial area in the future. The

member for Koolpinyah asked why, if she wanted to be buried or have her relatives buried in her own backyard, that should not be permitted. In theory, that is fine provided that, if the kids sell the place, someone does not dig up the grave. That is the fundamental issue. I support the minister's desire to ensure that a burial area is protected, whether it be in someone's backyard or in an Aboriginal burial area. Such areas need legislative protection against future desecration and therein lies the importance of the Cemeteries Act. I repeat my concern at having legislation applied by this parliament to what is fundamentally a local government function. Perhaps Territory legislation should apply only in respect of areas outside of the control of local government in its various forms in the Northern Territory.

I would like to speak about the issue of community government. Today, we have heard a couple of speakers try to create a controversial debate on the issue of community government. Most recently, of course, the member for Stuart decided that this was a good chance to have a go at the Northern Territory government. That, of course, is his usual style. He is not very interested in constructive debate in this place. He is always trying to find a mechanism to generate controversy and criticism of the government. Some would say that that is his role in opposition. That is fine. However, it is a shame that it does not advance the cause of the Northern Territory community. Nevertheless, if that is the way he wants to play his game, so be it. I am sure that he will receive the sort of rude shock from the community that that type of behaviour deserves.

The member for Stuart forgets that community government has been well recognised nationally as an exciting innovation in providing a flexible and appropriate mechanism to enable small communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, to evolve a method of local government that is appropriate to themselves. I know that the member for Arafura recognises the benefits of community government because of the very successful examples of community government in the Tiwi Islands where they have worked very successfully. Those communities, which have worked through the long and involved process of evolving their methods of representation, election and definition of the powers and responsibilities of community government, have proved them to be successful. The great success of community government is the sense of pride and self-respect that comes to a community when it has the right and power to decide for itself on matters that affect the people in that community.

Time after time, that example has shown itself. After all, so much of our pride in the Northern Territory evolves from exactly the same source: the feeling of being able to decide for ourselves those matters that affect ourselves, through a Northern Territory parliament in a responsible, self-governing Northern Territory. Local government and community government are no different. They simply deal with different issues that reflect that. Certainly, there will be debate and argument between the Northern Territory government and local government as to where the power-sharing arrangements fall, but the principle of devolving power closer to the people, where it is appropriate, is one that we should support. The community government process of allowing the organisational structure of community government to meet the unique circumstances that exist in Aboriginal communities has been the brilliant success of that legislation because it is not prescriptive in form. It is prescriptive in methodology and that enables the form to evolve that meets the needs of the given community.

I know the minister is well aware of - and we have discussed it in the House - the evolution that is occurring in the Ngukurr and Numbulwar area for

the development of community government there. The communities are determining the forms of representation, power-sharing and decision-making that will be appropriate for the particular land ownership and responsibility mixes that exist in those communities. I think that is good. And it is not only I, as a CLP member, who thinks it is good. Equally, the federal Labor Senator for the Northern Territory, Senator Bob Collins, in the ATSIIC debate last year, stood up and, as was recorded in Hansard, publicly praised the initiative of community government in the Northern Territory.

Mr Coulter: They sacked him from the Northern Land Council as an adviser after 2 weeks, because he supported it.

Mr Ede interjecting

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart does not like the way we do it because we actually spend a long time allowing the communities to consult and discuss. That is the key, of course, to finding a structure that will work, and the community government structures that have come into operation have worked because time, patience and perseverance have been put in to that process, and that is the success of the Northern Territory CLP government's initiative in providing real, self-determination for Aboriginal people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you why I believe the land councils have been fighting the community government process, and it has nothing to do with the nonsense that the member for Stuart was spouting. The land councils were opposing community government long before the movement for breakaway land councils was generating heat. They did not see this as a threat to them because of that. They recognised that real self-determination in the hands of Aboriginal people and a recognition of the traditional power structures in Aboriginal communities were the great threats to their power base because their power structures are artificial in respect of Aboriginal traditional ownership. I must say that I am not referring to the Tiwi Land Council which I believe is a positive representation of how land councils should be operating. I am referring to the amorphous, broad-ranging land councils in the Northern and Central Land Council areas which do not accurately reflect the power structures and traditional authority lines in Aboriginal communities. Further, I believe the land councils are undermining that power structure by playing financial favourites with those that are politically aligned with them, to the detriment of the traditional leaders of the communities.

That is the reason for the breakaway land council movement. The call is not coming from the Northern Territory government. Any member who visits the communities readily learns that the traditional leaders of the Aboriginal community are calling for help to protect their traditional authority and to overcome the undermining of traditional cultural values by the political power brokers of the land councils. That is the real problem in Aboriginal communities now. That is the real impetus behind the breakaway land council movement.

Anyone who allows that process to develop will be the subject of political attack and scorn from the land councils which know that anyone who supports that movement supports the development of real Aboriginal self-determination and is helping Aboriginal people to rise up and overcome the paternalistic power brokers who are controlling Aboriginal people through the land councils and their toady organisations at the moment. That is the problem. It is not community government. Community government should have no influence on the role of land councils. It should have nothing to do with the issue of land

ownership. After all, the Darwin City Council does not own all of Darwin and the Alice Springs Town Council does not own all of Alice Springs. Landowners are one thing and government is something else. We need to understand that and make the distinction.

The land councils oppose community government because they do not want Aboriginal people to have a true say in their own future and a true say in the running of their own lives. That would undermine the power brokers in the Aboriginal industry, the multitude of people in very well-paid jobs who spend up to \$20m of Aboriginal people's money every year to fund their own lifestyles. That is what the land councils are worried about. I support the right of Aboriginal people to break out of that vicious cycle, to stand up for themselves and determine their own future, and to govern themselves to the same extent as other Australians and other Territorians. I support the move for community government and I urge the government not to lose heart nor to cease persevering in its drive to give Aboriginal people a real say over their own future.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments particularly those on this side of the House. Some of the comments made by members opposite, however, require a response.

I will start with the remarks of the shadow minister for local government. I must admit that I was surprised when he stood up in this House and said that he did not understand why I was making such a wide-ranging statement on local government. I thought that he would have been the first person to acknowledge that local government is a very important issue in the Northern Territory and that it needs to be aired widely in all its aspects, including community government. His attitude was disappointing. He criticised me for my attack on the land councils. I could have expressed a great deal more anger about the way the land councils have conducted themselves in respect of local government. I was particularly restrained in my criticism of the land councils and in expressing my concern that they are willing to go into communities and spread misinformation.

I am quite determined to state that members of the Office of Local Government do not reciprocate that dishonesty. They go out and tell the facts as they are. Yet, for whatever reason, perhaps because of some innate or inane fear of what local government is about in Aboriginal areas, the land councils are determined to destroy what I know every member of the opposition favours - full self-management for Aboriginal people. No one has been able to demonstrate to me that that can be done better than through community government. Indeed, the shadow minister has said that he agrees with me. Nevertheless, he has said today that he does not understand why I am attacking the land councils. He knows that what I say is true. Why attempt to defend the indefensible? Mr Speaker, I do not understand that at all.

I am pleased to learn that the shadow minister supports the current investigation into the delivery of services to town camps in local government areas. I am very keen to see that investigation finalised so that we will have some strategies for the better delivery of services to all people, including people in the Aboriginal areas.

Mr Speaker, there has been considerable comment about the satellite acts and the fact that they are overdue for review. I am the first to agree about that. I have been awaiting eagerly the transfer of control of the satellite acts for a long time because I was concerned that they had been pushed aside,

mainly because the resources were not available to carry out a review. With the growth of local government in the Northern Territory, there has been a need to review the satellite acts and to place control of most of the functions covered by them in the hands of local government, not to create new acts to regulate local government but to provide the ability for local government to make its own regulations in respect of dog control and, as the member for Nightcliff indicated, the control of animals generally. Initially, we wanted to address the control of animals generally but, because there is such a desperate need for review, we are looking at the Dog Act as a first stage. When that has been reviewed and control is in the hands of local government, we will examine how we can put the control of animals in general into the hands of local government.

As I indicated, the Cemeteries Act arouses considerable emotion. I was pleased that some members agreed that we cannot allow people to be buried just anywhere. In the instance referred to by the member for Koolpinyah, I was involved in a difficult situation in relation to a proposed burial in the rural area of Darwin. The problem was not related to any unwillingness on my part to allow that family member to be buried on the land owned by the family. My concern was with the way in which the family wanted to protect that burial site. It wanted to use a family trust. Of course, a family trust does not protect land. It does not protect a burial place. If the land is ultimately sold by the family, there is no control over the site. I determined that the burial site should be excised and made into a private burial ground, thereby protecting it. I wanted the area to be accessible so that family members could gain entry to it in the future if other family members decided to sell the land. That is all I asked for and it took a long while for agreement to be reached. When that occurred, the proposal went ahead. I have no problem with such burials occurring on areas of land which are sufficiently large. The guidelines specify a minimum area of 8 ha and I am not personally prepared to go below that unless I face stiff opposition. It is also essential that burial places are protected so that family members can reach such areas freely in the future.

It is all very well to be critical of the Northern Territory government's approach to land councils. Members of the government have all tried at some stage to talk to the land councils. We have all tried to get a basis of agreement with them, and we have all failed. That has not been because of unwillingness on our part. We are very willing to reach agreements that are acceptable to the people of the Northern Territory. We know that it is very difficult to do that, not only for this government but for the Aboriginal people. With the single exception of the Tiwi Land Council, it is impossible even for Aboriginal people to achieve agreements with their own land councils.

A number of members alluded to the review of functions and they generally supported it. I have already mentioned the Dog Act and the Cemeteries Act and I will not make further comment in relation to them. The Caravan Parks Act is also under review and will be sent to all interested persons for comment in the course of that process.

The member for Arafura asked for information on the resources available to the Office of Local Government in carrying out its functions. I am prepared to give him a briefing on the resources available. Those resources will never be everything we would like them to be because we do not have the level of funding available that the Northern or Central Land Council has to employ 140 or 150 field staff as compared with our 26 or so. We do not have those sorts of resources because we have to deliver services to Aboriginal people. Land councils do not have to deliver services. We put 90% of our dollars directly

into the hands of Aboriginal people. How many dollars do the land councils put into the hands of Aboriginal people? They put an occasional hand in their pockets in order to hand over cash to somebody to give an answer.

Mr Ede: Give us an example. One example!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Arafura can hardly deny that he did well out of the Northern Territory government as a councillor.

Mr Tipiloura: Pardon?

Mr McCARTHY: As a councillor, not personally. You cannot say that you did not do well as a councillor, thanks to the support of the Northern Territory government which puts 90% of its dollars into the hands of Aboriginal people through direct untied grants. Show me another organisation, including the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which puts 90% of its available funds into the hands of Aboriginal people in the form of untied grants. The Office of Local Government distributes 90% of its funds in the form of untied grants whereas the Department of Aboriginal Affairs distributes less than 50% of its funding in that way.

I heard criticism about the level of funding flowing from the Office of Local Government. If we want to look at the actual funding, the Commonwealth dollars distributed to the Northern Territory for distribution under the federal distribution system in 1987-88 and 1988-89 was in the order of \$6m. That was to be delivered by our Grants Commission to all local government bodies, including community government bodies and other local governing bodies that are currently a part of that system under the current agreements. There was \$6m in those last 2 years from the federal government to be distributed by the Grants Commission. The Northern Territory government provided to our Grants Commission for distribution to community government bodies and other local governing bodies, which are mainly Aboriginal, in the order of \$10.5m to \$11m over those last 2 years. The dollars are going to Aboriginal communities from the Northern Territory government's discretionary funds.

I know that the opposition spokesman wants to protect the federal minister in this. He says that we have not been able to provide her with the proper information. I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that is not the case. We have provided her with everything that she wants. I have spoken to her personally. She says: 'We agree that you have adhered to the principles. We have no argument with that. However, the answers are not right and we are not going to give you the money'. Our returns were there on time. Tasmania's were not, nevertheless it has its agreement. We have no agreement because the answers have not been engineered to her satisfaction. That is just not on.

The member for Stuart raised the issue of funding. To take an example, the federal government FAA distribution to Yuendumu in 1988-89 was \$103 884. I refer to untied grants. The Northern Territory government's distribution in untied grants to Yuendumu was \$320 586. That was more than 3 times as much as that of the Commonwealth even though it is the Commonwealth which has the responsibility. We do not have a responsibility for distribution of local government grants. No state distributes moneys to local governing bodies. We are the only state or territory that does it. If, in fact, the Commonwealth government were picking up the whole tab, as it is obliged to, it would be distributing something in the order of \$405 000 to Yuendumu alone. Members

opposite can bury their heads if they like, but those are the facts. The member opposite can laugh. It is easy to laugh about this but, in fact, his constituents are being disadvantaged by the Commonwealth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I could go on forever. I thank members on this side for their support for so many of the things that were raised in the debate. I do have a concern in relation to the comments from the member for Arnhem. I must say that the member for Arnhem puts his case extremely well. However, he has a fundamental misunderstanding of what local government really is. Local government has nothing to do with land ownership. Local government does not attempt to control land.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: The member for Arafura will not attempt to tell me that, when he was the president of the community government council on Bathurst Island, he tried to control land issues on the island. He did not. If he did, he was right outside his responsibilities as the chairman of that council. If he wants to tell me that that was a part of his function as a community government president, I will be very much surprised. It comes down to a misconception.

Mr Tipiloura interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: If you want to continue that misconception, go on the way you are going now. Get out there as a responsible shadow spokesman and tell them otherwise because you are not doing that.

Mr Ede: You cannot tell people otherwise when 40 000 years of history says ...

Mr McCARTHY: Hang on a minute. Let us look at ATSIC or at the old NAC. When the NAC went to Canberra to talk about issues that were very important to Aboriginal people, did it take into account land boundaries? They were set up by an entirely different system, as ATSIC will be. The member for Stuart indicated that he has a concern that, occasionally, local governing boundaries appear to be the same as land trust boundaries. I think he has a total misconception about that too because it is community of interest. If land is not a community interest or an interest within that community in that area, I would be very much surprised. If it is not taken into account, I would question the boundaries of community government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members who made comments that were worthy of them. As usual, the comments that were quite unworthy came from the other side of the House. I will leave my comments there because I think I have answered all the issues raised extremely well. Even though it might have appeared a little noisy in here, they will come out in Hansard in a reasonable flow.

I am disappointed that members opposite, whom I know support community government, can say that the actions of this government in attempting to get community government up and running have been the major cause of our not achieving that aim. In fact, we have allowed as long as Aboriginal people want. If we go through 6 or 10 drafts - and the member for Stuart criticised that - that is because we want to get it right. We want to have the feeling coming from the people.

Mr Ede: Well, why can't you ask them?

Mr McCARTHY: We are asking the people. Why do you think we keep on going back? I have draft after draft after draft.

Mr Ede: And you keep changing their drafts every time they come back in.

Mr McCARTHY: That is because there are differences within the community itself. We finally get what the majority in the community want and that community government council comes into place. If the member for Arafura is prepared to say that he has a community government that did not get the total support of his community, let him tell me that. Go to Ngukurr. It has the support. I will end my remarks on that note.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by Leave): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to make a personal explanation as a consequence of suggestions implied during question time today that I have used the office of Treasurer to secure a personal advantage. The issues centre on the transfer of a property which I own jointly with my wife to a company, Dreprey Pty Ltd, which I also own jointly with my wife. The first discussions on transfer took place with my accountants on 15 December 1988 and, following written advice from my accountant on 4 January 1989, the decision was taken to action the transfer.

These discussions and decisions predated by 5 months the later events which shaped the Northern Territory budget, these being: first, the Premier's Conference in May 1989, where the Northern Territory government was first advised of the size of its Commonwealth allocations for 1989-90, and the reduction in real terms of some \$59m; and, secondly, the budget Cabinet in mid-June 1989, where the Northern Territory Cabinet first began to address the question of revenue shortfall and how that could be met, including a review of local taxes and charges. That review included conveyancing duty, which was adjusted upwards in the 1989-90 budget introduced to this House yesterday.

The decision to transfer the property was taken at least 4 months before I became aware, as Treasurer, that consideration would have to be given to a review of local taxes, and at least 5 months before those considerations commenced with my accountant. I further state that, on the transfer, the stamp duty paid was at the highest prevailing rate, there being no attempt to split the asset and so produce a lower dutiable result. Additionally, the new duty rate specified in the 22 August 1989 budget would add \$5750 to the transfer if that transfer took place under the new regime.

Mr Speaker, I reject any suggestion that I would abuse my office, or demean my 15 years of service to the public as a member of this House.

HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 214)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, for and on behalf of the Minister for Lands and Housing, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The main purpose of this bill is to amend section 16(3) of the Housing Act to clarify and extend the powers of the Northern Territory Housing Commission

to sell its real or personal property. It is the practice of the commission, when exercising its powers of sale as a mortgagee, to offer the property for sale, firstly, by public auction. In some instances, where the property is not sold or is passed in at auction, the sale of the property is negotiated either by direct negotiation immediately after the unsuccessful auction between the highest bidder and the auctioneer, with final approval by the commission, or by listing the property for sale with the auctioneer or members of the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory and sale at the highest price offered, subject to final approval by the commission.

Notwithstanding that the power of sale is contained in the mortgage document, which is subject to the provisions of the Real Property Act, a legal opinion has been expressed that the commission's practice of selling by private treaty after an unsuccessful auction may conflict with the current provisions of section 16(3) of the Housing Act which limits the disposal of real and personal property of the commission by either public auction or inviting public tenders.

It is in the best interests of both the commission and the mortgagor for the sale of the property to take place as quickly as possible at an acceptable price. This will enable the proceeds of the sale to be applied to discharge the loan after all expenses incurred from the sale have been deducted. Whilst the property remains unsold, the interest on the loan accumulates and the mortgagor's debt increases accordingly.

The commission generally favours the immediate disposal of a mortgaged property but, in view of the depressed state of the real estate market, properties that can be rented at a level that covers the monthly instalments, as well as contributing to a reduction of the loan, have been leased out through members of the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory. Here again, the rights of a mortgagee have been invoked by the commission but, in view of the recent opinion, this action may again be in conflict with the current provisions of section 16(3) of the Housing Act.

It is considered that the commission, as mortgagee in possession, should not be restricted by the limitations imposed by section 16(3) of the Housing Act. The commission should be seen at all times to be acting in the best interest of the mortgagor and therefore should have the ability to negotiate the best possible sale price or leasing terms of the property, in the shortest possible time, depending on the current circumstances.

In addition, whilst amending section 16(3) of the Housing Act, the opportunity has also been taken to include a provision to allow the commission to sell any property that has not been sold after first being offered for sale by public auction or after the calling of public tenders, which is the usual practice in public enterprise. However, the proposed amendment will limit the time the commission can sell by this process to a period of 6 months immediately following the unsuccessful auction or tender. This will ensure that the commission reviews and reassesses the sale of the property and may include the revaluation of the property where necessary. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

COMPANIES AND SECURITIES LEGISLATION BILL
(Serial 212)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, for an on behalf of the Attorney-General, 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, the Companies (Acquisition of Shares)(Application of Laws) Act, the Securities Industry (Application of Laws) Act and the Futures Industries (Application of Laws) Act to make further provision for the payment of fees under the Cooperative Companies and Securities Scheme and to make provision for the payment of taxes as well as fees.

Since July 1982, the law relating to companies and the securities industry has been substantially uniform across Australia. With the admission to the scheme of the Northern Territory in 1986, uniform laws were implemented across Australia with respect to the regulation of companies, and the securities and futures industries. That uniformity was achieved by a form of cooperative federalism which has served the Northern Territory and indeed the Australian business community very well. Under that scheme, the National Companies and Securities Commission was established to be the principal body responsible for the administration of the scheme. It reports to the Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities. The budget for the National Companies and Securities Commission is currently provided one-half by the Commonwealth and the balance between each of the participating jurisdictions in proportion to their population. In addition, each of the jurisdictions is required to resource a Corporate Affairs Office to assist in the administration of these scheme laws in its state or territory.

The growth of the Australian business sector in the last decade has led to many Australian companies having substantial operations in more than one state of Australia, and many of them having significant international operations. This growth has imposed considerable demands on the limited resources of the National Companies and Securities Commission. In response to the commission's need for additional resources to enable it adequately to regulate the Australian capital markets, the Ministerial Council decided, at its meeting in Melbourne in March this year, that those additional resources should be funded through increased fees, particularly in those areas where the actual cost of performing functions is not met by the fee presently charged. The decision included targeting those parts of the business community that are the principal 'users' of the commission's services and imposing additional fees or levies on the annual returns of listed corporations and the holders of securities and futures industry licences. Unlisted companies - that is, the vast majority of Territory companies - will not be affected by these fees.

The fees which will be imposed immediately are designed to raise approximately \$3.5m nationally in a full year of operation. They will enable the commission to recruit some 38 additional staff over the next 2 years. The majority of these additional staff will be allocated to enforcement and surveillance functions by the commission.

The amendments to the various application of laws acts made by this bill are necessary to provide for the application in the Northern Territory of scheme regulations which impose fees even though the fees imposed may amount to a tax. While the exact quantum of the new fees has yet to be settled by the ministerial council, it is likely that the fee could be expressed as a percentage of the value of their listed securities. For example, a company with over \$150m of listed securities, could pay a levy of \$1500 plus \$25 for each \$10m of the value of its listed securities over \$150m. In the case of takeover documents, the registration fee is likely to be expressed as a percentage of the consideration payable under the terms of the offer being

made, with a minimum fee of \$2000. Similar fees can be expected to be made with respect to prospectuses and statements under section 170 relating to prescribed interests.

Additional fees are also expected to be raised from participants in the securities and futures industry by increasing the fees payable in respect of licence applications and the lodgment of their annual statements. An application for a dealer's licence, for example, by a body corporate could rise from about \$160 to \$1500.

The bill before the House also substantially mirrors changes made to the Commonwealth fees acts which are designed to facilitate on-line computer access to Corporate Affairs Offices' public records. Once all Corporate Affairs Offices are computerised and linked to this system, this will be of immense benefit to the business community. I am pleased to say that the Northern Territory Corporate Affairs Office is in the early stages of being part of this national network.

The commencement provisions of the bill are linked to the commencement of part IX of the Cooperative Scheme Legislation Amendment Act 1989 of the Commonwealth, and are designed to ensure that uniform changes will be implemented throughout Australia at the same time. I expect that each of the states will be passing similar amendments to their legislation in the near future. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (POWERS AND PRIVILEGES) BILL
(Serial 213)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, on 23 May 1989, the Legislative Assembly adopted the following recommendations from the New Parliament House Committee:

That, prior to the Legislative Assembly being accommodated in the Chan Building, the Legislative Assembly and Privileges Act be amended to establish the Chan Building and appropriate adjacent areas as the parliamentary precincts during the construction of the new Parliament House.

Mr Speaker, this bill gives you the power to declare, by notice in the Gazette, that the precincts described in schedule 1A are the parliamentary precincts. These precincts are comprised of the Chan Building and associated car park areas.

As honourable members are aware, the date on which the Legislative Assembly will move to the Chan Building is not certain. It depends on the availability of the new TIO building, Northern Territory House, the length of time that it will take to establish ministerial offices in that building and the time that it will take to move there from the Chan Building. The government is anxious to proceed as quickly as possible but, at this stage, there is no certainty that the Legislative Assembly will be able to take up accommodation in the Chan Building prior to the October sittings of the Assembly. It is therefore rightly left to you, Mr Speaker, to declare the precincts at the appropriate time. As the Assembly will probably be occupying this Chamber for another 3 months, the opportunity has been taken to correct

an anomaly in the present description of the parliamentary precincts and thus to make certain the present precincts of the Legislative Assembly.

The land described in schedule 1 of the bill encompasses the present Legislative Assembly buildings, the Nelson Building and surrounding lands and car park. The old description did not include the Nelson Building. I believe that this anomaly should be corrected as soon as possible and I therefore propose that this bill be passed through all stages at these sittings. Accordingly, I will move for a suspension of standing orders at a later stage. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY INSURANCE OFFICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 197)
MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 198)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this simple legislation will enable the TIO to restructure itself on the occasion of the departure of its General Manager, Mr Hawke. He is to be replaced by 2 people and that is a pretty substantial compliment to him. The opposition has no problem with this legislation and I do not want to speak for long.

This is an appropriate opportunity to congratulate Mr Hawke on his time at the TIO. I have had some significant run-ins with the TIO and its directions during his period of office, but there is no doubt that the TIO is in a much sounder position at the time of his departure than it was at the time of his arrival. Some bad decisions were made before he arrived, particularly in the reinsurance area. It had a fairly rocky time and there is no doubt that the TIO is now in very sound shape and has the potential to play a very important role in the future economic development of the Northern Territory. It was encouraging that this year, for the first time, a budget item indicated that the Northern Territory exchequer would receive \$2m directly from the TIO. I believe that is a sign that the TIO is beginning to mature and come of age as a major player in the Northern Territory economy, both in its own right and in its role of providing a return to the taxpayer.

I would also like to congratulate the TIO on the role that it is starting to play in terms of investment in local activities. We all know that it made a disastrous decision, probably at the government's instigation, to become involved in Hungerford Refrigeration in the Trade Development Zone. That is certainly past and everybody is now watching the future of its joint participation in the expansion of Darwin Joinery. It is to be hoped, and I have no good reason for any belief to the contrary, that that operation will proceed smoothly and that the participation of the TIO will be rewarded both in terms of extra jobs at Darwin Joinery and also in terms of returns to the TIO. It is in that area of encouraging and increasing our productive capacity that the TIO has really to concentrate.

I must say that I found the decision of TIO to invest in Northern Territory House rather strange. Firstly, that building does not really add to our productive capacity. Secondly, I have it on first-hand authority that the decision by the TIO to invest in such a building meant that another private enterprise developer who was interested in a multistorey development pulled out and did not proceed with that development. I think it is unfortunate that

a semi-government instrumentality has operated in a way that has discouraged private enterprise development in a particular area.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bills. We believe that the TIO is soundly based and we certainly believe that it has a very vital and expanding role to play in the future economic development of the Northern Territory.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise today to speak to these very small but important bills which basically relate to administrative changes at the TIO. However, these small administrative changes exemplify some very important aspects of the TIO and its change of direction.

I cannot allow the Leader of the Opposition to go unharassed in respect of some of his gratuitous comments about the operations of the TIO. Whilst he hands out bouquets with one hand, he uses the other to hit the TIO with a brickbat.

Like the Leader of the Opposition, I applaud Mr Hawke, the former General Manager of the TIO, for his efforts during the last few years. I wish him and his wife well in their retirement in Queensland. Mr Hawke worked untiringly for the TIO and the Northern Territory government during his period here and, whilst he was not an insurance man in the traditional sense, he had a considerable understanding of the background of insurance and a very fine understanding of and background in investment matters.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to problems in the reinsurance area with the TIO in the last few years. Certainly, there will always be occasions when an insurance company will be involved in reinsurance in the process of handling its affairs. An insurance company has to spread its risks and, in that process, there are occasions when minor mistakes are made in reinsurance handlings. Generally speaking, I believe the TIO's reinsurance affairs were handled exceptionally well. There was one minor aberration, as the Leader of the Opposition is aware.

I would like to applaud the efforts of Michael Nyunt, now one of the joint General Managers of the TIO, for his efforts in dealing with the reinsurance problems. Late last year, he visited London to ensure that the interests of the Northern Territory were protected by the underwriters of the reinsurance program. My inquiries indicate that his very fine efforts on behalf of the Territory and the TIO created an environment which enabled the TIO to resolve the problems it possibly faced in relation to the collapse of an international reinsurance broker, something of which the TIO could not have had prior knowledge. Certainly, Mr Nyunt's involvement helped to protect the Northern Territory's interests and I applaud him for his efforts.

The Leader of the Opposition criticised the TIO's involvement in Northern Territory House. On one of the first occasions that I heard the Leader of the Opposition speak about the Territory Insurance Office, he criticised its lack of involvement in investment in the Northern Territory. One of the major things that the Territory Insurance Office has been involved in since its inception has been the collection of premiums from the public. Where it has been at all possible, it has reinvested that income in the Northern Territory and, as widely as possible, it has protected the policyholders of the company. It has invested widely in buildings and other business projects in the Northern Territory from one end to the other. The Leader of the Opposition criticised this. I do not believe that he really understood what he was saying because he made such a very small point of it. His criticism of the

investment in the building across the road was, in my view, not only gratuitous, but certainly unfounded. I support the bills.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on a matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the Territory Insurance Office investing in office buildings. I acknowledge the point that he made that, because the building is being constructed by the TIO, some other private developers who were perhaps proposing to build an office block in Darwin probably shelved their plans. No doubt that would be right because people who are in the office accommodation market keep a very careful eye on the rate of demand in a particular town and the building plans of various developers. They project 2 and 3 years ahead when their properties are likely to come on the market and decide whether or not to go ahead.

Before we turn around and say to the TIO that we do not think it should build any more office blocks in the Territory, I will point out a couple of facts to honourable members. First, we have established the TIO under a board and its instructions under the act are to run as a commercial enterprise, largely as an insurance company would run if it did not have that government backing and name. However, there are powers in the act for a minister to direct the TIO in certain matters, certainly not in regard to claims being made against it and so on, but in regard to other matters.

The TIO is very conscious of the expectation in the community and among politicians that it will use its substantial income to invest in the Northern Territory, and it does its very best to do that. However, the Northern Territory is a very small pond when it comes to large-scale investment. Indeed, a number of large investment houses who might seek to have an investment in the Northern Territory at times find it difficult to track down sizeable, secure, profitable investments. Of course, insurance companies are not really in the risk-taking business by and large. They are as far as offering insurance coverage is concerned but they are not really in the risk-taking business as far as their investments are concerned. They prefer blue chip investments, and the TIO is no exception. If you look around the Territory to find a business venture or investment of quite a few million dollars that has a long-term future of earning a high return, you will find that most of them are owned by people who do not feel like giving them up. In fact, there are few of them about.

Thus, the TIO has built office blocks in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Darwin. It will keep an eye on those property markets. It is also investing in a number of businesses around the Territory where it has attractive propositions put to it. It is also becoming involved now in commercial loans to business. It has appointed a commercial manager who will consider loan applications from businesses in the same way as a bank does. We applaud its expansion into this field to try to keep money rolling through the Northern Territory rather than flowing interstate.

I simply point out to members that the TIO has the difficulty of finding investments in the Territory for its equity dollars. If we were to deny it the ability to expand or tell it to get out of the office block business, that would place it in a situation where even more of its funds would have to be placed in the money markets. A fair proportion of its funds are there anyway because it needs a sizeable pool of liquid funds to be able to pay out claims at any time. Whilst those short-term money market funds are probably deposited locally, they flow instantly interstate to earn high interest dollars. Indeed, much of the TIO's profit is interest earned on its cash flow, and rightly so.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

PAROLE ORDERS (TRANSFER) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 166)
PAROLE OF PRISONERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 181)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has given considerable thought to the bills before the Assembly. There are a number of provisions that cause us no great concern. I refer particularly to the requirements that the constitution of the Parole Board be changed. There are certain other aspects that are acceptable as well. There are provisions that we find unexceptionable: those relating to a broader range of documents to accompany interstate parole transfers and the documents accompanying registration in the Northern Territory and those relating to consistencies in respect of cancellation of parole orders and the sentencing of parole violators to periods of imprisonment equivalent to their original sentences.

However, there is one area that is of concern to the opposition. I refer to the principle of removing the requirements of natural justice applying to the deliberations of the Parole Board. I have given considerable attention to this question and I note, for example, the honourable minister's reference to the fact that, in Victoria for some time and more recently in Western Australia, amendments have been made to prevent the operation of natural justice applying in Parole Board decisions. I have had the benefit of some advice from members of the Parole Board in Victoria, for which I thank them. Their basic point is that they believe that they provide a sufficient degree of fairness in the deliberations of the board, but they did not want to be shackled by demands of procedural fairness.

In my view, the situation in Victoria is dramatically different in terms of number and in terms of size. The Victorian jails are much bigger than ours. In fact, I am advised that decisions have to be taken in relation to about 70 people a week or about 3500 a year. In 1987, in the Northern Territory, there were 401 Parole Board case considerations. That is dramatically fewer and would seem to indicate that the circumstances in the Northern Territory are somewhat different from those in Victoria in that regard. I suggest that very often the argument is advanced by the government in the Northern Territory that conditions are different here and we should have different approaches. I believe that, in this particular instance, there is not a strong case for following the Victorian precedent. That becomes even more clear when we look at the particular case in the Northern Territory that has been the justification for the removal of natural justice provisions.

Before I turn to that case, let us give some consideration to what these principles of natural justice are. Of course, they are concepts that are deeply embedded in the common law. Often, we have members referring to ancient rights and to the importance of the common law as a bulwark against the oppression of individual liberty, and I suggest that this is exactly one of those circumstances. Any legislature should be very loath to do away with the principles of natural justice. There are 2 of them. One, of course, is

that a person who is making a decision or is involved in a decision about somebody before the law should not have been involved previously with that person. He should not have an interest in the outcome. The second principle of natural justice is *audi alteram partem*, to be allowed to be heard on the other side, literally, so that a party should be given a fair hearing and should be allowed to defend himself. That very principle of natural justice has been fought for long and hard. All members know as well as I of the origins of that common law right in relation to the Star Chamber of the 17th century, and of the Cromwellian abuses of natural justice that led to the creation of those rights.

Let us look at the particular case that occurred in the Northern Territory. First, I will give the very potted version of this case that the honourable minister gave us in his second-reading speech. For the benefit of honourable members, it is worth reading this:

The next amendment proposed is a highly significant one. The need for the Parole Board to operate without being bound by the rules of natural justice stems from a case in 1986 when a man with an extensive criminal background threatened his parole officer with violence. This man was on parole, living in an inland town of the Territory. His parole officer was a woman. Satisfied about the seriousness of the incident, the Parole Board revoked the man's parole order, which meant he immediately went back to prison to finish his original sentence. A month later, he was out of jail, the revocation order having been quashed by the Supreme Court when the man appealed on the grounds of denial of natural justice.

Outrageous, do you think, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this man should have been allowed to escape renewing his sentence after threatening violence on a female parole officer, and he with such an extensive criminal background? Let us have a look at his extensive criminal background. The extensive criminal background was of breaking and entering, not a crime against people. He did not have a history of violence against people and, in a strange irony, I point out that the Chairman of the Parole Board was in fact the Supreme Court judge who delivered the decision that the principles of natural justice should be upheld. I am rather interested to know about the genesis of this particular provision.

This is all public information so there is no problem with my mentioning that the person involved was Darrell Ross Patterson, who was ...

Mr Coulter: That is it. You say that he did not have any history of violent crimes. Break and entry was the only crime.

Mr BELL: I take up the interjection from the Leader of Government Business and I remind him that, on 17 November 1981, this person pleaded guilty and was sentenced for 1 charge of breaking, entering and stealing, and 1 charge of larceny as a servant. For these offences, he was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment. The judge specified a period of 2 years and 6 months during which he was not to be eligible for parole.

At the expiration of the 2 years and 6 months period, he was released on parole in 1983, subject to certain conditions which he kept resolutely. With the permission of his parole officer, he left the Territory and went to Queensland. He remained in Queensland for about 1 year, went to New South Wales for about 9 months, and then returned to Queensland. He had married while he was in New South Wales and he returned to the Northern Territory in about March 1986, and his wife came with him.

During all that period of some 2 years, the applicant complied, it appears, with the conditions of his parole and no suggestion was made that he had not complied with them but, when he returned to the Northern Territory, he had problems. I will read from the judgment, Mr Deputy Speaker:

After his return to the Northern Territory, and having first obtained the permission of the parole officer, he commenced work in Elliott. He was told that there was a female parole officer visiting Elliott who would visit him. He raised an objection to this on the ground that he did not get on with women parole officers because he had trouble communicating with them. However, he seems ...

Mr Collins: Sad.

Mr BELL: Hang on, this bloke was put back in the nick for this, and bear in mind ...

Mr Coulter: We are not talking about him.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Hang on, I will pick up the interjections from the member for Sadadeen, the Leader of Government Business and the member for Jingili. I will just point out ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw the comment that he was put back in the nick.

Mr BELL: I withdraw the comment that he was put back in the nick and I aver, Mr Deputy Speaker, that he was returned to jail. Slang it may have been, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I have some doubt as to whether it was unparliamentary. However, I withdraw it unreservedly.

I point out for the benefit of those people interjecting from the government benches and elsewhere that the parole system is there as part of a process of rehabilitation. Let us look at it in those terms. This bloke had been doing pretty well. He had done his 2½ years. He had gone to Queensland and New South Wales. He had married, and he had returned here and appears ...

Mr Collins: He had done pretty well.

Mr BELL: Well, let us ...

Mr Coulter: All of this while he was on parole.

Mr BELL: I will not spoil the story, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will get back to it. I remind people that parole exists presumably as part of the rehabilitation mechanism. People are also under the control of the state. I quite accept that, and parole is not the same as being out of jail and free. I quite accept that. I simply argue this particular case at some length to point out that the facts are not quite as simple as the minister indicated in his second-reading speech.

Mr Patterson returned to the Territory and commenced work in Elliott. He had a good work history, presumably a desirable outcome, and bear in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this is at a time when we are trying to keep people out of jails if possible. We are attempting to find alternatives to incarceration. Far be it from me to comment on whether his disagreement with

the female parole officer was wise or not. In fact, Mr Justice Asche made exactly that comment, I recall. The judgment went on to say:

He seems to have accepted the necessity that the female parole officer would visit him, but he made the point that he required her visits to be confidential since he believed that, in a small town such as Elliott, he would have trouble obtaining or maintaining employment if his past history became known.

I believe that is a very reasonable concern.

He then received a phone call and later a letter from this officer saying she would visit him. He did not reply to the letter. Subsequently, he received information that led him to believe that this officer had spoken to his employers, telling them that he was on parole for larceny as a servant. He became very upset at this information although that is not to say that he then acted wisely. He telephoned a parole officer in Darwin whom he knew and, on his own admission, made some threats concerning the woman parole officer. He says that he used words to the effect that, if she was in Elliott, he would 'smack her in the teeth'.

A report made by the Regional Director for Correctional Services, dated 23 June, states that several threats were made by the applicant about this officer. It is fair to the female parole officer concerned to say that the report of the regional director makes it clear that, if any information was given about the applicant on parole, it did not come from her but from another source quite unconnected with any officer of the Department of Correctional Services. I am not seeking to be critical of the parole officer concerned. I am saying that the minister's comment in his second-reading speech, to the effect that a man with an extensive criminal background threatened his parole officer with violence, needs to be qualified. I have well and truly established the nature of that qualification.

The real injustice occurred when, after the regional director had reported on 23 June in relation to the threats, there was no further communication with Mr Patterson until he was taken into custody on 27 June. He was not taken into custody on 23 June when the matter came to light. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the situation was not quite as dramatically bad as the minister suggested in his second-reading speech. Mr Patterson was returned to jail and, on the basis of this application, the principles of natural justice were not accorded to him. He did not have a chance to go to the Parole Board and say: 'I have been out of jail for 2 years. I have been in Queensland and New South Wales and have accepted the reporting conditions. I was concerned that I might lose my job because my past might become known to my employer, even though it was not relevant to my employment, and I made rash threats in that situation'.

Mr Coulter: Is that acceptable behaviour in your book?

Mr BELL: No. I do not defend that sort of behaviour at all. However, I believe that natural justice was denied because this person did not have the opportunity to put his case. I would not be complaining if he had had the opportunity to put his side of the story. Looking at that particular case in the overall context of correctional services, I think it was an absurd decision to place that man in jail again. I do not think the interests of the Northern Territory or the individual are served by that sort of action and I think the decision taken by the Supreme court of the Northern Territory, that

he was denied natural justice under those circumstances, was eminently reasonable.

Having said this and having explained why the opposition does not accept the principle that natural justice should simply be done away with, it is reasonable to consider whether there are real problems in relation to the work of the Parole Board and whether extra powers are required to ensure that procedures are smooth, that time is not wasted unnecessarily and that the board is administratively efficient within the bounds of fairness. That is fine. As far as I am concerned, however, the government is using a sledge-hammer to crack a walnut with this amendment. We strongly oppose those provisions. I do not believe that there is justification for them and, before they are introduced, I would like to see a more thorough review of the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act and the Parole of Prisoners Act. I think that this legislation is very ill-considered.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to correct much of the information that the Assembly has just been given by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Bell: It is a Supreme Court judgment, Barry.

Mr COULTER: It is Justice Asche's judgment. Everybody knows that. This is not about Mr Patterson. It is about whether the Northern Territory can have a parole system that works. The member for MacDonnell hails from Victoria and he said that he has been sent some information from Victoria. According to my information, Victorian legislation exempts the Parole Board from the rules of natural justice.

Mr Bell: That is what I said. You never listen do you, Barry. That is exactly what I said.

Mr COULTER: The Western Australian Offenders Probation and Parole Act explicitly excludes the rules of natural justice. That is 2 states where such a provision applies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when I was the minister responsible for correctional services, I was very proud of the pioneering legislation introduced in this Assembly to initiate compulsory AIDS testing of prisoners. We were the first in Australia to move in that direction. We are not going to sit in this Assembly and accept the arguments put forward by the member for MacDonnell. The honourable member comes from Victoria. As a penal colony, Victoria would have had more experience in this regard than anywhere else.

Mr Bell: Victoria was never a penal colony, you peanut!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that comment.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw 'peanut' unreservedly. The minister was dramatically mistaken.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, Australia as a penal colony ...

Mr Bell: Yes, I am Australian.

Mr COULTER: The member for MacDonnell rightly corrects me in terms of Victoria not having been a penal colony, although I can advise honourable

members that there were very strong attempts to make it a separate colony in its own right in the very early days. My point is that, with the possible exception of Tasmania, no state would have more experience in the operation of correctional services institutions than Victoria. As I say, Victoria exempts its Parole Board from the application of natural justice. Are we in the Territory going to argue that Victoria is wrong? Is that the argument that the honourable member puts forward? I think not, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Let me continue. The situation is the same in Western Australia. In South Australia, offenders before the Parole Board can be represented by counsel, although there is no actual legal requirement. The Parole Board is conscious of operating within the rules of natural justice. My information is that Queensland would like to have its Parole Board exempted from the rules of natural justice. In New South Wales, I understand that the situation is not clear. There have been court cases requiring adherence to the rules of natural justice. While there has been no intention to exempt the Parole Board from the rules of natural justice, the policy of the New South Wales government is not clear. In Tasmania, legislation does not make specific reference to exempting Parole Board decisions from the rules of natural justice nor does it give parole applicants the right to be heard although, in practice, applicants are in fact interviewed.

That is what is happening throughout Australia. Why should the Northern Territory be different? As I said, I am proud of the pioneering legislation which this Assembly passed in relation to correctional services. We are not here to reopen the Patterson case, which Justice Asche summed up so well as has been demonstrated to us by the member for MacDonnell. We are simply being asked to determine whether the Parole Board can operate under the existing system, under which the person on parole can take his case to the court. The answer is very simple: it cannot.

Remember that, while Mr Patterson was on parole, he travelled around Australia and, although we are told that he could not communicate with women, he married during that period. The member for MacDonnell read out a list of Mr Patterson's prior convictions but the list was not complete. I understand that Mr Patterson collected convictions over a period dating back to 1979. However, we are not here to argue about that case or to reopen it.

Mr Bell: Then why did the minister mention it in his second-reading speech?

Mr COULTER: Simply as an example.

Mr Bell: No. As a cause.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, it was one case in 1986. It may open the floodgates to a whole range of matters. This society needs and demands protection from those people who will not conform. The vexed question of parole and non-parole periods is one which concerns the general community. The member for Nhulunbuy displays much mirth. I have been in more prisons than he is ever likely to ...

Mr Leo: I do not doubt that for a second, Barry.

Mr COULTER: ... including 38 in the United States of America. I have put a fair bit of my life into correctional reform.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you look at innovations like the Wildman River Wilderness Camp, the Beatrice Hill Rehabilitation Project, some of our home detention systems and electronic surveillance, I believe that I am justified in claiming to have made my mark on correctional services. I am proud of some of the reforms that were achieved during my time as minister. I will not sit in this Assembly and be told that we should move backwards at 100 mph by retaining the principle of natural justice when the states do not have it. We must show results. We must give the community the protection that it demands and deserves. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bills.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bills before the House. I wish to refer to some of the specific amendments contained within the bills. A major amendment will make the Director of Correctional Services a member of the Parole Board. I think that that is fair and reasonable. The Director of Correctional Services is probably the person who is best equipped to know the background and the history of any person who has been incarcerated in prison. I must say that I am rather surprised that the director has not previously been a member of the Parole Board. No one could be better suited for such a position. There is a whole range of people on the Parole Board as it exists at present and I think that the addition of the director will go a long way in assisting the deliberations of those very learned people.

I listened to the social scientist on the other side of the Chamber, the member for MacDonnell. He gave us a typical example of social engineering by a socialist.

Mr Bell: Where I come from, social science ...

Mr SETTER: He told us all about the Patterson case. The reality is that it is very unwise to refer to a particular case in this instance, to name the person concerned and drag up the history of the matter.

Mr Bell: It is public information, you dope!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr SETTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is very important to note the essence of the problem that was created by the release of Patterson after his parole was revoked and after he appealed to the Supreme Court. Like the member for MacDonnell, I will quote from the minister's comments on 24 May 1989. I think it is worth reading this into Hansard once again because it is very important that we understand this when we are considering the point made by the member for MacDonnell:

This case caused a great deal of concern among parole and corrections authorities all around Australia. It was recognised that there is potential to virtually destroy the system of parole and conditional liberty programs across the nation ...

That is what we are talking about, not whether or not Mr Patterson should or should not be incarcerated or whether or not he should be entitled to natural justice. What we are talking about is whether the parole system in this country will stand up in the future. That is what we are moving to correct today. The minister went on to say that there is potential to destroy the

system 'if every decision to refuse, defer or revoke parole was open to challenge on the grounds of natural justice not having prevailed'. He said:

The time and work to hear and determine one appeal would be bad enough, but the dozens or even hundreds of challenges would create an impossible situation difficult to contemplate, and hundreds of appeals might not be an exaggeration when you take into account all the unfavourable decisions taken by the Parole Board over the years.

Since the case I have just outlined, the Parole Board has been hesitant about parole revocation, preferring to let the courts decide on breaches of parole and this uncertainty is probably reflected in last year's revocation figures.

Since the Supreme Court decision, the Parole Board has not been prepared to rule on these matters because of the threat of its decisions being taken to the Supreme Court under common law and being overturned by the court. That is not acceptable. These days, the community demands a couple of things. First of all, it demands truth in sentencing. In other words, the sentence imposed by the courts must reflect the seriousness of the crime. I know that the Attorney-General currently has this situation under review and, doubtless, he will be coming back to this place at some time in the future with amendments to the relevant acts.

The second thing that is very important is that the parole granted to these offenders also must reflect the sentence for the crime. In other words, if the judge or the magistrate has imposed what he considers to be an appropriate sentence, the non-parole period imposed by the judge or the magistrate must also reflect the gravity of the crime. There is no point in sentencing an offender to 10 years in jail if he will serve only 25% or less of that sentence. The parole period must also reflect the gravity of that crime. I would like to draw your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, to section 92 of the Prisons (Correctional Services) Act which refers to remissions: 'The minister may make a determination specifying the amount of remission which may be granted to the prisoner and the circumstances in which that remission may be granted'. That is outside the Parole Board's determination.

I further refer to determination No 5 under the Prisoners (Correctional Services) Act, section 3(b), which says: 'The maximum amount of remission that may be earned shall not exceed one-third of the maximum length of the sentence'. I am told that that one-third remission is automatic in the Northern Territory. I would like clarification of that because my interpretation of that is that, for every sentence that is imposed in the Northern Territory, the prisoner is entitled to an automatic one-third remission of the sentence. I do not think that is a fair go.

Mr Bell: You didn't read the second-reading speech either, Rick.

Mr SETTER: If I didn't, you didn't either!

In his second-reading speech, the minister referred to a 1983 report indicating that 47 prisoners were paroled at that time. He went on to say that 18 paroles were revoked. That is 39%! I am blessed if I know why he was quoting from a 1983 report but, if that was the case, I have to ask whether the consideration of those various prisoners' paroles was fair and reasonable.

The amendments also relate to section 6(1) and section 8 of the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act. These are being amended to allow a broader range of documentation to be made available to the minister.

I would like to close on this point. As far as I have been able to research, there are 3 acts that control the parole of prisoners: the Parole of Prisoners Act, the Prisons (Correctional Services) Act and the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act. I must ask why we need 3 acts to control the parole of prisoners. I think it would be fair and reasonable to ask the minister to rationalise the 3 acts into 1 act controlling the parole of prisoners. I would also like to request the minister to have a further look at the automatic one-third remission of sentence in the Northern Territory. Somebody suggested to me some time ago that it was introduced many years ago because it was rather difficult for prisoners incarcerated in the tropics. I can understand that the galvanised iron and concrete block houses at Fannie Bay Gaol would have been very hot during the summer period. It would have been very difficult indeed for anyone incarcerated there for a number of years. Is that why they have been given a one-third automatic remission all these years? Such conditions do not prevail at Berrimah Prison. I would like to have clarification of that. In today's society, where the community is demanding truth in sentencing, it is not fair and reasonable that prisoners be given an automatic one-third remission of their sentence. I believe that needs to be reviewed.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I have a little more information in which honourable members may be interested in regard to the former prisoner, whose parole was revoked after he threatened a parole officer.

The gentleman concerned was born in 1956. Thus he is only 33 years old now. He has a pretty good record for a fellow who is only 33 and he has a lot of life to cram in there yet. I am advised that, in the ACT, Victoria and New South Wales, between 1972 and 1974, he was convicted of possessing property, 6 counts of break, enter and steal, stealing, larceny, larceny as a servant, larceny from a motor vehicle and housebreaking and stealing. In 1975, in New South Wales, he was convicted of larceny of a motor vehicle. In 1975, in Victoria, he was convicted of larceny of a motor vehicle. In 1975, in New South Wales, he was convicted of breach of bond. In 1977, in Victoria, he was convicted of theft of a motor vehicle. In 1978, in South Australia, he was convicted of larceny. In 1979, in New South Wales, he had another conviction. In 1981, in Alice Springs, he was convicted of larceny as a servant. In 1981, in Darwin, he was convicted of larceny as a servant and break, enter and steal. For those last 2 offences in 1981 in Darwin, he was sentenced to 5 years hard labour. Thus, in his short life, he has been pretty active in breaking the laws of the land. Given the debate earlier, I thought I should add that little historical touch to it all.

I am advised that, without this change to the rules of natural justice, the parole system really would be unworkable or it could make the parole system unworkable if those persons who could today take action under the natural justice provisions took that action. It may well be that prisoners who apply for parole and who are rejected without a hearing before the Parole Board, which I understand is pretty commonplace, could apply under the rules of natural justice on the grounds that they ought to be heard. I understand that, after the non-parole period that is set by the court expires, the Parole Board meets monthly and, in fact, each prisoner who has his parole application rejected could apply monthly and, if he does not receive a hearing before being rejected, he could scream about the rules of natural justice. If the Parole Board is to hear all such cases, the taxpayer will be up for a few dollars, not to mention the time taken up by the busy people on the Parole Board. The prisoner would have to be escorted to the Parole Board. He would require escorts, no doubt, and he would probably be entitled to some legal representation in that respect too, no doubt at taxpayers' expense.

In the case of revocation of a prisoner's parole, as in the case highlighted in the second-reading speech, if we do not abolish the rules of natural justice, it will mean that, after an offence has been brought to the notice of the board, the person must be found and given notice that the Parole Board proposes to consider the revocation of his parole. Presumably, he has to be given some time to prepare his case and the benefit of legal representation and then he has to be brought before the Parole Board. He might be at the opposite end of the Territory, I guess, but he has to be brought before the Parole Board, no doubt at taxpayers' expense, for his case to be heard. I believe that could indeed make the current parole system quite unworkable. Certainly, it is not the intention of this government to have a parole system in the Northern Territory which acts so poorly.

If a Labor stronghold such as Victoria considers that it is warranted that the rules of natural justice not apply in relation to parole, I am sure it did not take that decision lightly because Victorian parliamentarians seem to have the nation's conscience on their shoulders. Western Australia has also done the same thing. I am advised that other states are considering the same course of action and, by this legislation, we propose to do it also.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to put my thoughts on record in relation to this matter. Basically, I have some real concerns with the whole parole system. A person who has committed a crime is charged, tried by the courts, where he is afforded all natural justice, is found guilty and sentenced. Then, lo and behold, particularly to the consternation of those who have been offended against, he is back on the streets again in a short period. There is considerable disquiet in the community in relation to the parole system.

I must confess that I feel a great deal of empathy with the community in this regard. I can appreciate the point of view of the prison administrators that the possibility of parole may be something that can be held over a prisoner's head to encourage him to behave. I suppose schoolteachers do the same sort of thing. They have various punishments and rewards which they can apply. No doubt, for the people who have to be face to face with people in the prisons, it is handy to have a prisoner know that, if he does not behave himself, his chances of release on parole can be jeopardised. Parole is a carrot that can be dangled before a prisoner to encourage him to behave. It is a reward for good behaviour. That is pure and simple psychology.

In the case which we have before us, which has prompted the government to introduce this legislation for the removal of the rules of natural justice as a ground of appeal, I believe that, in the interests of the ordinary person in the community, we have to make parole a real privilege, as it is supposed to be. If a person does the wrong thing while on parole, that is a demonstration of real stupidity. As I understand it, if you are given a sentence of 5 years with a non-parole period of 2 years and 6 months and granted parole after the expiration of the non-parole period, and you do something stupid and your parole is revoked after 2 years, you are not returned to prison for 6 months but for another 2 years and 6 months. I believe that is the way it should be. That adds to the attraction of the carrot. A person should realise that he may only have 6 months more to go on parole but, if he does something stupid, loses his temper and will not comply with reasonable directions, as in the case referred to, then instead of 6 months on parole, he returns to prison for 2 years and 6 months.

It should be that way. Parole must be seen as a privilege. People in the community have a right to feel that, when a person is released on parole, he

will behave himself. They feel very upset about some of the people who are released on parole because of the nature of the crimes they have committed. People on parole should act like model citizens. They are not free to do some of the things that even you and I might do, Mr Speaker. On occasion, we might even like to sound off about how we would like to smack someone in the teeth, but that is a freedom that we have. Of course, we do not mean it, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: Now that you come to mention it, the thought has crossed my mind.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, I am sure the Leader of Government Business would have felt that way and I am sure that we all have had such feelings on occasions, but that is an extra freedom. Parole is a real privilege and it must be seen that way by the community or it will react even more strongly over the parole system in the future. If you are out on parole, it is a privilege and, if you are told to jump, you simply ask how high and how many times.

As I read it, this man had only 6 months of his parole period to complete when he was silly enough to react in the way that he did. My feeling is that it should be made known throughout the prison system that an appeal to the Supreme Court will not be available because of the decision of this parliament. I believe that this legislation expresses the desire of the vast majority of the people that parole must be a privilege. If a parolee abuses that privilege, he will be returned to prison to complete the full term of his sentence. If we go soft on this proposal, we will take away one of the real prodders, shall we say, for people who have been released on parole to do the right thing.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks will be brief and general only and not directed to particular aspects of the amendments. We have heard a great deal from the opposition about the right of the prisoner to natural justice, but no member from the government or the opposition benches has said anything about natural justice for the victim. When any crime is committed, there is a victim. Sometimes a person commits a crime against himself or herself, but those occasions are very few.

Recently, there have been a number of cases involving bodily harm or assault or, in some cases, rape of women by men. I cannot remember the details, but what raised the ire of any thinking woman against the justice system and, I suppose you could say, against the government for making the rules in cases like these, were the relatively easy terms of parole that the perpetrators of these crimes had imposed on them. They were handed down a penalty for committing these crimes against women and, after a relatively short time, they were due to be released on parole. Parole is supposed to be given to a person not as a right but as a privilege. It is used to help the person rehabilitate into community life and lead a proper and law-abiding life. This does occur in most cases but, in other cases, far too many to mention, the rate of recidivism is very high. It is particularly high and particularly noteworthy in relation to those crimes directed against women, and I am talking about crimes of assault.

I cannot speak firmly enough on my views on the subject of easy parole for prisoners who commit crimes against women because ...

Mr Collins: And children.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Women and children, crimes of violence. Time and time again, these people have been released only to commit the same crimes

again. In general, I have objected violently to positions being given to women simply because they are women, because I believe a woman should earn her position by her merits other than her sex. However, I make an exception in respect of membership of the Parole Board. I am not aware of the current composition of the Parole Board, but it might not do any harm if the minister reviewed it and perhaps ensured that one of its members was a woman who might feel for those women in the community who ...

Mr Collins: Bleeding hearts.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: She would not be a bleeding heart but would feel for all those women in the community ...

Mr Collins: You are the only one I know, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am not a bleeding heart.

Mr Collins: I know. You are the only one I would put up.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: She would feel for all those women in the community who have had crimes committed against them.

Mr Speaker, if prisoners are given easy terms of parole because people are afraid of making hard decisions in relation to requests for easy conditions of parole, those people should not be members of the Parole Board or in positions where these decisions have to be made.

I believe that our courts have to pull up their socks figuratively and consider the wishes of the community. Only by making the justice fit the crime - and I mean 'justice' with a capital 'J' - will we have a reduction in crime in our community. I am not speaking about crimes against property. I am speaking about crimes against persons. There has been an upsurge ...

Mr Coulter: There is a woman on our Parole Board.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I hope she is not a bleeding heart.

Mr Coulter: She is not!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Perhaps you should have more of them.

Mr Coulter: Of course, I am not sure what you mean by a 'bleeding heart'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You know what I mean.

Mr Speaker, if those who perpetrated crimes against women and children received their just deserts, that would contribute to the lessening of violence in the community. I hope the minister will take my views into consideration. They are the views of people in the community who are asking for justice to be applied in relation to our parole system.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I am deeply concerned that the bills are proceeding in this way.

Mr Collins: Move an amendment then.

Mr BELL: Rather than moving an amendment, as the member for Sadadeen suggests, I believe that in the case of such an important issue as that raised by clause 5 of the Parole of Prisoners Amendment Bill, it would be appropriate to have a complete review of the Parole Board and its operations in the light of interstate precedents. I do not believe that has been done adequately, certainly not on the basis of the minister's second-reading speech. Perhaps the only sensible suggestion made by the member for Jingili concerned the inclusion of the different parole acts in 1 law. That might be worth investigating as well.

Mr Speaker, finally, I want to place on record my profound opposition to the proposal that natural justice not apply to the deliberations of the Parole Board.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT (MOBILITY) BILL
(Serial 209)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill has an admirable purpose which is to allow employees of the Northern Territory public sector to move between the various public sector employing agencies whilst retaining accrued service entitlements and conditions of service. The bill does that job admirably with 1 or 2 minor problems which, I understand, will be corrected by the amendments in the schedule that has been circulated.

I commend the government on the introduction of this legislation. Throughout Australia and even beyond it, there is a feeling that it should be made easier for people to transfer within the government sector, both within a particular state or territory and between states and territories. This bill addresses that issue within the context of the Northern Territory. Clearly, it also fits within the broader context of the need to ensure that people in the work force today have the opportunity to undergo retraining whenever necessary to ensure that they keep up with demands in their present occupation or, if their present occupation becomes less desirable or their positions are abolished, that they have the opportunity to retrain and obtain skills in other areas. The public sector is moving in that direction at present. It would perhaps be more appropriate to address those matters in another debate rather than taking up the time of the House now. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition almost summarised the minister's second-reading speech in his response. It is pleasing to note the opposition's acceptance of the bill. I rise to add my support to the bill and to note some of the practical difficulties which this bill seeks to overcome. I also note that, in the context of a number of the political grandstanding exercises the opposition engages in from time to time, the appointment of a person to a senior position within the women's policy area of the Department of the Chief Minister gave a good example of how problems could be overcome with transfers and seniority rights being able to be transferred from one sector of public employment to another.

This bill also assists people working in the public sector in other ways. A number of adjustments have occurred in respect of the changes in

administrative arrangements orders which have led, for example, to the transfer of officers of the Department of Transport and Works and the Department of Mines and Energy to the Power and Water Authority. A range of similar issues arise as the government of the day organises its functions in the manner which it considers most appropriate. In such situations, individual employees of government should not find themselves disadvantaged. This bill will enable such technical difficulties to be overcome without the significant administrative complications that have arisen in the past.

The bill will also assist in particular areas of employment. I am aware that some of the management training programs in the Northern Territory Police Force are exceptional and may potentially broaden the opportunities for members of the force to move into other managerial areas as their careers progress over the years. In the past, the necessity to resign from the force in order to seek other public service employment has created difficulties and this bill will change that situation.

The minister and the government should be congratulated on this step and the further development of employment and career opportunities for public sector employees in the Northern Territory in a new era in which there is a much broader range of opportunity with far fewer bureaucratic hassles. I support the bill.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bill. I agree with the spirit of the bill in enabling public servants to move more freely in their employment in the public sector. However, one of my constituents has raised his concerns with me and I would seek an assurance from the minister in relation to them. This person was an employee of the Commonwealth Public Service and he transferred to NTEC. He works in a technical area and, when NTEC was subsumed into the Power and Water Authority, he felt as if he had lost some of his entitlements. I believe that this bill will allow the transfer of full entitlements and I would seek the minister's assurance that it covers employees who transferred from NTEC to the Power and Water Authority and that all their rights and privileges will be retained.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, it is certainly appropriate in any public service, including the Northern Territory's, which is relatively small by Australian standards, that the capacity should exist for employees to carry with them any benefits and entitlements as they move from employment in one area of the public sector to another. In future, the bill's provisions will apply to all people who move from one area of Northern Territory government employment to another and will allow them to carry with them all of the benefits that they have accrued. I do not think that there is any real reason for me to go on. The bill has the support of members on both sides of the House. I thank honourable members for their contributions and assure them that there has been ...

Mr Smith: What about answering the question from the member from Flynn?

Mr McCARTHY: I have answered it. In future, all people moving from one area of employment to another will be covered. I answered the question and, if you look at the Hansard record, you will see what I said. Any public servant moving from one place of employment to another within the Northern Territory Public Service, including the other bodies named in the bill ...

Mr Floreani: From NTEC to the Power and Water Authority.

Mr McCARTHY: The bill applies to any public sector employment. One way or the other, all public sector employees will be picked up under the terms of this bill. It does not matter whether a person moves from the public service to a statutory authority or the other way around.

Mr Floreani: This person moved in the past.

Mr McCARTHY: It is not retrospective.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTION

Noting Statement - NT Fibre Crops Program

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement. In doing so, I would like to make some comments about this program which is being conducted by the Northern Territory government. I will also make some comments on statements made on this matter by members opposite.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr HATTON: In response to the member for Koolpinyah, I will change that to the members who should be opposite, those members who have now left the Chamber for whatever reason. I refer in particular to the comments made by the member for Stuart on 24 May this year and by the Leader of the Opposition in early 1987 when the idea of a kenaf development was first mooted in the Northern Territory.

The kenaf initiative is an example of an innovative idea being put before the Northern Territory people. In encouraging the project and pressing for the development of a potential new industry in the Northern Territory to further strengthen its economic foundation and possibly create further industries here, the government showed great initiative. The response to that of the members of the official opposition - and I use that term quite deliberately - was to ask questions about the cost of a trip to investigate the potential of the industry. The opposition proceeded to lampoon the idea and to argue that it would not work. I happen to have the press comments in front of me. The Leader of the Opposition was pretty quick off the blocks. He took a trip to Queensland. When he came back, he said that it would not really work except possibly in the very long term. Our famous Labor representative, Senator Collins, also commented. He referred to his 20 years of agricultural experience. I have mapped out some of Senator Collins' experiences. He has had 20 years in agriculture, 10 years in forestry and 20 years in the beef and abattoir industries. So far, I have calculated that he is about 120 years old. Be that as it may, Senator Collins is a colourful speaker and we all appreciate the humour and wit that he demonstrates in his oratory.

Mr Speaker, I would like to remind honourable members of how this project has developed. As the minister explained, it is still very much in the research and development stage. It began with an approach to the Northern Territory government by News Ltd and, in particular, by Mr Hogan from the

NT News. In February 1986, he approached the then Chief Minister and myself, as Minister for Primary Production, suggesting that this might be a matter worth investigating for the Northern Territory. In May or June 1986, the government decided to carry out a pre-feasibility study into the crop known as kenaf in order to investigate its potential for the Northern Territory. In conjunction with News Ltd, we engaged 2 people who had had some 20 years experience working with kenaf in Australia. These were Dr Gartside and Mr Wood of CSIRO. One worked in the Division of Chemical, Wood and Technology and the other in the Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures. They were to carry out a study with the following general objectives:

to provide the Northern Territory government and News Ltd with an initial assessment of the potential for the development of a pulp and paper industry based on kenaf in the Northern Territory, the key issues and implications involved, and actions and strategies appropriate for industry development.

The specific terms of reference were to:

1. broadly review current knowledge of kenaf production, handling, processing and marketing;
2. assess the potential of kenaf production in the Northern Territory;
3. identify the key issues and implications involved in kenaf industry development in the Northern Territory; and
4. recommend appropriate actions and strategies needed to further investigate and develop the potential of the industry in the Northern Territory.

The study proceeded, following 2 preliminary reports in early February 1987. A final report was submitted to the Northern Territory government by that consulting team. It is worth mentioning that both consultants were highly respected in their fields. They had worked on agronomic and industrial research on kenaf in the Ord River area in the 1960s and were also involved in some of the work associated with developments in the Burdekin. They had followed developments around the world in kenaf and pulping technology development. Their report gave us sufficient heart to consider the matter further.

In early February 1987, myself and Mr Hogan of the NT News, went to Khon Kaen Province in Thailand. The indicators showed that there was some potential for development of a kenaf industry here and that further research was needed into marketing, industrial technology and the environmental effects. We wanted to see the operation in practice and to understand some of the practical difficulties experienced by manufacturers. We made a very short visit to Khon Kaen Province and had an opportunity to see the operations of the Phoenix Mill. We inspected the operations, and discussed the process and blending operations with chemists and industrial technologists. We also looked at the blending arrangements being used and alternative fibre developments including the use of giant bamboo and plantation-grown Australian eucalypts, which were being developed as alternative crops to be used in the pulping operations. We were also well briefed on the pricing situation in respect of the pulp which was produced by the blending processes. We returned to the height of controversy, with the Leader of the Opposition criticising the government for making yet another trip to look for an industry for the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: It was going to take over the Northern Territory. It was going to be the kenaf-led recovery.

Mr HATTON: We were enthusiastic about the process but also indicated that more research needed to be done. The Northern Territory government then proceeded, through the Department of Industries and Development, to put together a study team to carry out further detailed research suggested by the initial pre-feasibility study. That was to be at least a 3-year program looking at the agronomics of growing the crop, appropriate locations for cultivation, possible cultivation techniques, fertiliser quantities, tilling methods and so on. The minister has reported on that work and the particularly encouraging results from it.

Further work needed to be carried out in respect of projecting long-term market development in relation to the types of pulp that may be most appropriate to develop the economic viability of the industry and whether alternative field crops may also be developed in a pulping and paper development. I note the minister has indicated also that work is being carried out on alternative crops so we do not end up with a monocultural development which may result in fragility of resource material for any pulping operation. There is also the need specifically to develop the industrial technology to produce it at the most economic rate.

If those 3 factors could come together, there would be real potential for an industry. I believe there is a very strong potential for this industry in the Northern Territory and I still believe very strongly in the projections that I made in 1987 on the future of kenaf. Equally, I have continuously supported the direction of the government in undertaking this research fully and effectively and for it to be marketed as an investment prospectus for the private development of this industry. I believe that is an effective and exciting way for the government to develop a new agro-industrial economic basis for the Northern Territory. As is revealed in the Douglas-Daly area, it has potential to provide an exciting future for the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, in recent times, we have seen an increasing pressure from the community for protection of our natural environment. In particular, there has been concern about the pulping of our natural forests and the removal of large tracts of forest for the purpose of producing paper. Environmental concerns have arisen also in respect of some of the old pulping technologies.

Mr Smith: Rainforests do not produce trees for pulping.

Mr HATTON: Pulp mills seem to me to be the principal cause of environmental arguments. The reality is that, if the world is to continue to develop and if the poorer countries are to improve their standard of literacy, there will be an increased demand for paper. Projections show clearly that the demand for paper and paper products will increase in the future. There will not be a great deal of timber to meet that demand and, with the Greenhouse Effect being extensively and properly argued in the community, the issue of chopping forests down to make paper will become an increasingly vexed environmental question. A time will come when people will not be able to remove forests for the purpose of producing paper. The opportunity that can flow environmentally from developing effective field cropping to produce paper and paper products provides an exciting alternative to the current methodologies. It provides great opportunities for the Northern Territory because kenaf is a tropical crop. It is not native to Australia but is native to our latitude and the environment that exists in the northern parts of the Northern Territory.

All the indicators are positive in relation to overcoming the industrial, marketing and agronomic issues even though we are only halfway through the research at this stage. We must apply equal vigour to ensuring that, in terms of cropping and soil protection, we can proceed to develop environmentally responsible pulping methodologies. The pre-feasibility study raises those issues and urges their investigation. Bringing these things together will provide the opportunities to develop an industry in the Northern Territory which should receive the support of all members of this House.

I congratulate the government on the work that it is doing and I am pleased that it is progressing so successfully. I have every confidence that, with the CLP continuing in government, exciting and responsible investigation will continue into this and other areas of research and development to provide a sound future for the people of the Northern Territory in an environmentally appropriate way.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. It is interesting to note that only 1 member of the opposition took part in this debate. That is ironic given that members opposite continually call on this government to initiate development opportunities for the Northern Territory and to expand our economic base. I find that all the more interesting as the Leader of the Opposition has denigrated the kenaf program from its very outset. This is consistent with the arrogant attitude that we have come to expect from members opposite.

Mr Ede: You are the arrogant one.

Mr REED: Your interjection provides a basic illustration of who the arrogant members of this House are.

We have come to expect a negative and arrogant attitude from members opposite. We should only expect that a program such as this would be opposed by the members opposite, particularly by the Leader of the Opposition. He has a long history of opposing successful projects that have been initiated by this government.

Mr Smith: Yes, like Hungerford.

Mr REED: We can rattle them off. Yulara was opposed by the opposition. The gas pipeline was opposed by members opposite.

Mr Ede: Proposed, not opposed.

Mr REED: The TDZ was opposed by the members opposite. That is probably the most notable example. Of course, the Frances Bay Mooring Basin, which is a huge success, was opposed by them. The only problem with it is that it is not big enough. However, the negative attitude of members opposite is now almost taken for granted by the members of this House and the people of the Northern Territory.

I would like to touch on a few of the comments made. The member for Stuart drew attention to the fact that there would be a need for substantial infrastructure in the event that the program does get under way. I have every confidence that it will. He said that these, in their own right, will require quite large amounts of expenditure. I do not disagree with that, but I do not see it, as I believe the honourable member for Stuart does, as an immovable obstacle to the development of a kenaf industry in the Northern Territory. It

is certainly an issue that will have to be addressed and it has already received a good deal of attention from the government. The member for Stuart drew our attention to the sugar cane industry as a comparison. I guess that is a reasonable comparison given that there will be a need for considerable infrastructure to service the industry.

Along with the member for Nightcliff, the member for Stuart raised environmental issues. These are considerable and they will be addressed. Over the next 12 months, considerable attention will be given to the environmental issues, particularly the disposal of waste from the pulping process and the development of pulping processes that may be more environmentally acceptable. I alluded to that in my statement.

The honourable member also said that I might have been 'a little carried away' in saying that results were very positive and encouraging. I would put those comments by the member for Stuart down to the typical negative attitude that the opposition adopts in relation to almost every proposal. The present position is indeed encouraging. We have proven that kenaf can be grown in the Northern Territory. We have proven that kenaf grown in the Northern Territory produces good quality pulp and that, in turn, that pulp produces a very good quality paper. Indeed, on the presentation of my statement, I circulated to honourable members a sheet of paper produced from Northern Territory kenaf.

Mr Ede: There are a few more things to prove yet.

Mr REED: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not disagree that there are a few more things to prove yet and, indeed, I made that comment in the statement. The point is that, if we do not keep working on the project, we will never get anywhere, and that would be the position if we were in the very sorry state of having an opposition that sought and achieved government in the Northern Territory. We would get nowhere. Any reasonable chance of development in the Northern Territory would be knocked on the head at birth and we would be back in the doldrums. We would be a mendicant state.

The member for Koolpinyah raised a number of issues also, and I agree with the honourable member that we should indeed strive to broaden our agricultural base. I thought the points that she made in that regard were very relevant. Indeed, this very project of research into the kenaf and fibre program in the Northern Territory, if we see the industry develop, will provide that very ability for us to broaden the economic and agricultural base for the Northern Territory and provide another crop for farmers to pursue. I believe that that will tell its own story in relation to future agricultural development in the Northern Territory.

In the event that the pulping industry comes to fruition, we will be looking for very large areas for the production of kenaf to feed a pulp mill - in the order of 10 000 t to 20 000 t. I believe that there are opportunities that must be considered and, of course, that is the process we are currently working through.

The member for Nightcliff gave a very good summary of the history of the program. It has been broadened from a kenaf program to a fibre crops program to take into account the opportunities that may exist in relation to other crops such as sida and other hibiscus species. The program has been broadened to undertake trials on those crops to assess the potential for a fibre crops industry in the Northern Territory that has a broader base than simply kenaf.

The member for Nightcliff touched on other environmental issues, particularly the conservation of native forests. I believe that the circumstances that we are currently witnessing in New South Wales and Tasmania, with the pressures in respect of the utilisation of native forests and the woodchip industry, will continue and, in fact, escalate. I am of the belief, and I make the prediction, that within 10 years, woodchipping of native forests will be simply a matter of history in Australia. I believe that the woodchipping of native forests is nearing its end. I do not see it as continuing given the present environmental and conservation pressures that are being directed against it, and I can only see that as being positive from the point of view of a possible fibre crops program developing in the Northern Territory.

In my statement, I remarked that the proposal will be presented shortly to specific target companies selected from among leading specialty paper manufacturers in Asia and Europe and perhaps in Australia who could be either potential investors in a Territory industry or buyers and users of Territory produced pulps. Since I delivered the statement in May, a commercial investment proposal has been developed. In fact, some officers from my department are overseas at this moment speaking to companies in 7 countries, selected mainly from specialty paper manufacturers throughout the world, who could be investors in a Territory industry. The object of that exercise is to make those companies aware of the progress that we have made to date in the fibre crops program and to try to attract one or more of those companies to invest in our program. Such commercial investment would certainly escalate the work that we can do in the program.

We have proven that kenaf can be grown here. The results and yields are encouraging and the quality is very good. The good quality paper products, as I have already indicated, have been illustrated and we are now working to establish other parameters in respect of environmental matters relating to the development of pulping and processing in the Territory. As I said, we still have a long way to go, but I would encourage farmers to start considering the prospect of kenaf in the Northern Territory. Indeed, my department will be endeavouring to do that in the coming years. The government will continue its commitment to the fibre crops program.

In closing, I would like again to thank officers of the department who have committed so much time to the program over the last couple of years. I thank them for the effort that they have made and for the success that they have achieved to date.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there have been a great many debates in this Assembly about Lindy and Michael Chamberlain. I have contributed to many of them and I like to think that I have contributed to them constructively. I recall the debates on the unfortunate Martin Report into the situation of the Chamberlains and the subsequent findings about the scientific evidence in that particular case. I recall the tabling of the Morling Inquiry and its findings, and the subsequent legislation that established the court of appeal that finally quashed the convictions of the Chamberlains. I was deeply concerned, and I am sure many other members will

be deeply concerned, to have seen that the application for compensation by the Chamberlains is still dragging on. I read today's newspaper reports and I have listened to some of the public debate to which the Chief Minister and Senator Bob Collins, who has taken a very keen interest in this matter for many years now, have contributed.

In this evening's adjournment debate, I do not propose to canvass any of the issues nor even any of the possible bases for compensation payment to the Chamberlains except to say that there is strong precedent for it. The Chamberlains have been found to be innocent of the crime for which Lindy Chamberlain spent 3 years in prison and, if half the reports are to be believed, the family life of herself, her husband and her children has been ruined beyond redemption. I do not know that dollars can compensate for that.

I regard the comments that were made by the Chief Minister this morning on an ABC radio program as curious, to say the least, in that he could do anything other than publicly accept the principle that the Chamberlains should receive compensation. I am aware that some figures have been suggested. I do not propose to discuss figures in respect of compensation for the Chamberlains. On the basis of the information that is available to me, I do not believe that it is possible for me to make a meaningful contribution in that regard. However, what I do propose is action by this Assembly. I believe that it is appropriate that, first of all, this Assembly accept the principle that the Chamberlains are eligible for compensation. That is the first question.

The second question is the means by which the Chamberlains should be compensated and the method of determining the amount of compensation. It seems that the amount by which they should be compensated should be under at least 2 headings and, on the basis of the information that is available to me, there should certainly be an amount of money available to them that would enable them to live in a comfortable fashion. Secondly, there should be some sort of compensation for the extraordinary pain that she and her husband and family have been put through. I have no doubt about that. I am aware that there are precedents elsewhere for determining the amounts of such payments. They have been determined by courts and by jurists in various other cases and I hope that information can be laid before the Assembly so that a reasonable judgment can be made in this case.

I express my concern and I hope there will be a change of heart from the Chief Minister in respect of his comments on ABC radio this morning. He was asked by the interviewer why the Chamberlains' financial situation should have a bearing on their right to financial compensation. The Chief Minister said that, in his view, it should have a bearing on their right to financial compensation. I hope - and this is one of the reasons why I raise this matter this evening - that what the Chief Minister really means is that their financial position should have some bearing on the amount of their compensation, not on their right to receive it. I believe that their right to receive compensation should be incontestable.

I advise honourable members that I will be giving notice in the morning of a motion to establish that principle. Similarly, I will be giving notice of motion suggesting the establishment of some process for determining the amount of that compensation and the criteria that should apply in that determination. I hope that it will receive bipartisan support. It is outrageous that 9 months have been allowed to elapse and that the Chamberlains have been forced to go to the press in order to bestir the Territory government. I have no doubt that a 9-month wait in this regard, with no indication of an outcome, is far too long a time in a pressing matter such as this.

A further issue that I wish to mention is the question of the confidentiality of the Chamberlains' financial position. This seems to be the sticking point at the moment. The Attorney-General has said that he is unable to guarantee the confidentiality of the apparently intimate financial details that the government has requested. He said that he has to be accountable to this Assembly and, for that reason, he cannot guarantee confidentiality of those financial details. I remind the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister of the precedent set in that regard in respect of the Strehlow Research Foundation legislation that passed through this Assembly some months ago. The government had no hesitation whatsoever in maintaining the secrecy of the agreement that it had made with Kathleen Strehlow. I presume that that precedent will be able to apply in this case. Let me assure members opposite that the opposition will not be pressing for intimate financial details of the Chamberlains' circumstances. I trust that, on this basis, finally we will be able to move to a satisfactory resolution of what has been surely one of the sadder chapters in the legal history of the Northern Territory.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to touch briefly on Kangaroo 89 and the exemplary performance and behaviour of the troops that have been in the Northern Territory during the last 6 to 8 weeks. I would begin by briefly referring to the logistics of bringing the people to the Northern Territory and, in particular, the enormous task of the transportation of troops, APCs, vehicles, materials, tanks, machine equipment and field equipment to the Northern Territory in the period building up to the exercise. I am certain, Mr Speaker, that you observed in the Alice Springs region - and I certainly observed it in my drive to Alice Springs recently - the enormous amount of transportation required to move the exercise towards Darwin. You would have noticed the staging camps in the centre of Alice Springs and towards the north of town. I noticed further staging camps all the way up the track.

The convoy method that was employed in bringing the materials to the north was extremely well done. Whilst there were a couple of letters to the newspapers complaining about the problems connected with driving during the period that convoys were on the Stuart Highway, I personally had no problems with that. I spoke to other people at different places along the Stuart Highway who had had no problems either. It was also quite enjoyable for me to be able to stop at some of the points on the highway where the troops were staging during the day and of an evening.

During the exercise, I was fortunate to have briefings from most of the services. Together with several members from this Chamber, I was lucky enough to be a participant in the Operation Shopwindow which was one of the largest seaborne exercises that we have seen in this area for a number of years. It involved all the surface vessels in the exercise. It included most of the Australian vessels - the DDGs and the FFGs - 9 patrol boats, 2 United States warships and 3 Oberon class submarines together with the air strike capability of the FA18s, the Macchis and the F111 fighter-bombers.

That was an incredible day's exercise for me. I was quite impressed with the professionalism that was shown on that day and certainly with the capabilities of the troops involved. It was an excellent exercise. For myself, it was a day of public relations as well as a worthwhile defence exercise. Certainly, I know that some of our federal parliamentarians also enjoyed that particular day.

I had an opportunity to go on board several of the other ships. I travelled on the Brisbane during Operation Shopwindow. The Brisbane was the

command vessel on that day and the officer in command was Admiral Taylor who who was running the exercise during that period. It was extremely interesting to see that the troops on that particular vessel that day were involved not only in protecting their own vessel during attacks by patrol boats, aircraft and submarine, but in the enormous amount of work that was required in directing the whole of the fleet during the day.

I had the opportunity to go on board several of the American ships several days later. I was extremely pleased to be taken on a guided tour around the USS Peary, which is well known to Darwinians because of the relationship between the vessel, Peary 3, and the original Peary which was sunk during the Japanese raid on Darwin in February 1942. I have arranged with the captain of the Peary, Captain David Brown, to forward him photographs of action during that battle. He does not know this at the moment, but also I am about to send him copies of 'Australia's Pearl Harbour' and 'Australia's Front Door' by Douglas Lockwood, our then resident author who makes extensive reference to the battles of that day in which the Peary features quite dramatically, especially in the latter stages of the battle when, as the Peary was sinking, it was observed that the troops on board were still firing their anti-aircraft guns. Unfortunately, the small number of troops on the stern who were still fighting as the ship sank lost their lives.

I also had an opportunity to go on one of the submarines while it was here. If members have an opportunity to go on one of the Australian submarines, the Oberon submarines, I can recommend it as an exercise in - I won't say sheer terror, but I will say that it is not a visit to be undertaken by the fainthearted. Having been in many unusual positions and circumstances myself at sea in some of the international yachting events that I have been in and having had to squeeze into very small berths and small spaces to navigate in particularly difficult conditions, I thought that I would be able to relate quite easily with submariners until I actually went on board the submarine and found that I had to move between cells that are sealed as you move from one place to another. The crew has to work in and around large amounts of electrical equipment in cramped spaces. In most areas, it is not possible to stand upright. The only place you can really stand upright with any ease is in among the V12 engines in the middle of the submarine, which is a most claustrophobic and extremely hot area to work in. I take my hat off to those fellows, and I am very pleased that I am not in that branch of the service.

Last weekend, I was able to have a look at some of the land-based activities in the Katherine region. In company with several other people from this Assembly, I travelled on the Caribou aircraft from Darwin to Katherine and then from Tindal air base out to some of the forward control posts on the Blackhawk helicopters. We went to the 1st Division Headquarters and had a look at the troop operations out in the bush. Again, I take my hat off to those fellows out there. Some of them have been out there for 50 days. The majority have been out there for 30-odd days now, working in the dust and the heat and the very difficult conditions of the forward control post in the outer perimeter areas around the Katherine region.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is pretty primitive in Katherine.

Mr FIRMIN: It is fairly primitive in the forward control base area, and I take my hat off to them for the way they are working out there.

On the way home, we were fortunate to attend the field hospital which is set up on the Tindal air base. It is an excellent and very modern facility. It has not only proved of enormous benefit to the troops but has proved a

benefit to the local people of the region. As may have been noticed by honourable members during the past couple of weeks, there have been some reports of medical evacuations, after treatment at the field hospital, of people who were injured in the region and sent south. It is a shame that that facility had as much use as it did while in the Katherine region. However, unfortunately, with 25 000 troops on exercise, one expects that there will be accidents. Regrettably, of course, there were. In fact, on 1 day alone, 9 very serious injuries were treated at the field hospital and, unfortunately, the next day there was a case of paraplegia resulting from the overturning of a 4-wheel-drive vehicle in the scrub. It was very sad, but at least the people concerned were treated as quickly as possible. The hospital works on the basis of 3 hours from injury to treatment at maximum, and it certainly demonstrated its ability to handle anything that arose during the course of the exercise.

Mr Speaker, I really wanted to speak this evening about matters that were raised prior to the exercise that I thought would be detrimental to the operation of the troops in and around the Darwin region. People were raising the spectre of problems that might be caused by so many troops working and taking their R & R in and around our local communities. In fact, as we all knew they would be, the troops who came from the south are people just like ourselves. They are the sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and fathers of the same sorts of families, whom we understand and whose company we enjoy in the Northern Territory. In any group, there will be somebody who may have an aberration or who will not treat things as morally or soundly as others. However, there was no major problem with the troops being here and I certainly do not believe there will be any problems with the troops who will remain here for a little longer.

Most of the criticisms that were made were totally unfounded and, in fact, the benefits to the Northern Territory, quite apart from the obvious financial benefits, have proven to be substantial. Mr Speaker, as you saw in the press the other day, some troops have been able to assist to a large degree in some local community activities. For example, engineers were able to help with the re-establishment of the electric motors and the refurbishing of the bells at the Catholic cathedral. There have been many other instances where the troops have been of assistance in the Darwin region. Certainly, I am led to believe - and I am sure the member for Katherine will know if it is true - that the troops in that area helped out with engineering projects and were of great assistance to people in the Katherine region.

In a letter that I circulated to the navy and the air force recently, I wrote that I felt that their visit here was worth while. I certainly enjoyed being involved in the short periods that I had with them. By and large, I thought their conduct was exemplary and that most Territorians who came in contact with them enjoyed working with them and thought that they behaved themselves extremely well. I expressed the wish that our visitors would come back again soon and indicated that I thought that the whole exercise was well done.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak in this adjournment debate, I have to say at the outset that I was not given the opportunity to ask a question this morning of the Minister for Education, which was very relevant to a problem that has existed for some time in relation to Taminmin High School. My question relates to a meeting to be held at the Katherine Rural College on 25 September about the rationalisation of rural education and training in the Northern Territory. The aim of the meeting will be the formalisation of the responsibility of the Katherine Rural

College Advisory Council for the overview of the provision of rural education and training in the Northern Territory. Taminmin High School, with a greater enrolment and wider agricultural interests, is not mentioned on the agenda. Secondly, I had intended to ask the minister why this important meeting on rural education will not be addressed by someone from the Department of Education. Thirdly, I wished to ask why the Katherine Rural College is determining rural education policy in the Northern Territory which I believe is rightfully the province of the minister himself.

Mr Harris: It is.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The minister has just admitted that it is.

Mr Speaker, because the content of my speech tonight will be from papers, I seek your indulgence to read briefly from them. I am happy for the minister to see the letters from which I will read. Some of them are reasonably confidential, but I believe that, in the interests of justice to Taminmin, it is the minister's right to see them.

On 25 September, this meeting will be held at the Katherine Rural Education College. I have a letter written to the Taminmin High School which says: 'The object of the meeting is to formalise the responsibility of the Katherine Rural College Advisory Council for the overview of the provision of rural education and training in the Northern Territory'. It indicates that rural industry organisations have been invited to present papers and to speak to them at the meeting and that input from private enterprise is of the utmost importance. It invites the participation of somebody from Taminmin School. The opening of the meeting will include an address from the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. There will be representatives from the Cattlemen's Association, the Graingrowers' Association, the Northern Territory University, the Northern Territory Horticultural Association, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the Northern Territory Buffalo Industry Council. However, there will be no teacher representative nor anybody from the Department of Education. In fact, not even the Minister for Education will address this meeting which is about the rationalisation of rural education and training. I do not know what is going on in Katherine, but I believe that a gross neglect of the position of the Minister for Education and officers from the Department of Education is demonstrated by this failure to invite them to participate at this meeting.

Not only will the situation of Taminmin High School be ignored at this meeting in Katherine, but there are grave concerns about the agricultural courses at Taminmin. These concerns do not relate to the staff, students or content of the courses. They are concerns of the advisers, the project officer, the principal and the school council in relation to the way in which they are being completely ignored by the Department of Education. It is on record that the only time anything is done at Taminmin is when direct reference is made to the minister himself. The minister seems to be the only one who listens to Taminmin High School. If the minister cares to inquire further into this, he will find that my statement is corroborated by people at the school.

An invitation was extended to Taminmin High School to attend the meeting in Katherine on 25 September. However, the invitation was not extended to the agricultural project officer or even to the school principal. It was extended to a representative of 'the organisation at Taminmin'. That completely downgrades the interest and the role of Taminmin in agricultural education in the Northern Territory. The invitation to the conference was not even addressed with the correct title.

Letters have gone back and forth between the school and the Department of Education. If the honourable minister would like to read these letters, he is quite welcome to do so. I will not mention the names of the people involved because that is not my custom. The Taminmin High School states that the meeting will be addressed by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and a range of other people but not by any representative of the Department of Education and, of course, not by anybody from Taminmin High School. If this is the way the Department of Education is treating Taminmin, there appears to be a gross lack of interest in rural education in the Northern Territory.

I know that Taminmin High School has been made a centre of excellence. I do not know what a centre of excellence is. I have not been able to find out. In fact, the people at Taminmin do not know what a centre of excellence is. I know that this decision was taken by the then Chief Minister before the last election. No doubt, it was done to detract from my profile as a person who has a great interest in the Taminmin agricultural courses and Taminmin High School generally in an effort to have the CLP candidate elected. That attempt was a miserable failure and the title 'centre of excellence' is viewed extremely cynically by the Taminmin High School Council and the teachers.

Mr Speaker, I will mention in passing that none of the teachers employed at Katherine Rural Education College is a member of the Northern Territory Teaching Service. My information is that they are all members of the Northern Territory Public Service. The staff of Taminmin, on the other hand, are members of the Northern Territory Teaching Service.

A member interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is what I was told.

Mr Speaker, one of the tasks of the agricultural projects officer at Taminmin was to do preliminary work in the formalisation of a certificate in agriculture. It appears that, in the course of carrying out his duties, he somehow raised the ire of the Katherine Rural College. Once again, I will not name names although I will tell the minister privately, but some people associated with the Katherine Rural College seem to feel that there is competition from Taminmin. There is no such competition. The agricultural projects officer is not competing. There is no hint of that. The high school, the council and the projects officer himself are continuously aiming to work together with the Katherine Rural College towards a form of integration which would do both institutions the world of good.

A private letter, of which I have a copy, states that the proposal to establish an agricultural course at Taminmin appears to be in competition with programs already offered at the Katherine Rural College in 'course, title and objective'. The letter continues: 'As you are aware, we are experiencing difficulty in attracting sufficient students to our own certificate course and the establishment of another course would seem hard to justify'. There was no intention at all that Taminmin should compete with Katherine Rural College. I cannot stress that sufficiently.

For the information of honourable members, I will give the student numbers at both institutions. At Taminmin High School, 270 Year 8, 9 and 10 students study agricultural courses for 10 weeks a year. Another 32 Year 11 students undertake courses for 20 weeks a year and 9 Year 12 students undertake a full-time course. At the Katherine Rural College, there are 11 first-year students and 5 second-year students. There is a great difference in attendance at the 2 schools. I also know for a fact that there are far too

many students per teacher at Taminmin High School and far too few students per teacher at Katherine Rural College. Instead of seeking confrontation, as Katherine Rural College appears to have done - although perhaps not intentionally - the 2 organisations should be working together. The proposed agricultural certificate is not intended to be something which can be studied only at Taminmin. It is a proposal for a Northern Territory agricultural certificate to be undertaken by all students in the Northern Territory.

My time is running out and I will have to be very brief. The Katherine Rural College repeatedly expresses concerns regarding the certificate in agriculture and letters have gone out from the Department of Education assuring a particular senior person that it 'is the intention of Taminmin High School to fully involve the Katherine Rural College in the development of this Year 12 course'. That is indeed true. Taminmin has always sought cooperation.

As well as having to deal with the problem of being considered to be a very poor relation of the Katherine Rural College, and having to combat the serious problem with senior officers in the Department of Education, Taminmin also had to combat the events at the beginning of this year when a series of meetings and non-meetings culminated in the publication of a document entitled 'Palmerston College: An Integrated College for Senior Secondary and TAFE Students'. This led the people at Taminmin, to believe that extensive planning had been discussed for Taminmin. The truth of the matter was that Taminmin had had no input. On the one hand, officers of the Department of Education - whose names I will give to the minister - are downgrading Taminmin in relation to Katherine and, on the other, great play is made of the fact that Palmerston is to have an integrated college for senior secondary and TAFE students. Where does this leave Taminmin? I hope that it does not leave it up that proverbial creek without the proverbial paddle.

It has always been Taminmin High School's deliberate desire to work in cooperation with the Katherine Rural College. As I said, calling Taminmin a centre of agricultural excellence was an act of political expediency. I have not been able to find out what it means and neither has anybody at Taminmin. The truth of the matter is that Taminmin has fought tooth and nail for staff, funds, courses and even for land, in spite of sustained objections from the Department of Education. Perhaps the officers at Taminmin may not like to tell the minister that. I will perhaps keep the names from him, but I will tell him of the actual cases.

To conclude, I am perfectly happy for the minister to see the correspondence that I have. I hope that he will be able to intervene, as he has done in similar instances in the past, to rectify the situation in relation to Taminmin High School and give the people associated with it their due regard.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a few issues relating to my electorate that I would like to bring to your attention tonight. The first relates to the problem of health services in the south-western area of my electorate and the communities around Mount Allan, otherwise known as Yuelamu, Nyirripi and Yuendumu. Yuendumu is expected to provide health services to Mount Allan and Nyirripi. Mount Allan is some 40 minutes from Yuendumu, if the roads are in good condition. It takes between 2 and 3 hours to drive from Yuendumu to Nyirripi, depending on the vehicle used. Both are sizeable communities, each having about 200 residents. They require something better than a visit from the sister from the Yuendumu clinic once every couple of weeks.

I have been trying for quite some time to have the small clinic at Nyirripi upgraded. I was successful in having it moved there from Willowra some years ago. It was not adequate at Willowra and, as it was all that was available, we moved it across to Nyirripi some 5 years ago. With the expansion of the community, it has become inadequate. There was one part-time health worker there looking after almost 200 people which was quite impossible. She resigned after finding herself unable to cope and the clinic was left vacant. Unfortunately, as often occurs when buildings are left vacant, some damage was done. When that was not repaired, there was some further damage.

Mr Bell: I would have been surprised if there was not.

Mr EDE: Exactly. I remember the problem at Docker River some years ago. That was a classic case.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am told that there is a possibility of a new health clinic being moved to Nyirripi. I am still not satisfied that enough is being done to provide health workers. At least 2 or 3 people are needed to carry out basic health work in that community and they need a direct radio link to Yuendumu so that they can make contact with the sister if a difficult situation arises.

There are additional limitations at Mount Allan. I have now been told that all further expansion of that community is to cease. All capital works that were already programmed for that community have been stopped. The teacher there is Alistair Burns who does a fantastic job. He has 5 or 6 children. He lives in one of those silver bullets and teaches in another. We had approval to build a house for him and his family but everything has now come to a halt. Once again, the problem is water. There is a large community there but the government has said that the water supply, which was not supplied by the government originally but by the station, is no longer adequate and cannot be expanded at the rate the community is expanding both through natural growth and, to a smaller extent, through migration. The community has just taken up CDEP and there is considerable enthusiasm there at the moment. People are moving in from other areas because they like the spirit and enthusiasm there, with CDEP being used in conjunction with the cattle station as well as on municipal work.

When a community of that size is already established and has been there for many years, you cannot simply say: 'Sorry, there is no water'. It will be necessary to pipe water in. After a number of years, we had to bite the bullet in a similar case at Napperby. The community had been there for many years and water was eventually piped in. I am told that government funding ran into millions of dollars. Dick Smith tells me that, for something like a quarter of that amount, the community could put in the water supply itself by using CDEP. Polythene pipe could be used. He believes that there is a closer water supply possibility which really should be checked.

In respect of Mount Allan, it is not good enough for the government to say that the water supply would be too expensive, that services cannot be expanded and people will just have to sit. That is not a viable option after a community reaches that size. When you are talking about an outstation of 10 or 20 people, you may be able to negotiate a movement as was done eventually with some of the people from Anningie. However, that is not acceptable in a place where already huge sums have been spent on government infrastructure in terms of 3-bedroom houses and the construction of an office.

I cannot help but contrast the standard of health services provided in that area to those which are supplied by the Urapuntja Health Service in the Utopia area. Utopia stretches over a much larger area involving some 14 or 15 very small communities. However, the health service there always has a doctor and sisters who are constantly visiting those communities. Next week or early in the next sittings, I hope to be able to present to this parliament a report, which is in the final stages of preparation, on the health statistics of the people in that area. Early figures given to me indicate that, since the Urapuntja Health Service has been established, there has been a marked upsurge in the standard of health in that area. Credit must go where credit is due but, on the other side, the Walpiri people, a much larger number of people, do not get the same standard of health care from the Northern Territory government.

There are a couple of educational matters that I would like to raise briefly. The first relates to adult educators. I heard that there is a possibility that we will have some luck in respect of Lake Nash. The minister believes that he will be able to provide somebody there, and that is desperately needed. It is another community that has CDEP. There are 2 components of CDEP that are crucial. The first is that the community becomes involved so that it does not become make-work. There must be development of projects for the future and privatisation so that people have actual jobs which are exciting and relevant to community needs rather than an initial rush of enthusiasm that dies away and becomes make-work.

The second component is training. This has to be involved in adult education. It must tie in with the Department of Labour and Administrative Services and DEET to ensure coordination of training as people take on extra projects so that the maintenance of the projects can be undertaken by the Aboriginal people of that area. You expand the number of people involved on maintenance work, whether it be maintenance of an orchard or a school or council office cleaning etc. If you have outsiders assisting people to establish new projects and the people who get those projects off the ground move on to new projects, you have to employ more European staff to maintain the original projects. In my view, you are not then meeting the need that the community has to maintain itself.

How many more times do I have to talk about Willowra? When are we going to staff that facility there?

Mr Harris: You might be all right with Willowra.

Mr EDE: I 'might' be all right with Willowra. That is the best that I have had to date, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have not had a 'might' yet and therefore I am encouraged by that.

In regard to Lajamanu, I am told that there is a possibility of somebody coming in there for a while and some assessment being made of whether that will continue or not. Again, Lajamanu is a community which is talking about CDEP. One of the considerations which has a bearing on whether it will become involved in it or not is the availability of training and the upgrading of skills to be able to take on the work there.

Woola Downs and Anningie are 2 communities that are outside of Ti Tree. Neither of them has a bus service although they used to have bus services. I am unable to get to the bottom of the problem at Anningie. I believe the problem was that the bus broke down, or that the operator was unable to continue the operation and there seems to be some problem in getting it going again.

At Woolla Downs, the community moved away for a while after the death of a grand old gentleman in very tragic circumstances. However, the community has moved back, as always happens in these circumstances. There is one vehicle there. The offer to them was that they would be provided with a per-kilometre rate for the use of the vehicle, which worked out at a quarter of the public service rate for an equivalent sized vehicle, to take the children to school and back. It would have been far more reasonable to have negotiated a rate which would have allowed the people to do it economically. It could then have been negotiated whether the purchase of a second vehicle would have been appropriate so that they would have been able to move their own people to school. Other than that, I think we should return the bus service which operated quite effectively in that region for a number of years.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have some very good news. At Ali Curung, the school has set in train a program of Aboriginalisation which is really quite exciting. A couple of Aboriginal teachers and a large number of Aboriginal assistant teachers have been involved in that school for donkey's years. The assistant teachers were becoming quite frustrated by the fact that they were not moving much further with their training and were always on the periphery. With the appointment of a new principal and a couple of other new teachers, they set about structuring a method whereby, over a number of years, they could work side by side with Aboriginal teachers and eventually take over the whole school.

I must give my thanks to the honourable minister. At one stage, there appeared to be a major hiccup in getting the RATE program going there. That was one of those issues that I took up with John Dawkins after he had left the minister and when he was out at Yuendumu. He made a note to try to find out where wires are being crossed in getting RATE programs going. He wants to get more of them going just as the minister and I do. Wires seem to have been uncrossed and certainly there is a very enthusiastic group out there who want to be involved in the RATE program for their teacher training, and have Aboriginal involvement in the school up to 100%. I would like to pay them my compliments.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening, a couple of issues have been raised which cut across my portfolio. I would like to start with the comments by the member for Koolpinyah in relation to the concerns about a seminar that is planned to be held in Katherine on 25 September. Could I indicate that I have also received a number of letters from Taminmin High School. I must say that those letters were a little off the mark. I will be speaking to the people concerned because they need to have more detail on what is being proposed.

The first thing that needs to be made clear to the member for Koolpinyah is that there is a difference between a high school and the Katherine Rural College as such because the latter is a TAFE college. That is an important point that she needs to note. I am sorry that the member has interpreted the letter as indicating that the Katherine Rural College is the body that will set policy. I can assure the honourable member that the government sets the policy and not the institutions. I have made that very clear. Members will recall the development of Batchelor College and the need for the government to issue guidelines in relation to it. We will be developing guidelines for all the institutions so that there can be no doubt about the direction in which the government wants them to move.

The proposed seminar actually grew from my wish to have input from interested people and organisations into rural education and training in the

Northern Territory. I have already had discussions with Taminmin High School about agricultural development and training. I have also spoken with the Katherine Rural College people in that regard. I took with me to the meetings with both those groups the Vice-Chancellor of the Northern Territory University, Professor Malcolm Nairn, to discuss those issues. The reason why such a seminar is necessary is that, over the next 10 years, the education system in the Northern Territory needs to provide our rural and associated industries with skilled and competent employees.

We need to look at the range and level of courses that will be required to meet those needs in the future and when such courses should be introduced. At which institutions should the courses be made available? How can we ensure that industry has an appropriate say in course development and evaluations? How can we ensure cooperation among institutions to avoid unnecessary duplication of courses? What research is required to support rural industries in the Northern Territory, and how can we ensure that all the sectors of the rural industries are involved? Those are the sorts of questions that need to be addressed.

I also point out to the honourable member that it is a seminar, and all of those people involved in the seminar are able to participate. Simply because someone is not listed formally as being a speaker does not mean that that person will not have the opportunity to have input. The list of people who have been invited to attend is as follows: the TAFE Advisory Council, the Industry, Employment and Training Advisory Council, the NT University, and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries - and I state here that there are a whole range of new industries that are developing in that area. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will be opening that seminar and he will be speaking about some of those industries. To continue the list of those invited, there is the Katherine Rural College Council, the NT Department of Labour and Administrative Services and the NT Board of Studies. The Board of Studies from the department will give a full range of detail and there will be opportunity for people to discuss issues relating to accreditation etc. Taminmin High School is invited, as is the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training because there is a whole range of issues that it is aware of and needs to be across.

I can assure the honourable member that Taminmin is not being disregarded. The government has identified Taminmin as a secondary school that is specialising in agriculture. I have heard some people comment that Taminmin High School is supposed to be a centre of excellence and, with the proposed TAFE college being developed at Palmerston, they are worried about the funding to Taminmin decreasing. I would like to make it very clear that Taminmin's development as a centre of excellence in agriculture is independent of the development of the Palmerston college. I think that needs to be understood. It is funded as a school on the basis of approved programs and enrolment, and such funding will continue. Likewise, the Palmerston college will be funded for its programs and enrolments. The majority, but certainly not all, of its activities will be in the TAFE rather than the schools area.

In the planning of the Palmerston college, emphasis will be placed on cooperative and complementary arrangements between institutions, as is the current government policy. The aim is to provide a range of services suited to the needs of Territorians in all centres in a cost-effective manner. In line with this, there may be opportunities for cooperation between Palmerston and Taminmin if there are students at Palmerston who have an interest in agricultural studies. It is not intended to duplicate facilities. It is likely that the Palmerston college will provide a hub and management centre

for TAFE programs in the rural area in the same way that the adult educator currently situated at Taminmin is part of the Darwin regional TAFE team centred at the Palmerston office.

The whole exercise is designed to try to develop a system through which we are able to provide the best possible opportunities for our young people in the Territory. As I said, Taminmin was identified as a school to specialise in agriculture. When I was Minister for Education previously, I indicated that at some stage Tennant Creek High School would be developed to specialise in the pastoral industry. We were trying to have 2 schools in the high school area that could allow students to proceed down that path, and then those students would flow on to the Katherine Rural College and to the Northern Territory University. It was a matter of all working together so that one facility would not try to oppose the other or feel threatened by the other. It is quite clear from this situation that, unfortunately, some people see this seminar as threatening.

As I said, it is important that all sectors work together to provide the best opportunities for those of our young people who wish to take part in rural industries. I believe that the seminar on 25 September will provide the opportunity for rural industries, and many of the people involved in those industries, to come together to discuss training needs across the Territory. Eric Johnston is to be the chairman of this seminar. Eric Johnston has recently been appointed as the Chairman of the Batchelor College Council and as Chairman of the Northern Territory Open College. It is important that he be involved in the entire exercise to look at the needs and develop the way in which we can not only provide for those young people in the various communities but ensure that Batchelor College is able to provide teachers and other training in different areas of management at the college itself. I can assure the member for Koolpinyah that Taminmin High School should not feel threatened. It will not be compromised in any way, and I have made that very clear to the people there. In fact, in the budget this year, which we will be talking about later, there is an allocation of \$75 000 specifically for Taminmin High School.

The other issue that the member for Koolpinyah raised related to the agenda. I think I have covered most of that in relation to the people that will be attending. The agenda and the letter to which she referred are rather out of date. I can assure the honourable member that I will be addressing the seminar. My remarks will be of an introductory nature, simply indicating what I would like this seminar to produce. I will be taking part in the seminar. As I mentioned, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will open the seminar.

I need to emphasise to the member for Koolpinyah that it is a seminar and, as a seminar, every participant is able to have a say. It is important that we work together. It is not seen as trying to usurp the authority of any one group. I guess it is disappointing that some people have read it that way and I can assure them that they really do not need to feel threatened at all.

The member for Stuart raised the issue of adult educators in Aboriginal communities. It has been an ongoing saga, I must say, and I have had my concerns in relation to the arrangements between the Commonwealth government and the Territory government about the construction of facilities and our inability to supply adequate numbers of adult educators because of the ongoing cost implications. That is what I have been talking to the federal government about to try to come to arrangements whereby we can ensure that the buildings that are established are able to be staffed and we are able to move forward in a positive manner.

I indicate to the member for Stuart that funds are available and that provisions have been made for adult educators. We will have more detail at a later stage as to where those people are to go. I agree that, in many of the communities that I have visited over the past 6 months, the maintenance of a number of facilities could be handled by the local people. There is no question about it. It is crazy that we fly in people from other parts of the Territory to repair buildings at Papunya or Yuendumu or wherever. The member for Stuart would be very much aware that the problem relates to the attitude towards work that some Aboriginal people have. The workers need to be committed. They must continue to work regularly and such matters need to be addressed during the training process. I am sure that will happen.

The only concern that I have in relation to Lajamanu is that there appears to be some feeling against me at the moment there. I do not believe that is fair inasmuch as it relates to the occasion when they said that I would not speak to them outside the Chan Building and therefore I was not welcome in their community. That is a disappointment to me. I need to see what is happening in order to complete my review. I am having FEPPi and others address that issue.

I have been talking to the adult educators and other people in those communities whom I need to see. I have been looking at the work that is going on in the communities and assessing what is needed so that I can ensure that those positions are filled. As I said, it might take a little more time in respect of Lajamanu, but I am working on that. I can assure the member for Stuart that I will do everything in my power to ensure that we provide the necessary facilities and staffing to give opportunities for Aboriginal people in isolated areas.

I heard an interjection about Nicholson River, and I do not know if the honourable member for ...

Mr Tuxworth: Are we on or are we off?

Mr HARRIS: You are on the go. It has been constructed and you should have people out there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to report tonight that this has been a more positive adjournment debate and I hope the member for Stuart maintains his positive approach.

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a certain grass in the Todd River that I regard in much the same way as the member for Port Darwin regards coffee bush. I refer to our couch grass. We have the annual problem of couch again. We have had frost and the green couch grass has turned brown. People have been setting the grass on fire. Apparently, some children were involved initially and now certain people are running around deliberately firing the grass and the fire brigade has been called out several times. The problem is that, once that couch grass is burning, all the little river red gums that come up spontaneously every year after decent rains are unable to survive. Even a small fire around the base of a river red gum will kill it. The Todd River is a disgrace, Mr Deputy Speaker. There has been no regeneration of decent trees in the Todd for years.

I understand that the couch grass was deliberately planted in the drought period around 1966-67 and it spread very effectively in the Todd. I remember

asking the member for Koolpinyah, when she was Minister for Conservation, to do something about it. Her reply was that they were stabilising the banks. The banks just about reach the middle now, Mr Deputy Speaker. Time and time again, I have made the suggestion to the council and to this Assembly that Round-up be used to kill the grass. It is a very effective chemical for killing grass and it could be used at the appropriate time after rain when there is warm weather and the grass is growing effectively. That is the right time to use Round-up. It is systemic. It is absorbed by the leaves and goes right through the root system. It would clean it up very nicely if used properly. It is also good because it is denatured when it hits the ground. The soil is not poisoned forever and a day afterwards.

We have flooding problems in Alice Springs. If the channels of the river were wider and clean, that would help alleviate the problems in a minor way. If the couch is killed, the roots will rot eventually. With the aid of the river flow, I believe that the channels will be widened and, at least in the smaller floods, we could have a more rapid flow-through and less property damage. Of course, in a major 1-in-100-year flood, it would not make much difference whether the couch was there or not. In the interim, however, its removal could improve the situation.

I plead with the government, particularly the Minister for Mines and Energy, to act. One flood-mitigation method is to clean up the bed of the Todd by removing sand and so forth. The sand will be a darn sight better if it does not have couch grass roots in it. The grass tends to hold dirt as well which means that any sand mined from the Todd will have to be washed. That all adds to the cost and a useful resource is not as useful as it would be if the couch were removed.

The Todd should be one of our real assets. These days, it is full of untidy old trees with limbs broken off, affected by the change in the general level of water of the Todd, which has not been used for drinking purposes since about 1970 when I first arrived in the town. It would be good to see the Todd rejuvenated with new trees. You may recall, Mr Speaker, that the Conservation Commission even planted trees at one stage. However, those disappeared like the others. It does not matter whether trees are planted or come up naturally, one fire will kill them. It is time something was done. It would rejuvenate the Todd and make it a river of which we could be proud and it would assist with flood mitigation. I plead with the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Minister for Conservation to discuss this matter with the Alice Springs Town Council.

The ownership of the Todd has always been a problem. At certain times, it seems as though the council owns it and other times the government seems to. I think that the council believes the government owns it when there has been a flood. Something should be done. I do not mind if there is a bit of couch grass growing on the edges to stabilise the first few metres. As far as the rest is concerned, Round-up should be used. There would be some regrowth from seed, but it would not be very difficult for someone with a simple spray device to keep it under control. That would be a very cheap process. Afterwards, nature could take over again. There would be no need to let contracts for the removal of sand after flows. The river would be much cleaner and a much more valuable resource.

Some time ago, I raised in this Assembly the possibility of floodlighting the Todd River. This idea was put to me by Mr Lyel Kempster of Burke Street in my home town. His view was that it would be an attractive way of highlighting part of the town as well as providing a degree of extra safety

for tourists and other people who walk around the town. The town council has approached the Power and Water Authority and costings that have been put forward are rather horrendous. Basically, I do not blame the council for saying that it would be too expensive.

However, I spoke to Her Worship the Mayor a few days ago. I had written to her saying that I would raise the matter again in the hope that the government might care to consider it. She suggested that perhaps it could be done a little at a time. Mr Speaker, I ask you to have some input on this matter as a member of the government and to request the government to consider the possibility. We know that money is tight. However, many people feel that the idea has considerable merit.

On 12 August, a couple of Saturdays ago, the Old Timers held their annual fete. I have a personal interest, being a member of the authorising committee of the Old Timers. The Old Timers' fete has really become a time when the town gets together. Everybody seems to come. It is getting better and better every year. There are plenty of things for people to do, to eat and to buy and the entertainment is excellent. This year's fete was a real tribute to the town. Many people and organisations played a part, including Rotary, Lions and church groups from right across the spectrum.

I would like to pay tribute particularly to the secretary of the Old Timers' auxiliary, who himself lives in one of the cottages, Mr Doug Rankin. Doug has been tireless in organising the fete and getting people to do their bit. It came together like clockwork and was a perfect day. The weather was great. Last year, I paid tribute to the fete because it was about the only event in Alice Springs that held its own in terms of fundraising as compared with previous years. Other events, including the Camel Cup, had their normal takings reduced by about half as a result of the economic situation. I hope that the 25% to 30% increase in takings at the Old Timers' fete this year is an economic indicator.

I thank the people of Alice Springs and many people from further afield who contribute goods such as clothing, coat-hangers and knick-knacks of various sorts to support the Old Timers. The fete has become essential in providing a few extra items to the Old Timers Home in a period when federal government funding is very tight. Last year, it was a borderline case as to whether the home could survive. Every dollar was vital and no expenditure was undertaken that was not absolutely necessary. I thank the people of Alice Springs who supported it by coming, particularly those who supported it by putting their time and effort into manning stalls etc. The staff of the Old Timers do a fantastic job every year, and I would particularly like to pay tribute to Doug Rankin for the marvellous job he did on organising prizes. He even got prizes out of the ANR for guessing the weight of the camel. I am pleased to know you are involved, Mr Speaker.

A funny thing happened to me at the airport on Monday. I was taken aside by one of the Ansett staff who said: 'You might not believe this, but many people are coming out to the airport thinking that they are on the road to Adelaide'. As you most probably know, Mr Speaker, there is a sign at the right hand turn on the way to the airport. The road curves left towards the airport and, immediately before that, there is a T-junction sign which reads: 'SA Border'. Most of us would think that that ought to be good enough but, evidently, a large number of people reach the airport and the bitumen road stops. They ask airport staff for directions. It is one of those oddities.

I have spoken to Bill Duffy who indicated that, possibly, they will put a secondary sign underneath the 'SA Border' sign indicating the distance to Adelaide. The Ansett man told me that one bloke went a number of miles down the dirt road before he decided to turn back. It is one of those odd things, but I hope the Department of Transport and Works will add that extra information to assist our tourists.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on 2 issues tonight. First, I want to pick up the comments of the Chief Minister yesterday in question time relating to pollution on polling day. I must say that I share the view of the Chief Minister completely in that the polling day activities and the amount of manpower and money that is put into manning booths has gone overboard and is really a blatant waste in many ways as well as being intimidatory and unproductive.

I can remember elections in 1969 and 1970. In those days, the polling booth attendants were a very important part of polling day because many people did not have much information about elections before arriving at the booth. Radio schedules were not available. There was no commercial radio or television. As you know, Mr Speaker, there was no television advertising of any consequence in those days. Newspapers were weekly or biweekly at best, and most communities relied on their own little clarions or newsletters for their source of information. These were mostly of a non-political nature and most of them refused to publish anything about politics at all.

When people went to the polling booth on the day, obtaining their how-to-vote card and other information was an important part of the electoral process at that time. However, times have changed pretty significantly. We now have commercial television all over the Territory and the ABC does a fair amount of political broadcasting of one type or another. Newspapers are daily, or at least 2 or 3 times a week in Alice Springs, and most small towns have a couple of publications. The postal service is much improved on what it was in the early days and, as a result, people generally have reasonable access to voting information if they want it, and I think most of them take an interest in it.

Under the changed circumstances that we have in the Territory, I would be more than happy to advocate a system similar to that used in Tasmania. I believe that it is an offence in Tasmania to solicit a vote within 300 m of a polling booth on the day. I would be happy to go the extra step and make it an offence to solicit a vote on the day and leave people in peace to make their own decision when they go to the poll without all the added influence that is presented to them at the booth. I shall be communicating with the Chief Minister in these terms.

The second item I would like to raise this evening is the story that was very widely publicised in the southern media yesterday and has only just started to take effect here. I refer to the story of the Chamberlains. In fact, Mr Speaker, if you have the time and the opportunity to flick through the interstate papers of yesterday, the coverage on the Chamberlains and their compensation settlement with the Northern Territory would be of little help to the Northern Territory at all. To be quite honest, since the Morling Report was tabled here some 9 months ago, I had forgotten about the settlement and simply assumed that it had occurred quietly and that there was nothing more to do about it. Although I had intended to ask a question at the last sittings, I forgot about it and it has not been a matter of great importance to me. I was pretty disturbed to see the press reports because I think they are very adverse publicity for the Northern Territory. I was even more disturbed to

hear that, not only are the Chamberlains not involved in a settlement but, as a result of the Chief Minister's comments this morning, it is quite obvious that very little has been done towards moving to a settlement. That is what I would like to talk about.

As I recall it, when the Morling Report was tabled in this House, the Attorney-General was happy to give Mrs Chamberlain a pardon, and it was later accepted that the only thing that could reasonably be done for the Chamberlains under the circumstances was to quash the sentence. The moment the sentence was quashed, some form of settlement or compensation or whatever you want to call it was due from the Territory to Mrs Chamberlain and her husband. I do not think that there is any way that that can be avoided and it is something that we ought to settle graciously and as quickly as possible.

On radio this morning, the Chief Minister rather stunned and surprised me when he said that, firstly, he was not sure that the Northern Territory should pay any settlement because the Northern Territory was not at fault. I would have to accept that the Territory was not at fault, but there is nobody else with whom the Chamberlains could take the matter up. Secondly, the Chief Minister said this morning on radio, as well as pointing out that the Northern Territory was not at fault, that he felt that, if the Territory were to come to some arrangement, it would take into account the Chamberlains' financial affairs over the last few years. That is pretty disturbing because the reality is that the Territory community has a settlement to make with Mrs Chamberlain. There is no getting out of that. All we are talking about is how much and how quickly we settle it. To be confusing the issue by asking whether we are obliged to pay and whether Mrs Chamberlain has any money or not is quite irrelevant. It would not matter if the Chamberlains were multimillionaires in their own right; we have a duty to settle with them.

I would say to the Chief Minister that we are seen by many people down south as a bunch of rednecks who do just about anything that we can think of to harass and make the Chamberlains' lives more miserable than is necessary. I do not accept that view. I think Mr and Mrs Chamberlain were accorded every legal opportunity that was possible under the law. The Morling Inquiry was set up entirely to ensure that they received the ultimate measure of justice. That having been done, I think it now behoves us, as a Territory community, to settle the compensation issue with the Chamberlains as quickly as possible.

I mentioned a moment ago that we are perceived by people down south as rednecks. We will have to rely very much on the attitude and support of people down south for things that we want and need to do in the future. When people down south see us behaving like this, they regard us as a community that is not to be trusted and one which certainly should not be accorded the rights of statehood, let alone other things. I do not want to labour the point tonight, but I would ask the Chief Minister to take into account that it is 9 months since the Morling Report was handed down. There is a growing perception in the community that the matter should be finalised. The negotiation between the government and the Chamberlains is a matter for the government and the Chamberlains. I do not care what the settlement is and I do not think many people in the community mind. There is a desperate need for us to settle the matter so that justice can be done and honour can be maintained between the parties. If we do not do that as a community, the southern media will give us a basting that we will carry for a long, long time.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to pursue my call for the establishment of a Medicare office in Katherine. I have written recently to

the federal Minister for Health, Hon Neal Blewett, expressing my concern and that of the community that there is no Medicare office in Katherine to service the people of Katherine and the region.

The 1980s have seen Katherine grow from a township of some 3000 to a town with a population in excess of 7000. The last count, conducted by the ABS under the auspices of the Katherine Town Council, showed that the town's population is 7283. Katherine is also a major regional centre. It services an area of something in the order of 250 000 km². There are 10 towns and communities in that region, an expanding mining community, a very large pastoral community and other industries. It is my belief that the people in the region have a right to be able to access a Medicare office without the need to travel another 320 km to Darwin or, alternatively, to conduct their business by mail. The region outside the Katherine area has a population of about 3000 people. It is worthy of note that the Katherine population includes about 2000 RAAF personnel and their dependants. Of course, they are posted to the Tindal RAAF Base. They come from areas where Medicare offices are available and, together with other people in the region, they have a legitimate expectation of being able to access a Medicare office without the difficulty that currently exists.

In addition to the 10 000-odd people who live in the region, many tourists pass through the region each year. During the main tourist season, it is estimated that, at any given time, the tourist population adds 4000 people to the local population. That boosts the population to something between 11 000 and 14 000 for at least 6 months of the year. Like the RAAF people, the tourists have come principally from areas where services of this nature are available and they have had the ability to promptly access Medicare offices and receive prompt rebates or attention to their inquiries in relation to Medicare matters. They too come to Katherine with a legitimate expectation that services of this nature will be available in a town of this size.

Other regional centres the size of Katherine and serving similar areas and outlying communities are serviced by Medicare offices. I see no reason why Katherine should not be serviced by an office. It should not have to depend on the office in Darwin. I must say that, despite the distance involved, the Medicare office in Darwin provides a reasonable level of service given that it is dependent on Australia Post and other courier services. Nonetheless, the inconveniences experienced by people in Katherine in seeking Medicare services is unjust. People cannot obtain prompt rebates and not everyone is in the happy position whereby they can afford to wait a week or so for their rebates to come back. Some people need to watch their money very closely. The average working man, who is experiencing high interest rates for his mortgage and other financial burdens in these fairly difficult financial times, has to watch what he does with his money very carefully, particularly if he has a family. Children have a habit of becoming sick or having accidents and requiring medical attention on a regular basis. It places an additional pressure on families if they have to wait for their Medicare rebates.

I wanted to put on record tonight the fact that the people of Katherine have an expectation and a need for a Medicare office to be established in the town. I have written also to Senator Simmons, the minister responsible for defence personnel, in the hope that he too will support this request to the Minister for Health, given that the 2000 RAAF personnel and their dependants who live in Katherine also need the services of a Medicare office. We all hope that the minister will accede to our request.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the Attorney-General for today on account of ill-health.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Continued from 22 August 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I start by thanking the government for continuing the practice of providing equal time to the opposition to deliver its response to the budget. It certainly adds to the value of parliament and I hope that it has now occurred often enough to become part of the tradition of this parliament so that the same privilege will be extended no matter which party is in opposition.

Unfortunately, this budget is like the government itself. It is tired. It is directionless. It is out of touch and arrogant.

Mr Coulter: You haven't got last year's there, have you?

Mr SMITH: Yes, last year's budget was much the same.

The very best that could be said about this budget for the Territory is that it is a 'do nothing' budget. In fact, it plans for a stagnant population and stagnant employment levels. The only thing that rises in the whole budget is the debt. That is the sort of budget that we have: stagnant population projections and stagnant employment growth projections, but a rising debt.

It plans to hit individual Territorians hard, particularly those at or below average income, and let us not forget that that is most people in the Northern Territory. Certainly, the majority of people in the Northern Territory are at or below average income. The only group looked after in this budget is the government itself. It has given itself an increase of 1.5% in real terms and, of course, that has been financed largely by those people who can least afford it, the low-income earners.

The sad fact is that this government has continued to frame its budgets in the same way it framed them when it was awash with money in the years which followed self-government - without discipline. It is the same sort of budget as the first Perron budget. The government has failed to listen to advice that I and others have given to it during the last 2 years. It has also failed to heed the message received from the electorate in the Flynn by-election in September 1988 and in the Wanguri by-election on 19 August this year.

The government's problem was encapsulated in a publication we received last year. It was called 'Territory on the Move' and it was an impressive-looking, glossy document. It was certainly a first step in developing the groundwork for planning, but it is not a plan. It is a collection of fragmented ideas about what may happen in the Territory some day. Most of the so-called strategies for development are, in fact, research

and identification tasks. The few specific targets contain no time-lines and no indication of what meeting the targets will mean for Territorians in terms of costs or benefits. To give an example of long-term projections and implementation policies without time-lines, I refer back to the May sittings when it was implied that the Chief Minister would make available long-term forecasts for the Power and Water Authority. Instead, we were given a commitment that electricity charges would not rise during 1989-90. Where are the long-term forecasts that will enable business to plan ahead?

To give another example, in the NT News of 12 June 1988, the Minister for Mines and Energy indicated that a number of major projects were very near to coming on-line, projects that would significantly increase power consumption and therefore bring unit costs down, resulting in a reduction of electricity costs - and I quote - 'by up to half'. What have we heard since about those projects that were very near to coming on-line: the Darwin-based synthetic fuels plant, the Darwin-based LPG stripping plant, the synthetic paper manufacturing plant, the ethylene glycol plant, the gas pipeline to Nhulunbuy, gas reticulation to Darwin homes and a cyanide plant requiring substantial gas throughput? It was said 15 months ago that all of those were very near to coming on-line. When he speaks in this debate, the minister will no doubt promise all those things again, and probably more. But what we want from this government is not promises or pies in the sky but some sense of direction, some sense of purpose about where we are going. The Northern Territory needs a sense of direction. We need a commitment to job creation through support for local industry and we need an emphasis on efficiency in public expenditure.

Mr Speaker, let us examine the effect of this budget on individuals. The effect this budget has on the working Territorian is to take a week's wage off the average family over a year. If a family lives in Housing Commission accommodation, it is much worse off. An average family living in Housing Commission accommodation loses \$400 per year in rent, \$100 in bus fares, 0.5¢ per litre in petrol costs, 10¢ on a packet of cigarettes and, of course, an additional amount every time it goes shopping for its groceries. If you are an average income earner or below, and you are lucky enough to have any money to put in the bank, you will even be taxed on that under this new, you-beaut government scheme of hitting the poorest and those who can least afford it, and the budget attacks those who can least afford it. A typical young couple with 2 or 3 young children, with the wife at home while the children are at school or are under school age, could be hit for \$500 to \$600 per year or more. That is \$10 to \$12 a week. What do they get in return? State Square!

Mr Finch: So they can have a job.

Mr SMITH: People in that situation know that State Square will not provide a single additional job that will be available when their kids are looking for work in 10 to 15 years time. No wonder State Square stinks and was an important factor in the historic Labor victory in Wanguri.

As well as the \$10 to \$12 hit that they have to wear as a result of this budget, people face the added worry that there is no end in sight. Whilst electricity charges have not gone up, they remain the highest in Australia. While this is bad enough, the cavalier way in which these budget papers fail to address the future of electricity pricing as our subsidy drops is breathtaking. There is no assessment in the budget papers or anywhere else of where electricity prices are going even though, earlier this year, the Chief Minister marked electricity prices as one of the most important issues facing his government. There is continuing hope that major consumers will come

on-line to bring down the average price. However, as we have seen, hope does not necessarily become reality. Hope does not allow businesses to plan for their future. That is the problem: we cannot get the Northern Territory government to plan and to tell us what its plans are and how they will impact on the price of electricity.

Let us have a look at the effect of this budget on the Territory. As well as hitting the ordinary Territorian, this budget is not good for the Territory community as a whole and the hopes we have for it. The government has lost its way. It projects that population growth will remain at 0.4% and that employment figures will stay the same. Significantly, in the very last sentence of his speech, the Chief Minister talked about protecting jobs rather than creating them. What sort of defeatist approach to planning the economic activities of the Northern Territory is it to end your budget speech by saying: 'Our task this year is to protect jobs, rather than to create them'?

There is no sense of what will attract people to the Territory to stay. There is no adjustment for the future and no review of what may have gone wrong or what adjustments need to be made. Instead, this government has increased our debt to just under \$1500m by borrowing another \$95m this year. \$1500m is almost the complete budget for the Northern Territory this year and that is what we owe in either government or semi-government loans. The Northern Territory has nearly 1.75 times the average Australian per capita debt. These debts have been acquired recently, as the budget paper points out, and their cost is therefore higher than those of other states, which have been acquired over a longer period. Not only do we have the greatest debt, we also have the most expensive debt.

While we recognise that investment and infrastructure are essential and that economically and socially productive assets, such as the power station, schools and most roads are justifiable, there is growing alarm that the government is committed to non-productive expenditure as well. One can well ask when the community will get a return on the State Square project. The only return is that our kids will be paying for it for the next 20 years. The budget has continued with the tired old formula: keep doing what we have always done and, if the feds will not pay, squeeze the taxpayer, particularly the low-income taxpayer.

When we look at the income side of this budget, there is more cause for concern. Firstly, \$7.9m has been shaved off the self-insurance fund. That is like a home owner letting the contents insurance slip to save money. Like a home owner, you can be assured that, one day, something will go wrong. I would like to know, and perhaps one of the ministers opposite can tell me, how much money is left in the self-insurance fund. We may get away with these short-term measures in this financial year but, sooner or later, the government will be caught short.

Secondly, there has been a reduction in cash reserves. An effect of this may well be to delay payment to companies that supply goods and services to the government. While this may make the budget look better, it will not help Territory businesses struggling to make ends meet. As well, there seems to be an inconsistency in the running down of cash reserves and, at the same time, estimating an increase in interest received from cash balances - a decidedly rubbery approach.

Thirdly, the reduction of the Treasurer's Advance from \$35m to \$11m has supposedly freed up funds. This reduction is apparently because the Treasurer's Advance no longer covers wage and salary rises. This is made up

by an increase of \$5.5m in the conditions of service reserve under the Treasury estimates. On a wages bill of \$489m, we could expect wage increases of about \$15m in the financial year. Despite the recent wage decision, the government is obviously hoping for much less. Once again, it is a very rubbery approach. The government has scoured its hollow logs to find the money for its expenditure and only time will tell whether or not it has overdone it.

Where does the money go? The only good news in this budget is a welcome increase of about 10% in capital works. This, of course, is an increase on last year's dramatically low base. Honourable members will remember that, at that time, the Treasurer's hope was that private enterprise would fill the gap. The truth is that, without the federal government's commitment to the Territory in terms of its own capital works, the construction industry would be much sicker than it is. The construction industry needs to be able to plan for the future. More effort needs to be put into forward work proposals so that industry can view them with some confidence instead of seeing them as departmental wish lists. If, as government expenditure indicates, we are settling at a lower level of government activity into the future, the industry should know about that now.

On first glance, the budget seems to present positive news for some departments. An increase above CPI levels for education is an example. When one closely examines allocations to programs within those departments, however, one discovers cuts to vital areas. Thus, whilst the Department of Education receives an increase in administrative expenses in real terms, there is a 5.5% cut in real terms to preschool and primary education. With the only factor contributing to the net growth in the population of the NT being natural population increase, this should be an area of growth. There is also an 11.7% cut in real terms to secondary education at a time when there is a move Australia-wide to encourage more kids to stay on to Year 12. I would like to see the honourable minister justify that.

Mr Harris: No problem.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that is an area the government has specifically targeted as needing improvement. Of course, Mr Speaker, secondary education is experiencing its second year of cuts.

Discounting specific funding for BTEC, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has received a 5% reduction in real terms in areas of real potential growth, such as horticulture, suffering a 35% decrease in real terms. There are extensive cuts to research as well. Of course, research is the key to future development in the primary industry and fisheries area.

Industries and Development also looks good on the surface.

Mr Reed: What about the positive parts of primary industry? You skipped over them very conveniently.

Mr Ede: It was the biggest cut of any department.

Mr SMITH: That is right!

Mr Reed: What about what is happening? What about the parts that have been funded? We are not going to hear about those. They are a bit too positive, are they? You only want to tell us about the negative views.

Mr SMITH: What do you think you are here for?

The allocation to the Department of Industries and Development also looks good on the surface with a 17% increase in the industry development activity area. But, again, on closer examination of the 3 programs within the area, something different is revealed. The big boost to the industrial development program is accounted for by the proposed expos in Hong Kong and China in November 1989. It is clear from this budget that that is being financed at the expense of existing small businesses in the Northern Territory. Existing small businesses in the Northern Territory cop a 23% reduction, in real terms, in the business development program. The business development program is the program that addresses small business needs in the Territory. This government's opinion of small business is clear from the size of the cuts. There is a 23% cut to the very programs best suited to help the sector of the Northern Territory business community which is most in need of help and which is most critical to the future stability of the Territory: the small business community.

In the last 2 budgets, I have given a list of principles that this government should be following and I repeat them here in the hope that, sooner or later, the government will listen.

Mr Reed: Let us hear about Territoricorp. That was a good one. It was well received.

Mr SMITH: Obviously the people of Wanguri are listening, even if the government has not yet got the message.

Mr Finch: Go on, you are kidding yourself there.

Mr SMITH: Well, if you think we are kidding ourselves, why don't you ...

Mr Coulter: Tell them what the alternative government is going to provide for them now. You keep on quoting about it. Let us hear from you about what you would do.

Mr Ede: They know, they know a lot better than you mob.

Mr Reed: Start with land tax.

Mr Harris: You would start off by knocking \$10m off the public service.

Mr SMITH: You are ready, are you?

Mr Coulter: Talk about land rights, uranium mines and Coronation Hill. What would you do?

Mr SMITH: How about we talk about some honesty and integrity in government, and a Chief Minister who holds those values as being important? How about we talk about arrogance?

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, as I said, in the last 2 budget debates I have given a list of principles that this government should be following, and I repeat them here in the hope that, sooner or later, somebody in government will listen. There are 6 principles ...

Mr Finch: Let's get down to them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: The first is to identify population targets and the level of social and economic infrastructure required to facilitate our emergence as a state.

We have no population targets. The budget speech does not relate to any required level of social and economic infrastructure. One has to go through the budget papers themselves to find anything of relevance and there one finds that the population growth target is 0.4%. Is that not an acceptance of defeat?

The second principle is to ensure that there are training and employment opportunities for all Territory kids. The third is to minimise the costs of red tape to entrepreneurial businesses willing to risk their money in the Territory. The fourth is to establish an effective, efficient and motivated public service. The fifth is to keep Territorians' money in the Territory through investment strategies, and the sixth is to ensure thoughtful social development policies aimed at improving the quality of life for all.

If the government had the wit to adopt a set of targets similar to those, it might be able to produce a cohesive budget which contained some meaning and which provided some direction to the general population and the public service. It has not had sufficient wit. It has been content to add 5% to last year's figures and the result is the hotchpotch of this budget.

The government itself must be managed efficiently and the government should aggressively support Territory business as a generator of jobs. I make no apology for saying that this side of the House has an aggressive bias towards existing businesses in the Northern Territory. That is where the future of the Northern Territory lies. Those businesses will receive the support of this side of the House to assist their growth and expansion, and that is the support which they are not receiving from the government.

Mr Speaker, let us look at one of the major requirements in terms of getting this economy back on the road. We need an efficient government. If the public service is to be efficient and responsive, the government must first provide it with a clear sense of direction. It must not provide conflicting signals, which is what this budget does. For example, whilst saying that it wants private enterprise to lead the Territory out of the hole in which it finds itself, it cuts support to small business. When the government sends such conflicting signals out to the public service and the small business sector, it has problems.

We will aim at developing Territory people and providing them with opportunities, not just importing skills at great expense. We will provide the public service with a sense of direction through cooperation with public servants and the unions involved.

Mr Coulter: By taking \$10m off them. They will know which way they are going.

Mr SMITH: I cannot identify precisely where that \$10m will be found. You can only do that when you are in government. But can I tell members opposite what they would know if they bothered to talk to public servants and the public service unions? That is that there are significant savings to be made

by more efficient administration of the Northern Territory Public Service which would cut out waste, protect job opportunities and, most importantly, provide enhanced job satisfaction to the people who are out there working hard for us in the public service without receiving any sense of direction from their political masters. I give an undertaking that members on this side of the House will work in cooperation with the public service and the unions to identify the savings that can be made.

Mr Coulter: Which jobs are to go?

Mr SMITH: It will be done without losing jobs. I give the public service a further commitment that a considerable percentage of the savings that are made will be put back into proper training for public servants so that we can increase the retention rate and provide people with ongoing opportunities.

Mr Coulter: Where are the savings?

Mr SMITH: The savings will be made when we increase the retention rate to an acceptable level instead of sitting idly by while the rate of attrition goes through the roof, instead of sitting idly by while teachers leave the system resulting in situations like that at Darwin High School, which cannot even provide teachers for Year 12 classes. That is what we will do.

Mr Harris: It is disgraceful, teachers resigning in the middle of the year and leaving their students in the lurch.

Mr Finch: It was disgusting too, leaving in the middle of the year.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Next, Mr Speaker ...

Mr Coulter: It was disgusting.

Mr SMITH: Teachers leaving in the middle of the year.

Mr Perron: Great professionalism, isn't it?

Mr SMITH: Why don't you go out and ask them why?

Members interjecting.

Mr Ede: A number of teachers are doubling up on their jobs. They are doubling their teaching loads just to try and keep the system afloat.

Mr Coulter: And what else would you do?

Mr SMITH: At Darwin High School, a teacher has had to be called back from retirement to take a Year 12 class. Isn't that disgusting? Why don't you ask yourselves why they are leaving?

Let us look at the support a Labor government would give small business in the Northern Territory. I repeat that we will aggressively support existing small businesses and encourage them to grow. We will put in place EnterCorp.

Much has been said about the dog-eat-dog approach in private enterprise. EnterCorp taps into the cooperative sense of business people who see themselves as part of a broad business community and recognise that generally

a more productive economy is good for all. Under EnterCorp, new small business operators are put in contact with a support network in the business community. This is based on an already successful concept called 'Business in the Community', a private-sector initiative that operates in most of the states. There is considerable expertise out there that is not being tapped at the moment. That expertise can help existing small businesses and those who want to become established. One of the most effective actions that government can take is help those sorts of people to create jobs.

Governments are notoriously bad judges of the probable success of new businesses. Labor recognises this but also sees a need to give some sort of financial assistance to new business. It will do this through Startup and Explan. These schemes provide guarantees to new or expanding businesses which have approvals for bank loans subject to adequate asset backing. Under these schemes, a Labor government will allow bankers and business people to assess the concepts put forward by these businesses and to evaluate their chances of success. It will then provide partial guarantees to ensure that businesses can obtain financial backing if, after an assessment by independent financial institutions, it is found that the only thing holding them back is a lack of sufficient security. That is what small business is all about - giving people with good ideas the opportunity to get out there and create jobs and growth in the Northern Territory economy. That is what we want to see, instead of accepting the stagnant population figures that this government is predicting.

We have an exciting idea for regional centres. In the regional centres of the Northern Territory, potential business ventures do not eventuate for many reasons. There is no entrepreneurial climate, there is a lack of knowledge about support services and there is an inability to turn good ideas into reality. Labor will help overcome some of those problems by providing regional economic facilitators. We will start in Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. The job of these facilitators will be to support ideas and concepts in their local communities. They will open up lines of communication with government and other industry. Most importantly, they will create jobs.

Mr Perron: How much will you allocate for them?

Mr SMITH: \$100 000. The cost of 1 press secretary.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the investment base of the Northern Territory. As I have said in this House previously, we must support business by providing a larger investment base. I am pleased to say that the TIO is moving in this direction by extending its banking functions and adopting a charter which provides for an aggressive bias towards Territory investment. There were some welcome moves earlier this year in the arrangement between the TIO and the Public Service Credit Society. Under a Labor government, those moves will go further and we will see the TIO moving at a proper pace towards the creation of a full banking institution in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, as I have said before, parliament should lead the way by arranging to have the Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Fund managed locally so that it can have an aggressive Territory bias in its investments.

Mr Ede: Labor leading the way.

Mr SMITH: Labor leading the way and members of parliament showing, through the use of their own superannuation funds, their confidence in the future of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, all that I have said about support for small business must apply to embryonic Aboriginal enterprises as well. We must support Aborigines as they strike out into commercial enterprises, using their land to provide a better future for themselves.

Mr Perron: Ask the member for Tiwi.

Mr Ede: Who is the member for Tiwi? It is Arafura.

Mr SMITH: The Chief Minister cannot pronounce Wanguri and doesn't even know the correct title of the member for Arafura.

We must support Aborigines as they strike out into commercial enterprises using their land to provide a better future for themselves and their kids. There is a need for more support in education. Many communities are finding that existing education services do not adequately prepare them for new businesses employment opportunities. We must also ensure that they get the same training, advice and financial support that is available to those businesses in the larger centres. Ideally, I would hope that the regional economic facilitators whom we will place in both Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy will be able to work with Aboriginal groups and individuals to help them get their ideas off the ground.

Let us not forget, when we talk about the Aboriginal dollar, that research done on behalf of the Central Land Council indicates that one-third of total expenditure in the central Australian regions is in fact Aboriginal money. In places like Tennant Creek it would be closer to half if it is not already more than that. One of the great challenges that we face in the Northern Territory, and it is one which the Labor Party is prepared to take on, is to see that all Territorians are equal, not just politically and legally but also economically.

Mr Speaker, let us now turn to the social justice area. In developing a responsible budget, Labor would ensure that a social justice strategy is applied. Labor recognises that not all Territorians are equally able to access opportunities and some often need specific assistance. Labor further sees economic disadvantage as a primary cause of social problems. We would therefore establish programs of assistance to ensure that services are available and appropriate to the needs of the communities in which people live. Essential to this strategy is the need to incorporate the principles of equity, access, participation and human rights. That is what social justice is all about.

Mr Finch: They are only words and you know it.

Mr Ede: We will make it happen.

Mr Finch: It is happening already. Jobs ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works will listen to the Leader of the Opposition in silence.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I have been driven into a state of shock. Of course they are only words. However, without those words, words which express concepts, there is no basis for planning a social justice strategy. That is the government's problem. It has no basis for planning its social justice strategy. It throws money all over the place. It throws it at pet projects as they come up. The government has no rationale for that. It has no basis for assessing whether that expenditure is effective.

I will give an example: the NT AIDS Council. The NT AIDS Council was supported financially by the government 2 years ago because it was the flavour of the month. People in the government and in the broader community were concerned about AIDS. Now, however, something else has taken the fancy of the government and the NT AIDS Council has been cut back.

Mr Perron: They have more money this year than they have ever had.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Tell those people to stop their unnatural practices and they might get more money.

Mr SMITH: I will take up that comment from the member for Koolpinyah. I want to say how much I admired Mr John Dunham, who appeared on last night's 7.30 Report on behalf of the NT AIDS Council and identified himself as an HIV victim. That has not happened to him because of unnatural practices. It has happened, for the benefit of the member for Koolpinyah, because he is a haemophiliac who received an infected needle. What does the honourable member say to those people who, through no fault of their own, are suffering the worst disease that we have seen in the second half of the 20th century? Does she say that they should not be helped? She should be ashamed of herself.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am not ashamed of myself.

Mr SMITH: You should be. I respect people like John Dunham, not people like you in your little cocoon out in the rural area. You have no idea of what real people are doing and what real people are suffering.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I know what real people are doing.

Mr SMITH: You ought to be ashamed of yourself. People like John Dunham and other disadvantaged people in this community deserve a better and a safer deal than they are getting from this government. It is time that they got that deal.

That can only be achieved by a government which has a social justice strategy which recognises the concepts of access, equity, participation and human rights. That is the key, Mr Speaker. This government does not have a social justice policy. It has no theoretical framework in which to plan its programs and spend its money, and that problem applies right across the board in all of its spending areas. Until that framework is put in place, it cannot effectively maximise the benefits of expenditure in the Northern Territory. It cannot assume that funds are allocated to the areas of greatest need. Instead, it has to rely on whims, pet projects and anything but a proper, reasoned basis for its expenditure patterns.

That is the essence of this government's problem. It is the reason why the public service has an appalling morale. It is the reason why teachers are leaving in droves. It is the reason why the NT AIDS Council has had its funds cut. It is the reason why things are going so terribly wrong in the Northern Territory. However, as last weekend's by-election proved, this government has gone beyond the point of no return. It does not listen. It will not take any notice. It is committed to a course of action identical to that which it followed in the first year of self-government and it will get the results it deserves.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Aboriginal Community Living Areas

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

1. endorse the Northern Territory government's action in seeking to negotiate with the Commonwealth to provide an effective resolution to the issue of community living areas for Aboriginal people resident on pastoral leases and the settlement of land claims to stock routes, stock reserves and other public purpose land in the Northern Territory;
2. endorse the proposals conveyed by the Chief Minister to the Prime Minister on 11 July 1989 and express its confidence that these proposals would provide for resolution of the issue and for early progress in implementation;
3. condemn the federal government for its inadequate response to these proposals;
4. condemn the attack by the federal government on the fundamental principles of Territory self-government contained in the Prime Minister's letter of 22 August 1989, and in particular:
 - (a) the threat by the Commonwealth to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act to establish a wider land claim regime in the Northern Territory;
 - (b) the demand by the Commonwealth that the eligibility criteria for community living areas be extended beyond that of need;
 - (c) the demand by the Commonwealth that areas required for the provision of essential services on community living areas not be capable of acquisition by the Territory ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! On this crucial matter, which relates to one of the most sensitive issues facing people in the Northern Territory and concerns many members, the Chief Minister moves a motion and presents a statement, a copy of which we are yet to see.

Mr Coulter: It has been circulated. It is on your desk. Have a look.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Hatton: We circulated the speech in advance.

Mr Coulter: You tell us we are arrogant. What do you think you are?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Dondas interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I did not notice the actions of the member for MacDonnell but had I done so I would have pulled him up. I advise the member for Casuarina that 2 wrongs do not make a right. The Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I will resume at paragraph 4 of the motion:

- (d) the stated intention of the Commonwealth to enshrine, in Commonwealth legislation, certain provisions of the Territory legislation with the effect that the discretion of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly will be fettered in an area clearly within the prerogative of the Assembly;
5. call on the federal government to abandon this attack on Territory self-government;
6. confirm the Northern Territory's commitment to early and effective resolution of the issues associated with community living areas; and
7. call on the federal government to accept the proposals put by the Chief Minister on 11 July 1989 and to agree to immediate further negotiations for the implementation of these proposals.

Mr Speaker, honourable members are undoubtedly aware that discussions have been proceeding between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth in recent months concerning the provision, on a needs basis, of living areas on pastoral properties for certain groups of Aborigines, and the settlement of land claims to stock routes, stock reserves and other public purpose lands in the Northern Territory. This is a matter of great importance to Territorians and it is appropriate for me to inform the House of the situation that has been reached.

The Territory government has long recognised the plight of certain groups of Aboriginal people who have not had satisfactory access to land under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Over the years we have made numerous efforts to deal with this problem in a constructive way and to resolve the issues in a manner acceptable to all interested parties.

In 1983, as part of the Territory government's 10-point package on Aborigines and land in the Territory, the Northern Territory government indicated its willingness to enact legislation to provide for the granting of land for Aboriginal communities living on pastoral leases. The offer made at that time was extremely comprehensive and would have provided the machinery to deal with the needs of Aboriginal communities in an effective way. Honourable members will be aware of the Commonwealth's lack of interest in and lack of response to that package. Honourable members will also be aware that no alternative proposals were forthcoming from the Commonwealth.

In May this year, I made a statement to the House on this issue. Let me reiterate some of the points I made then, to ensure that all honourable members appreciate the course which this issue has taken over the last several years. In April 1985, the then Chief Minister advised the Legislative Assembly of guidelines for the excision of Aboriginal community living areas. These guidelines had been agreed following extensive consultations between the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. It is important to remember that these guidelines

were accepted by the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The guidelines established criteria by which Aboriginal communities resident on pastoral properties could be provided with living areas sufficient for their residential needs and for the provision of community services.

There was a further dimension to these arrangements, which was clearly agreed by all parties to be an essential ingredient. This was the commitment of the Commonwealth to amend section 50 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to preclude traditional land claims to stock routes and stock reserves. I emphasise that there was a clear and unequivocal commitment from the then federal minister that this would be done. While the amendment was enacted by the Commonwealth parliament during 1987, and has been assented to, it has never been proclaimed and is, consequently, not in operation. I will refrain from making comment on the propriety of the Commonwealth government in clearly failing to carry out the wishes of the parliament. As important as that consideration is, the key issue is that the Commonwealth failed to honour an undertaking in relation to claims over stock routes and reserves. This failure has had tragic effects on the excisions program.

Both the Northern Territory government and the Cattlemen's Association proceeded with the excision program in good faith. While the results have clearly not been as substantial as they would have been had the Commonwealth kept its part of the bargain, nonetheless progress has been made. At the present time, and since the initiation of the excision program, a total of 21 titles have been issued for Aboriginal living areas. These are issued under Territory title. A total of 17 offers of Territory title have been made, but a number of these have been rejected by the relevant land councils, apparently on the basis that the titles should be Commonwealth inalienable title rather than Territory title. A further 12 offers of living areas are now ready to be made which, subject to the commencement of the amendments to section 50 of the Land Rights Act, could be handed over forthwith. As many as 50 offers for living areas could be made within a few months provided there is cooperation between the 2 governments, the land councils and the pastoralists.

On 16 May this year, I reported to this Assembly on the situation which had then been reached. My report detailed a very unsatisfactory saga. We have had to contend with bad faith from the Commonwealth and total non-cooperation from the land councils. We have been faced with the active collusion of the land councils and the Commonwealth in a self-defeating exercise of staggering proportions, the real victims of which are those Aborigines whose interests we have been endeavouring to serve. Quite understandably, the process has alienated the pastoralists and has provoked an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion. We have seen the land councils denying Aboriginal groups the opportunity to accept freehold titles which were immediately available, on the basis that they were to be under Territory title rather than Commonwealth title. I leave it to honourable members to make their own assessment of the advantage which this has bestowed on those Aborigines who were then, and who are still now, without land as a result of this uncooperative and irresponsible stance by the land councils. It is also a matter for Territorians to judge whether Territory citizens should properly feel that Territory land titles are unacceptable.

I remind honourable members that Justice Toohey's review of the Land Rights Act, entitled 'Seven Years On', concluded that title to living areas ought to be provided pursuant to a statute of the Territory, given that the purpose of the title was to provide living areas, not to recognise traditional ownership.

Although the excisions program proceeded, no formal negotiations between the Commonwealth and the Territory occurred between September 1988 and June this year. I remind honourable members of the issue which precipitated this most recent round of negotiations, which began in June and has continued until just this week. That event was our almost accidental discovery of unilateral action which the Commonwealth was about to impose on the Northern Territory. That action provided for the scheduling under the Land Rights Act of certain stock reserves and parts of stock routes and the establishment of a tribunal to hear applications for the excision of community living areas from pastoral leases including, if necessary, recommendations for compulsory acquisition. It provided for title to be Commonwealth inalienable freehold under the Land Rights Act.

On the basis of the report which I made to this Assembly at that time, the House resolved on 16 May 1989 to condemn the Commonwealth for the action it proposed and called on the federal government to re-establish cooperative and meaningful arrangements to resolve the very serious problem of Aboriginal community living areas on pastoral leases in the Northern Territory. With the support of that resolution of this Assembly, I sought a meeting with the Prime Minister in an effort to establish a cooperative basis for the resumption of meaningful negotiations. That meeting took place on 17 May 1989. I believe that the meeting was extremely useful and that it established a sound basis of agreement between the Prime Minister and myself on which negotiations could proceed. I believed that there was a common commitment to move forward on Aboriginal living areas and broad agreement on the way in which this could best be achieved. I table for the information of honourable members a copy of my letter of 1 June 1989 to the Prime Minister following that meeting.

The negotiations which then proceeded between myself and the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and between officers of the 2 governments were generally constructive and all those involved on the Northern Territory side were of the view that progress was being made. These negotiations culminated in a proposal which I put to the Prime Minister on 11 July. I also table a copy of that proposal for the information of honourable members.

I want to emphasise that this proposal provided a comprehensive package which would clearly have provided an effective framework within which the community living areas problem could be quickly resolved. Naturally it required give and take by all parties. It was not a proposal which satisfied only the interests of the Northern Territory government. Indeed, there were aspects of it which would not have been our first choice. However, I draw to the attention of honourable members the absolute commitment which I gave to the Prime Minister that we would fulfil our part of the arrangement. In addition, I ask honourable members to note that the letter also provided a progress report on the excisions program, a report which I think reflects very favourably on the Northern Territory government and the pastoralists as cooperative and constructive participants.

That brings us to the events of the last few days. On 22 August, the Prime Minister responded with a package which differed from that which I had proposed in some very important aspects. Mr Speaker, this is not an issue which I have sought to beat up. I believe the Territory government's dealings with the Commonwealth and the pastoralists have demonstrated very clearly a genuine desire to achieve a resolution and a willingness to compromise to attain that end. I regard the satisfactory resolution of the issue of Aboriginal living areas as extremely important. It is therefore important to understand very clearly the full implications of the Prime Minister's proposal and to assess its likelihood of success.

The Northern Territory has consistently sought to meet the legitimate aspirations of Aborigines in a responsible manner. My package of 11 July would have done that and would have provided the quickest and most effective path available in that respect. Further titles to living areas would be processed right now if this package had been accepted. It is clearly a matter of great regret that the package was not accepted.

The Prime Minister's proposal - and I table a copy of the Prime Minister's letter of 22 August - will unquestionably fail to secure our objective of obtaining community living areas for Aborigines in need. That is the fundamental reason why the Territory government cannot agree to it. It fails to acknowledge that the quickest and surest path to community living areas is to support the issue of title under Territory legislation and under arrangements which are acceptable to the parties directly affected. Without the cooperation of pastoralists - and I do not believe that the pastoralists can accept the Commonwealth's proposal - there is no prospect of significant implementation. All that is in prospect is an ongoing process of delay, frustration and litigation.

I also draw other aspects of the Prime Minister's proposal to the attention of honourable members. These will be of great concern to this Assembly. They introduce further elements which no Territory government could accept if it claimed to stand for the interests of Territorians. The Commonwealth government is now demanding that the Territory community living areas legislation provide for eligibility criteria for excisions based on a range of criteria beyond the criterion of need. As my proposal to the Prime Minister indicates, I am prepared to introduce community living areas legislation, but this program has always been about needs-based living areas, nothing more and nothing less. It cannot extend land rights arrangements to pastoral properties. That would be totally unacceptable to the whole of the Territory community. This, however, is precisely what the Prime Minister is now proposing. His proposal takes the form of a very clear threat. If we do not agree, then the Commonwealth will itself establish such arrangements in the Northern Territory by amending the Land Rights Act.

This is unacceptable as a matter of substance and intolerable as a form of conduct on the part of the Commonwealth. However, the matter does not stop there. I urge honourable members to read these letters carefully. The Prime Minister indicates that the Commonwealth will amend the Land Rights Act to enshrine in federal legislation those provisions that it wishes to see in Northern Territory legislation. To explain that more clearly, the Prime Minister is proposing that we introduce legislation in this House which the Commonwealth will then legislate to ensure that it cannot be changed by this parliament. This is an intolerable and totally unacceptable intrusion into the very principles of self-government, and we will not agree to it. It is a preposterous demonstration of bad faith to introduce blatantly unacceptable conditions which will clearly destroy any chance of progress, and which, in any event, have no bearing on the issues of substance and do not serve to promote the interests of the Aboriginal people.

I ask honourable members to note that the Prime Minister has also demanded, again under threat of Commonwealth action, that our community living areas legislation provide that no portion of land granted under an excision is to be capable of acquisition by the Territory. He has demanded that any requirement for land for the provision of essential services to Aboriginal communities be by way of a lease.

The Territory government cannot allow itself to be put into such a position. I draw to the attention of honourable members the views of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in his findings on the Ti Tree Land Claim. In that case, the claimants put the view that access to land for likely future water supply requirements did not require an excision of an area from the land claim. The commissioner's view was as follows:

A government that has all of the responsibilities of a state so far as meeting the diverse needs of the entire community is concerned, yet lacks the power of compulsory acquisition which the states enjoy, is at the mercy of those with whom it must negotiate ... There is no reason to believe that they are any more reasonable or responsible than the rest of the community might be expected to be had they had such an advantage in a negotiation situation.

As honourable members will appreciate, achieving excisions for community living areas is not the end of our concerns. Inescapably, the question of the provision of essential services for the communities arises. The Territory government's position on the provision of essential services and the installation of assets is clear. We will not and should not resile from the right to acquire such land as is necessary for these purposes and it is reprehensible and irresponsible to suggest that communities need not provide land for such purposes.

Mr Speaker, I table for the information of honourable members my letter of 23 August 1989 in reply to the Prime Minister's letter of the previous day. I ask honourable members to read this letter carefully. I will not dwell at any length now on the matters which I have put to the Prime Minister. The letter is very clear. These matters are extremely serious and honourable members will note my extreme disappointment and frustration. Put simply, if the Commonwealth continues to pursue its present course, then the hopes of Aboriginal people for community living areas will be dashed.

It will be clear to all honourable members that the Northern Territory government has worked constructively and cooperatively to meet these needs of Aboriginal Territorians. We stand ready to honour our commitments, a point which I have emphasised to the Prime Minister. But we cannot compromise on fundamental principles. We cannot abrogate our responsibilities and we cannot allow the erosion of Northern Territory self-government. The solution to the community living areas problem has not been in front of the Commonwealth government for 6 weeks in a formal sense. It is now time to acknowledge that solution and for all parties to get on with the job.

Mr Speaker, I call on honourable members to support this motion and to give full backing to our efforts to address the real issues. I look forward to hearing the views of members opposite, who have a very real interest in this matter. Events have taken on a totally new dimension and I look forward to hearing their views on the proposal I put to the Prime Minister on 11 July which, if accepted, would allow 50 titles to be issued within a matter of months. We have now lost 6 weeks, primarily because the land councils are demanding inalienable freehold title.

Mr Speaker, I propose that the terms of this resolution should also be forwarded to the Prime Minister.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the comments made by the Chief Minister this morning in respect of the question of excisions on pastoral leases have

been the subject of a great deal of debate in many quarters for many years. Unfortunately, they have not been the cause of as much action as they should have been.

At the outset, let me place on record my encouragement of the federal government in attempting to log-roll this situation. In the time that is available to me, I am unable to give an extensive history of the excisions process. The Martin Report on Pastoral Land Tenure in the Northern Territory, tabled in this Assembly in 1981 and leading on to perpetual leasehold tenure for about a third of the Territory's pastoral properties legislation later in 1981, was entirely devoid of any reference to the need for excisions. That was precisely the basis of my maiden speech in this Assembly in March 1981.

Thus it is with a sense, if not of *deja vu* then of considerable sadness, that I observe that there has been very little progress made towards the resolution of these problems in the 8½ years that I have been a member of this Assembly. However, I will say - and I believe that the Chief Minister is to be congratulated on this - that there has been a great deal more movement in the direction of the negotiation of excisions in the last few years. That has perhaps been a result of a change of heart on his part and perhaps a legacy of the member for Nightcliff's tenure as Chief Minister. I think both deserve a considerable degree of approbation by this Assembly because of their efforts in that regard. It has to be said, however, that it has not been enough. The Yambah situation to which the Chief Minister referred this morning is a clear indication of that. In the 17 years since the Gibb Committee identified the crying need for excisions in 1972, the matter has not been adequately negotiated and there has been no resolution.

Mr Speaker, I rise to address this motion as opposition spokesman for lands and I will be moving an amendment to the motion moved by the Chief Minister.

A member interjecting.

Mr BELL: Yes, it will be circulated.

In the context of the Chief Minister's statement, it was extremely interesting to read the exchange of correspondence between himself and the Prime Minister during the last few days. It is clear that the Prime Minister of this country is determined to see resolution of this problem. It is clear that the Prime Minister of this country is not prepared to present himself in international forums as not having provided a just settlement for Aboriginal people in an area in which he is able to act. I think it is unfortunate that the federal government has been pushed to this point, but it is quite clear that it has been left with little alternative.

Let us look precisely at what the Chief Minister's options are at this stage. The Chief Minister has 2 options. The Chief Minister can either whinge about what the Commonwealth government has done, as he has attempted to do ...

Mr Perron: Or has not done.

Mr BELL: If we are going to talk about what the federal government has not done, to answer the interjection from the Chief Minister, I suggest that what the Commonwealth government has not done in respect of the land needs of Aboriginal people could be written on the back of a postage stamp. On the other hand, the opportunities which this government, and this Chief Minister

in particular, have had over the last 15 years to meet those desperate needs could barely be contained in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The plain fact of the matter is that the Chief Minister himself has been Minister for Lands for much of that time, and he could quite easily have addressed these issues as well as some of his more pressing personal problems.

As I said, the Chief Minister has 2 options. He can whinge, scream and belly-ache about the federal government's determination to solve this problem, or he can legislate, as the Prime Minister suggested in the letter which the Chief Minister tabled in the Assembly this morning.

In his letter of 22 August, which I notice begins very cordially with the words 'Dear Marshall', the Prime Minister says that the federal government would be forced to 'put in place a Commonwealth Living Areas Tribunal should you be unable to put in place the legislative proposals attached to your letter of 21 August'. The Chief Minister tabled that letter in the course of his statement, together with his own response dated 23 August. He also tabled the Prime Minister's letters of 1 June and 11 July. The Prime Minister's letter, however, makes reference to another letter from the Chief Minister, dated 21 August, apparently containing legislative proposals. When the Chief Minister sums up on his statement, he might like to tell us exactly why he did not table that item of correspondence with the Prime Minister. I would be very interested to see it.

The government's options are clear. Either it can complain and belly-ache or it can legislate. It can complain and belly-ache and wait till the Commonwealth government steps in - and let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that I do not think the mood out there in the electorate will cop an election on this basis, if that is the Chief Minister's idea. It is not just the Aboriginal people in the bush who are my constituents who are affected. The constituents of the member for Barkly and the constituents of the member for Victoria River also desperately want this problem resolved.

Mr Tipiloura: Around Katherine.

Mr BELL: And the people in the member for Katherine's electorate want this problem solved.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I really do not think that is the issue. The problem that we have to solve relates to administrative and legislative issues.

I have identified clearly the options available to the Chief Minister. Let us turn for a moment to Northern Territory title, which is the nub of the disagreement between the Chief Minister, the Commonwealth and the land councils. The fact of the matter is that the land councils and the Commonwealth government seem to have moved considerably on that issue. Yesterday's letter from the Prime Minister says: 'Considering the acceptability of your legislation to facilitate excisions from pastoral properties, the Commonwealth will have regard to the extent to which the Northern Territory legislation includes...'. It then refers to various matters, including eligibility criteria and a form of Territory freehold title which would incorporate statutory protection against alienation or encumbrance as well as resolving the problems in relation to access for essential services, mining reservations and statutory right of access.

There has been considerable movement on the question of Northern Territory title. I would have thought that the Chief Minister would be reasonably happy about that particular aspect. I appreciate that he would not be at all happy about the prospect of Commonwealth title under the Land Rights Act to parts of stock routes. However, he has nobody but himself to blame in that regard. He has had sufficient time to act in this matter and I support the Commonwealth absolutely in terms of it being forced to take action.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister's motion be amended as follows:

Omit all words after 'that' and insert:

(1) express its earnest desire to:

- (a) provide living areas now and a more satisfactory economic base in the future for Aboriginal people who it is accepted have a desperate need for land on pastoral properties; and
- (b) ensure that such provision does not unreasonably affect the economic viability of such properties; and

(2) resolve to legislate in concert with the federal government to provide a process which satisfies the majority of those needs by 31 December 1989 and includes a deadline of settling the balance of those needs by 31 December 1990.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister can hardly complain about this amendment. He has agreed on the need to provide living areas for people who are in desperate need. If there is any agreement in the exchange of correspondence between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister on this issue, it is that there is a desperate need.

I have included in that the earnest desire to see a more satisfactory economic base in the future for Aboriginal people. I do not want that to be misinterpreted. I am not talking about cattle stations within cattle stations. As I have said on many occasions in this Assembly, I believe that, in the context of the living areas debate, consideration has to be given to the fact that the current economic base for many of those groups is the dole or other forms of social security benefits. In the long term, that is not satisfactory. The way has been pointed with programs like the Community Development Employment Program. That should be enhanced, as the Gibb Committee report said, with the possibility of killer herds, horticultural exercises and so forth on those areas.

From the point of view of the lessees of those properties, we have included paragraph (1)(b) to ensure that such provision of living areas does not unreasonably affect the economic viability of such properties.

Mr Coulter: What does that mean?

Mr BELL: As the Deputy Chief Minister would be aware, that has been one of the issues in the Yambah case. I presume he saw Aaron Gorey on the Four Corners program a couple of weeks ago, saying: 'Those people are living on some of my best country'. Mr Speaker, let me say this. As somebody who represents many of those properties, I take very seriously the task of representing the interests of families living on pastoral properties.

Mr Hatton: Then what are you trying to stand on now? You cannot have it both ways.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: The member for Nightcliff, who prides himself on his ability as a negotiator, says 'you cannot have it both ways'. The basic assumption in this whole debate is that it is possible to negotiate in relation to our need to use our productive resources to produce cattle and our need to find living areas for Aboriginal people. I am surprised at the member for Nightcliff. I thought that he had a much more positive attitude to the world than that. The fact of the matter is that this whole debate is conducted on the assumption that resolution is possible. I believe that that assumption is appropriate.

The second part of this amendment refers to resolving to legislate in concert with the federal government to provide a process which satisfies the majority of those needs by 31 December 1989 and which includes a deadline of settling the balance of those needs by 31 December 1990.

Mr Coulter: A big part of them could have been resolved in 2 weeks time.

Mr BELL: The Deputy Chief Minister interjects and says that they could have been resolved in 2 weeks time. Let me remind him that, for 10 years before he became a member of this House, the party to which he belongs had the power to resolve this issue. It did nothing, and the member opposite cannot bitch when the federal government steps in to solve the matter in its own way.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the opposition's amendment is eminently supportable.

Mr Hatton: Sit down and learn some facts.

Mr BELL: The member for Nightcliff says I should learn some facts. The plain fact of the matter is that I represent about a quarter of the Northern Territory in which this problem is a live issue, the problem that the honourable Chief Minister addressed this morning when he brought up the question of Yambah. I was interested to hear him refer to 1954 records and the number of applicants who survive. I think it is a sad comment that only 7 of the 147 applicants whose applications were lodged by the Central Land Council are still alive in 1989.

Mr Perron: That is not what it says.

Mr BELL: From my recollection of the Chief Minister's comments this morning, he said that the names of 147 applicants were lodged by the Central Land Council. He contrasted that with 1954 station records which show that only 87 people were living there, and stated that only 7 names of the 147 lodged by the CLC appeared in those records.

Mr Perron: No, I did not say ...

Mr BELL: The Chief Minister will be able to enlighten me as to what he actually said, but we have to recognise that, for various reasons, people have been around within that country over the last 100 years. I remind the Chief Minister that it is about 125 years since the Telegraph Station was established. It is about 100 years since Yambah Station was founded. In that time, traditional Aboriginal society has been subjected to dramatic and essentially destructive influences. The people living at Yambah have

traditional links in the Napperby area. The relationship between those people and the 5 groups who are seeking excision areas is a very complicated one.

Mr Firmin interjecting.

Mr BELL: All those people are my constituents and if one looks at the recent contact ...

Mr Firmin: Why won't they accept the offer that we have made?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, will you tell him to shut up?

Mr Firmin: It is getting to you, isn't it?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ludmilla will have an adequate chance to participate in the debate.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, during the last 30 or 40 years of contact history, the people from Yambah have lived in various locations. They have worked on cattle stations and lived in towns. Many of them ...

Mr Firmin interjecting.

Mr BELL: Oh shut up, will you!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I remind the member for Ludmilla that I pulled him up a moment ago. I have been fairly tolerant. He will have a chance to participate if he so wishes.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if you look at the history of those people over the last 50 years, you will find that they have lived in various places. They have lived in Alice Springs. They have lived at Arltunga. Many of those people and their parents were moved from Alice Springs to Arltunga during the war. They moved subsequently to Santa Teresa Mission in the early 1950s and some went to Amoonguna in the late 1950s. Since then, Alice Springs has changed dramatically. In 1950, Alice Springs was only slightly larger than Tennant Creek is now, with a population of about 3000. It has changed dramatically since then. These people have had to adjust to extraordinary changes. I mention that in order to draw the attention of honourable members to the social complexities involved.

I want to stress the importance of addressing this issue on a case-by-case basis before a tribunal within 6 or 12 months. If there is not a prospect of a tribunal being set up in 6 or 12 months, some people will not negotiate. The history of the Yambah excision is a particular case. I believe that, had there been the prospect of a tribunal determination, a resolution to that particular problem would already have been found. While I am on the subject of the Yambah excision negotiation, let me pay credit to the work of the Ngerreke Council which works in close contact with the Tangentyere Council and, particularly, to the work of Mr Des Carne who is a very hard-working adviser with the Ngerreke Council. I do not intend to go into detail on the recent history of the Yambah negotiations. It is not possible in the time available to me.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, in the time that remains to me I would like to refer to a couple of other situations in my electorate where the excisions question has been of importance. It has been of importance in the areas where excisions have already been negotiated. I refer to properties such as Maryvale, Tempe Downs and Narwietooma where excisions have already been negotiated. It is to the credit, for example, of the Connellan family that an excision was negotiated on its property without the threat of a tribunal determination. I suggest that honourable members opposite should be aware that the late Eddie Connellan was something of a father figure in the CLP and perhaps they should follow his example in that regard.

In places where negotiations are continuing, one of the major difficulties is obtaining information. It has not been possible to get all the information about the excisions from stock routes but I will be very concerned to find out what happens to the stock routes in the vicinity of Umbeara, Lilla Creek, New Crown, Henbury and Tempe Downs stations because the maps I have seen include those stock routes in the green areas. The map which I have is quite an extraordinary document, Mr Speaker. It has green, brown and red areas. I am concerned about the red areas and the impact that those stock route claims might have on the properties which adjoin the stock routes. I will be taking a particular interest in that subject.

In closing, I point out that these comments are essentially extemporaneous and I look forward to contributing further to the debate on what, hopefully, will be the rapid resolution of the question of excisions for people whose need is demonstrable and desperate and must be satisfied.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, before commencing this speech, I advise honourable members that the noise which we have been hearing, even within these enclosed walls and above the strident tones of the member for MacDonnell, was caused by the weekly testing of the nuclear emergency siren at the wharf. It was nothing more than a test. Honourable members opposite should note that it was a practical example of what the Minister for Transport and Works referred to in question time earlier this week.

I must say that one becomes very frustrated when one comes into this House and hears the sort of self-congratulatory pious claptrap that emanates from the members opposite every time something to do with Aboriginal people is raised. That last speech was one of the worst examples I have heard. It is about time the community understood the reality of what is happening in relation to living areas and excisions. It is about time people recognised the real political game being played by the power brokers in the Aboriginal industry and the extent to which destitute Aboriginal people are being used as political pawns in a national and international power game. It is about time members of this House stood up and offered something that is practical, appropriate and fair in the interests of all Territorians, not least of whom are those destitute Aboriginal people who are living without homes, without property and without any real future at the moment.

Mr Speaker, we heard nonsense from the member for MacDonnell and I suppose we will hear it from the member for Stuart. They are running dogs for the land councils.

Mr Ede: Our electorates.

Mr HATTON: They are the running dogs of the land councils, not their electorates. That is the problem: they are in here to promote the cause of the land councils. I think I can stand up in this House with some pride in the work that I have done, in the short time that I have been a member of this parliament, to promote the cause of genuine improvements in the life of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I stand proudly by that.

I also know the reality of what is going on and it is about time that some of that reality was on the record of this House. I hope that the member for Barkly will stand up and mention some of the problems that he experienced in seeking to resolve these matters. The problem is the land councils. That is where the fundamental problem lies. The land councils do not want an agreeable solution to the living needs of those Aboriginal people. They do not want the Northern Territory community to find a cooperative agreement to resolve that known and genuine concern. They want to maintain the crisis. They want to maintain the conflict and they want to use it as a political weapon to extend the Land Rights Act beyond unalienated Crown land. This move by the Prime Minister is the first significant step towards the attainment of that political objective by the land councils. That is what this is all about. From the point of view of the land councils, it is not about looking after the interests of Aboriginal people.

The Chief Minister has outlined the moves that occurred in 1983 to put legislation in place for living areas and the moves made in 1985 by the then Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, to arrive at an agreed position which would have allowed Aboriginal communities, pastoralists and the federal government to develop a process for negotiating living areas for all those Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties who did not have access to claims under the Land Rights Act. I give credit to the member for Barkly. I must say that, as his Minister for Lands, it would have been nice if I had known about the discussions that were occurring. The outcomes of the discussions were presented to me after the event, but I have to say that they were good. I give him credit where credit is due for the introduction of the excision guidelines. They were working exceptionally well. I say now that, had the land councils not forcibly intruded themselves into the process of the negotiations over those excisions, the whole issue would probably have been resolved 2 years ago. There would have been excisions, there would have been living areas, there would have been titles and water and fencing and all the other things would have been in place. It is probable that that would have been done 2 years ago.

Because I was actively and closely involved in that process, I know that some 70 negotiations were taking place in 1985. I know that, in most of those cases where the Department of Lands was talking directly with the Aboriginal community involved and with the pastoralists, agreed areas had been determined or were being determined to provide living area titles. What happened? When the then Chief Minister was moving to put the excisions into place, the land councils attacked the concept.

That did not work because we proceeded to work directly with the people concerned. The land councils attempted to intrude but we told them that the matter was beyond the scope of the Land Rights Act and that we were talking directly to the people. That approach was working quite successfully but the land councils then approached the communities individually and muscled in on the process. They obtained powers of attorney from each of the communities involved, stating that we were not permitted to speak directly to the communities but had to talk only to the land councils.

That was when the negotiations started coming undone. The first step taken by the land councils was to cut off direct negotiation between the government of the Northern Territory and the people in need. They did that by obtaining powers of attorney from those Aboriginal communities. We were forced to talk directly to the bureaus of the land councils. They said: 'Throw away that approach. We are not interested in it'. Their own people went out and started picking spots that they knew would be unacceptable to the pastoralists either because they were too large or because they were critically important to the viability of the property. Even when agreements were close to being reached, the land councils changed the locations of areas requested for excision.

Yambah is an example. Agreement was reached in relation to sites on Yambah but the land councils subsequently changed the locations of the areas required. When an offer was made for land on Yambah, what did the land councils say? 'Oh no. That is going to solve the problem. We do not want that to happen'. What did they do? They claimed an area that is critically important to the entire viability of Yambah Station. The station owners responded by saying that they would not agree to an excision of that area and the result is the events which have occurred during the last few months. People have walked onto the property, having left their illegal camp on a stock route, where another claim has already been lodged.

That is what is happening in this exercise, Mr Speaker. I have sat through meeting after meeting after meeting with the land councils. I have sat down for meeting after meeting after meeting with Clyde Holding and meeting after meeting with Gerry Hand and the same story goes on and on. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs regularly advised Minister Holding, and later Minister Hand, that the Northern Territory government's approach was right, that we were effective, that we were achieving results and that the land councils needed to have their toes cut off. That is the advice DAA gave to the minister, and Minister Holding heard that advice.

Minister Holding honoured all the promises which he made to Northern Territory pastoralists in respect of stock routes and reserves. However, there was an election in 1987. What happened in that election? There was a change of ministers, because suddenly the land councils saw that the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had woken up to them, and it is significant that the Canberra lobbyist for the land councils at that time was one Warren Snowdon. He had lived in Canberra for some months, lobbying on behalf of the land councils for the removal of Holding and his replacement by Gerry Hand, the leader of the left wing faction of the ALP. He was successful. Congratulations!

This, however, was sad news for the Northern Territory because Gerry Hand does not listen to advice from his department. I know he has ignored it. Countless times it has been demonstrated that all of his advice comes from his political mates in the land councils. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is shut out of the minister's office on Northern Territory Aboriginal affairs matters. That is the problem. Gerry Hand is forcing the views of the land councils on the Cabinet. The land councils have deliberately and continuously frustrated the whole negotiating process on land rights. Gerry Hand, as their collaborator, has worked very hard to block assent and implementation of legislation that passed through both Houses of the Australian Parliament in 1987. That is an absolute affront to the principles upon which the Westminster system is based. The parliament has passed the legislation and the Governor-General has assented to it. However, because the government has not allowed it to be published in the Gazette, it has not become law.

That is the sword that is poised over our heads. The federal government says: 'When you demonstrate to our satisfaction that you have made real progress on excisions, we will sign the gazettal and let the amendment go through'. Quite justifiably, the pastoralists were just a little peeved about that. The pastoralists had cooperated in the entire process of negotiation on excisions although they knew that the claims were totally unjustified in many cases and that the land councils were shovelling people out of the towns and onto the communities, shovelling people off Aboriginal land onto excision and stock route claims. They knew that the land councils were using federal money to provide housing and other services on those areas, one of which is Yambah. Even though they knew all that, the pastoralists were still interested in finding a negotiated settlement. They did, however, say one thing: 'For once in a decade, we want the federal government to honour a promise. Just once, then it will all happen'. Will the federal minister do that? No way! There is no chance that the federal government will do that because Gerry Hand does not want a solution. He is one of the front men for the land councils, just as the member now leaving the House is one of their front men and just as the member for MacDonnell is one of their front men.

Every time an issue comes up, the defenders of the land councils jump out of their seats and proclaim the tragedy of the Aboriginal people and the terrible behaviour of the Northern Territory government. We want this matter resolved. We put pressure on the pastoralists. We moved to settle the stock routes and reserves claims together with the excisions in a total package. We pressured pastoralists to do this. We were frustrated by the continuing failure of the federal government to take one step to honour what it had promised to do, and that is where our problem is.

People out there have had a gutful. They are saying that enough is enough. We know that these Aboriginal people need land, as they need services, education and job opportunities. We know that, but we are not going to sacrifice our own lives and our own livelihoods on the altar of a political campaign by the land councils to take over the Northern Territory. We are not going to do that. And can you blame us, Mr Speaker? I am sorry but I cannot. I will fight for true opportunities to be put before Aboriginal people. These people are destitute. Any member who has seen the places where they live will know that they desperately need water, power, housing and land.

Mr Ede: Yes, yes! Why are you dragging your feet year after year after year?

Mr HATTON: We know that. We are not dragging our tails here.

Mr Ede: We are not going to drag our feet any more.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, here he comes. I knew I would drag him out of the woodwork soon. He sits there, not saying that his mates and masters are deliberately frustrating that process. They are deliberately frustrating it.

Mr Speaker, compulsion will not properly solve this problem. If the federal government honours its promise tomorrow, and signs a gazettal notice tomorrow, we will see tens of living areas falling into place. We know that.

Mr Ede: 'Trust me', he says.

Mr HATTON: There they go. Listen to them. Mr Speaker, if there is one thing we know it is that we cannot trust the ALP. It breaks promises. Its members even pervert the process of parliament in the interest of their own

political games and serving their political masters. If that is the problem, and if the federal government is so altruistic, why does it not sign the gazetta? It has been through parliament. It has been assented to by the Governor-General. What is the problem? Why does it not honour it now and give us a go?

I will say something else: the best way to resolve the living areas problem is to kick the land councils out of the negotiating room. I would give money directly to Aboriginal communities to hire their own private legal representation and get out of the political minefield created by the land councils. They would have decent professional advice in the negotiations; I would not deny them that. They should be removed from the political gamesmanship that is absolutely destroying them. Everyone knows that and it is about time somebody did something about it. We should not allow this federal government to become the pawn of the land councils once more.

If the federal government's threats are translated into action and there is an opportunity under the Land Rights Act for claims to be made over alienated land on pastoral properties, every pastoral property in the Northern Territory would immediately be at risk. People may rubbish me for saying that but, in 1976, when some people stated that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act would lead to claims over national parks and public purpose lands, they were accused of scaremongering. There are grave risks in this situation. The Territory people should determine what occurs and we must get the political power brokers out of the system so that that can happen and so that we can do what we want to do, which is to provide decent living conditions and land tenure for people who are living on pastoral properties or people who have been thrown off pastoral properties where they should be living. These people must be helped to live with some dignity and hope for the future.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, about 2 weeks ago in The Australian I read some remarks of the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Gerry Hand. He said that he was most reluctant to use federal powers. He sounded like a pretty reasonable sort of bloke who was resisting pressure from the land councils urging him to use federal powers to show the fellows from the Territory who is boss. He said that he was most reluctant to do that. Reading between the lines, I think Mr Hand was probably thinking of 1983 and Paul Everingham's campaign in relation to the handover of Ayers Rock and the thrashing which the Territory Labor Party received in the subsequent election. Remembering that, I believe he wanted to give the impression of being somewhat reluctant to use federal powers.

However, we have subsequently seen something which no doubt surprised the Labor Party greatly. It won the Wanguri by-election. It has just a sniff of victory and thinks that, if it could force the government to an election, it might just have a chance of winning. I can just imagine Senator Collins and Mr Snowdon advising the Prime Minister: 'Turn up the heat. We have got them over a barrel. We really have them frightened. Put the heat on them'. I believe that is what lies behind these threats by the federal government. The Prime Minister is endeavouring to show how tough he is and prove something to the people in Australia who do not understand the issue, by saying: 'We will do it. We will make the excisions and the Aboriginal people will no longer live in poverty. We will do it'.

The truth of the matter is that, if the Labor Party felt genuine concern for the Aboriginal people, it would do the postage stamp's worth of work which the member for MacDonnell said is all it needs to do. How right he was! All the federal government has to do is assent to the legislation which will

exempt stock routes and reserves from claim and honour the promise made by former minister Holding. That is all it needs: the Governor-General's signature and a postage stamp.

Mr Firmin: No, he signed it.

Mr COLLINS: Well, it needs to be gazetted. That is even less - half a postage stamp's worth. It is in the Prime Minister's hands.

A few weeks ago, whilst travelling to Alice Springs from Darwin, I found myself sitting behind a Melbourne lawyer who was working for the Northern Land Council. We were discussing this very issue and I said: 'Look, if the federal government is genuine, it should honour its promise to the cattlemen, who have already shown their good faith'. We heard the member for MacDonnell praise the late Eddie Connellan for taking the initiative and negotiating a lease for the people who lived on his property, Narwietooma. That is only one of many examples. Another involved the Webbs at Alcoota. They gave title to the Aboriginal people there and those people have settled down and are making their living area something to be very proud of. One can see their pride. The problem has been solved in that instance. There are many other examples.

Who can blame the Territory pastoralists for saying: 'We accept that there will be excisions but first the Commonwealth must honour its promise'? The matter could be settled for half the cost of a postage stamp. As I said to this lawyer representing the Northern Land Council, if that was done there would be dozens of excisions and titles granted within a reasonably short time. If the Territory government or individual pastoralists are recalcitrant, the Commonwealth government still has the power to act. It can say to the Australian people: 'We have done everything. We have given the Territory government and the pastoralists a chance to be reasonable and do the right thing'.

In reality, it is good to see that pastoralists can negotiate with Aboriginal people without any government involvement, apart from the role of officers of the Department of Lands and Housing who have to draw up the excisions and arrange the titles. That is how it should be. There should not be any hammers involved. All that is required is half the cost of a postage stamp for gazettal of the act. Why the parliament is not in uproar over that, I do not know. The Territory government should be given the chance to prove that it is capable of and willing to solve the problem. I suspect, however, that that will not occur because, as the member for Nightcliff pointed out, there are people who purport to represent Aboriginal people but who could not give a damn about them. Their very existence depends on there not being resolutions to problems for Aboriginal people in the Territory. That is a crying shame, and that is the message that needs to be put across.

We have had considerable publicity about pastoral leases, lack of excisions and how the Aboriginal people are living in poverty whilst the white people are living in luxury. However, very few have had the courage to publicise the fact that the federal government has not honoured its promise. It is really in a position of power. It could be seen to be totally reasonable. It could gazette that legislation and see if the people, the Territory government and the pastoralists do the right thing. If they do not do the right thing, it could intervene with great authority and support from the Australian people and say: 'You have not done the right thing. We believe that we have a mandate to intervene'. It does not want that.

Mr Ede: That is rubbish.

Mr COLLINS: The member for Stuart should be urging his federal colleagues to force the minister to have that legislation gazetted. If he were fair dinkum, he would do it. These fellows will not be urging him. All they can smell, after the Wanguri by-election, is the possibility of Labor winning in the Territory. That is the perception which Bob Collins and Warren Snowdon have. I believe that they are posturing and trying to push the Territory government to an early election.

I do not think that our current Chief Minister has the same sort of personality as Paul Everingham has and, in many ways, that is probably a good thing. Paul was able to maintain a rage in relation to the handover of Ayers Rock during a very short election campaign of several weeks. That laid many of the ground rules and many people who only half read the story believe that it is simply that the poor Aboriginal people are downtrodden by the terrible people in the Territory. Those people do not get to the second part of the story, which is that this matter could be resolved.

I challenge the member for Arnhem to urge the minister to gazette the act and test the Territory government and the Territory pastoralists as to whether they are men of their word. They have gone halfway. Many excisions have been granted so far. If they prove to be men of straw and not men of their word, the Commonwealth can hit them on the head and I will support that. We should also have a thought for the Aborigines out there. If members opposite do not do that, all I can say is that they are interested only in keeping confrontation going.

The very existence of the land councils depends on the continued existence of problems. When the problems are gone, their purpose will cease and they will no longer be of any use. They are of no use now because they are not carrying out the will of the Aboriginal people. I urge members opposite to show their good faith and have the federal government gazette that act. If, in 12 months time, there has not been a considerable amount of improvement and 80% to 90% of those remaining claims for excisions have not been processed, federal legislation can be enacted that would have the support of the Australian people. I believe that the Labor Party is not game to do that. It wants to posture in the hope that there will be an election which it hopes to win. It then hopes to pose as the saviour. All doors will open and the gazettal will be done: 'We have solved all the problems. The CLP government and the conservatives in the Territory did not have any idea. What wonderful chaps we are'.

It is about time the Labor Party put politics second to the needs of those Aboriginal people whom it says are poor people. I say that they are poor people too and that they need these excisions. Here is a simple recipe which still leaves the power in the federal government's hands to act if events do not proceed appropriately. However, it would have to show its good faith in return for the good faith that the cattlemen have already shown. Territory cattlemen are men of their word. Their word is their bond. I fully support them in not going any further until the federal minister gazettes the act.

I support the move of the Chief Minister in opposing these attacks upon our powers in the Territory. If ever there was an example of how much we need statehood, this is it. This will be a big issue and it ought to be a burning issue for every Territorian. It needs to be spelt out clearly that the answer is quite simple. We must turn up the heat and we must tell every Australian the true story. This is the log jam which can be broken for half the cost of a postage stamp. Gerry Hand has the power to put things in motion again. If he does not do it, then he stands condemned and so does his government. If

the members opposite do not urge him to do that, they stand condemned because they will be preventing people from obtaining the land and secure title that they need.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I do not support the motion moved by the Chief Minister and I support the amendment as moved by the member for MacDonnell in which he said that this Assembly should 'express its earnest desire to ... provide living areas now and a more satisfactory economic base in the future for Aboriginal people who, it is accepted, have a desperate need for land on pastoral properties'. Let me dwell on that first.

My knowledge of the geography of the central Australian area is not as good as that of the members for MacDonnell and Stuart. However, I am aware of some of the needs of people living on pastoral properties. I have traversed that country. Many of my people live down there. I am one of the lucky people who was given land under schedule 1 of the Land Rights Act and I am very pleased that my people in the Top End of the Northern Territory received that land. We are talking now, however, about those people whom the land rights legislation forgot.

It is important to understand the aspirations of Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties. They are seeking a piece of the land which they owned until the white man's law came in, land which they rightfully claim. They want to exercise their birthright and their ceremonial rights in an area of which they have custody through the way they exercise their traditional rites. That is what we are talking about, Mr Speaker.

It is my understanding that, during the early 1980s, the Territory government was very close to negotiating some excisions, and I believe that people have obtained excisions in some areas. In fact, Territory titles were offered in some areas around Katherine. One has been accepted. According to my information, there is an area at Bucket Springs in Keep River National Park for which a Territory title has been issued. This was accepted.

Mr Speaker, let me say this. Some Aboriginal people living on pastoral stations are very reluctant to trust the Territory government. The people they turn to are those who belong to the organisations which the member for Nightcliff denigrates, the land councils. The land councils have been set up by an act of parliament specifically to look after the interests and the needs of traditional landowners. I thought I had got that message across to members opposite yesterday when they were talking about the rights of traditional landowners and the rights of other people occupying specific areas. I really thought they had got the message. Under the federal Land Rights Act, the land councils have an obligation to look after the interests of traditional landowners of specific areas, whether those people be living at Mallapunyah, Urapuntja, Groote Eylandt, Numbulwar, Maningrida or Victoria River Downs. That is the responsibility of the land councils.

I heard the member for Sadadeen say that the Aboriginal people seeking land on pastoral leases would be better off without the land councils and that they could go to the open market and find their own lawyers to negotiate excisions and titles. Are the members for Sadadeen and Nightcliff willing to pay those legal fees to help those Aboriginal people gain legal access to legal services? That is why the land councils exist.

What the members opposite are trying to say is that they have the power to legislate and that we should meet their terms. When we have the guts to compete in their world, in their courts and in their system, they denigrate

the only organisations that are there to assist us. On this issue, they have done an about-face. Would they like us to go to the law officers of the Territory government, who are at present advising members opposite not to give title to Aboriginal people? Mr Speaker, would you like the Aboriginal people to go to the same lawyers who are advising this mob opposite? I do not believe that Aboriginal people would do that, because they know that the legal officers of the land councils are loyal to their organisations and their goals. They are not the sort of people who would dump their jobs and go to work for the Territory government to advise it how to run the affairs of pastoral properties.

I, for one, would like to see these places given to Aboriginal people. They are asking for excisions from pastoral properties and it is wrong for the member for Nightcliff to state that they would ultimately be seeking to claim much larger areas on the properties. There is no indication of that in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chief Minister, but the Chief Minister has put the fear of God into the pastoralists and members opposite have said misleading things. I could not believe that a member of this parliament would get up and say in this House that, after getting these excisions, Aboriginal people would have the right to claim pastoral properties. That is why paragraph 1(b) of our amendment expresses our wish to: 'ensure that such provision does not unreasonably affect the economic viability of such properties'. We included that provision specifically in order to ensure that, as well as looking after the interests of Aboriginal people, the viability of affected properties is maintained.

The member for Nightcliff should be embarrassed and ashamed of his attitudes and the way he has sought to mislead people. I am sure that the member for Victoria River and the member for Ludmilla will be more than happy to spread the word around, saying: 'Here march the Aboriginal people again. They have taken Uluru. They have taken Kakadu. They are in the process of taking over pastoral properties in the Northern Territory'. I bet you, Mr Speaker, that that is the sort of message that they will be preaching.

Mr McCarthy: Wouldn't you want to protect Territory freehold title if you were in government, Wes?

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, what are they talking about? They are talking about Territory title. Aboriginal people have been wary about accepting Territory title. Do you know why? Because of this government's attitude towards land rights in toto. This government has never supported any claim made by Territory Aborigines. Look at the records of the High Court. How many decisions have been turned down? How many decisions have been made in favour of Aboriginal people in the High Court? Plenty, a hell of a lot.

I would like to stress once again that I could not believe my ears when I heard what the member for Nightcliff said. I hope the member for Ludmilla will get up and speak on this matter. I am speaking out for the rights of those people who once dwelt in specific areas on pastoral properties. They used to own that land before John McDouall Stuart arrived on the scene and before the pastoralists came to put up fences. The traditional owners who are living in those areas now, or who would like to go back to those areas, have traditional links with very specific areas of land in the central Australian region.

Mr Firmin interjecting.

Mr LANHUPUY: We are talking about Australia. We are not talking about what has happened overseas.

Mr Firmin: You have not learnt the lesson correctly.

Mr LANHUPUY: You have not.

Mr Speaker, the member for Ludmilla has been involved with the council and the YMCA, and I thought that by now he would have developed enough brains to accept the basic fact that Aboriginal people lived here before anyone else. We are asking for a basic right but the honourable member supports the idea that cattle and pastoral properties have more rights than Aboriginal people. That is what he is saying.

Mr Firmin: They should live together on the same terms.

Mr LANHUPUY: I would like him to come out and say what he really means, which is that cattle have more rights than Aboriginal people.

Mr McCarthy: Yes, sure.

Mr LANHUPUY: There you go. There is the good Christian on the other side of the House who is saying that ...

Mr McCarthy: Yes, and I am proud to be able to say it.

Mr LANHUPUY: ... Aboriginal people have no more rights than the cattle on some of these properties. I would like to thank the honourable member for that because I have him on record now.

Mr McCarthy: Do you?

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, that is one of the reasons why I support the Aboriginal people's aspirations to get back to places like Yambah and Napperby and all the other places they cannot get to at present. I would like to see them get titles and, of course, we have offered to assist in amicable discussions between the people concerned and the Territory government. However, the Cattlemen's Association does not like that idea and has decided that it has had enough. It has walked away from discussions and the door has been closed on us.

The claims of Aboriginal people to these areas of land date from long before the days of Everingham and the time when members of this House were elected. They can serve their terms of office but, long after they have gone, the claims of Aboriginal people to that land will remain. They will always remain; I can assure honourable members of that.

Mr Speaker, coming from Alice Springs as you do, you would certainly be most aware of the basis of the claims of Aboriginal people to affiliation with specific areas of land. That basis is my reason for supporting these claims. I wish this Northern Territory government would regain some sanity and accept the requirements and the needs of the Aboriginal people. There are specific conditions which will ensure that, if people are given excisions, they will live on the excised areas. The Prime Minister and the Chief Minister are saying that they will look at the affiliation of people with specific areas and will legislate to accommodate that or create some sort of tribunal to thrash out arguments and assist in the process of supporting the move of Aboriginal people to excised areas on pastoral properties.

There is, however, another hurdle: the land claims hurdle. We have the stock routes hurdle and now there will be another hurdle to be crossed by Aboriginal people who will have been waiting for their land for 60 or 70 years. They will have to go before a tribunal to convince a group of people that they have a right to return to a piece of land, without even setting foot on it, although they continue to exercise their ceremonial rights to that specific land. That is what we are talking about.

This issue needs to be looked at from a human point of view, but of course I am aware that this government does not think like that. I believe that it is afraid that, if excisions are created, services will have to be provided to these places. Certainly, as long as I am here, I will voice my opinion about the attitudes of this government towards Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties. I will fight to ensure that their rights are recognised, both under federal legislation and Territory legislation. I will seek to ensure that they have adequate living facilities because, as I said earlier, the cattle on some of these properties live better than some of my people and that is a fact.

An ABC television program shown 2 or 3 months ago showed people living in disgusting conditions at Brunette Downs. Other people in the Territory have shared the benefits of economic growth and high employment rates. They live in expensive houses. Tourism is booming in the Territory and jobs are being created. But Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties without excisions are living in disgusting and primitive conditions.

Mr Ede: Not even any water.

Mr LANHUPUY: Without even having water supplies, as the member for Stuart says.

Mr Speaker, I would like to honestly encourage members of this government to have a look at the amendment moved by the member for MacDonnell and, before they vote, to think about what they believe in rather than what their political masters in the Cattlemen's Association have told them. I will always try to convince members opposite and the broad community that Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties have more rights than cattle. Those people would like to live decently and it is the responsibility of this Assembly to help them to do so.

Mr Speaker, I will go back to a point which I made earlier. It does not matter whether the member for Palmerston, myself or other individuals are members of this parliament in 10 or 20 years time. When we have gone, other members will represent Territory constituents and they will look back at the record and say: 'Why didn't that mob in parliament in 1989 give the Aboriginal people this land?' This argument only continues because of the government's hard-headed attitude towards Aboriginal people, land rights and excisions from pastoral properties generally. I would urge honourable members on the other side of the House to consider the amendments introduced by the member for MacDonnell. Mr Speaker, I support the amendment.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I will never cease to be amazed at the amount of time we spend in this Chamber trying to overcome the problems and the difficulties that Territorians face as a result of the original legislation implementing Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory. I think it would be reasonable to describe it as an important piece of legislation that was drafted by fools and passed by bigger fools who had no understanding of what they were trying to do, other than attempting to satisfy their own electorates down south.

One of the shortcomings of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was that, whilst it allowed unalienated land to be claimed, it made no provision for Aborigines to achieve any accommodation on alienated land. I note here that, although there were no traditional owners for some of the unalienated land, ultimately all that land was claimed. Such results reflected the fact that the people who drafted the legislation had never been in the Northern Territory and did not understand the problem. They were putting together words and promises designed to make them look good in the eyes of people down south. We now find ourselves again having to overcome an impasse in the interest of local people. The impasse has developed because this problem is not going to go away. The member for Nightcliff mentioned earlier that my predecessor as Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, proposed the introduction of legislation to overcome this problem as part of a 10- or 13-point package. My only reservation was that such an approach would set up a miniature land rights system for claims on alienated land.

I felt that there must be a better approach and I proposed a system of negotiation. I did so for a number of reasons but primarily because every situation is different. It is just not reasonable to try to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people on a range of different stations with a single binding piece of legislation. I always felt that most of the problems would be solved if individual station owners and groups of Aborigines could discuss and negotiate their land needs. Even before I moved in that direction as Chief Minister, some stations in my electorate had already done that.

As far back as 1983, the owners of Brunette Downs sat down with their local Aborigines and excised as much as 10 square miles as a living area for Jack Cotton and his people. Other areas were set aside for them to run a few cattle. That was a very big initiative in those times, given the conflict that was occurring in relation to Aboriginal land rights. At Rockhampton Downs, the living area issue was settled very quickly and it was not long at all before the people had homes, tanks, water supplies, washhouses and all the things that go with community living. The people at Rockhampton Downs have done very well during the last 7 or 8 years and they have been a mile in front of any other Aborigines in the Territory.

This process of negotiation was begun voluntarily by some cattlemen and was speeded up by the process that was put in place when I was Chief Minister, a process which the member for Nightcliff outlined. It was gaining a fair amount of momentum. Part of our agreement with Clyde Holding was that he would move to protect stock routes and reserves as part of the quid pro quo for pastoralists giving up areas on their properties. Everybody thought that was reasonable. There were not too many dissenting voices at the time. The problem only arose when Clyde Holding reneged on his undertaking. That really began to exacerbate the problem.

We like to talk about integrity, honesty and trust. They are always qualities which we have and which the other bloke doesn't have. In this case, I think it was damnable for the federal minister to do what he did. It was regrettable too that the incoming minister, Hon Gerry Hand, did not say: 'My colleague reneged on an undertaking to you people but we will honour it'. Had he honoured that undertaking, the arrangements in respect of living areas would have proceeded very quickly. He did not do so. He has procrastinated. Why he has done so is another matter which probably only he can explain. One can only describe the federal minister's failure to honour the agreement as cretinous. It is regrettable because it destroys the trust that is necessary for people to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion. We have reached a point at which the cattlemen are saying: 'We do not want to talk any more.'

We cannot believe what you say. We cannot even trust your actions because you passed legislation and then refused to sign it. Where does that leave us? The big losers are the Aborigines. While politicians, bureaucrats, members of land councils and others play their self-righteous games, the people who are waiting for land miss out. In many cases they are living in deplorable conditions.

I would like to pick up the Brunette Downs saga because I think it is one of the most misrepresented cases in the Northern Territory. The management and owners of Brunette Downs are painted in the southern media as absolute rednecks when, in fact, they have led the way in terms of giving Aborigines land on their property. It is not their fault that an impasse has arisen. That has come about as a result of a fight between the cattle industry, the Territory government and the federal government. Again, the Aborigines are the losers.

I can say from my own personal involvement with them that I have always found the owners and management at Brunette Downs, who are also involved at Rockhampton Downs, to be most accommodating when it comes to settling the needs of the Aboriginal community. I think it is also fair to say that, if they were not cooperative, the Aborigines would find life considerably less comfortable than they do today. They rely on the station for a great deal and the station is gracious about what it does for them. The southern media has portrayed the management at Brunette Downs as a bunch of rednecks out to give Aborigines a hard time, and that is grossly unfair. It does not recognise what they did between 1983 and 1985 when the rest of the Territory had not gone even as far as providing land for Aborigines on pastoral leases.

At Alexandria, another major Territory property, provision for land for Aborigines needs to be settled. I think it is fascinating that the man who pioneered the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in Australia, Malcolm Fraser, was a shareholder in a station that did very little for the Aborigines who lived there. I have been never able to understand the contradiction between the way Malcolm Fraser carries on about South Africa and land rights in the Northern Territory and what happens on a property in which he was a shareholder.

The management at Newcastle Waters has sat down with the Aborigines who live there and agreed on what they want to do. They have sorted out their problems locally and everybody is happy. They are ready to sign agreements between themselves. The people who own Beetaloo are not the traditional owners. They are members of an Aboriginal family which has probably been out there since just after the turn of the century. The station was set up by old Bulwaddy Bates, who was one of Starlight's gang. The Aboriginal family which runs it has been subjected to a land claim from traditional owners in relation to a property which it has held under a Territory pastoral lease for many years.

Whilst the Aboriginal people in the Borroloola region were granted a fair swag of land under the Borroloola Land Claim, it is perfectly reasonable that some of the people at the McArthur River Station have a living area on that station. They have strong traditional connections with the area and I do not think that the company will bite and scratch about it.

Seven Emu is run by the Shadforth family, which is as Aboriginal a family as one could find anywhere in the Northern Territory. The Shadforths tell me that it has been suggested that traditional owners might make a land claim on their property.

My great concern is that the administration of the Land Rights Act is in an absolute mess, particularly in my electorate. I know it is also of great concern to people in other areas, but we have to keep focusing on how to solve the problem. The truth is that the Commonwealth has the power to do what it wants to do. We have the right to scream as much as we like about that but we cannot change it and it is time we did something positive for the people who are directly involved, so that they get some resolution. When you live in a car body without any water or other facilities, you do not really care who holds title to the land or who is causing the problems. All you want is for things to get better. There are a great many people out there who are in that category and I think it behoves us all to try and solve the problem.

Mr Speaker, I led the push against the transfer of title to Uluru. I conducted a national campaign about it. I was portrayed as anti-Aboriginal and anti-land rights. My objection was to the Commonwealth intrusion in the administration of Northern Territory land and title. That will always be a very sacred matter for us all and that is the issue today. We are now getting ourselves in a knot because the Commonwealth is intruding again into the administration and affairs of our land. We cannot stand by and watch it happen; we have to resist it. But, at the same time, we have a responsibility to solve the problems that are hurting people in remote areas so badly.

Times are changing, Mr Speaker. Anybody who listened to the radio recently and heard Mrs Holmes a Court talking about the conditions that she found on her husband's property and what she expected to happen can see that there is a mood of change coming over the cattle industry and that things are going to change for the better in some areas. We need to make a concerted effort to ensure that it does happen and that it happens with a little bit of integrity and honour.

The Commonwealth government has a responsibility. A minister made a written commitment to the cattle industry. If it wants people to take it seriously and hold the word of a minister of the Crown in any regard, it has to honour that commitment. If it does not honour it, there will never be any trust between Territorians and the federal government because that will always be held up as the big lie that was told in relation to land.

The Commonwealth government could play a much more productive role in all of this by acknowledging that there was a commitment and honouring it and, at the same time, ensuring that the things it wants to happen with the granting of excisions do in fact happen. There will be some intransigent pastoralists who do not want to go along with the new lore of catering for Aboriginals in remote areas and there needs to be a way of handling that. If we want to have the majority of the Territory onside in doing so, we certainly need a Commonwealth response which has some integrity. While it refuses to honour the commitment of Clyde Holding in relation to stock routes and reserves, it will always be treated with suspicion.

Paragraph (a) of the amendment moved by the member for MacDonnell refers to providing 'living areas now and a more satisfactory economic base in the future for Aboriginal people'. It is absolutely essential that, when we are talking about living areas, we are quite clear that we are not talking about pastoral leases within pastoral leases.

Mr Ede: We are not.

Mr TUXWORTH: We need to be clear about that because there are some people in the land councils who see it as their role to obtain excisions which are

large enough for traditional owners to run a few cattle and be a little self-sufficient.

Mr Ede: Is that a problem?

Mr TUXWORTH: That is a problem. If the member for MacDonnell is considering this, we need to get it out into the open and discuss it clearly so that we all understand exactly what we are talking about. If I was a pastoralist and I was talking about a living area, I would be talking about a place where people live. If something was to be done with that land which was in tandem or in conflict with the purpose for which I was using the land, I would want to know how and why in case it affected me. That is a reasonable concern. Pastoralists fighting the BTEC battle see the operation of a pastoral area within their pastoral lease as a threat to their BTEC program. We need to be absolutely clear about what we mean when we refer to a 'living area' and an economic base.

The member for MacDonnell's amendment refers also to ensuring that 'such provision does not unreasonably affect the economic viability of such properties'. Very few of these pastoral properties are really viable. One can almost count the good properties on one hand. The remainder are marginal from season to season and marginal in terms of price for product that is obtained at the meatworks or at sales. There are not many properties anywhere in the Territory that are likely to give a tract of their land that could be used for a similar purpose by other people.

Mr Ede: 2% will affect their viability?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it depends on where the 2% is. That is very relevant. That needs to be understood and it is not clear.

Mr Coulter: How do you know it is 2%? Why couldn't it be 20%?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, in some cases, you could probably give away 20% of some places as a living area and it would not have the slightest impact. The member for Stuart mentioned 2% and I am saying that the 2% could be prime grazing country or waterholes which would have a major impact. In the case of Phillip Creek, one of the areas claimed included a waterhole which has a big impact on the operation of the property. It is nonsense to pretend that it does not. In persisting with that claim, the Aborigines concerned must know that it will affect the operation of the property.

I sympathise with and support the government in its determination to ensure that the Commonwealth does not intrude any further into the administration of the land of the Northern Territory and that any land granted to any people in the Northern Territory, be they Aboriginal or European, is vested in Northern Territory title.

Mr Coulter: The division on this will be interesting.

Mr TUXWORTH: I do not think that it will be interesting at all. It is a foregone conclusion.

Mr Speaker, I say again that we can sit in here as often as we like and beat each other up, but the fact is that the people out on the ground need a solution. Whatever the government can do to provide that solution will be greatly welcomed by many people, particularly those in my electorate, who need some results.

Mr Coulter: 50 titles could have been issued in 14 days time.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest to the minister's speech and also read the various items of correspondence between the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister. What comes through loud and clear to me is that there appear to be good intentions on both sides. I cannot help but believe that there is some form of hidden agenda. Incidentally, in case members opposite are a little confused about my intentions, I intend to support the government's motion.

There seems to be something missing here. I found the television program relating to the Yambah case to be most interesting. What impressed me most was that 4 or 5 generations of Goreys have lived on that property and, on the other hand, a similar number of generations of Aboriginal people have been living in roughly the same area. All stations, at least those in central Australia, had Aboriginal people living on them and I believe that the black people and the white people lived quite harmoniously. It was only when the federal government interfered in the Whitlam era and introduced certain rules regarding award wages for Aboriginal people that the whole thing fell apart. It seems to me, without being crude about it, that every time the federal government becomes involved in Aboriginal affairs it tends to stuff the whole thing up. In the Yambah case, the people who are suffering in terms of decisions not being made are both the black and white people who live there now, people whose fathers and grandfathers lived in harmony. I believe that interference by the federal government must not be tolerated and I applaud the Chief Minister for his stand in this matter.

There is a station in central Australia where, without the interference of any government, the people themselves, black and white, came to an arrangement on excisions of land. Then, suddenly, there was a new claim on land on that property. The local Aboriginal people knew nothing about it. It is that sort of interference by the land councils that causes problems.

According to the Chief Minister's statement, guidelines for excisions were worked out as far back as 1985. Amendments were made to section 50 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act but never proclaimed. I think any sane person would conclude that there is a hidden agenda in this matter and it sounds like interference by the federal government. I believe that the pawns in this political game are the Goreys and the Aboriginal people at Yambah. There are probably many other people in similar circumstances throughout the Territory.

What will happen when the press has finished with an issue such as Yambah? The sons and daughters of those people will be there. I believe the answer lies in asking the federal government to leave these problems alone and allowing the Northern Territory people to resolve the problems regarding excisions and land rights. All I see in the future is further delay, frustration and litigation. The people who will suffer the most are the Goreys and the Aboriginal people.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been fascinating to listen to the debate here this afternoon and to hear some of the comments that have been made, principally by way of interjection, by members of the opposition. Those comments have clarified a few points in relation to their amendment, their real intentions and their perceptions on a number of issues related to this matter.

The member for MacDonnell said that what the federal government has not done could be written on the back of a postage stamp. Whilst that may be

right, I think it has to be put in its correct perspective. It is not a question of what the federal government has not done. Indeed, what could be done to resolve the whole issue could be written on the back of a postage stamp: the enactment of the amendments to section 50 which have already passed through the federal parliament. The federal government's failure to do that, as the Chief Minister has indicated in his statement, makes one wonder what the agenda of the federal government really is and just how much concern it has for the wishes of the federal parliament. We often hear from members opposite about arrogance. If this is not a classic case of arrogance and disregard for the people of Australia, particularly the people of the Northern Territory, I do not know what would be.

In previous years I have taken part in discussions concerning living areas and excisions on pastoral leases and in national parks. Indeed, I can vividly recall negotiations which took place over a particular pastoral lease in the Victoria River district. Agreement was reached and the Aboriginal people concerned signed a document to that effect, designating the area in question and indicating their agreement. Admittedly, it was only a rough piece of paper. However, as is so often the case and has been shown in the Northern Territory, these bits of paper can mean a great deal and can be the basis of significant agreements. When that agreement came to the attention of the Northern Land Council office in Darwin, the whole thing fell apart. Those Aboriginal people are still waiting for a resolution of the problem which has been continuing for more than 10 years. Similar things have happened in many other areas and that is the sad aspect of this debate. Members opposite are simply attempting to use this issue as a political tool. They appear to be very caring but they really achieve nothing except following their own agenda.

By way of interjection during the member for Barkly's speech, the member for Stuart made reference to living areas. Like the member for Barkly, I asked myself a couple of questions in relation to the amendment that has been put forward by the opposition. The first question relates to living areas. Like the member for Barkly, I consider that a living area is an area sufficient for people to live on - a comfortable area, not a postage stamp. It is clear, however, that the member for Stuart is pushing for living areas of 25 km² to 50 km² or more. I do not consider that to be a living area, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Ede: I do.

Mr REED: In the past, members opposite have laughed at this government in certain circumstances when, in the process of contesting land claims, town boundaries have been extended to 40 km² or more. I find it ironic that, whilst members opposite cannot accept in that context that a town like Katherine might need to expand and might need to have land set aside for that purpose, they quite readily accept the notion of living areas of 50 km² for groups of 10, 20 or 40 people. If that is not inequitable, I do not know what is.

If the member for Stuart considers that living areas should comprise a certain percentage of a pastoral lease, his perception is totally out of kilter with reality. Such an area would be a fixed proportion of the pastoral lease regardless of the size of the lease. Such a notion does not take into account the number of people who might be going to occupy the living area or the effect that it might have on the pastoral lease. It is all very well for the member for Stuart to sit in this Chamber and ask what pastoralist would miss 2% or 3% of a pastoral lease. This typifies his lack of interest in and concern for the pastoral industry and his total lack of knowledge of its operations and needs.

Mr Ede: I have spent more time on a cattle station than you have.

Mr REED: Mr Deputy Speaker, I turn now to the question of a satisfactory economic base, as put forward in the opposition amendment. I do not see the relevance of that motion to living areas. We are talking about living areas. We are not talking about a satisfactory economic base. I do not deny for a moment that there is a need to address the question of an economic base for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and, indeed, throughout Australia. However, members opposite are confusing the issue, as they have done for many years in relation to the excisions question. It is another matter which they raise in order to cloud the process of addressing the real needs of the Aboriginal people.

Paragraph 1(b) of the amendment put forward by the opposition makes reference to the economic viability of pastoral leases. This directly conflicts with paragraph 1(a) which, as I have already indicated, suggests that living areas be granted to Aboriginal people as a percentage of the pastoral lease area. These paragraphs conflict with one another. The intention is ambiguous and I cannot in any way support the amendment put forward by the honourable members opposite.

As I have visited pastoral leases around the Northern Territory, I have been somewhat surprised at some of the people who have in fact entered into agreements with Aboriginal people and are waiting for the implementation of the amendments to section 50 amendments of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to provide living areas to Aboriginal people. I would have thought that some of these people might never reach agreement. The pastoral industry is undergoing great change. The people in the pastoral industry are aware of the needs of Aboriginal people. We have to bear in mind that many people in the pastoral industry have lived with Aboriginal people and, in many cases, have grown up with them. They are aware of their needs and they are sympathetic to them. This fact has been overlooked by both the members opposite and the federal government.

As I see it, there are only 2 obstacles to the granting of excisions on pastoral leases for Aboriginal living areas. Those 2 obstacles are the federal government and the land councils. The federal government would be well advised to gazette the amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and then to walk away. I would have to agree with the member for Barkly that the way to resolve the excisions issue is to leave it to Territorians. Only Territorians understand the problems sufficiently to sort them out and I believe that they can be sorted out very quickly.

The Chief Minister indicated in his statement that, apart from 21 excisions which have already been put in place, another 50 could be processed in a very short space of time. If the federal government wished to display any commitment to the resolution of this problem, to giving Aboriginal people living areas and to solving the problems of Aboriginal people, all it need do is step aside and leave the matter to Territorians.

I can understand the pastoral industry's total frustration with the present situation. The industry has put a great deal of effort into this issue over the years. Attitudes and outlooks have changed. They have developed a mechanism which could be the solution to the problem. They have, in fact, reached agreement with a previous federal minister in relation to a solution and all they now seek is for that agreement to be honoured. By doing that, the federal government could bring a quick end to this impasse and save the pastoral industry, the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and, indeed, all Territorians, a great deal of trauma.

It is ironic that, at a time when the Northern Territory is seeking the transfer of additional powers from the Commonwealth in our march towards statehood, we have this week received a letter from the Prime Minister suggesting that the Commonwealth is prepared to trample all over the rights of Territorians. If the Prime Minister takes the action to which he refers in his letter, it will have a deleterious effect on all Territorians and will set back race relations in this country for years. This sort of jackboots stuff is not what is required to solve the problem. Territorians will not stand by and have their rights trampled. They will not be walked over and, naturally enough, they are looking to every member of this House to seek a solution to this problem. It is my belief that they will be absolutely horrified by the proposals put forward by the members opposite. I see no way in which the opposition amendment could contribute to a solution of the problem.

As both myself and the member for Barkly have indicated, the pastoral industry has already made considerable strides. In many cases, living areas have been provided on pastoral leases. Agreements have been signed and are only awaiting the gazettal of amendments to section 50 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. When that occurs, further excisions can be made and Aboriginal people will receive living areas on which they can be provided with reasonable living conditions.

I think the member for Stuart, the Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite have to come to terms with just what living areas are. They have to come to terms with the original intent of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in terms of living areas being provided on a needs basis. It has very little to do with a satisfactory economic base. It has nothing at all to do with a percentage of a pastoral lease. It certainly has nothing to do with areas of 20 km² to 50 km² on pastoral leases. The suggestion that it has is totally untenable to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory, and indeed to Territorians generally. We cannot allow action of this nature to come to pass and alienated lands in the Northern Territory to be threatened in the way that they would be threatened if the Commonwealth were to move in this way.

I believe that all Territorians will support the Northern Territory government in any effort to find a solution to the excisions question but that they will not support anything along the lines of the Commonwealth's proposal. Territorians will find the proposition put forward by the Prime Minister to be nothing short of abhorrent and they will have nothing to do with it. I call on all members of this House to support the Territory government's stance on this issue and to get behind the pastoralists who have committed so much of their time and effort to finding a solution to this problem.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, let us have a look at what we are talking about here. For the last 15 years at least, this has been a sorry saga of stopping and starting and doing nothing. When maximum pressure has been felt from the federal government, this government has eked out a little and tried to procrastinate and slow down the whole process. For 3 terms now, the federal Labor government has been trying to push, cajole and persuade this government to take some firm action to resolve this problem. However, it has been to no avail.

If any member opposite has any doubt whatsoever about the political will of the federal government on this issue, let him drop it right now. There is no way that a Labor government will allow that situation to continue beyond the end of its third term. I say, 'Thank you very much', because that situation is a blot on our nation. It is an absolute travesty of justice that

it has been allowed to continue this long. There is no way that any Labor government worth its salt would allow it to continue. Certainly, the next Northern Territory Labor government will not let it continue. The federal Labor government has the power and is going to act decisively. We have asked it to give the Territory government a chance to see if it will move even though it has failed to act every time it has had the opportunity during the last 15 years. Mr Deputy Speaker, this is the last chance.

Let it get on with it now and fix the problem. It does not have any problems with the philosophy of what is occurring. I have a copy of the proposals for a statute law revision bill for community living areas and I will come back to that later. These are the Northern Territory proposals, the ones that the Chief Minister did not table. These are the ones that he did not tell you about, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I will come back to them.

There is no way that we on this side of the House will do anything but ensure that the problem is fixed once and for all. That is why we moved the amendment. The Northern Territory has had 15 years in which to act but it did not want to act. Now that the federal government has said that it will act and that, if the Territory government does not act within a certain time, it will take further action, members opposite start screaming. There is no chance that the federal Labor government will go beyond 3 terms without ensuring that this problem is fixed.

As my honourable colleague said, the federal government looks at people. I will tell you about people. Look at the situation of Quart-Pot Corbett. He is a very old man who lives at Ammaroo on a tiny block that he calls his 'little handkerchief'. It does not belong to him. He has no title. It has been refused. The previous leaseholder promised it to him in return for a lifetime of service to the cattle industry in that area and in return for bringing up the current lessee. He remembers the current lessee as a child. He remembers how, as a younger man, he dandled the youngster on his knee, showed him how to follow the lizard tracks and how to survive in the bush. That is the relationship which he had with the current lessee of that station. Now that he is an old man, he is told: 'Get off. Go next door. I am not having you on my land'. The man is sitting there. He cannot get water. He has to try to cart it in a battered tractor from Utopia store, which is 30 km down the road.

Quart-Pot Corbett is an example of the people we are talking about. We want to solve the problem for those people. They are the people in respect of whom the government opposite has dragged its feet year after year. All it can say is: 'If you had trusted us, we would have done it'. The facts do not bear that out. The Deputy Chief Minister interjected: 'If you let us go, in another couple of weeks we would have had about 50 titles in'. If he could have done that in the next 2 weeks, why didn't he do it in the last few weeks? I have heard this from every minister who has ever had any responsibility: 'Just give us a go and we will have it all fixed up in a couple of weeks'. I for one am fed up with waiting because I represent those people in my area and they are fed up with waiting. People right throughout the Northern Territory are fed up with waiting. They have waited for years and years and they are fed up with it. They want the problem fixed. They do not care whether it is fixed by the Commonwealth government or the Northern Territory government.

The fundamental fact is that the Northern Territory has failed and failed miserably. The federal government is giving it a final opportunity to enter a cohesive arrangement whereby both governments will solve the problem. If that does not occur, the federal government will take action itself.

The people do not trust the Northern Territory government. They had the ability, under the Land Rights Act, to claim every stock reserve and every stock route and to hold them all under federal title. That was their ability under the law. They have come a fair way, haven't they? They have said that they would make no claim over 95% of the stock routes if they were given the remainder as living areas.

Mr McCarthy: The amendments are in place.

Mr EDE: 'Trust me', he says. 'Trust the government', he says. Trust the government that has had the ability to fix this problem for years and years and has failed to do so.

Let us have a look at what might be called the other end of this process. In central Australia, 139 requests for excisions have actually been lodged with the land council. A further 3 have been lodged independently. That is probably an indication of the level of trust in the land council: 3 groups out of 142 have gone their own way, as is their right, and the remaining 139 decided to go with the land council. These applications affect 88 pastoral properties. For the information of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, the average area sought is about 12 km². If all of these applications were granted, they would represent 0.54% of pastoral areas.

I have said by way of interjection and I will say now that I believe that, in many areas of central Australia, areas of 50 km² would be required if we are not simply going to create rural ghettos where Aboriginal people will be able to do more than merely exist or perhaps provide a cheap labour source for enterprises based outside their living areas. I am not talking about pastoral properties within pastoral properties. I have said before and I will say again that that is not on. We do, however, have to consider the possibility of some form of economic activity on those areas. It could be horticulture, agriculture or even - horror of horrors - an arrangement negotiated with the relevant pastoralist under which a small number of beasts could be sold to Aborigines residing on the living area to be fattened as a killer herd.

Such an idea would horrify the members for Barkly and Katherine. It does not terrify me and it does not terrify the pastoralists, because they have talked in those terms previously. They have talked about Aboriginal people running their own cattle which could be cooperatively mustered, branded and turned off. Such an idea does not horrify the pastoralists. It only horrifies the members opposite when they are trying to beat up fear and hatred.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if every ambit claim, wish list, desire and request was ever put to the land councils on paper in relation to pastoral properties were to be granted, the total area would not exceed 2% of all land held under pastoral lease. However, members opposite talk about areas totalling 20% and 30% and affecting the viability of pastoral leases. I have made it clear that, if a property is viable, the excision of 2% of its total area will not in itself make it non-viable. Viability can be affected by location, number, size, shape and access, which are matters for negotiation. That is set down in the proposal from the federal Labor government and that is how it is to proceed: negotiation first. If that becomes impossible or if more than 1 negotiation is attempted on a particular property, the tribunal comes into play. It is a common model: conciliation and arbitration. It is the obvious way of getting around this problem.

The problem can be solved by the Northern Territory government agreeing to legislate, along the lines which have been discussed, not far beyond what it has already agreed to do. In that context, I refer to the heads of agreement for the Wakaya Alyawarre land claim, which I will table when I have finished quoting from it. It is signed by Simon Nish for the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and by Jack Punch for and on behalf of the Arruwurra claimants.

The terms and conditions of this heads of agreement are very close to what would be acceptable to Aboriginal people as the form of title for their land. In this instance, those terms and conditions have been accepted by the Northern Territory government. Why not incorporate them in the legislation? What is the problem? If such an agreement is appropriate in one case surely there should be no problems in other cases. It was signed on 26 April 1989. In this agreement, the Northern Territory undertakes to 'Refrain from exercising its power of acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act (NT) over the land except for acquiring land for the provision of the specified essential services of transport, energy and water. If land is required for the purposes of providing essential services, the Northern Territory of Australia will acquire on just terms'.

In respect of mining, the agreement states that the Northern Territory undertakes to 'Reserve an area of 20 km² around an outstation at or near Wunara over which the Northern Territory will not issue any mining tenement'. The Northern Territory had no problem agreeing to that.

In respect of title, the heads of agreement refers to the size of the land offered. It states that, in order to comply with section 21 of the Crown Lands Act in respect of freehold title, the Northern Territory would have to grant over 30 certificates of title to the association. It states that this section of the act is under review and agrees in the interim to grant freehold title to an area of 150 km² and to grant the balance of the land under perpetual lease with no rent, covenants, reservations or conditions. It goes on to say that if the act is not amended by the end of the November sittings of this House, thereby allowing 1 certificate of title to be issued, it will grant the land under multiple certificates of title by 31 December 1989.

Freehold title is not a problem. Mining is not a problem. There is agreement in relation to essential services. What is the problem? It is the problem of politics. The Northern Territory government has yet to crawl out from under the wagon train of the NT Cattlemen's Association. Members opposite make great play of a supposed link between the opposition, the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council and the Tiwi Land Council. It appears to me that the government's links with the NT Cattlemen's Association are much stronger. That is interesting, Mr Deputy Speaker, because that association has lost credibility and continues to lose credibility with pastoralists week by week. Pastoralists are telling me that it no longer represents them on any of their real needs or on any of the issues which really matter to them. It has walked away from them on BTEC. It has walked away from them on the basic issue of how to make the pastoral industry grow. There is only one area in which it is strong and that is on Aboriginal issues. It has consistently fought in relation to land claims, stock routes, stock reserves and so forth, and it has the Northern Territory government tagging along behind it.

I heard a few minutes ago that the Chief Minister has been threatening to call an election over this issue. If he thinks that the mood in the Northern Territory is such that he can do that and successfully frustrate the

aspirations of people who need these excisions, he has misread the climate entirely. People out there are not interested in the political point-scoring that goes on in here. Both the Aboriginal people who are affected and average Territorians want this problem to be fixed. They do not care whether the federal government or the Territory government fixes it. They have seen the pictures and they know about the dire poverty people are living in. All they want is for somebody to fix the problem.

I say to the honourable members opposite that they have a chance to be involved in this process. They can accept our amendment and they can develop legislation, in concert with the federal government, which will address the issues and ensure that the problem is overcome. Alternatively, they can refuse to be involved. They can make a stand on some phony state rights basis and refuse to look after the interests of the people of the Northern Territory. If members opposite choose to follow that course, they will become just an accidental chapter in the book of history. No one will follow them down that course. If the Chief Minister wants an election on the issue, so be it. The people will judge him and his colleagues as a mob of phonies who are beating up an issue which needs to be solved.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr EDE: If the Deputy Chief Minister wants to be part of the problem, if he wants to be a provocative bully boy and try to ensure that this problem is not solved ...

Mr Coulter: 50 titles could have been issued in 14 days time.

Mr EDE: Here we go again. It could have been solved in 14 days time. Why was it not done 2 weeks ago? Why were the titles not issued then? I hear this every time. If that had occurred, there would have been a case to put to the federal government.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the message of the member for Stuart is 'trust the government'. Of course, he means the federal Labor government in Canberra. He should know, because we have told him often enough this afternoon, that we did trust the federal Labor government back in 1986. We trusted it, and we got kicked in the teeth. As he well knows, the amendments to section 50 of the Land Rights Act have never been gazetted. If they had been, we would not be standing here today arguing about this issue. The matter would have been resolved. The dozens of families that wish to take advantage of excisions on pastoral leases would have been located several years ago. The honourable member can thank his mates in Canberra that that has not happened. He need not come in here trying to con people and pull the wool over their eyes. He knows full well why the matter has not been resolved already.

The member for Stuart knows so little about this issue that he prattled on and tried to tell us that it had been around for 15 years. The reality is that it has been around since the mid-1960s, when the Australian Workers Union made its claim for equal pay for Aboriginal stockmen working on pastoral properties. Prior to that claim being lodged, the Aboriginal families living on pastoral leases were quite happy. They were looked after by the stations and given provisions. Some of the men worked on the station properties as stockmen, ringers and so forth.

When the award was introduced in the mid-1960s, pastoralists were forced to pay full wages instead of the previous cash payments supplemented by

payment in kind in the form of victuals, sustenance and so on. That is where the problem began. It was caused by the Australian Workers Union with the strong support of the Australian Labor Party at the time. That brought about the tragedy that we see today and it is indeed a tragedy. The responsibility lies with the party of the members opposite and its union mates.

At that time, the pastoralists quite naturally said: 'If we have to pay full award wages, we will do so. We will pay the full award wage to stockmen and other employees who work for us but we are not going to feed their families as well. We are not going to feed the whole tribe. These working men will be paid a wage and they can go and buy their food and clothing and so on and look after their own families'. That is where it all fell apart because that did not occur. The stockmen were employed on a seasonal basis only and, when there was no employment, there was no money. As a result, people moved away from those properties and they, or their descendants, are now the fringe dwellers that we see around all the major towns in the Northern Territory, and indeed throughout most of the rural areas of Australia. It is a tragedy.

Mr Speaker, if you look around Katherine, Mataranka, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs, you will see people living in horrendous conditions. I have seen them, and I feel for them. I really do because, as a result of the move away from the pastoral properties, they were exposed to alcoholism, which has decimated them. The federal Labor government had the power to solve the problem in 1986. What has it done? Nothing. Yet members of the Labor opposition in this House have the audacity to stand up here today to support the Prime Minister's letter and to move an amendment which supports the transfer of responsibility for this whole issue to the federal government. That is totally unacceptable.

Pardon me for being a little cynical, Mr Speaker, but this Yambah issue is a set-up of the first order. People moved from the stock route, where they lived until a few weeks ago, onto the station proper. In my opinion, that was done quite deliberately to lift the profile of this whole issue into the national arena and to try to create a scenario in which the Prime Minister could write to the Chief Minister in the terms in which he has now written, posing threats to the Northern Territory. It is a set-up on the part of the minister, Hon Gerry Hand, and is part of the scenario that was painted in May of this year. Mr Speaker, I would like to quote to you from a story in the NT News of 12 May 1989, which is very important and relevant to my argument.

The federal government is believed to be set to compulsorily acquire private property in the Northern Territory which will then be given to Aborigines as inalienable freehold land. This would be the first time that the Land Rights (NT) Act of 1976 has been used for such a purpose.

'The Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Mr Gerry Hand, has taken a proposal to federal Cabinet to compulsorily acquire stock routes and stock reserves', a spokesman for the Chief Minister, Mr Marshall Perron, said today. 'As well', according to the spokesman, 'Mr Hand proposes to establish a mechanism to deal with the issue of living areas for Aborigines on pastoral properties. The mechanism will be established under Commonwealth law and will consist of a tribunal with the power to recommend compulsory excisions for conversion into inalienable freehold Commonwealth title'.

So, back as far as May this year, it was known that that was what Minister Hand was going to do. Of course, since then, those people have moved on to Yambah Station. It is all part of the scenario for setting things up and lifting the profile of the issue. One wonders what it is all about. Why has Prime Minister Hawke written to the Northern Territory government in these terms? Why is he allowing himself to be manipulated by federal Minister Hand? Let me go back a little further. Let me go back to 13 October 1987, Mr Speaker. I will quote again from the NT News and I will read from an article referring to the appointment of Mr Hand as the Aboriginal Affairs Minister:

Mr Hawke's son Stephen has spent most of his working life helping remote Aboriginal communities, and his father's failure to right the wrongs of history has been a sore point. Now Mr Hawke is ready to make amends. The political cowardice that made him ditch the ALP's land rights policy under pressure from Western Australian Premier, Mr Brian Burke, before the 1984 election, has been curbed.

At the time, Mr Hand condemned Mr Hawke's decision and hit out at Mr Burke's pragmatic stand. 'The cynicism of the Burke government over the question of land rights is to be deplored', Mr Hand wrote in a controversial paper that urged the Hawke government to stick with the party policy.

That is what this is all about. This is the square-off, not only with Hand but with Hawke's son Stephen, who was very upset at his father's inaction in previous times.

The other thing that saddens me about this whole issue is the way the Labor Party has managed to manipulate Aboriginal people in the past and continues to manipulate them today. It uses Aboriginal people and the issues that surround them. There is no doubt that those issues are emotive. They tug at the heartstrings of people in the southern parts of Australia, and I can understand the concern that is expressed. In order to understand the real motivation of the opposition in this matter, it is helpful to refer to an article by Frank Alcorta that appeared in the NT News on 6 May 1986. The subject of the article was the annual conference of the Territory ALP.

The Labor Party's Annual Conference achieved peace, but at what price? The price was any chance the ALP might have had of winning government next year. Forget the niceties, or things like education, equal opportunity, youth policies and so on. They were nothing more than a regurgitation of Labor cliches that are raised and passed at every conference.

What the conference was all about was 2 issues: land rights and mining, particularly uranium mining. Both were sacrificed on the altar of the progressive left. On land rights, after the usual rhetoric, the colonisation of dispossessed and alienated Aboriginal people, the conference agreed to: maintain the Aboriginal land rights veto on mining on Aboriginal land; ...

And note this, Mr Speaker.

provide for excisions on pastoral properties of up to 2% of their total area;

And that is what we were talking about a moment ago, Mr Speaker. The article continues ...

Mr Ede: Keep talking. Keep reading, go on.

Mr SETTER: I will read it, if you are interested. If you do not know what happened on that occasion, I am very happy to read it.

provide for Aboriginal control over Northern Territory coastal waters within 2 km of and adjacent to Aboriginal land;

Of course, we all know that that has happened.

legislate to allow Aborigines to enter upon, use bore water, hunt and forage over pastoral properties, provided they comply with reasonable requirements of pastoralists ...

The article continues in that vein, explaining what this is all about. Of course, the matter does not end there.

Mr Speaker, an article in the Sunday Territorian of 26 April 1987 was headed, 'Smith speaks out on Land Rights'. It said: 'In a departure from a prepared speech to the Northern Australian Labor Party forum in Mt Isa, Mr Smith referred to the growing political organisation of Northern Territory Aborigines'. Note that reference to growing political organisation, Mr Speaker. The article went on: 'He said it was time the land rights debate moved on'. It further stated: 'Answering questions at the forum, Mr Smith said Northern Territory Aborigines were taking a stronger formal role in the Labor Party through active branches of the party'. Mr Speaker, that represents political manipulation of Aboriginal people.

I was very disappointed when the member for Arnhem gave what I would call a 'poor fellow me' speech. It could have been written by Xavier Herbert. He carried on in a very emotive manner, trying to tug at the heartstrings of people. I can understand his concerns, but why has he not insisted that his Canberra colleagues implement section 50 of the Land Rights Act? Why has it not been gazetted? If that had been done, as the honourable member knows and as his mate on the backbench knows, the problems that we are debating today would have been solved 3 years ago.

Mr Ede: Rubbish! Absolute rubbish!

Mr SETTER: The member for Nightcliff said: 'You cannot trust the Labor Party'. Indeed, you cannot. He went on to tell us how that gentleman who is now known as Hon Warren Snowdon, the Territory's federal member in the House of Representatives, went to Canberra representing the Central Land Council and pulled the rug out from under the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister Holding. Minister Holding had agreed to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and to implement section 50. Let me quote from the second-reading speech made in 1986 by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Mr Holding when presenting the bill to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Against this background, it has been the government's position that it would be preferable, as a general rule, that claims to stock routes and reserves not proceed and that a program be developed, with the cooperation of the Northern Territory government and pastoralists, whereby excisions from pastoral leases to provide living areas for Aboriginal groups would be negotiated.

He went on to say:

I have now informed the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the land councils and the Cattlemen's Association that the Commonwealth will proceed in this bill with an amendment which will prevent the Land Commissioner from hearing claims on stock routes and reserves unless a hearing has already commenced or unless the stock route or reserve is wholly encompassed in the overall area of land under claim. This is a significant concession.

Mr Holding was unequivocal. He said: 'Let me make our intentions totally clear on this issue. We want negotiated not imposed solutions'. The federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said that when he presented the amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 1986. And what do we have today? We have a letter from the Prime Minister threatening to move in and take away the right of the Northern Territory government to act in this matter, breaking the promise that was made by Minister Holding in 1986.

Mr Ede: Well, why don't you fix it?

Mr SETTER: We would have fixed it. If your mates had proclaimed the section 50 amendments 3 years ago, it would have been resolved within months, and you know it. How the member for Stuart can sit there and argue in favour of the Prime Minister's letter is absolutely beyond me, Mr Speaker. He must have no conscience.

It is now history that, because Minister Holding put forward those amendments, he copped the axe fair where it hurt - in the neck. And who was the axeman? Mr Snowdon. He was the henchman of the person who took over from Mr Holding as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Hand. The member for Sadadeen - and I must agree with him - said that the letter from the Prime Minister is a ploy by the Canberra mates of the members opposite. Senator Bob Collins, the puppeteer who is pulling the strings for this opposition, is trying to tempt the Northern Territory government into an election. That is what it is all about.

Members opposite have their tails up. They believe that, if we called an election now, they would win it. I have news for them. Whilst they talk about the great swing in Wanguri, the reality is that as far as the primary votes are concerned, there was almost no swing to the Labor Party at all. It was quite significant to note that Senator Bob Collins weighed in on this issue this morning. He completely overshadowed the Leader of the Opposition who was just a non-event. He walked in and took over, as he did at the Wanguri by-election. Nobody wanted to know about the Leader of the Opposition. We could not even see him. He had disappeared.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that this letter from the Prime Minister is absolutely arrogant. It is from that eternal pragmatist, the man who invented consensus. The Prime Minister's attitude in this matter can only be described as arrogant and should be treated with the contempt that it deserves.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not propose to spend my full 20 minutes speaking on this matter because much of what needs to be said has been said. However, I think it is only right that I should make some comment because I have a view on this matter that seems not to be shared by those members opposite who have large Aboriginal electorates such as mine.

There is one area in which the Northern Territory government is vulnerable, and that is that it is too honest, it is too straight and it speaks the truth. We do not play the sort of political games that the federal government plays. You can have a discussion with a federal minister who can agree with you and then go away and do exactly the opposite. That has happened to me. I know it has happened to the Chief Minister and to almost every other person who has dealt with the current Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The other area in which we are vulnerable is that our word is our bond. When this government says that it will do something, it does it. There would not be a single election promise or any promise made by this government that has not been honoured if we have had the power to honour it. This is the one area where the federal government can screw us. It has the power to act. It has the ability to do what it says it will, because we are a territory. It has not attempted to do so elsewhere and the Labor colleagues of members opposite have not attempted in their own states to do anything like what the Commonwealth proposes to do here.

Mr Ede: 50 excisions in Western Australia in the last 2 years.

Mr McCARTHY: Under what title? That is all we ask. It comes right down to that philosophical point as to whether Territory freehold or Aboriginal inalienable title is the right title for excisions. I believe it is the view not only of the government but of Northern Territory people that Territory title is the only suitable title for Aboriginal land. The Prime Minister has agreed previously that that is a reasonable position but, as a result of whatever pressures have come upon him in the last few days, he has been prepared to go back on discussions that he has held in the past.

Regardless of what members opposite say, the action proposed by the Commonwealth creates the potential for claims way beyond what the original Land Rights Act envisaged. Already, legal argument and court findings have widened the scope of the Land Rights Act considerably beyond what was initially intended. This could do even more. If, by some chance, members opposite should gain government in the future, I wonder if they would be prepared to pay charges for access corridors for services into communities. That is certainly envisaged under the Prime Minister's proposals.

All that is required to fix the problem is the gazettal of the original proposals that were put through the federal parliament and assented to.

Mr Ede: How will that fix it?

Mr McCARTHY: Because the excisions will flow. All the work has been ...

Mr Ede: Trust me!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, if he wants to talk about trust, I am happy to do so. The member for Stuart has a large number of pastoralists in his electorate. He can make the sorts of statements that he makes now because he has lost the pastoralists. He knows that he has to do something to regain any respect he might have had from the land councils.

I would like to quote from the comments of John Ah Kit when giving evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. In response to a question concerning the support which this opposition had given to an activity of the government, Mr Ah Kit's response was: 'It probably is, but we would have to be quite honest with you and I would say that we do not have much faith in the opposition either in the

Northern Territory. Sometimes I wonder whether we are the hidden opposition'. Obviously, members opposite have to do a great deal of work to win back the respect and trust of the land councils. One of the ways in which they are attempting to do that is by supporting what the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is doing at the instigation of the land councils. It is not a secret that Gerry Hand swings from the land councils like a mobile. He is hanging on a string. It is well known, even in Aboriginal affairs circles, that he is running to the agenda of the land councils. We know that. We know that he has been able to allocate a whole range of extra funds to the land councils to assist them in fighting their fight.

Mr Perron: Only 2 of them.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, only 2, but it is happening.

In the last few days, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has withdrawn an enormous part of the Aboriginal Development Commission budget. I wonder why that money has been withdrawn. Approved projects for housing in Aboriginal communities, not only in my electorate but also in the electorate of the member for Arafura, have been withdrawn. The communities have received letters detailing the program for the year and the funds to be expended but, during the last week or so, have been told that the funds are no longer available. The background to that is that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has withdrawn a substantial part of the ADC budget. That means that housing in the honourable member's electorate will not be built this year.

Pastoralists in my electorate are very responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people. I can well remember an occasion a couple of years ago when I took a fellow on a trip around my electorate. His view of the attitude of pastoralists to Aborigines had been shaped by listening to the usual propaganda, which he had probably contributed to himself. After he had visited the various pastoral properties in my electorate and listened to what people on those properties had to say about Aboriginal affairs and excisions, he said: 'These people are not rednecks. They think the same way as I think. They want the same things as I want. They want Aboriginal people to be looked after. They want to employ Aboriginal people'. That was the case.

Increasingly, Aboriginal people who walk up to the doors of pastoralists' houses and ask for work are given jobs. Pastoralists want to employ Aboriginal people. They are very keen to employ Aboriginal people because they know that Aboriginal people will stay. There is no feeling on the part of pastoralists that Aboriginal people should not be accommodated. The member for Arafura cannot talk about this because there are no pastoral properties in his electorate. Pastoralists are very keen to accommodate Aboriginal people. I am sure that the member for Stuart can cite other examples. Certainly, in the Victoria River region, the Aboriginal people ...

Mr Ede: The problem is the NT Cattlemen's Association and the CLP.

Mr McCARTHY: Who do you think are the members of the NT Cattlemen's Association? Pastoralists are very keen to accommodate Aboriginal people, as is the Northern Territory government.

Mr Ede: The NT Cattlemen's Association and the CLP. They are the problem.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I know I have said this before but it is worth repeating. In continually screaming about this government and its

ability to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, members opposite are arrogant. They have never had to respond to the needs of anybody, apart from constituents in their electorates, and they are never likely to have to. The government has to respond to the needs of everybody.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me quote again from the Chairman of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Warren Snowdon. He said:

There have also been some very important highlights in terms of the delivery of services. I think, despite my own propensity to criticise the Northern Territory government at times, there are some areas in which I think it has been doing extremely well. I think it goes without saying that, despite the political flavour of the Northern Territory government in some areas, it has done extremely well in terms of administration of Aboriginal affairs. And that can be contrasted with any state in Australia.

Those are the words of the federal member for the Northern Territory, a man who belongs to the same party as members opposite. He believes that the Northern Territory government is ahead of everybody else in the area of Aboriginal affairs. We know that we are. Unfortunately, because of the sorts of things that are published in the interstate media, we are portrayed as rednecks in the area of Aboriginal affairs when, in fact, we are performing better than anyone else.

This morning I told the House about the amount which Northern Territory government allocates specifically to assist Aboriginal community councils. That does not happen anywhere else. It does not happen in any other state. We do it. We have programs in place that cannot be beaten. Hon Warren Snowdon talks about the RATE program at Batchelor, which is one of this government's training programs for Aborigines. We do it better than anyone else, yet members opposite continually carp about our not doing enough. They say that we do not do anything. In fact, we have the ability to put Aboriginal people onto excisions on pastoral properties.

Mr Ede: Well why don't you use it?

Mr McCARTHY: For God's sake, are you so damn thick that you cannot see ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

The honourable member opposite cannot see past the front of his desk. If the federal minister, Hon Gerry Hand, would do what Minister Holding promised to do and gazette the amendments to section 50 of the Land Rights Act, this problem would be solved once and for all.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr McCarthy: For God's sake! If you cannot understand that, you are thick.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no way in the world that this would be held up any longer. The pastoralists, the Cattlemen's Association and the government are committed to ensuring that there are excisions for Aboriginal people.

Mr Ede: Well why didn't you do them before?

Mr McCARTHY: Because we have not been able to get them gazetted. For God's sake, you are thick!

Mr Ede: You could have done it beforehand but you would not.

Mr McCARTHY: You are so thick! You are also arrogant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there has to be give and take. The proposal put forward by the Chief Minister in July was very reasonable. The Prime Minister was happy to go along with it at the time. Then he talked to his mates from the left. For whatever reason, Gerry Hand has some control over Bob Hawke. I just cannot understand how, but he has been able to change the attitude of the Prime Minister. That is quite unreasonable.

When I visit the communities in my electorate, I speak the truth. It is a pity that some other people do not do so. I tell people what the real position is. They can understand what I say. They would understand that, if Gerry Hand gazetted the amendments, the problem would be solved. Members of parliament for other electorates in the south and some in the north obviously cannot understand what Aboriginal people can understand. If the members opposite think that Aboriginal people do not trust the Northern Territory government, they should start thinking again. Increasingly, Aboriginal people are telling me that they get a far better response from the Territory government than they ever got from the Commonwealth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, consider the withdrawal of housing funds in the member for Arafura's electorate. There will be no housing program on Bathurst Island this year unless the Northern Territory government funds it because the ADC has withdrawn its funds.

Mr Ede: The money has gone to the Department of Lands and Housing.

Mr McCARTHY: That is not so. We will be providing the housing but we have received no extra dollars for it. Once again, a program has been withdrawn by the Commonwealth. It says that it is helping Aboriginal people. It has withdrawn funds from Kalano, Jurnkurakurr and Tangentyere and it is withdrawing funds from housing associations. Those are the organisations which help Aboriginal people. It is so illogical it is not funny. I just do not understand how members opposite can expect to gain any credence while they do no more than sit there mouthing platitudes.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you expect to gain credence in your electorate for what you are saying? You cannot. It is just not honest. It is not straight.

I am back where I began. This government sticks by its promises. It does understand a bond. On many occasions when I have discussed Aboriginal affairs with Hon Gerry Hand, he has said to me: 'That is okay. I can handle that'. In fact, his favourite saying is: 'I can accommodate that'. He says it all the time. He then goes away and sends letters which accommodate nothing. That has happened to me so often now that I just do not trust him. That is the position in which the Northern Territory government finds itself. We cannot trust the federal government and therefore we cannot trust the people who are advising it.

Mr Ede: The Aboriginal people have said that they cannot trust you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Stuart will withdraw that remark about Aboriginal people not trusting the honourable minister.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! On resuming his seat, the member for Stuart referred to your request as 'pathetic'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear him.

Mr HATTON: I heard it over here, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member for Stuart like to withdraw the word 'pathetic'?

Mr EDE: I withdraw.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to take up too much of the House's time but I want to make a few points. I wish to support the comments made by my colleagues and the amendment moved by the member for MacDonnell.

I urge the Perron government to accept the Commonwealth offer. Obviously, for political reasons, I know that I might as well be talking to the clock on the wall. The Commonwealth offer to the Perron government was a realistic and acceptable solution. If the Territory government accepted this offer, it would rid the Territory of a weeping sore. It would allow thousands of my people to settle themselves once again and live with some dignity. As I came into this House, I heard a media rumour that the Chief Minister had called a press conference for 3 pm today to announce that he would go into a general election on this issue. I say to him now: 'Go for it'. The days of the CLP government dividing the Territory on racial issues are well and truly over.

What we have here is a classic CLP response to a crisis: kick the blackfellows and hope to hell that the white people get behind you.

Mr Hatton: People do not wear that line any more.

Mr TIPILOURA: You are right. They do not. One has only to look at the recent history of the CLP government which represents the interests of the pastoralists on this issue. Let us have a look at the Chief Minister. A few weeks ago, he was asked a series of questions by journalists about a recent report to the United Nations which talked about Aboriginal families of up to 17 people living in a chook shed in the desert. His response was to ask the journalist whether he should fall down and gnash the carpet and say how terrible it was. Only a few weeks later, in response to the federal budget, the Chief Minister said that we would all have to get used to eating mince and potatoes. Mr Deputy Speaker, what a joke! When was the last time the Chief Minister was forced by economic necessity to eat mince and potatoes?

I cannot understand the reluctance of the Northern Territory government to agree to the compromise of issuing Territory titles on excisions and Commonwealth titles on the existing stock routes and stock reserves. However, I urge this government to accept the proposal on the basis that it can negotiate a satisfactory outcome for resolving this big question. I am referring to the process that would be used for claims to be made for

excisions for Aboriginal people who are not currently living on pastoral properties and the eligibility criteria for those claims to be made. The Commonwealth has already clearly indicated, in the statement made by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, that the door is open for the matter to be resolved to the Territory government's satisfaction.

In my opinion, it has to be resolved by the Northern Territory tribunal providing Territory title with eligibility determined on a needs basis so that claims would not become mini land claims on private property. It should also be a requirement that the Aboriginal people making the claim before the tribunal prove their traditional link with the land and their need of the land as a permanent residence. The basic structure for implementing this is already in place in the 1984 Aboriginal Community Living Areas Bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly by the former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham.

The reality is that more than 90% of the people affected by this offer will have Territory title. Aboriginal people who have claims on stock routes and excisions currently have a legal right to make claims which will result, if successful, in Commonwealth title being provided. The Commonwealth view is that this right should not be removed from them. This matter will not be resolved for the benefit of the people living in abject poverty if all parties to this dispute are not prepared to make some concessions and that includes the Commonwealth government, the Northern Territory government, the pastoralists and the Aboriginal land councils. The Commonwealth offer provides a real opportunity for this matter to be finally resolved, and it should be possible for such title to be provided for all Aboriginal people who are currently living on pastoral stations before the end of the year. It is time that the 5000 Aboriginal people affected by this dispute were given a place to live.

I can only urge this government to go back to the negotiating table with the Commonwealth and the land councils to sort this matter out as soon as possible. To allow the problem to continue is not in the interests of all the people of the Territory and is affecting people, mainly the Aboriginal people and the pastoralists on the stations. The sooner this government, the Commonwealth and the lands councils get together, the sooner we will get this problem solved.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 2 tragedies in this whole issue. The first and most obvious tragedy is that the Aboriginal people concerned do not have land or a place to call their own. This government and the members of this government recognise that and recognise that those people have to be provided for.

The greater tragedy is that those same Aboriginal people put their trust in the likes of the member for Stuart.

Mr Ede: Well placed.

Mr PALMER: That trust is misplaced. I could not think of anybody I would be less inclined to place my trust in than the member for Stuart. He is nothing more than a lifestyle politician. It serves him well to drive around with his heart bleeding. He does not care if this problem is resolved. It provides an issue for him. I will address these remarks to the member for Arafura. Stanley, we will be here a long time after the likes of the member for Stuart have gone.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Karama will refer to the member for Arafura as the member for Arafura.

Mr PALMER: Myself and the member for Stuart will be here a long time after the member for Stuart has finished playing politics ...

Mr Ede: You are getting confused.

Mr PALMER: ... has finished driving his Toyota around the Territory ...

Mr Ede: You are confused again.

Mr PALMER: ... has finished having a good time and has gone, has left the Territory. He will be gone.

Mr Tipiloura: No. Try again, Mick. Try again.

Mr Ede: He is confused. He is getting the names wrong.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, as far back as April in 1985, a resolution to this problem was offered.

Mr Ede: Come outside. I'll shout you one.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I resent that remark. It is not I who was locked up in Ti Tree. It is not I who was arrested. It is not I who deserted my wife and kids and left them on the welfare system. It is not I. We have the self-righteousness of the member for Stuart over there ...

Mr Ede: Righto.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, we have ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Karama will withdraw the reference to wife and self-righteous.

Mr Ede: Hang on.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do so unreservedly. I withdraw all that reference.

Mr Ede: It is wrong anyway.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, we have issued 21 titles. We have made 12 offers and a further 12 are subject to the commencement of section 50 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Another 50 could be offered shortly, and I believe that would assist something like 75% of the people affected.

This debate has failed to address the question of money. If we issue 138 or 140 titles, who is going to pay for the provision of services? Who is going to pay for the access? Who is going to pay for the housing? Who is going to pay for the fencing? The Commonwealth has made no offers in relation to funding. It has not offered the Aboriginal communities or the Northern Territory government the money to provide those services. By merely providing the land, we will have done nothing to redress the plight of the Aboriginal people on these pastoral leases. Substantial provision needs to be made for those services.

Mr Ede: Of course.

Mr PALMER: I would be surprised if the member for Stuart could identify, in anyone's budget, the necessary finances to provide those services to 140 communities.

This government is committed to resolving this problem, but it has to be resolved under Territory law and with the issue of Territory title. There can be no other solution. We do not accept the imposition by another government of forms of title which do not currently exist. We must resolve the situation in the Territory. I believe that it can be resolved, should be resolved and will be resolved upon the commencement of section 50 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

I commend the Chief Minister's motion.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I understand that I am speaking to the amendment and the motion. In conclusion, I simply say that this matter has 2 aspects. One is the unnecessarily heavy-handed approach of the Commonwealth at this stage. The other is the question of what solution is appropriate. Let me read into Hansard a couple of paragraphs from the Prime Minister's letter of 22 August, just in case honourable members have not quite got the message about what we are being told. Mr Speaker I quote from the bottom of the first page of the Prime Minister's letter:

Possible amendments to the Land Rights Act to establish a Commonwealth Living Areas Tribunal will only proceed if the Northern Territory does not enact appropriate excisions legislation in the October 1989 sittings and deliver titles to a significant number of excisions by 31 December 1989.

Now, if that is not a directive to the elected people of the Northern Territory, I do not know what is. If we do not act as the Commonwealth wishes us to act, we are threatened. Is that supposed to be a negotiation process? The next paragraph says:

In considering the acceptability of your legislation to facilitate excisions from pastoral properties, the Commonwealth will have regard to the extent to which the Northern Territory legislation includes ... eligibility criteria.

In that context, the Prime Minister then refers to 'traditional affiliation', which has not arisen before in relation to eligibility criteria. He further says 'that the land not be capable of acquisition under the Northern Territory Lands Acquisition Act or any other law of the Northern Territory'.

I thought that self-government was all about Northern Territory people being able to fairly and democratically elect their own representatives to make decisions about laws which should prevail within the Northern Territory, particularly in relation to matters such as land.

As an attempt at negotiating a settlement to a problem which I am sure we all recognise and we all want to solve - although I am sure many people have doubts that some parties want to solve it - the letter from the Prime Minister is amazing. In effect, it says that: notwithstanding the views of constituents of members of this House, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly will introduce legislation in October. That legislation will be passed. Excisions will be processed and the Commonwealth will tell the

Territory in December whether its action has been sufficient. If the Commonwealth is not satisfied, its own legislation will come into play.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to go on any more about that. I have demonstrated the point that we have been trying to reach a cooperative resolution - at least, I have been trying to and I thought that the Prime Minister was trying to. This most recent letter represents an about-face in terms of attitude. That is without addressing matters about areas being scheduled to the Land Rights Act without any consideration of demonstration of traditional attachment.

Let me move to the other aspect of the problem which, I guess, is the really important one: what is the solution? We know for a fact that, had the current Minister for Aboriginal Affairs not stopped the proclamation of the amendments to section 50 of the Land Rights Act 18 months ago, thereby violating a clear understanding between the former minister, the cattlemen, the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth, in the vicinity of 150 excisions would have been processed by now. In that situation, the Commonwealth could have been letting us know whether we had done well or badly in its estimation, in terms of the number of people who had been accommodated. If it had needed to, it could have started to rattle swords, in accordance with its powers. However, when the Commonwealth failed to proclaim the amendments to section 50, the system ground to a halt. That is why, on 11 July this year, 6 weeks ago, I said to the Prime Minister: 'Please commence the amended section 50. I guarantee that a special task force of the Territory government' - which, incidentally, will cost us heaps - 'will process excisions very rapidly. If I consider that some pastoralists are being intransigent, I will be prepared to acquire land from them. I give you my word, Mr Prime Minister, that I will do that'.

Of course, we should not get our knickers in a knot about things like compulsory acquisition at this stage. For goodness sake, let us get the process moving. Let us get land to those people out there who are looking for land as fast as we can. We can address problems as they arise further down the track and, if we do not address them, I guess people can break out the heavy hammers and so on. It is absurd, however, to insist, before we take any action to address the matters which are urgent now, that we should try to find every conceivable group that might come out of the woodwork in 2 years' time to seek a parcel of land, that we should identify them, fix criteria under which they can apply for land, determine the size of areas and so forth. It is crazy for the federal government to insist upon withholding commencement of that legislation.

The fact is that very little will happen until the amended section 50 is commenced. Excision processes are very complicated. They require considerable information on applicants, their backgrounds and the areas they are seeking. They require a survey on the ground. They require an assessment of where water resources are located because we are not going to make excisions - and the Aborigines do not want us to - in areas where there are no water supplies or where it is unreasonable to put in road access. And so on. There is a great deal of work to be done. It is necessary to have the cooperation of the pastoralists. I appreciate that they cannot lock the gates and keep everyone out. Government officers have the right to enter these areas. However, one can imagine the ability of pastoralists to procrastinate and frustrate the process, let alone the possibility that they will issue injunctions and seek to exercise their rights to natural justice. Lawyers and QCs would be engaged to debate whether a particular group was eligible to apply for an excision, whether it had too many people and whether it was

asking for too much land. Once matters come into the ambit of a tribunal, be it a Commonwealth tribunal or a Northern Territory one, they could become bogged down in the same way as some claims under the Land Rights Act have become bogged down. We do not want that to happen.

I have had many discussions with pastoralists. I have told them - and they have agreed with me - that, if we have the blockage of section 50 cleared, applications must proceed promptly through the system. Otherwise, all of our credibility will be shot. The delay in relation to section 50 is the only problem. I wish the Prime Minister had said to me 6 weeks ago: 'Yes, we will commence the amendments to section 50 but I will look hard at you in 1 month, 2 months and 3 months time and, if excisions have not proceeded very promptly, we will start to become heavy with you'.

I do not mind having my performance assessed after I have been given a chance. I am saying today that many excisions would have been completed. I am saying that, under any system other than the one we propose, even though the Commonwealth has enormous legislative powers, it will have to install an enormous bureaucracy here to try to create excisions against the wishes of all sorts of people. Mr Speaker, can you imagine the legal fights which will eventuate when the whole pastoral movement asserts excisions are a threat to its land and that it has not had the opportunity for negotiated settlement? The whole process will become completely bogged down.

The solution is to commence section 50. The excision process will then flow. If that does not work, the Commonwealth can take action. However, the solution is certainly not for the Commonwealth to send letters to the Northern Territory government asking it to pass legislation in the Assembly, telling it what that legislation should contain and saying that, when that is passed, the Commonwealth will amend the Land Rights Act so that the Territory legislation cannot be amended and so that the process will be ongoing forever.

Mr Ede: That is rubbish.

Mr PERRON: That is what it says. Let me read the relevant paragraph to the honourable member: 'When agreement is reached on your proposed legislation' - that is the NT legislation, - 'the Commonwealth will amend the Land Rights Act to ensure that the provisions of the Northern Territory legislation will be maintained into the future'. What do you think that means?

As I understand the powers of this Assembly under the Self-Government Act, we have the ability to legislate within certain areas. If we legislate improperly, the Commonwealth has the power to refuse assent within a 6-month period. It certainly has the power to enact overriding legislation. I presume that it has the power, although I have never heard of anyone suggesting that such a power should be used, to entrench a piece of legislation passed in this House so that it can never be changed or, if this House has legislated a sunset clause, to ensure that the sunset clause has no effect. This is brand new stuff.

Mr Speaker, I rest my case in this matter. The government will be opposing the amendment proposed by the opposition. I foreshadow a brief amendment after this amendment is defeated, as I expect it to be, to the effect that the terms of the resolution be forwarded by the Speaker to the Premier Minister.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 16

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Floreani
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by adding at the end:

8. the terms of this resolution be transmitted by the Speaker to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Speaker, it is clear that a resolution such as this should contain such a provision. The motion is designed to express to the Prime Minister the grave concern of this Assembly, of the representatives of the citizens of the Northern Territory, about what was contained in the recent offer to the Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, if the Chief Minister was wishing to convey the views of the House as a whole, he would include the proposed amendment as well. We are quite happy to send it to the Prime Minister because we are proud of the position we take on this. Honourable members do not seem to realise that, since the working party was established in September 1987, only 1 title has been issued in the northern area. During that period, the Aboriginal people have said that they are willing to trade some 3000 km² of land which they had under claim for the possibility of getting 1200 km² plus an excisions tribunal. That was what they asked for. In fact, pastoral properties would obtain 1800 km² more land under that arrangement than under the arrangement which this government is proposing.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart must relate his remarks to the amendment as he has already spoken to the original motion.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the amendment is quite acceptable to this side of the House. Of course, we will be conveying our views to the Prime Minister. Given the results of the recent by-election, we can now speak for the majority of Territorians. I advise honourable members opposite that, dodos though they may be ...

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

Mr EDE: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

On the verge of extinction as a species honourable members opposite may be, Mr Speaker, but members on this side of the House will speak out for the people in the Northern Territory who want this problem solved.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Continued from 22 August 1989.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the Appropriation Bill 1989-90, I do not intend to spend a great deal of time analysing the Leader of the Opposition's response to the budget other than to comment on his criticism of the Department of Industries and Development, particularly its assistance to small business.

The Leader of the Opposition claimed a reduction of \$1.8m in the department's business development program, but he is confused. However, he is no more confused than he was last year when he was \$250m out in his budget calculations. He maintains a degree of consistency which is unparalleled in this parliament. He did not mention the industry development program, which had an increase. The 2 funds are virtually identical and the net result is that combined total funding is not reduced at all. It is maintained at last year's level and both programs are directed towards local business expansion. Mr Speaker, 10 new positions have been created specifically to assist development and expansion of local business. Further, small business workshops are currently so successful that extra sessions are being run at nights and on Saturday mornings. These workshops, which are funded by the Department of Industries and Development, are now being run regularly in the 5 major Territory population centres.

The Leader of the Opposition claimed that DID is spending so much on the Hong Kong Expo that small business funding is suffering. For his information, total DID spending on the expo is \$60 000, which is in fact 0.002% of the DID budget.

I took the trouble to read the budget speeches made by the Leader of the Opposition last year and the year before and compared them with the budget speech that he made today. They are identical in all respects. He maintains his knock, knock, knock attitude. He says the same thing every time. For example, he said in 1987-88 that the major failure of the budget was that people could not tell where the government was leading them. This year he said that a sense of direction for the Territory was needed. In 1988-89, he said the same thing over and over again. He was looking for directions. He said: 'We can choose to build a uniquely successful community on the bedrock of our resources or we can choose to continue on the slide that will turn us into the backwater of the Australian nation'. This 'backwater of the Australian nation' will this year produce \$1700m in mineral and hydrocarbon wealth from the Northern Territory. In fact, the 1% of Australia's population which lives in the Northern Territory will produce 10% of Australia's export wealth.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Power and Water Authority and said that it had no direction. Let me inform him that he is quite welcome to come on a trip with me although I would take 2 cars to avoid travelling with

him. In the last 2 years, we have purchased 30 gas turbines in the Northern Territory. In fact, we have bought 15 in the last year and 7 in the last few months. The electricity grid will extend for some 6000 km across the Northern Territory. It is being constructed to realise my vision of an electricity grid across the Northern Territory capable of delivering 400 MW of electricity. If anybody had gone to Pine Creek a year ago and said that, within 12 months, it would have a powerhouse larger than Katherine's, he would have been locked up. As we speak, a 25 MW powerhouse at Pine Creek is pumping out electricity to the mines at Moline, Silver Coin and Renison.

There has been enormous growth in electricity production and that is why we have been able to keep electricity prices frozen at the October 1986 level. In fact, the last person to raise electricity charges in this parliament was the then Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, Ian Tuxworth. They have not gone up since. Honourable members would have seen the comparative analysis on selected taxes and charges throughout Australia. They would have seen that the cost of electricity in the Northern Territory is higher, but not much higher, than in the states. When one considers the \$1000m worth of infrastructure we have put in, the debt we have to service for the new power stations we have built in Darwin, Katherine, Pine Creek, Cosmo Howley, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, plus the \$270m we outlaid on the gas pipeline, the Northern Territory Power and Water Authority has done a remarkable job.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to ridicule my remarks about the development of value-added downstream processing in our gas industry. I made announcements last year and the year before about LPG stripping, polypropylene, ethylene glycol and a number of other projects. The negotiations are still continuing. Would the Leader of the Opposition have me rush into an agreement such as the petrochemical arrangements that were entered into by WA Inc? I think not, Mr Speaker. We will do it right in the Northern Territory.

Before I give more detail on the activities of my department following this year's budget, I want to point out that the people of Palmerston have been well looked after again.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I wonder why!

Mr COULTER: More is needed but that is always the case. I refer to the \$44m TAFE secondary college, and the \$1m cash allocation to water and sewerage program that will deliver services not only to the college but to the 2nd Cavalry Unit. The member for Koolpinyah goes to great lengths to try and tell people that the 2nd Cavalry Unit is not in the Palmerston electorate.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is in the Litchfield Shire.

Mr COULTER: Whilst it is in the Litchfield Shire, a great deal of my electorate is in the Litchfield Shire also. The name of the electorate is in fact Palmerston. However, the time available to me does not allow me to educate the member for Koolpinyah.

A number of other major projects in the Palmerston area have been funded under the 1989-90 budget and I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that the people of Palmerston are grateful for that.

Tonight I want to talk about what I believe this budget will do for the Northern Territory and what it will do to project us into the 1990s. It is my

privilege to provide a portrait of the government's activities to stimulate further growth, development and investment in the Northern Territory, particularly in relation to the brace of development portfolios under my ministerial jurisdiction and within the framework of the 1989-90 budget. Those activities mean more jobs, a healthy economic climate, better business opportunities, expansion of the Territory's manufacturing base and greater volumes of Territory products exported to the rest of Australia and the world. That in turn means a better lifestyle for all Territorians. It means a higher standard of living and it means we can afford to continue to make improvements to the Territory's social and physical environment.

I say this because sometimes single-issue organisations and political movements seem to forget about the necessary balance that has to be maintained in society. You cannot plant a billion trees if you do not have the money to do so. You cannot increase old age pensions if you are not increasing revenue or reducing other services and you cannot keep interest rates, inflation and the value of your dollar stable if you continue to spend more than you earn and if you continue to import vastly more product than you export. If our trade deficit dropped below \$1000m, I think the federal government would declare a public holiday. In fact, some people in Australia believe that a \$2000m deficit can be contemplated. The good things in life, Mr Speaker, usually have to be earned.

The portfolios I represent are the Territory's earners: minerals, energy, business investment and expansion, and export growth. They provide the perspective within which I respond to the Territory's 1989-90 budget. I will address the specifics of the budget as they relate to the various portfolios I represent. Firstly, it may be informative to give an overall picture of what they mean and the targets being set, not necessarily in the current financial year.

In simple terms, the targets are these: maximum Territory benefit from the exciting offshore oil and gas exploration and development programs, which means several millions of dollars of new business for Territory companies; expansion of the Territory's reserves of natural gas, which will allow new gas pipelines to be built to major consumers, which in turn means expansion of the Territory's efficient gas-powered electricity grid, bringing about the economies of scale needed to produce electricity at attractive and competitive rates in comparison with other parts of Australia; continued growth of the Territory's mining industry, still by far the major contributor to the Territory economy; establishment of new manufacturing in the Territory to broaden our economic base; expansion of our existing industry and the replacement of goods and products currently imported to the Territory with locally manufactured goods; and, last but certainly not least, rapid expansion of the Trade Development Zone meaning new factories, new industries, many hundreds of new jobs and a whole new focus on Australia's Northern Territory as an emerging regional force in South-east Asia. I note in this context that, in his response to the budget today, the Leader of the Opposition made no criticism of the TDZ. The very man who tried to sink the TDZ now forgets to mention it in his budget speech.

I will deal first with Trade Development Zone matters. The 1989-90 budget notes, in its cold and factual style, that the zone expenditure will increase by \$9.6m to \$19.6m. This is mainly for an additional 12 000 m² of factory space, taking the total to 20 000 m². They are the facts but here is what it means. In short, it means that the TDZ has brought home the bacon. I have made no secret of my opinion that, in its earlier days, the local image of the TDZ suffered from some premature enthusiasm about its prospects. Such

enthusiasm was perhaps understandable, as the zone was breaking new ground in Australia and every prospect which appeared on the horizon looked genuinely exciting. What happened was that some prospects made it to the starting line and many did not. Those that did not were perceived as failures of the zone.

Experience has taught us all that the business of attracting participants to the zone needs patience, above all, along with a little faith and commitment. Over the last couple of years we have shown patience and we have restrained our enthusiasm. We have been conservative in our public statements about zone activities. We have taken the view that it is results that count. With some degree of difficulty, I will maintain that stance here today. However, let me give at least a flavour to the 12 to 18 months ahead for the Trade Development Zone.

There will be substantial expansion of textile manufacturing in the zone. Some of this is known publicly already. It was announced recently that the Hengyang textile factory would expand its factory space by 2600 m², involving the recruitment of more than 200 extra staff. The Leader of the Opposition talks about job creation. The new factory space will not become available until March next year but expanded operations will start later this year in temporary space, once new staff have been recruited. This will take the total Hengyang work force up to about 450 people, which makes it the third-largest employer in the Territory after Gemco and Nabalco.

There will be further good news on textile manufacture by zone participants and it will happen shortly. The new venture will be of equivalent size to the Hengyang operations. There could be even more textile manufacturing start-ups. A number of prospective participants are holding ongoing discussions with the TDZ Authority and some of those discussions are close to finalisation. I expect a new zone participant from Singapore, which operates in the field of precision engineering, to be announced very shortly. Just this month, a Perth-based company which handles high-quality colour separation work for the printing industry started operating in the zone without any particular fanfare. In all, likely new participants in the zone - and I am talking about prospects well within the horizon and not beyond it - represent a further private injection of more than \$24m into the Territory economy. This is all based on what is currently known.

However, the zone's future is looking better than that. Honourable members would be aware of the intense interest which Hong Kong is showing in Darwin and our Trade Development Zone. Much of that interest is being held back until the Territory's Hong Kong Expo in November. On conservative estimates, the Territory will be talking furious business in Hong Kong during that week, when prospective investors will have immediate access to all the people and the material they need. That access, of course, will not be restricted to government ministers and departmental officers. It will also involve the Territory's private sector including banking and finance houses, legal and insurance offices, real estate companies and a whole spectrum of knowledge required to set up business in Darwin. Through a combination of circumstances and the hard work of Territory representation in Hong Kong for the past 4 years, we are very much the flavour of the month in Hong Kong. A great number of opportunities will be open to us and I have no doubt that the first week of November 1989 will be seen in the future as the watershed of the Territory's integration with Asia.

Mr Speaker, let us look now at one of the Territory's most valuable resources: gas. The target, of course, is to convert our reserves of natural gas into benefits for the Territory. We are well down that track already with

the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline and gas-powered electricity generation. The government's objectives fall into 3 spheres: discovery and development of more gas reserves; expansion of the Territory's electricity grid and the substantial use of gas-powered electricity by large consumers; and establishment of new industry, using natural gas and its components as primary resource material.

On the first of those objectives, it is my pleasure to announce to honourable members that development drilling currently taking place at Palm Valley is producing rather spectacular results. Palm Valley No 7, a well drilled by a joint venture led by Magellan - a company with which you would be very familiar, Mr Speaker - reported only last week that it had achieved a flow of 9.4 million cubic feet per day. For the benefit of honourable members who are hearing this news before it is public knowledge, I will explain the significance of that figure. It means that previous estimates of the size of the Palm Valley gas field have now been confirmed. It is at least as big as had been hoped and the chances are very bright that it is even bigger and better than was hoped. It also means that the life of the Palm Valley field has been lengthened considerably, and ensures that the Territory's current and medium-term gas requirements are able to be comfortably accommodated. We could yet be talking about comfortable, guaranteed supplies of gas to meet the very large projects that are within our sights. These projects include a pipeline to Gove, possibly extending to Groote Eylandt, and another pipeline to Mt Isa. They also include large-scale manufacturing plants drawing gas from the central pipeline and connected to the electricity grid.

Another factor in the equation is the huge Petrel gas field in the Bonaparte Gulf. The development of this field is currently overshadowed by corporate movements as Elf Aquitaine seeks to sell its major interests. But discussions leading to the field's development in the 1990s are continuing on a regular basis, and I remain confident that gas will be piped ashore to Darwin during the decade.

Offshore oil exploration and development are already bringing rewards to Darwin business and this will increase sharply in the year ahead. This month, the number of drilling rigs working the 23 offshore permits will rise from 2 to 5, bringing the activity level back to the record 1988 levels. The 4 Jabiru wells are producing about 42 000 barrels per day. Challis starts production in October which will swell that production figure to about 100 000 barrels per day, and this will bring total offshore production to near 25% of all Australian oil production. Development of the Challis and Cassini field is progressing and further appraisals of the Jabiru, Challis, Montara and Skua oil fields are planned. Feasibility studies are under way for the development of the Skua field.

BHP Petroleum plans to expand its Darwin office at a cost of \$2.5m and another major energy company, Santos, has recently opened Darwin offices. In all, the offshore oil industry directly employs 500 workers in Darwin, which is not bad for a part of Australia that was not in the oil business in 1984. In those 5 short years we have seen this magnificent industry become well established in the Northern Territory.

I have already outlined during these sittings the major companies which intend to be associated with the offshore supply base. They include Marubeni Australia, Gerhart United, Milpark and Baroid Australia, and they will provide supplies and services such as drill piping, equipment servicing, drilling fluids and drilling mud. Temporary space for an interim facility is now being made within the Darwin Port area and decisions will shortly be reached in

relation to the establishment of a larger, permanent base. An offshore supply base facility offers local manufacturers and suppliers a conduit to the huge spending by oil companies in the Timor Sea. This level of spending will only increase in the decade ahead, particularly as the highly prospective Timor Gap area becomes available for exploration. Looking ahead to this, I have had talks in Jakarta with the Indonesian government and Indonesian oil authorities about the use of Darwin as the logical supply base for the whole region. Indonesia is warmly supportive of our plans.

Territory mineral development is very much at the crossroads. Of course, there will be further growth in the industry, particularly in goldmining, based on what is known and what is available. However, problems which have been looming for some time have now reached the stage where we are confronting them directly. Examples of areas where problems exist are the rich Coronation Hill and El Sherana prospects in the South Alligator valley, and the Jabiluka and Koongarra uranium prospects. The Territory can proceed no further with the development of these immensely valuable prospects. We are sitting on our hands waiting for matters beyond our control to be resolved by the federal government, which continues to show little inclination to make decisions. It is a subject which could and should be addressed at length, and not in the context of this address in relation to the 1989-90 budget. Instead I will divert to some good news.

The Pine Creek story is worthy of close attention from honourable members. In this century, Pine Creek has gone from boom to bust along with the fortunes of gold. In 1989, it is back to the boom times and gold is again the motivating force in the development of Pine Creek as the centre of a highly profitable mining region. The government has facilitated this strong regrowth through the provision of roads, water and electricity. It is the electricity component which makes the whole region hum with activity and which offers benefits to the whole of the Territory. A privately-owned, gas-fired power station at Pine Creek was commissioned in March this year and it now has 6 turbines generating electricity. In fact, it is the Territory's second largest power station, after Channel Island, in terms of capacity and output. We are in the process of connecting virtually every mine in the region to this system, which brings about economies of scale for the mining operations and which also substantially helps to bring about the bigger economies of scale needed to stabilise electricity costs for the entire Northern Territory.

So far, mines that have been connected include Moline, Pine Creek Goldfields and Cosmo Howley. Future mines targeted include Union Reef, Gandy's Hill, Mt Bonnie, Union Extended, Mt Wells, Mt Todd, Woolwonga and Spring Hill. If problems I mentioned earlier are resolved, it is possible that the network could extend out to Coronation Hill and El Sherana, and I cannot emphasise too strongly to honourable members the importance of these projects. They are already making a valuable contribution to Territory electricity generation costs and that contribution will increase as the grid expands. It is an excellent example of how we should make our resources work for us. In fact, I hope that the whole tenor of my address today is a demonstration of how we should be looking after ourselves. We have moved out of the quarrying age. Now we should be making our assets work for us, and that is what we are doing.

Indeed, that is the whole thrust of the study on import replacement, which the government commissioned. Touche Ross recently presented the report on the study, which identifies millions of dollars worth of business opportunities not currently being realised by Territory companies. It examines the volume of goods and products imported annually, either from overseas or from other

parts of Australia, and sifts out opportunities for replacement by goods and products manufactured locally. The Touche Ross report is now being assessed by the Department of Industries and Development with a view to direct approaches being made to likely Territory companies, and it is also being circulated to industry organisations for their input. In simple terms, why buy it from elsewhere if we can do it ourselves? Why support business outside the Territory when we can gain benefits across the spectrum by supporting our own industry?

The offshore supply base is another example of such a philosophy at work. In that case, we are using Timor Sea assets to generate other business opportunities and employment. It is what we are doing with our minerals, our natural gas and our oil. It is Territorians using the Territory for the benefit of Territorians. We are helping ourselves first. Mr Speaker, the 1989-90 budget is a practical document which represents that admirable philosophy in practice and enables its achievement. The Leader of the Opposition does himself no good at all by taking the attitude which he has consistently adopted over 3 years. We heard in question time this morning that a Labor government would seriously consider the imposition of a land tax in the Northern Territory. We heard the Leader of the Opposition tell us how he would cut \$10m from public service expenditure. He said that he could do that by identifying waste. We know where much of that waste occurs. It occurs in his salary. He is about as much use to the Northern Territory as a wheel on a walking stick and he has no future here.

He seems to believe that the people of Wanguri support him and would like to see a Labor government in the Northern Territory that would spend its time providing excisions, dealing with Aboriginal land rights, banning uranium mining, stopping mining at Coronation Hill and implementing any other social engineering measures which came across its desk. If the Leader of the Opposition really believes that Territorians want that, he is mistaken. I certainly do not believe it.

I look forward to the opportunity to test his theory because I believe people would leave the Northern Territory in droves at the mere hint of his becoming the Chief Minister. The job is too big for him. It is too important for him. He has shown himself to be incapable of coming to grips with the economy and the direction in which it should be heading. There are many examples of this, particularly within his own party. I refer, for example, to an article which appeared in the NT News on Tuesday 2 May. It was headed 'Labor Row Erupts' with the subheading 'Split Occurs on Economy Policy'. It said: 'A fierce row has erupted between the right and left wings of the NT Labor Party over strategies for the economic development of the Northern Territory'. The Leader of the Opposition's economic plan is not even accepted by his own party, and who could forget him telling us that we could get out of our troubles by using the WA Inc model.

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

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I can start by saying that I share the despair of my colleague, the Minister for Mines and Energy, at the opposition's attitude to what has to be the most important item of business before the House in these sittings: the budget, a budget brought down at a critical time and under critical conditions. It affects not this House, but the people of the Northern Territory. During the speech of the Minister for Industries and Development and Mines and Energy, who is responsible for a great number of positive developments in the Northern Territory, no member of the opposition has been present in the House and, with

the exception of the member for Koolpinyah, the crossbenches have also been vacant.

The Leader of the Opposition has displayed an attitude of arrogant smugness during these sittings, arising from what he interprets as an endorsement of his party by the people of the Northern Territory. His attitude is nothing short of shameless. When I think of some of his gutter tactics, it is clear that he has no cause to feel anything but shame, not just because of the disrespect he has shown for this House but for the people of the Northern Territory.

Let me commence my contribution on behalf of the Department of Transport and Works by acknowledging the very competent and efficient way that the department has managed under very difficult circumstances. Its budget last year was very tight. With the pressure of federal cuts, it could have been oppressively tight, but the department has managed in a way that is deserving of great credit. The department's staff are a group of dedicated professionals. Their track record among Australian construction authorities stands second to none and I will present some specific details in that regard in due course.

The overview of the Transport and Works budget reflects the Territory budget. It is one of quality. We all know that we are in tough times. We all know that we have to tighten our belts. The trick of the trade these days is to provide, in tough times, high-quality and efficient delivery of service to the people of the Territory. As a design and construction authority, we cover a wide range of works on behalf of client departments, particularly in the public works or the building side. We are responsible, of course, for the delivery of all road construction and maintenance services for Territorians. In the current budget, we have taken on construction responsibilities for the Conservation Commission as well as in the rental housing area. Our total budget in 1989-90 has an allocation of \$256.6m, compared with last year's expenditure of \$236.6m. This figure, of course, includes some \$6.9m of expenditure incurred by the Conservation Commission for its capital works. In general terms, that is an increase of some \$20m. Obviously, we represent a significant proportion of the Territory budget.

As I have said during the last few days, what is important to Territory businesses, to the Territory economy and Territorians overall, is not airy-fairy government programs set for many years ahead but the actual cash that is delivered into the economy. The department's cash allocation for this year is \$150.4m in capital works compared to last year's \$133.5m, an increase of some \$16.9m. The Leader of the Opposition stated that last year's base was low. As usual, he was wrong. In the previous 2 years, the amounts spent on capital works were \$205m and \$200m respectively. The amount this year is \$225m, an obvious sign that, in tough times, the department is able to convert the quality of its program for the benefit of Territorians.

The capital works appropriation represents some 58.6% of the department's total budget. If one looks at the record of similar departments interstate, that compares very favourably. Usually, the rate of capital works output in proportion to total budget is much lower. Furthermore, when compared to the total cash allocation of \$225m, that amount represents 66.6% of the total budget, Territory-wide, for capital works. That is, we are the major deliverers of the capital works program. That is what it is all about, Mr Deputy Speaker. The department is responsible for delivery of construction services and the cash that it injects into the economy is quite significant.

I turn now to the success of State Square in regard to jobs. There will always be those who will carp about State Square. The success of that project alone has meant that 95% of the value of money spent to date and the money which will be spent prior to completion of the project, will produce local benefits. During the Wanguri by-election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition made much of State Square. Neither he nor the ALP candidate seemed to be aware that 20 residents in the Wanguri electorate are directly employed on the State Square project, not to mention those who benefit indirectly. That is 20 families which have survived, which have not had to move interstate or join the dole queues. That is in just one electorate.

The budget has always been about quality and maximising benefits to the private sector. Where consultants are used, 59% of the 1989-90 program will go to local consultants. As usual, there will be no interstate consultants unless they have special expertise or other qualities that will contribute to the consultancy program. That is another injection into our local economy. Last year, expenditure on consultants increased from \$2.7m to \$5.6m as a result of additional programs coming on stream. That did not include the designers involved in State Square.

Mr Deputy Speaker, by way of comparison to that delivery of cash into the economy, I refer to the federal government's track record last year and this year. Of its widely proclaimed \$373m capital works program, which is \$460m if the airport is included, a maximum of \$50m will be injected into the local economy, compared with \$225m from the Territory government. How is it that the media fail to pick up these pertinent facts about the imbalance in commitment to the Territory economy? When one takes into account the revenue-raising capacity of the federal government versus that of the Territory government, there is only one thing I can say about the praise which members opposite heap upon the federal government - horses, Mr Deputy Speaker, horses!

Last year, the federal government was supposed to spend \$52.3m. In the end, it spent \$39.2m. That is \$13.1m taken from Territory pockets and flogged off to a welfare program elsewhere. It is time that Senator Collins and the federal member, Warren Snowdon, responded to numerous demands by myself and others and answered some basic questions. Was there or was there not a deferral of the defence program last year? Mr Deputy Speaker, you will remember how members opposite attempted to defend the indefensible. They said it was not possible. The proof of the pudding is in the eating: 25% of the federal department's cash went missing last year.

The Territory's federal Labor members can avoid my questions now and they will probably avoid my questions tomorrow but at some time, sooner or later, they will have to answer to the people of the Northern Territory. What are they doing in those corridors of power in Canberra where, they so loudly proclaim, they are doing so much good? What has happened to the commencement of construction at the airport? We were promised it would begin late last year. We were promised 19 August. Now we are promised November. I do not believe it and neither does anybody else. The federal colleagues of members opposite have failed to deliver. Where is this \$375m or \$460m capital works program that they crow about? It is a total vacuum. Sooner or later, though, they will have to answer.

The public works program of the Department of Transport and Works has a cash allocation of \$100m, compared with \$84.3m last year. The amount takes into account some transfer of responsibility for housing and represents a \$16m increase in building works. The major infrastructure of the Territory,

including schools, hospitals, police stations and so on, has been completed largely in the 11 years since self-government. As I have said time and time again, State Square is proceeding for no reason other than the fact that the 2 buildings are necessary. Whilst many find it hard to accept that they should be built now, there is no better time for them to be used to fill in the construction program.

On many occasions, including several in the Wanguri by-election campaign, I have heard the member for Barkly state that he has a list of 30-odd projects which would represent a better use of funds than State Square. He has had 2 years in which to nominate 1 project upon which loans program money could legitimately be used in the Territory. I challenge him to tell us what is on his list. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I and every other member in this Chamber know that he cannot find 1 item upon which loans program money can be legitimately spent.

The public works allocation will, of course, allow commencement of a number of new projects throughout the Northern Territory. These include: the rehabilitation and casualty ward at the Katherine Hospital, the ANZAC Hill High School redevelopments, the Strehlow Centre project, the Marrara grandstand and synthetic athletic track, the Batchelor Area School and many others. We have a continued priority on development of basic road infrastructure required for tourism, mining and transport. Safety is also an important consideration. This year's allocation is \$49.5m compared with last year's \$49.2m. Our objective is to produce quality roads.

I will say loudly and clearly here that the record of the dedicated and hardworking public servants in the Department of Transport and Works is second to none. For every \$1m spent on capital works or roads programs, the Department of Transport and Works has 4.4 employees. That compares to an average of 8.8 employees per \$1m expenditure in the states. We place high emphasis on quality as well as quantity. Quality means a high private sector involvement. Our entire road construction program is carried out by the private sector, together with much of our roads maintenance including minor surface repairs, grass mowing and so forth. Interstate departments do not even contemplate using the private sector to perform such functions.

This year's federal allocation for roads is some \$38.5m. I stated the other day that that figure represents a cut of \$0.5m. Some \$22.9m of that is spent on capital works. Over 3 years, there has been a continuing slide, from \$27.4m in 1987-88 to \$24.9m in 1988-89, down to this year's \$22.9m. The highway program received some \$30m 3 years ago and is now down to \$20m. Where is the commitment of the federal government which talks about social equity and which talks about development of remote areas and decentralisation of Australia? Such talk is nonsense in the context of its record. What has happened to the fuel excise that has been collected during that period? The excise is now levied at the rate of 23.8¢ per litre and a total of \$6000m has been collected, against an expenditure on roads of \$1300m. Those are the sort of questions that Snowdon and Collins have to answer. That is the sort of question which I continually put to them. Where is that money going? It is going on social welfare programs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me put the Territory government's budget in perspective. We have had a 50% reduction since 1985-86 in the total general purpose capital funding available to us. Even with such constraints, the Territory government has managed to allocate \$26.6m to roads expenditure this year, which compares with a federal allocation of \$22.9m for capital works. When we look at the expenditure for the total roads program, including repairs

and maintenance, we see that the Territory allocation is \$103m compared with a federal allocation of \$38.5m. We spend nearly 3 times as much as the Commonwealth.

Some mention has been made of an increase in Territory fuel excise to 4¢ per litre compared with the federal government's 23.8¢ per litre. In terms of the amount of revenue generated, the ratio is 16:1. That effort demonstrates this government's commitment to the development of remote areas and the development of the Territory. We want safe roads for our constituents but we also want good roads to develop our tourism and our mining, and that is the commitment. I will cover very briefly some of the specific projects involved in the roads program this year. We are making a total cash allocation of \$49.5m and that money will be spent in a range of areas. I emphasise that these are program figures. An amount of \$1.5m has been allocated for the West MacDonnells; \$1.5m for Areyonga/Walleru; \$1.5m for the Tanami Road, a road which services not only the cattle industry but the goldmining area of the Granites; \$0.5m for the Katherine Gorge road; more than \$0.5m plus on Gregory National Park; and \$4m on the Litchfield National Park.

I am sure that the Minister for Tourism will agree with me when I say that I believe firmly that Litchfield will be far the greatest visitor attraction of the next decade. People are sick to death of not being able to get appropriate access into Kakadu National Park. They are driving back down the track, and they are saying: 'Don't waste your time. Access is very difficult and there is an entry fee of \$10'. Litchfield is the destination of the next decade. Whilst I am on that subject, I will mention that we are allocating funds to provide access, not only to those areas which can be reached but, more pertinently, to the current and potential mining locations in the area. We will spend some \$5m on the Kakadu Highway and \$4m on the next stage of the Oenpelli road.

That is an impressive list of projects and it is nowhere near comprehensive. It does not, of course, include the national highways or the national arterial roads which are the federal government's responsibility and which we contribute to through our taxes. We hear so much about the federal government's commitment to roads. Every time the smallest road opening ceremony is performed, federal politicians crow about the extent to which the federal government has funded the works. However, a decline from \$30m to \$20m is hardly evidence of the federal government's commitment to the Northern Territory.

I am most concerned about the Victoria Highway. Recently, the federal Minister for Land Transport viewed the Victoria Highway and other roads in the Territory. I am sure that he and his staff went away with a very positive impression of the works we are carrying out with the limited funds available to us. When I look at the opportunities that we have and when I realise that that was the seventh Minister for Transport I have dealt with during the last 2½ years, I must point to the need for some stability within the federal Cabinet, certainly for the duration of the federal government's term in office - which I am sure will not be too long. If we are to get that message through, and it has to be us who do that because it is clear that Mr Snowdon and Senator Collins are unable to, there needs to be some stability in the federal ministry. I fail to see how our federal Labor members can stand by and see road funding to the Northern Territory decline by \$0.5m overall this year when the rest of the country has an increase of \$120m. If the norm had applied in our case, our funding this year would have increased by \$2.5m.

In order to complete the works on the Victoria Highway which were to have been completed under the Bicentennial Roads Program, we would need to spend \$15m over the next 15 years or \$17.5m to do a makeshift job over the next 4 years. Either of those options would be acceptable to us. I ask members opposite to impress upon their federal colleagues the need for some strong lobbying for significant injections of funds into the road program. Members opposite are always telling us that roads in their electorates are not up to scratch. We all know, of course, that funds for most of those roads have to be found from the Territory government's limited budget. In terms of roads for Aboriginal communities, none of the money comes from the federal government. Members opposite have the audacity to accuse us of having no commitment to Aboriginal people although roads for Aboriginal communities are funded 100% by the Territory government.

A couple of new programs are being introduced in the area of bus services. One is, of course, the Alice Springs Bus Service. Subject to the receipt of acceptable tenders, \$171 000 will be committed. Some additional contract sums are required but, overall, the funding of the bus service remains buoyant.

The Darwin Port Authority's budget remains static with no increase in general terms and no increase in rates to port users. With regard to other developments at the port, during the next 3 months there will be some critical discussions among various federal government committees on implementation of the ISC's recommendations on the waterfront. We will stand by and see whether the federal government has the courage to bite the bullet and implement some rationalisation of industrial relations on the waterfront. That will not only be critical to Australia's development but to the development of the north-south rail link. Interesting times are ahead and I am pleased that some works are to take place at the port this year which will assist in relation to the offshore gas developments outlined by the Minister for Mines and Energy.

We have heard much from the Leader of the Opposition. He considers us to be tired. We are not tired, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are only tired of the negative, non-contribution from his colleagues. He says that this is a do-nothing budget but in fact it is about a proper balance - getting people back to work and producing the best goods for the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition did not make a single criticism that cannot be refuted. When it comes to a matter of who produces the jobs and the goods, the Northern Territory government can stand on its record. The federal Labor government and the federal colleagues of the Leader of the Opposition are in strife. They know it. They are in such desperate straits that they must be about to call an election. Here in the Territory, hundreds of jobs have been lost because of changes to Telecom and the Civil Aviation Authority. The federal capital works program last year was down by \$30m and in itself that represents a reduction of 200 jobs. The federal government is in such strife that I have little doubt that an election will be called during the next 2 months.

When it comes to our track record, we might have copped a bit of a shake-up, but I am sure that the arrogance and smugness displayed by the Leader of the Opposition during these sittings will be very short-lived indeed. In terms of his reflections upon the integrity of the Chief Minister, I give fair warning to the Leader of the Opposition. When it comes to private matters and matters of personal integrity, we might know shortly where the integrity lies. He, and his colleague adjacent to him, have much to answer for.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT
Report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the Report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry.

There would be very few people in the Northern Territory who have not been made aware of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Police Misconduct as it is more properly known, over the past 2 years or so. This inquiry is a matter of particular interest to members of this House and I am sure that there is no need for me to dwell at any length on its background. The opening pages of the report set out very clearly the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the inquiry.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry is wholly directed towards particular events and circumstances in Queensland. It is not a report into police misconduct and procedures through the whole of Australia, nor is it a report on issues associated with political processes and public administration throughout the whole of Australia. It would be a mistake to draw that conclusion.

The system of government in the Northern Territory is not perfect, nor is the bureaucracy, nor are the police, but our systems and procedures are sound and our performance and standards are ahead of the rest of Australia. Nonetheless we must all strive constantly to improve our parliamentary and administrative systems.

At the commencement of his report, Commissioner Fitzgerald notes that the commission 'is an adjunct to the democratic process, not a replacement for it. It is not infallible or omniscient and has had limited time to consider topics on which views may sincerely differ. The commission has no mandate to impose its opinions on the community'. Commissioner Fitzgerald points out also that the 'shock, panic and anger which follow an inquiry such as this can produce overreactions which unnecessarily disturb traditional systems and values, including civil rights. Great care needs to be taken to avoid such overreaction ... response to the problems must be measured and solutions well considered'.

This government is more than willing to act and root out misconduct and improve public administration. We do not protect systems and procedures which allow corruption to begin or grow. We will support appropriate measures for change and improvement in the interests of the community. That has always been our approach. But, in deciding what is desirable and appropriate, governments cannot abrogate their responsibilities. Mr Fitzgerald says in his report: 'The outcome of the inquiry and the report must be determined by the political process, as should be the case in a democracy'. Resistance to change which is necessary and desirable is wrong. So 'too is unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of proposals for change.

A local current affairs program dealt in a somewhat superficial way with the implications of the Fitzgerald Report for the Northern Territory last week. I was disappointed that some members of this Assembly were unable to resist the temptation to leap in with unquestioning support for proposals for change without establishing whether 2 essential prerequisites had been met. These prerequisites are: does a problem exist in the Territory which requires attention, and is the recommended course the best solution which will lead to the problem or the potential problem being most effectively overcome?

Unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of very sweeping recommendations fails both of these tests. Politicians of the 'me too' variety who seek media attention by demanding such sweeping changes without establishing their relevance or suitability to our circumstances serve only political fashion, not the interests of their constituents. They do no more for their constituents than those politicians who refuse to implement positive and worthwhile changes when these are clearly called for. This government is giving the most serious and careful attention to the analysis and recommendations of the Fitzgerald Report. I would like today to touch on a number of matters identified in that report and to put these into the Territory context.

By careful examination of the range of issues identified in the Fitzgerald Report and by following its chain of analysis, one can easily understand why the centrepiece of the recommendations is electoral reform. Put in its simplest form, the key proposal seems to be that an electoral system which makes it almost impossible for the people to change the government and in which the government can hold office even when it has lost the support of the majority of its constituents, will provide a breeding ground for nepotism, obsessive secrecy and non-accountability which, at the extreme, lead to corruption.

It is for the people of Queensland to determine their response to the picture Fitzgerald has painted, and honourable members will be aware of developments in that state since the report was released. But, the proper concerns of this House are with the Northern Territory. The Fitzgerald Report has touched on a number of issues which need to be debated in the Northern Territory and which almost certainly will lead to new arrangements and practices which will serve the interests of Territorians well - and I will touch on some of these shortly - but we should keep matters in perspective.

The interconnection between an electoral system and the ultimate festering of corruption which Fitzgerald draws in Queensland simply does not apply in the Territory. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not saying that corruption or any of the lesser manifestations which Fitzgerald exposes cannot occur in the Territory, but they cannot flow from our electoral system as Fitzgerald suggests they do in Queensland. In the Northern Territory, we have an electoral system which is firmly and openly based on the principle of one vote one value with a tolerance factor clearly prescribed in legislation. We have a very public process of electoral distribution which is conducted impartially and which, on the 2 occasions that we have had a redistribution, has been accepted unanimously by this Assembly. It is essential to understand that much of the force and vigour associated with the Fitzgerald recommendations, and indeed their sweeping nature, flowed from an assessment that the electoral process in Queensland was undemocratic and that it was responsible for the lowering of standards in public administration. That central theme does not apply to the Northern Territory. It is essential therefore that the consequent recommendations made by Fitzgerald be examined on their merits and in the Northern Territory context.

The fundamental recommendation by Commissioner Fitzgerald in relation to the political context and to the public administration generally is the establishment of an electoral and administrative review commission. The government does not intend to establish such a body in the Northern Territory. The establishment of a large and far-reaching commission which will inevitably assume significant bureaucratic proportions is simply not called for. There is no reason to impose more government and more bureaucracy on Territorians. If we need a change, it is a change towards better government not bigger

government. However, the government acknowledges that a number of the issues which Fitzgerald suggests such a commission should consider are worthy of careful consideration. In other words, let us adopt those measures which are worthwhile but let us do so efficiently and without placing unnecessary demands on the taxpayer.

The Fitzgerald Report identifies the value of readily accessible administrative review processes and advocates the setting up of freedom of information arrangements. The Northern Territory government accepts that these issues need to be further debated. The Northern Territory Law Reform Committee currently has a reference from the Attorney-General on administrative review, and its report is imminent. When available, that report will be considered carefully. It will be tabled in this Assembly and it will clearly be a report which considers the issues in the Territory context. The government acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which greater access to information held within government records would be appropriate. Previous debates have not brought to light, however, examples where any individual has been unreasonably refused access to government information relevant to him. I would make the point that unfettered access by any party to any information is not appropriate. Procedures need to be developed and safeguards built in.

Freedom of information arrangements are not without cost. Over a period of 5 years, the cost to the Commonwealth government of administering its freedom of information legislation totals in excess of \$72m. The government is particularly attracted to recent developments in South Australia where, I understand, administrative procedures rather than legislative procedures have been put in place to provide access to information. This approach could well be appropriate for the Northern Territory and is being examined.

Within the broad area of administrative review, and particularly focusing on what he describes as 'administrative impartiality', Fitzgerald makes certain recommendations concerning the appointment of officials with independent functions or statutory officers. The report makes particular mention of such statutory and parliamentary officers as the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, the Commissioner of Police and the Clerk of the Parliament. With the exception of the Commissioner of Police, these officers are appointed in the Northern Territory by resolution of this Assembly itself, following a process of selection which is conducted on a totally bipartisan basis. I do not believe there would be any complaint about our approach to the appointment of such officers. With respect to the Commissioner of Police, while I do not see it as appropriate for the parliament to take a role, I do accept that there is merit in the suggestion that the appropriate shadow minister be consulted, and that approach will be followed in future.

Fitzgerald also lays down certain criteria for the appointment of chief executive officers of government departments. These include:

- proper and impartial consideration of all eligible persons;
- extraneous considerations such as personal and political associations or donations should not be regarded;
- appropriate qualifications for appointment should be formulated and publicly notified and advertised where appropriate;
- there should be relevant consultations with opposition shadow ministers.

With the exception of consultation with opposition shadow ministers, these criteria apply under existing procedures in the Northern Territory.

Our selection processes are based solely on merit. The other matters referred to by Fitzgerald play no part in our procedures and it would be false to imply that improper considerations, particularly including political association, play any part. Against this background, there is no demonstrated need for consultation with the opposition. It is my view that the recommendations of the report in this regard fail to properly grasp the nature of the relationship between chief executive officers and ministers and the role of chief executive officers in the process of public administration. The government therefore has no plans at this time to review its appointment procedures for chief executive officers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I turn now to the matter of codes of conduct for public servants and the Fitzgerald recommendation concerning whistle blowers' legislation. The recommendations of the report in this area flow from Fitzgerald's observations that an entrenched government can develop a relationship with public officials which is against the interests of the community at large. While this government here in the Territory is indeed entrenched, that is a consequence of majority electoral support and not from a creative electoral system.

From time to time, public servants in the Territory have received advice on how to conduct dealings with ministers and other members of this Assembly. This has taken the form of circulars issued by the Public Service Commissioner. The guidelines in place are quite clear and have served Territory public servants well. There is no evidence to suggest that we should thrash around searching for some other approach. As far as the public servants themselves are concerned, the Public Service Act, the General Orders and related regulations constitute a quite adequate code of conduct. However, over recent times, there has been a suggestion in some jurisdictions that public servants need additional protection. The Fitzgerald Report recommends the preparation of legislation to protect any person making bona fide public statements about misconduct, inefficiency or other problems within public instrumentalities and providing penalties against knowingly making false public statements.

This recommendation largely follows the lead of the United States which enacted the Whistle Blowers Protection Act 1989. This act recognises that employees who disclose government illegality, waste, fraud and abuse, serve the public interest by their actions and should be entitled to protection. The government has nothing to fear from this type of legislation and, if it appears appropriate in the Northern Territory, we are prepared to follow that course. At my request, the Department of Law is currently examining the United States legislation and we will take particular notice of the steps taken in Queensland to give effect to these recommendations by Fitzgerald. If we are to proceed in this direction in Australia, I believe it would make sense to adopt a uniform approach nationally and I have asked the Attorney-General to have the matter raised in the forum of the Standing Committee of the Attorneys-General.

I would like to comment briefly on the matter of judicial appointments. The Fitzgerald Inquiry was presented with evidence to suggest that there have been instances in which inappropriate influences may have intruded into the appointment of judges in Queensland. The recommendation in this respect calls for proper and impartial consideration to be given to all eligible persons and I would particularly draw the attention of honourable members to the

recommendation that there should be appropriate consultation with opposition shadow ministers. There has never been any suggestion of any inappropriate influence in the appointment of judges in the Northern Territory. As I understand it, the Law Society and the Bar Association have been consulted in relation to judicial appointments. However, I accept the desirability of judicial appointments being totally beyond any possibility of partisan influence and, as a matter of course, the government will consult with those professional bodies and with the opposition on all future judicial appointments.

The Fitzgerald Report also makes some comment about the issue of ministerial expenses and particular instances of abuse. The public is entitled to the assurance that ministers are not abusing their positions of privilege and that expenses in such areas as travel, accommodation and hospitality are reasonable and properly accounted for. In today's climate, it would seem that only open public disclosure would provide that assurance. In November 1988, I provided a detailed response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition setting out the procedures in place to verify ministerial expenditure in such areas. I assured the honourable member then, as indeed I assure all honourable members now, that those procedures are followed firmly and diligently in all cases. They provide for proper accountability.

Ministerial expenditure is processed by the Department of the Chief Minister. That department is of course subject to the same audit procedures and requirements as all government departments. That notwithstanding, I accept that the ultimate test of accountability is the open presentation of such information. Honourable members may have observed that information on the overseas travel expenditure of ministers was made available recently in response to a request by the media. I have directed that, in future, the annual report of the Department of the Chief Minister will provide a schedule of ministerial expenses. That report is tabled in the Legislative Assembly and the information will therefore be available for all to examine.

I turn now to the area of criminal justice. The Fitzgerald Report presents an umbrella recommendation in this area for the establishment of a criminal justice commission. Commissioner Fitzgerald's view is best summarised by his comment in the report: 'The administration of criminal justice should be independent of executive controls. It is an apolitical, vital public function. However, it should be open to public review and accountable to parliament'.

Before any comment should be made on any part of Commissioner Fitzgerald's recommendations in relation to criminal justice and the police, the fullest attention must be given to chapter 7 of the Fitzgerald Report which deals with what Fitzgerald calls 'police culture' in Queensland. This chapter provides a very clear picture of Commissioner Fitzgerald's view about the Queensland police and the way the Queensland Police Force has operated over many years. It is important that I emphasise this point because it is that assessment of 'police culture' in Queensland which is clearly fundamental to many of the recommendations developed by the commissioner in relation to criminal justice and the police. Fitzgerald proposes a commission which, among other things, would review criminal law, investigate the police and investigate official misconduct, be responsible for criminal intelligence, particularly in the area of organised crime, monitor police performance and give policy directions to the Police Commissioner.

Neither I, as minister responsible for the police, nor the Police Commissioner would pretend that our police force is perfect. But, again, we

need to keep matters in perspective. The Northern Territory is generally acknowledged to have the best police force in Australia. That is not a bad starting point. The government has an ongoing determination to maintain and improve standards of the force, but we will resist with equal determination proposals which are not soundly based or which are inappropriate, no matter how well intentioned they are, where these are likely to erode what we already have. I believe that the community has a high degree of confidence in our police force. We will build on that, not begin to dismantle it. The government does not intend to restructure the police force along the lines suggested by Commissioner Fitzgerald. It seems abundantly clear to us that such a response is uncalled for in the Northern Territory context whatever the situation may be elsewhere.

Commissioner Fitzgerald's comment that the administration of criminal justice should be an apolitical function independent of executive controls is correct. However, while the administration of justice must be apolitical, law and order is an issue that is inevitably a partisan political one. It is an essential responsibility of the elected government and one of the key issues upon which electors judge governments.

I turn now to some of the specific issues raised by the Fitzgerald Report in relation to criminal justice and the police. Fitzgerald makes some references to official misconduct and proposes that this been an important area of responsibility for the Criminal Justice Commission. There is no evidence in the Northern Territory to suggest that official misconduct exists or that, if it did, the existing structure could not deal properly with it. The Public Service Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General and the police all have particular responsibilities and roles which would deal effectively with an issue of misconduct depending on its particular nature.

Fitzgerald also proposes that the Criminal Justice Commission take responsibility for investigations into police misconduct. Within the Northern Territory, the existing joint investigative procedures which are in place between the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Commissioner offer a satisfactory and objective testing of internal investigations and are acknowledged as the best Ombudsman-police arrangements within Australia. The system provides for the notification of all complaints against police to the Office of the Ombudsman and the joint oversighting of any complaint considered by the Office of the Ombudsman to warrant such an overview. This joint review committee meets weekly to assess the progress of each investigation under review, to satisfy itself that the investigation is being conducted competently and expeditiously and to give directions as to any additional inquiries that the committee considers warranted. The government considers these arrangements to be adequate and we are not considering any changes.

The government takes a similar view of the Fitzgerald recommendations relating to criminal intelligence. Fitzgerald recommends that the Criminal Justice Commission, not the police, oversee criminal intelligence matters and manage criminal intelligence with specific significance to major crime, organised crime and official misconduct. This is an issue which is commonly focused on by the media and, while it may be emotive and, in some cases, sensational, the practical reality is that it is a function which most properly rests with operational police. The government is not convinced that the course recommended by Fitzgerald is desirable. I believe that effective cooperation between the police force in the Northern Territory and criminal intelligence staff in other police organisations is essential. I am concerned that the degree of cooperation between such bodies as the National Crime Authority and the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and criminal

intelligence staff in police organisations is less than adequate. The direction recommended by Fitzgerald would seem likely to exacerbate this problem.

The report recommends that the Criminal Justice Commission undertake a general review of regulatory laws aimed at the regulation or licensing of essential legal activities to identify activities that could be legalised or decriminalised, to introduce pecuniary penalties for minor breaches of the law which are not essentially criminal, to establish whether such legislation should cease to be the responsibility of the police and to establish whether responsible departments or agencies could have their own enforcement staff. This review would include laws relating to voluntary sexual or sex-related behaviour, SP bookmaking, illegal gambling etc. I believe that there is merit in this view and a possible approach is being considered by the Attorney-General. Most people would accept that, in the allocation of police resources, police should not be weighed down with minor breaches of the law or breaches of regulations where civil remedy is more appropriate.

Fitzgerald also proposes that there be a comprehensive review of police powers under the auspices of the Criminal Justice Commission. In the Northern Territory, a Police Powers Committee has been in existence for some time. It is comprised of an independent chairman, 2 representatives of the Law Society, a representative of the Bar Association, the Police Commissioner, the Secretary for Law and a Senior Crown Prosecutor. This committee meets on an ongoing basis as necessary to review a wide range of issues relating to police powers. The government is of the view that the committee structure is appropriate and, while there are questions as to the resourcing of this committee, we do not propose to proceed along the lines recommended by Commissioner Fitzgerald. However, to assist deliberations of the committee, I will be proposing, subject to discussions with the Law Society and the Bar Association, that the Solicitor General take over the chairmanship of the committee. This will allow for more frequent meetings. Further, the Attorney-General is to take steps to ensure that the committee has ongoing secretariat services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I turn to a number of other police related matters, I think it would be appropriate to make some mention of prostitution. Although there are no specific recommendations in the report relating to prostitution, the general question is discussed at some length in various sections of the report. As honourable members will know, there is a fundamental difference between the Northern Territory and Queensland with respect to prostitution. Prostitution in Queensland is illegal, and the thrust of Fitzgerald's comments on prostitution focuses on that issue. The Attorney-General will be making a detailed statement on prostitution in the Northern Territory during the course of these sittings. Therefore, I do not propose to make further comment on this aspect at this time.

I am tempted to say no more about police matters flowing from the Fitzgerald Report, given the irrelevance to the Northern Territory of much of what Fitzgerald had to say. I appreciate, however, that such an approach may be misconstrued as being flippant and it is not my wish to allow any such misconstruction. Therefore, I will comment on a number of other issues even though it is clear that a large number of the Fitzgerald recommendations are either inappropriate for the Northern Territory or in fact lag behind measures which have already been taken in the Northern Territory Police Force.

Fitzgerald comments on the need to abolish hierarchical specialist units within the police force and to replace this structure with a regionalised one.

The Northern Territory Police Force has always operated under a geographically-based regional system. The specialised units, such as the task force and training units, are very small. These units are clearly essential and recognised as such by Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald also recommended that the discretion of individual police officers be reviewed and appropriately circumscribed. The Northern Territory police currently have the discretion to warn offenders rather than proceed against them, although no formal recording of warnings for minor offences is required. The government's view is that the availability of such discretion to the police is appropriate and is regarded as appropriate by the community. The procedures allow for juvenile first offenders to be formally cautioned rather than charged, subject to the requirements that such cautions be delivered in the presence of their parents or guardians, that the child cautioned be under 14 years of age, that proper records be kept and that the caution be followed by supervision by a police officer. I consider the suitability of that arrangement to be self-evident.

Other decisions not to proceed are made only after consideration by the prosecutions section and/or an officer at the level of Assistant Commissioner or above. A policy has been determined setting out the criteria which apply in such circumstances. Naturally, decisions in relation to the more serious offences are taken by Crown Law officers. In other words, the essence of the Fitzgerald recommendations are already in place in the Northern Territory Police Force.

Fitzgerald also advocates a move towards a community-based policing strategy. Honourable members will be aware that this approach already applies within the Territory. Similarly, the recommendations by Fitzgerald concerning the civilianisation of the police force reflect matters which have been under consideration in the Northern Territory for some time and are being discussed as part of award restructuring processes. The report has a number of recommendations relating to the selection and training of recruits and in-service skills development. Recruitment and training issues are given very high priority in the Northern Territory. The most up-to-date techniques are used, including the wide use of audio and video recording. Recruitment and selection processes include professionally designed aptitude testing, including psychological testing. A great deal of attention is naturally given to the screening of recruits.

The recruitment and in-service training procedure has recently been reviewed and has been remodelled to provide for wider, more educationally based induction and in-service programs. Encouragement is given to members of the police seeking relevant tertiary qualifications or requiring particular supervisory and management development. Mr Speaker, this aspect is, I believe, particularly well-handled in the Territory.

Turning now to the matter of the promotion system within the police force, Fitzgerald proposes a number of recommendations centering on promotion based on merit and a more open and equitable system. Northern Territory police have operated under a merit promotion system for some years. The approach used in the Territory is very largely in line with the Fitzgerald recommendation and I see no requirement for significant change in this area.

Fitzgerald also recommends that the process of determining transfers of police be formalised and that there be no right of appeal against transfer. The Northern Territory Police Force is currently formalising a transfer policy. However, there is no right of appeal against transfer within the

Northern Territory and again, in this respect, the approach recommended by Fitzgerald is already in place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Fitzgerald Report is the culmination of more than 2 years of intense effort. The report is very detailed and the list of recommendations long. It simply is not possible to deal with each and every one of those recommendations in a statement such as this. But, by way of conclusion, a number of fundamental points need to be made.

Here in the Territory we do not have the catalyst which Fitzgerald identified as permitting and protecting improper conduct in public administration. That catalyst is an electoral system which enables the government to retain office when it has lost the support of the majority of electors. Nor do we have a huge, inappropriately structured police force. The police force in Queensland has some 5300 members; ours has 701. That makes it so much easier, of course, to know what is going on. We do not have entrenched organised crime hidden within a large population. Queensland's population is 2.8 million; ours is 156 000. The social framework is therefore totally different.

We do not have a Cabinet which deliberates on appointments to the public service below the level of deputy chief executive officer. Nor does it take decisions in areas which are properly the responsibility of other officials or agencies. We do not have allegations of political bias in the appointment of judges. We do not have political interference in police appointments, promotions or administration. We have securely in place an effective and respected system of investigating complaints against police. Police promotion is based on merit, as recommended by Fitzgerald, and there is no right of appeal against police transfers, again as recommended by Fitzgerald.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Fitzgerald Report has identified a number of issues, particularly in the area of general public administration, which are clearly sensible and appropriate. These will be implemented as a matter of course. There are other recommendations which warrant further consideration and this will proceed. But I reiterate that the debate on the findings of the Fitzgerald Report should not be uncritical and unquestioning. Not everything recommended by Fitzgerald is appropriate for the Northern Territory. We need to remember that the Fitzgerald Inquiry sprang from a particular electoral, political and administrative structure which, in almost every important respect, differs from that in the Territory. I urge all honourable members to examine the Fitzgerald Report carefully and critically, and I look to this House to set a lead in responsible debate on the important issues raised.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seem to have read the Fitzgerald Report more thoroughly than has the Chief Minister because he has omitted reference to significant sections of it.

In part of his report, Fitzgerald says: 'Whatever standards are practised or accepted by politicians will strongly influence the standards of public officials. A government which is self-serving and cynical will have a bureaucracy which wholly or partially reflects the same attitude'. What a day for the Country Liberal Party Perron government to bring down a statement on the Fitzgerald Inquiry! What a day, Mr Speaker, what a day! Today, we have had an example of a standard that is practised and accepted by the Chief Minister and endorsed by his colleagues, a standard which should have resulted in the Chief Minister's resignation but which instead has been accepted and

endorsed by his colleagues. Obviously, that is the standard this government expects from its public service.

That is why we have a problem in the Northern Territory. That problem is not with the public servants and it is certainly not with the police force; it is with the politicians. It is with the governing party, which has failed abysmally to set in place appropriate standards for the people and the public service of the Northern Territory to follow.

Mr Coulter: You are going to be so embarrassed.

Mr SMITH: That is an area upon which the Chief Minister is silent while the Fitzgerald Report is so vocal. That is the basic problem with the Chief Minister's statement. The focus of the Chief Minister's statement was to address problems that do not exist in the Northern Territory. It dwelt upon the police force and the question of electoral reform. I am the first to accept that we have a fair electoral system, as the voters of Wanguri proved at the weekend, and we certainly have an outstanding police force, the best in Australia. Those were the subjects which the Chief Minister dwelt upon in his speech.

Mr Speaker, the other pleasing aspect of the statement is that it finally recognises that things which the Labor Party has been pushing for a long time, such as freedom of information and administrative appeals, are worthy of consideration. It is a pity that it has taken such a long time and a report from outside the Northern Territory for the government to finally recognise the importance of these matters. Let us hope that the promised investigation into freedom of information and whistle blowers' legislation leads to them becoming an important part of the political and administrative process in the Northern Territory.

One of the Fitzgerald Inquiry's major findings is that it is only through open government and government which is accessible to the people that the inherent tendency for corruption to build up over the years can be avoided, particularly when a particular party is in power for a long period of time. Corruption begins when people bend the rules, and get away with it and, after a few years of doing so, begin to break the rules. Without any doubt, that happened in Queensland. The bending of the rules which took place in the first few years rapidly became the breaking of the rules. That was the problem in Queensland.

Mr Speaker, the problem in the Northern Territory, as I have said, is the failure of the Country Liberal Party to establish a standard of behaviour that people in the Northern Territory can respect and the public service can follow. Why else would there be a belief, common throughout the public service, that the service is full of cronyism and that people who associate with the Country Liberal Party have good job prospects? People actually go out and join the Country Liberal Party - or they did so until last weekend - in order to have a future in the public service.

Mr McCarthy: Show us the evidence.

Mr SMITH: Those things are well-known ...

Mr McCarthy: Show us the evidence!

Mr Ede: Everybody knows.

Mr McCarthy: Our members tell us it is not much good joining you mob because they cannot get anywhere if they are on your side.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, a common theme in the Northern Territory Public Service is the belief that you can get on only by being onside. Fitzgerald makes specific reference to this and clearly points out the dangers of a politicised bureaucracy. He says: 'When a government creates a bureaucracy peopled by its own supporters or by staff who are intimidated into providing politically palatable advice, the government is deprived of the opportunity to consider the full range of relevant factors in making decisions. As a result, wrong decisions are made'.

Mr Speaker, that is the danger that exists when you do not follow the proper procedures and when you attempt to politicise the public service. Let me give an example: the positions of chief executive officers. In his statement, the Chief Minister set out the criteria that Fitzgerald laid down for the selection of chief executive officers. I will repeat them:

- proper and impartial consideration of all eligible persons;
- extraneous considerations such as personal and political associations or donations should not be regarded;
- appropriate qualifications for appointment should be formulated and publicly notified and advertised where appropriate;
- there should be relevant consultations with opposition shadow ministers.

I am prepared to forget the last because I agree with the Chief Minister that there is no need for the government to consult shadow ministers on the selection of chief executive officers. However, this government certainly falls far short on the other 3 criteria.

The vast majority of chief executive positions are never advertised so how on earth can there be proper and impartial consideration of all eligible persons? Fitzgerald says: 'appropriate qualifications for appointment should be formulated and publicly notified and advertised where appropriate'. That is very rarely done. I acknowledge what I think was an exception in the Department of Labour and Administrative Services recently. As a general rule, however, it does not happen. Of course, much of the blame for this situation must lie with the member for Barkly who, in his period as Chief Minister, substantially altered and politicised the public service and diminished the power of the Public Service Commissioner. That was unforgivable. Equally unforgivable is the fact that this government, post-Tuxworth, has done nothing to redress the balance. It has done nothing to properly separate the political arm of government from the public service to enable the public service to operate in an apolitical way, to offer apolitical advice and to put forward a range of options so that the best decisions can be made. Its capacity to do that was reduced by the Tuxworth government and that situation has not been corrected.

Let me turn now to a theme which emerged constantly in telephone polling during the Wanguri by-election campaign: cronyism. Telephone polls indicated a very clear suspicion in the community that this government is involved in cronyism.

Mr Finch: Give us an example.

Mr SMITH: Let me give you 2 examples, since you ask. The August NT Government Gazette gave notice of a \$200 000 contract for a public relations exercise in relation to BTEC being awarded to Neilson McCarthy Hare. That contract was not advertised or put out to tender and we all know of the connections between Mr John Hare and the CLP.

Mr Reed: It was. I beg your pardon.

Mr SMITH: Mr Kim McDonald was awarded a \$500 000 contract for 26 3-minute films on the Northern Territory. It was not put out to tender.

Mr Finch: Who?

Mr SMITH: Mr Kim McDonald. Mr Kevin Norton is running a TAB agency in Nightcliff. There are 3 examples.

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Here are a couple of political examples. Mr Jim Robertson retired from this parliament on the ground of ill-health. He later popped up as ...

Mr Finch: What about Neville Wran? Tell me about Neville Wran and the CSIRO?

Mr SMITH: I do not remember Neville Wran retiring from parliament on the ground of ill-health.

Mr Bell: Jim Robertson was not a QC.

Mr Palmer: QCs do not retire from parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: In another 15 minutes, you are going to buy Marshall Perron a swimming pool.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, those are examples of cronyism in the Northern Territory and the problems which accompany it.

That brings us to Doctor's Gully. We are all very well aware of this land deal and of course, more recently, the transfer of property prior to a government decision to increase stamp duty.

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, may I have some protection?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works should not continue to interject whilst attempting to hide behind a sheet of paper.

Mr SMITH: As I said at the beginning of my speech, the real problem with what has occurred in relation to Doctor's Gully is that it implies that politicians accept, and act according to, standards which are not sufficiently

high for the public service. That has to be seen in the context of Fitzgerald's central tenet, which is that the existing procedures put in place to ensure good government in Queensland, and more generally throughout Australia, are not sufficient. In Fitzgerald's view, it is time to ensure that higher standards are put in place.

Now I accept that, in parts of his speech, the Chief Minister acknowledged that higher standards are necessary. However, he made no mention of that key area, the standards expected of politicians. He made no mention, for example, of the very firm recommendation of the Fitzgerald Inquiry that there should be a register of political donations and that donations to political parties should be required to be registered. Fitzgerald demonstrated that political donations are a matter of the highest concern. Of course, here in the Northern Territory we have that magic word Carpentaria.

Mr Finch: Not to mention that other thing. What is it called? The Labor Party charities trust?

Mr McCarthy: Horses for courses.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: We have the infamous Carpentaria Trust. The goings-on in relation to Carpentaria over the years demonstrate precisely the problem which exists when political donations are not disclosed. People suspect that organisations and individuals attempt to buy influence by donating to political parties. An essential tenet of any democratic system should be that favour or position cannot be purchased. There should be a process in place which clearly demonstrates that favour or position cannot be purchased by means of donations to political parties. That lesson has been learnt by other governments throughout the western world, and I think the United States of America was well to the forefront in legislating accordingly. I predict that the Northern Territory will also learn that lesson and it will simply be a matter of time before that happens. The Chief Minister failed to make any mention in his statement of this area addressed by Fitzgerald. I wonder why. When he sums up, he might tell us.

Of course, the Fitzgerald Report also mentioned pecuniary interest legislation. I acknowledge that we have legislation of this nature but I suspect that it will have to be upgraded.

To summarise, Fitzgerald has laid out a very clear case which transcends the borders of Queensland and relates to the standards of administration, probity and access adopted by governments throughout Australia. Those standards lie at the core of the Fitzgerald recommendations. The Chief Minister's statement indicates that the Northern Territory government has taken a couple of small steps in the right direction but that it is still failing to address some of the key questions. Those key questions will not go away.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to talk about a couple of matters. First, I would like to make a point of congratulating the people of Daly River on once again putting on a magnificent arts festival a couple of weeks ago and I refer, of course, to the Merrepen Arts Festival that was held at Daly River.

Last year, the Daly River people put on an arts festival for the first time. That festival came about, first and foremost, because of the efforts of Miriam Rose Baumann and also Eileen Farrelly, who is the organiser of the Magellan House facility at Daly River. Magellan House is a women's centre which was built with funds provided by the Northern Territory government and opened a few years ago by the former Minister for Health and Community Service, Don Dale.

The women's centres which are being developed in Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory are, in my view, one of the important means by which Aboriginal people will eventually develop the ability to cater for many of their own needs. They have the capacity to focus upon the unique aptitudes which each community possesses in the area of arts and crafts. This year's Merrepen Arts Festival at Daly River was certainly a magnificent success. It attracted in the order of 500 or 600 people from all over the Top End, from Katherine and beyond, from the west and the east and from Darwin. Last year's festival was certainly a wonderful occasion, but this year's festival was even better.

The quality of the artworks was excellent. They came not only from the Daly River people, but from the surrounding communities. In fact, quite a large number of people and a large collection of artworks came to the festival from as far south as Elliott. Interest in purchasing the artworks was high and many pieces were sold. Once again, I purchased a painting by a lady from the Daly River community. I have added it to my collection which, although small by some standards, is growing. I admire the art of the Daly River people very much. The efforts of the Daly River women in developing the Merrepen Arts Festival are worthy of comment and I want to record my appreciation of their efforts and the results which they are bringing.

I want also to pay brief tribute to a number of mining companies which have developed mining activities within my electorate during the last few years. The first was probably the Woodcutters Mine near Batchelor, which mines silver, lead and zinc and has been operating now for about 4 years. The advantages which it has brought to the local community are worthy of comment. More recently, the Cosmo Howley Mine has opened near Hayes Creek and a number of people have moved into the Adelaide River area. The mining company has made a notable effort to improve the facilities of the town of Adelaide River. It has developed a number of houses and provided a dish for television reception in the area.

At Pine Creek, the mining company has been involved in improving facilities, including the cricket ground and facilities in the town generally. It is involved in the provision of a swimming pool. The road to its retention dam in the hills is also available to the local people who want to go there to swim.

Much comment is made about the impact of mining on small communities and the potential problems which can be caused. However, the efforts of these mining companies are bringing real benefits not only to the new residents who arrive because of the mining activity but to residents who have been there for many years and have put up with fairly limited facilities during that time.

The advancement of education and health facilities is also of great benefit to those communities generally.

Mining activity in the Adelaide River, Hayes Creek and Pine Creek areas is developing very quickly. I understand the concerns which some people have when they have lived in a small town for a long time and see a mining company moving in and changing things. In Pine Creek, for instance, an entire hill has been removed. The mining company, through its efforts, has allayed the fears of the residents who have been there for some time and has improved their living standards quite dramatically. I give mining companies credit for such activities, and I have touched on only a couple of examples. There are many other instances of mining companies making very positive contributions to the towns that they have adopted. They are too numerous to mention at this stage but I wanted to place on record my appreciation of their efforts.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to raise an issue that I have previously canvassed in this Assembly. It concerns a police officer who attended a party in the northern suburbs earlier this year. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that I raised this matter during the last Assembly sittings. I believe that the house where this very rowdy party occurred was associated with the member for Jingili, who took great exception to my raising the matter. To some extent, that was not the important issue.

The aspect of this case which bothers me concerns Sergeant Mike Woods, the shift sergeant who attended this particularly rowdy party towards the end of the evening, following several other visits by police. I understand that, together with a couple of more junior members of the police force, the shift sergeant went to the party and gave people 20 minutes to quieten down. He went away and returned later after many complaints were received from neighbours about the live band, other electronic music and the general rowdy behaviour of party guests. I have heard tape recordings of the shouts and the jeers of party-goers. These were somewhat less than savoury and I will not sully the ears of the Hansard typists by repeating them.

Suffice it to say that, as is not unusual in such circumstances, there was something of a fracas. This led to the arrest of 4 party guests. Subsequently, the NT News carried headlines and accusations in the letters column about police brutality. The result has been the complete dropping of charges against the guests. No further consideration has been given to those charges. I was under the impression that the charges against Sergeant Mike Woods had also been dropped but I am now advised that that is not the case. In fact, I believe that the Northern Territory is about to spend some \$40 000 to bring a QC from Sydney to prosecute Sergeant Woods.

Mr Speaker, I find this particularly surprising. I understand that Sergeant Woods has been involved in 2 previous cases but has been completely exonerated in both. It seems to me that this is beginning to smack of a vendetta against Sergeant Woods. I have had the opportunity to speak to him personally and I believe that his situation merits the attention of this Assembly. I am rapidly developing the view that somebody is out to get Sergeant Woods and I do not intend to sit by and simply let this happen.

Let me contrast this situation with an incident which occurred in my electorate several years ago. A policeman in my electorate was found to have held at gunpoint a number of young men in ...

A member: Ti Tree.

Mr BELL: No, not at Ti Tree. In fact, it was a different incident altogether.

I will not go into all the details. I will simply mention the facts that are material to this particular argument. In that case, a policeman had threatened people with a gun without any provocation. No charges were laid. I know that there were some mitigating circumstances but I simply ask members to contemplate the situation if the boot had been on the other foot. I also ask members to compare that situation with the treatment which is evidently being received by Sergeant Mike Woods.

On the basis of the information available to me, it would appear that Sergeant Mike Woods dealt none too gently with people who had been cutting up rough at the party. However, it seems to me that there are hardly grounds for importing a silk from New South Wales to prosecute him, if there is any need to prosecute him at all. I asked a question about this matter at the May sittings and received no response. I want a response this time. Why were the charges against the arrested guests dropped and why is the Northern Territory taxpayer forced to pay \$40 000 to bring a QC from Sydney to prosecute a policeman who attended a rowdy party and was forced to arrest 4 people? It seems to me that there is something a little strange about this case because ...

Mr Coulter: Careful. It hasn't been your week for accusations.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, to pick up the interjection from the Leader of Government Business, nobody got up and disagreed with me during the last sittings. I would like to know why. The treatment and the vindictive effort, if I might be so bold as to call it that, being directed towards Sergeant Mike Woods is in stark contrast to the effort that was made in respect of the policeman to whom I referred earlier. Assault with a weapon ...

A member: Is that case before the courts?

Mr BELL: No, it is not. I am not sure whether the charges that were to be laid against Sergeant Woods are before the courts or not.

Mr Coulter: I think you had better be careful. They might not be before the courts but I understand that they are before the tribunal.

Mr BELL: I believed at one stage that those charges had been dropped but I understand, Mr Speaker, that they continue to be pursued in this manner. I must admit that I am a little bit bemused. I would be very interested to know at what level that particular decision was made.

Mr FINCH (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, it was about 5 years ago that I first entered this House and it was during the second sittings of my parliamentary career that I had cause to contemplate my background in Port Kembla as a young fellow, when gutter tactics were the order of the day. That was how one survived. When I first became aware of Territory politics, and that was in Everingham's day, I was quite proud as a Territorian of this House's reputation as a civilised place. The cause of my first rising to my feet in this House was one Bob Collins. It was Bob Collins then and it is Bob Collins now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during these sittings I have seen again the smugness, the arrogance and the gutter tactics that were the hallmark of the then Leader

of the Opposition's time in this House. Silver-tongued he may be and there is many a person in the Territory who believes him to be a great orator. I must give him credit; he does have a way with words. However, whilst he has a way with words and is able to deliver his message with some conviction and finesse, his oratory is nonetheless without substance. Despite all his oratorical competence, the former Leader of the Opposition has always relied on a twist or a turn of the facts to suit his own end.

No doubt the Territory will always be represented in Canberra by 1 CLP and 1 ALP Senator but, when one considers the cushy ride which Senator Collins was given in reaching the federal parliament, one would think that he would at least do the decent thing and look after the interests of the Territorians about whom he crows so loudly. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask why the former leader is now in Darwin holding the hand of the current Leader of the Opposition. He was brought back to help in the Wanguri by-election campaign because the ALP hierarchy recognised that the doom and gloom of the grim reaper, the undertaker of politics, was not working out there in the suburbs.

We have seen the skills of the Leader of the Opposition during the last 3 days. He has constantly lambasted the Chief Minister, a man of great competence, a man who has given a great deal to the Territory, an honest man who has given more than the Leader of the Opposition and all his colleagues together might even hope to aspire to do in their entire political careers. He has relied on rumour-mongering. He has twisted the facts and he has made incorrect allegations and smug comments.

If the opposition wants to use gutter tactics, I foreshadowed today, once by interjection and once in my deliberations on the Appropriation Bill, that I intend to take off the gloves with the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who stand on such high moral ground to incorrectly accuse others of indiscretions. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure those honourable members that I will drag out those things that ordinary Territorians find offensive in their behaviour, in some of their moral attitudes to their families and those around them. I shall make no apology for doing so. However, I would like them to be present at such time. I therefore foreshadow my action. I will wait until they are here because I would rather give it to them right up front than adopt their attitude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, consider their behaviour in the House. We have the arrogant smugness of the Leader of the Opposition. We have the childish, rude gestures of the member for MacDonnell, who had to resort to such tactics to try to gain the attention of the gallery and his colleagues. It is almost obscene. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has absolutely the least to crow about when it comes to moral standards. He can only resort to personal accusations and jibes across the floor in the most foul manner. I think it is time that that stopped. I think it is time that members opposite got down to some substance. It is time that they began to act in a proper manner on behalf of their constituents, regardless of their party affiliation. They owe it to all Territorians to provide this House with deliberate and substantive debate, not to resort to the foul-mouthed, rumour-mongering, gutter tactics that we have seen today and that we have seen for 5 years. High moral ground! I will give them high moral ground but I will give it to them face to face when they choose to attend the Assembly.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I could not miss this opportunity to speak in the adjournment debate today, even though I do not speak in adjournment debates very often.

I have just had the pleasure of appearing on the 7.30 Report, where I exposed the Leader of the Opposition, Senator Bob Collins and their colleagues for what has been a most monumental blunder on their part. Over the past few days, they have made a most vicious personal attack on myself and my wife, and it has been totally without substance. The attack has been based on an enormous falsehood. What we have seen in the last couple of days is gutter politics from a couple of people who have been in parliament long enough to know better. I am accused of using confidential information, gained in Cabinet budget meetings, to save myself thousands of dollars. It is one of the most serious allegations that can be made against a Cabinet minister and I take particular offence to it, having served this parliament for a long time as a minister and having been Treasurer for 8 years. I am pretty proud of the work which I have put in during those 8 years. I have enjoyed Treasury. It is an interesting portfolio and I take it very seriously.

My resignation has been demanded repeatedly and the chorus has been vitriolic. It has affected members of my family, who have been hurt by the attacks made upon us. The people who have made those attacks stand condemned because the fact is that, if I were to transact today the land which I transacted on 28 or 29 June, I would pay the same amount of duty as all those people who are transacting land today, as those who will transact land tomorrow and as those who will transact land next week. That is because the rate of duty will not change until the legislation is assented to. Tax on dutiable documents cannot be made retrospective. Those documents are all stamped and are legally enforceable. They cannot be made illegal because a higher rate of duty has not been paid. This duty is one of the taxes which actually take effect some time after the budget has been brought down.

The fact is that I have not stood up in this House and advised the rest of the world that, from a certain date, it will be paying a higher rate than I paid a month ago because - giggle, giggle - I had the drum. That is not the situation. That is, however, the basis upon which members opposite have demanded my resignation, argued that this government stinks and stated that all recommendations of the Fitzgerald Report should be implemented because corruption is rife from the Chief Minister down.

I have gained no advantage over any other citizen in the Northern Territory and, in this particular case, they all have the benefit, in a sense, of being forewarned of an impending tax increase. The members opposite stand condemned. I believe it is a terrible thing that they have done in this parliament. I hope that what I have said tonight will, in future, temper their inclination to stand up in this House and, without proper preparation, savagely denigrate other members. They stand condemned for what they have done.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

RETURN TO WRIT
Division of Wanguri

The CLERK: Honourable members, I lay on the Table the return to the writ issued by His Honour the Administrator on 3 August 1989 for the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral division of Wanguri certifying the election of John Derek Bailey.

Mr John Derek Bailey made and subscribed the affirmations required by law.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, I give notice that, on the next sitting day, I shall move that this Assembly:

- (1) censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer for conducting a transaction as a private businessman when he knew, as Treasurer, of the government's intention to raise the duty on such a transaction;
- (2) is of the opinion that, by so doing, the Chief Minister broke a fundamental rule of ministerial responsibility in that he failed to separate public duty and private interest; and
- (3) call upon the Chief Minister to resign.

Mr COULTER (Leader of the Government Business): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 95, the government accepts this notice as a censure motion. I ask that all questions be placed on the Question Paper.

Mr Speaker, I ask that the radio and television personnel cease their recording.

Mr SPEAKER: I advise all honourable members that the radio and television personnel will be advised accordingly.

MOTION
Censure of Chief Minister

Mr SMITH (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- (1) censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer for conducting a transaction as a private businessman when he knew, as Treasurer, of the government's intention to raise the duty on such a transaction;
- (2) is of the opinion that, by so doing, the Chief Minister broke a fundamental rule of ministerial responsibility in that he failed to separate public duty and private interest; and
- (3) call upon the Chief Minister to resign.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of those who are in the public gallery, I should explain what is to happen this morning. The opposition will present facts, facts that are not in dispute, facts that even the government accepts

and facts that show the Chief Minister has broken the rules. The opposition will show that, as a private businessman, he conducted a transaction when, as Treasurer, he knew that he was about to raise the taxes or duty on exactly that kind of transaction. There is a very important rule of government which says that a minister cannot do that, and I will come back to that. Then, the government will respond, and its argument will go something like this: yes, he knew the duty was to be raised and, yes, he did make his transaction when he knew that, but he did not mean to profit by it. Then the government will say, and here it becomes a little puzzling, that the Chief Minister could have dodged the new tax 2 weeks after the budget.

Those people in the public gallery who stay to listen to the debate will be able to decide what they think of the Chief Minister's dealings, but I would not want them to think that they will decide the result because we already know the result. The censure motion will be defeated and the Chief Minister will not resign, not because he has not broken the rules, but because there are more people sitting over there than there are sitting over here. It is as simple as that. Thus, when members of the opposition state their case, it is not addressed to those sitting on the opposite side, but to the voters of the Northern Territory.

The first thing that we have to do is recognise 3 very important dates. The first is 16 June of this year, the second is 12 days later, 28 June, and the third is last Tuesday, 22 August. Mr Speaker, let me repeat those dates: 16 June, 28 June and 22 August. On 16 June, the Chief Minister was winding up the annual budget meeting of his Cabinet at Smith Point on the Cobourg Peninsula. We all know that the Cabinet goes there every year so that it can meet in privacy to decide what is to be in the annual budget, and I stress the word 'privacy'. On that date, 16 June, the Chief Minister knew that Cabinet had decided the rate of duty on the transfer of property titles would be raised. For a property worth more than \$500 000, that would mean an additional \$5000 in tax. Nobody knew about that decision except those at the Cabinet meeting.

On 28 June - that is, 2 weeks later - the Chief Minister authorised the transfer of his Doctor's Gully property valued at \$575 000. Other people were doing precisely the same thing around that time of the year but - and this is the crucial point - they did not know what the Chief Minister knew. It was not until 22 August, budget day, that the rest of us found out what the Chief Minister knew all along: that the duty was to be raised. This means that the Chief Minister and Treasurer was in possession of information between 16 June and 22 August that no one else had, and he acted on that information in his personal business.

It does not matter why he did that - whether he did it deliberately or whether he failed to associate the 2 facts or whether he simply forgot. For the purpose of this censure motion, it is sufficient that he did it. The Treasurer knew 2 things and knew them with certainty: that he was to transfer title of his property and that he would transfer it before the new duty he was to impose would come into effect. The rules of this parliament are based on the rules of the House of Representatives in Canberra. They are laid out and discussed in Pettifer's 'House of Representatives Practice'. In that practice, Pettifer notes the existence of a ministerial code of conduct. Rule No 1, right at the top of that code, is shown as follows:

- ° at meetings of the Cabinet and its committees:

- a minister disclose to his colleagues when he has an interest which does, or might reasonably be thought likely to, conflict with his public duty as a minister;
- his declaration be noted in Cabinet records; and
- the minister then either indicate that he will not take part in the discussion in question or else secure the explicit authorisation of his colleagues for taking part;

Mr Speaker, let me put that into simple English. If a minister believes that there is conflict or potential conflict between a subject under discussion and a personal matter, he has an obligation to inform his Cabinet that such a conflict exists and either to withdraw from the discussion or seek express permission from his Cabinet to continue to participate in the discussion. I will come back to that in a minute.

That is the first rule in the code of ministerial conduct, and that is not so surprising, is it? A minister should declare any personal interest before taking part in a decision which relates to that interest. It is not surprising because we demand it of every local government body and every business board. We demand it everywhere except, apparently, in the Cabinet of the Country Liberal Party government. Even in the rough and tumble of the marketplace, there is a simple rule about this: if you know, you cannot trade. To do otherwise is called insider trading. Even in Queensland there was a code of practice. The Queensland government became slack in applying that code and look what happened to it! We saw that on A Current Affair last night. Even the Queensland government had what that program referred to as an 'informal' code of practice.

Let us go back to Pettifer and the ministerial code of conduct which sets a standard for parliaments throughout Australia and is the standard which should apply here. The code does not demand proof of a conflict of interest. It simply refers to a situation in which such a conflict might 'reasonably be thought likely'. This is what applies in the case of the Chief Minister. We have proof and the facts have not been denied. He knew that he was about to transfer \$575 000-worth of property under the old duty. As the Treasurer, he recommended the new higher duty to Cabinet. He transferred the property and then he announced the new duty. The Chief Minister does not dispute those facts. He does not claim that he declared his conflict to his Cabinet colleagues. He does not claim his colleagues knew about it and gave him their explicit approval. What the Chief Minister declares in his total defence is that everyone else has 2 weeks left in which to dodge the new tax in the way that he did.

The day after the budget was brought down, we asked the Chief Minister whether, when he transferred the title to his Doctor's Gully property, he was aware that he intended shortly to raise duties on precisely that sort of transaction. In his first answer, he said that he was not aware. Some hours later, in a personal explanation, he said that he was aware. We have to remember that we are not talking about some matter of no account to the Chief Minister; we are talking about a transaction which involved the foundation of his personal fortune. In his first response, he asked us to accept that he did not know. Then, in his second response, he said that he did know after all. In fact, in his second response, he said that he had been thinking about it for months and he produced a statutory declaration from his accountant to prove it. Of the 2 replies, I will take the last one. I do not know what it is like to have \$500 000 on the move and I never will, but I think I would be

aware of the implications, the political consequences and the responsibilities of my office if I were undertaking a major private business reorganisation and I was a government minister.

Of course, at the end of those conflicting explanations on last Wednesday, the Chief Minister realised he had done 2 things: he had broken the rules and he had admitted it. Now I want to take you outside this Chamber on the morning after the Chief Minister made his admission. Two people were involved in an argument. One of them works for the Chief Minister and one works for me. In the course of that argument, the person who works for the Chief Minister said: 'Well, what do you want him to do, lose money?' What we want and expect him to do, Mr Speaker, is to act with propriety. If that involves losing money and putting the public interest ahead of his private obligations and duties, that is the price he has to pay.

By Thursday morning, the Chief Minister had no further explanations to offer. He and his deputy were refusing to answer questions in question time and we had the less than glorifying sight of the Deputy Chief Minister refusing to rise to support the Chief Minister. On Thursday night, the Chief Minister appeared on television to deliver what he described as a master stroke: 'The legislation raising the duty will not be enforced until assent is granted in 2 weeks time'. The short message is - and it was picked up quickly in the community - get in fast and you can dodge it too. That does not sound to me like a Treasurer in a responsible government. Budget taxes come down on budget day and that is why we have a budget lockup: to prevent anybody using foreknowledge to gain financial advantage. It is accepted practice that new charges apply from the day that they are announced. But not, it appears, in this particular case, despite the fact that, last year, the same Treasurer backdated charges in the Stamp Duty Act to the date of the budget.

Mr Perron: Conveyancing?

Mr SMITH: We ran this peculiar practice past a few experts in government, both in Canberra and the states. We asked them what they thought of a new duty being announced in the budget and, 3 days later, an announcement that the duty would not be enforced for 2 weeks. The replies were in these terms: 'absurd', 'unheard of' and 'outrageous'. The fault in the Chief Minister's logic is that it would advantage the lucky few against the unfortunate majority who are not fully geared to get in quick. That, too, is against all the rules and that is why taxes announced in the budget apply from budget day.

There is nothing unheard of in our call for the Chief Minister to resign in these circumstances. There is no requirement that a major pecuniary interest be involved. Mick Young, a minister in the federal Labor government, resigned after he forgot to pay customs duty on a soft toy, a Paddington Bear. Michael MacKellar, the Liberal frontbencher, resigned in similar circumstances, this time relating to a colour television set. The significant difference between those cases and this case is that this involves a sum of \$5750. The Chief Minister has explained publicly that, to a man in his position, \$5000 is neither here nor there. To most people, however, it is here and there.

Pettifer cites a number of possible causes for the resignation of a minister and among them is 'as a result of allegations concerning the propriety of possible conflicts between a minister's public duty and personal and family financial interests'. Pettifer cites examples. Another Treasurer in another conservative government, when accused of a conflict of interest

involving family companies, resigned. The documents of the day show that the resignation was accepted in order to maintain the integrity of the government. That Treasurer was Philip Lynch and the man who accepted his resignation was Malcolm Fraser.

Mr Speaker, this is a short speech. We have the facts. We know the rules. We know the precedents. We have a case with one conclusion. He has his duty and let me say, Mr Speaker, unfortunately he will not do it.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has left me somewhat unprepared inasmuch as I had thought, as has the public been led to believe, that he had some massive expose to present here today, in using the very important opportunity of moving a censure motion. He has the opportunity to stand up and set aside the entire business of the House, irrespective of what else is on the Notice Paper and irrespective of what important matters face the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition has the opportunity to cast all that aside in order to move a censure motion against a minister or the Chief Minister and, of course, those things are done rarely and they are usually done with great seriousness. But, what we have this morning is an absolute fiasco. The Leader of the Opposition has had 30 minutes to outline a case against me in support of his motion. I think he has used about 15 minutes of that time to say next to nothing. However, Mr Speaker, let me address some of the matters that the honourable member has raised.

He started by saying that there were some very important dates in this debate, and indeed there are some very important dates. But, of course, he took the opportunity to mention the few that suited his argument and not a few others that might detract from or perhaps even destroy his argument. The dates he used were: 16 June, one of the 2 days that Cabinet deliberated at Cobourg on matters, including tax options, for the coming budget; 28 June, which was the date a transaction was conducted through the Titles Office transferring a property from my wife and myself to a company owned by my wife and myself; and 22 August, being the day that the Territory budget was brought down.

He conveniently omitted a couple of dates. The first is 4 January which, as advised in this House in a statutory declaration I tabled last week, was the date that my accountant advised my wife and I that we should proceed to have the property transferred to the company. That is an important date. There is another very important date, although I will mention a couple of others as well. The other very important date, which he conveniently omitted completely, is the commencement date of the stamp duty legislation which I gave notice of this morning in this Assembly. The commencement date is likely to be some days after the legislation passes through this House. It is expected that it will be passed on Thursday and then there are some administrative procedures to be conducted in order that that legislation may be presented to the Administrator for assent. I understand that that will probably occur late next week. The reason the Leader of the Opposition did not mention the commencement date, of course, was because it totally and absolutely destroys his entire argument.

The other date that I will mention is the date that the real estate valuers were asked to come and value the property because, of course, the Tax Commissioner requires some evidence that the value of the property has been fairly assessed in order that he may estimate the stamp duty liability. On 9 May, well over a month before Cabinet met at Cobourg, the real estate agents visited the property to make their assessment. On 15 May, they

provided a written assessment of their valuation and, again, that was 1 month prior to the Cobourg budget meeting. In fact, late in May, solicitors were advised that their services would be required to effect the transfer of the property and, on 12 June, they were given formal instructions to proceed with the transfer to take effect from 1 July - that being a logical and important date as it is the beginning of the financial year. If one is rearranging one's financial affairs, it is sensible and normal practice to do things from that date.

The Leader of the Opposition alleges, as he did last week, that knowing in advance that the stamp duty was to increase, we rushed this process in order to avoid a higher level of duty.

Mr Smith: I did not say that.

Mr PERRON: That is exactly what you said ...

Mr Smith: You did it when no one else knew.

Mr PERRON: ... that I moved to do it prior to a higher duty coming into effect. That is the exact substance of the allegation.

Mr Smith: You did it when no one else knew. That is the allegation.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, there are several points to this but it has been said that a man on the Chief Minister's income does not really need to prostitute his position for \$5700, and indeed that is very true. I can assure honourable members of this House and the public that I have much greater regard for my position and my record of 15 years in this Assembly than even to let it cross my mind for a second that \$5700 could be some sort of determining factor in whether or not I conducted such a transaction.

The facts are that, even today, exactly 7 days after the budget announced that stamp duties on conveyancing would increase, those charges are not in place. They will not be in place for another week. Transactions are being conducted, as occurs all through the year, which will be assessed at the past rate, and I refer honourable members to the period in 1981 when this conveyancing duty was increased and the same practice was adopted. In addition, the Leader of the Opposition alleges that it is normal for taxes to come into effect on budget day, the day on which they are publicly announced. I can inform him, because he clearly has not picked up this fact over his many years in parliament, that that is not the case universally. In fact, in this very budget it was announced that the financial institutions duty will come into effect on 1 January.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, makes the statement ...

Mr Smith: You have just hung yourself in your own noose.

Mr PERRON: The Leader of the Opposition makes the statement that it is normal practice for tax increases to come into effect on the day of announcement, and I am telling him that it is not normal practice. In 1981, the stamp duty was increased, but it did not take effect on the day of the announcement.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to an amendment in 1988 to the Stamp Duty Act which, in fact, did commence on the day of the announcement, but it did not relate to conveyancing duty. He failed to mention that. It was duty on share transfers. But, of course, it would not have suited his argument at all to have that matter come to light and therefore he very conveniently set it aside. That amendment to the Stamp Duty Act also had some very important anti-tax-avoidance provisions and it was important, at that time, that they came into effect on the day that it was announced, budget day.

On this occasion, there are a number of taxes that are effective from budget day because there is good reason for them to be so. Tobacco tax and petrol tax are 2 examples that came into effect on budget day. If the Leader of the Opposition would like to check federal records, I think he will find that there may well have been occasions when the federal Treasurer has announced a date when tax increases will apply at some future time.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition really has left me somewhat flabbergasted about responding in this debate because his argument has no substance whatsoever. We were looking for something more than he trotted out last week before hurrying into hiding on Thursday night when he learned that he had made a massive faux pas with this entire exercise. He mentioned that, in the past, some federal ministers have resigned because they had done the wrong thing and had been caught out, and so they should have resigned. Ministers here will resign if they are caught out in similar fashion. It was not the fact that it was a television set that caused a federal minister to resign; it could as easily have been a \$10 bamboo-spring watch. He resigned, not for the product, but as a result of what he did. He signed a customs or quarantine declaration which was incorrect and, of course, that is a very serious offence in this country. That was why he resigned. To give that as an example of why I, as Chief Minister, should resign because I undertook a transaction a month ago, 2 or 3 months before stamp duty was to be increased - a duty which has not increased even today - is clearly absurd. I am very disappointed. Over the years, I had thought that the Leader of the Opposition had been improving in his performance in this Assembly, but all he is doing today is wasting the Assembly's time.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadow that one of my colleagues will move an amendment to the opposition's motion during the course of this debate which, sadly, will continue. The government will not move the gag because, theoretically, debate on a censure motion is important. I do not think, however, that it will take the whole day, given the lack of substance in the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: There is one very simple point and you cannot see it.

Mr PERRON: This is pathetic. You are pathetic.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that the arrogance of the Chief Minister is such that he will not accept or possibly cannot even see that he is wrong. He has done wrong, but his arrogance is such that he has decided that he will not see that or accept it. He has demonstrated an inability to distinguish between the public purpose and private gain and that is the real crux of the censure motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chief Minister based his defence on the specious grounds of the commencement date. That, in itself, is irrelevant. The fact is that he undertook certain actions on the basis of knowledge available to him but not available to the average member of the community. Mr Speaker, as you and

honourable members know, the marketplace relies for its operation on the equality of knowledge among people who operate there. The fact is that laws have been enacted and are being strengthened throughout the world to prevent the distortion of the marketplace by people acting on the basis of knowledge which is not available to others. As honourable members all know, that is called insider trading.

Here we have a specific case of insider trading which goes far beyond the normal situation in which somebody picks up some information in the course of his business dealings and then utilises that knowledge for personal gain. In this case, the knowledge was not picked up over a bar or in the course of some social contact. The Chief Minister has used knowledge which he gained in the course of his duties as Treasurer. He actually put the proposal for an increased duty to his colleagues and argued its benefits when he knew that he was involved in a process which would ensure that he did not have to pay the additional amount payable under the increased duty.

Mr Perron: I could do it next week and pay the same!

Mr EDE: Right.

I turn now to the commencement date. The Chief Minister has said that the increased duty will not take effect from the date of the commencement of the budget, which would be the normally accepted practice. He proposes, after having made no mention of this fact in his budget speech, to bring the increased duty into force at some future date. If any honourable member or any member of the public has looked at precedent and normal practice throughout Australia, he will see immediately that that is outrageous. Let us have a look at some precedents in this House. In bringing down the budget in August 1981, the then Treasurer, now the Chief Minister and Treasurer, stated in relation to the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill:

They are an integral part of the budget package and are required to achieve a balanced position. Stamp duty and tobacco licensing legislation must come into force on 1 September to prevent speculation and produce the required revenue.

This is the one that the Chief Minister made big play about its not coming into force on the day of the budget, and it did not, Mr Speaker. It came into force 6 days later. That hardly left time for somebody to go through the process of organising what it took the Chief Minister 6 months to do in order to derive any benefit from it. Obviously, people in that circumstance were not able to take any advantage of that knowledge because there was insufficient time for them to do so. The Chief Minister was the one who had the time, not the people of the Northern Territory when it happened in 1981.

We talk about these matters not being backdated. In 1984, the budget was brought down on 28 August. The member for Fannie Bay, the present Chief Minister, who was then Treasurer, stated: 'The change in rate is to apply from today'. Obviously, it is good practice. It is the proper way of doing this sort of business. Unless it is specifically mentioned in the budget that the rate will apply from some future date, it is assumed that it will apply in such a way and from such a date as will prevent some people from taking advantage of that particular information. That is the fundamental point. Only the Chief Minister had the knowledge and the time to be able to take advantage of this situation. He now states that he is going to do it somehow differently.

Let us have a further look at the mini-budget that was brought down in June 1985 by the member for Barkly when he was Chief Minister. I quote from what he said when talking again about stamp duty: 'As with other stamp duty amendments, the new rate will apply from the date of this announcement'. That is the normal practice and, if the Chief Minister wishes now to squirm out of this by saying that, with his power, he will set this rate in place at another date, at some time in the future, he is only compounding the error that he has made.

Let us have a look again at what happened last year. The budget was brought down on 17 August. The second reading of the Stamp Duty Bill occurred on 23 August. The third reading and passage through this House occurred on 25 August. It was assented to on 14 September. But, the commencement clause stated: 'This act shall be deemed to have come into operation on 17 August 1988'.

Mr Perron: It wasn't conveyancing duty.

Mr EDE: Journalists know that the very reason why they have to go through the process of a budget lockup is to ensure that no one has the ability to take advantage of the situation.

Mr Perron: It was share transfers.

Mr EDE: It is irrelevant whether it was stamp duty or whether it was an ability of certain people to be able to organise their affairs in such a way as to avoid the duties that were to be changed. Only the Chief Minister was in the position to do that. The point is that, if an increase is not to come into force on the date of the budget, it is stated in the budget that it will come into force on a future date which is nominated. That is the principle. In this instance, we are told now that it will not take effect immediately. Clearly, this is a device the Chief Minister is using in an attempt to disguise his error and to obfuscate the fact that he was in possession of knowledge that other people did not have that enabled him to avoid the impact of this increase.

Let us look at another case. I raise this because I wish to contrast the Chief Minister's actions in this instance with his actions in another circumstance. That particular circumstance was one where members on this side of the House stated that he was in the wrong, and we still believe that he was in the wrong. The contrast lies in the fact that on this previous occasion he attempted at least to put a gloss on his activity. He attempted to devise a situation in which the proprieties did not appear to have been flouted as blatantly as they do in this instance. Honourable members know the history of this particular block of land. They are aware that it belonged to Carl Atkinson who tried unsuccessfully to get approval for road access and the upgrading of the parking area so that he could turn it into a business operation.

Mr Dondas: Nonsense. You were not even around in 1952.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I did not have to be in this place to have a nose. People outside can smell.

The Department of Fisheries was negotiating with Mr Atkinson, but dropped out after self-government. Then, the present Chief Minister purchased the property in about September 1979. It was created a fish reserve in January 1980 and restrictions were placed on that reserve. The initial

regulation prohibited any grant of title to land in the reserve. That would have protected some of the property which the Chief Minister acquired. By late February 1980, only 4 or 5 months after the Chief Minister purchased the property, the papers were reporting that the approach road had been upgraded, culverts had been built and the driveway had been concreted, not by the Chief Minister but by the department, on his land. Honourable members heard allegations made last night on television of similar occurrences in another state. But, by July 1980, the restrictions that would have prevented the Chief Minister from rezoning the new lease were lifted.

In June 1980, we had an election. Immediately after that election, the present Chief Minister, who was then the Minister for Lands and had direct responsibility in this area, stepped aside. I could contrast that action with the fact that, in this present instance, he did not stand aside. He did not even advise his colleagues of his conflict of interest or have it noted, nor did he pay the extra amount of tax so that his action would have at least an appearance of propriety.

Of course, on that former occasion, as soon as he stood aside from the lands portfolio and moved to another portfolio, he applied for rezoning of the adjacent foreshore. At the November 1980 rezoning hearing, 34 objections were raised. Just before the hearing, it was announced that no objections to the alienation of foreshore land would be heard, immediately removing the ability of those people to negotiate. In February 1981, the rezoning was approved by the Executive Council, and we could contrast that with an application for rezoning by Indo-Pacific Marine when the government was unresponsive to a request for suitable land. Finally, there was an application to rezone the old Fannie Bay Hotel site, which was approved by the Town Planning Authority but was never endorsed by the Executive Council.

In July 1981, the lease was gazetted. It was a gazettal of the grant of a lease for \$73 000 for 1840 m² of prime foreshore land. The initial valuation was \$98 000, I am told, but it was reduced by \$25 000 to cover the cost of filling in a hole. The hole might not necessarily have been a liability. It could have been an asset because the proposed development was to include an underwater observatory. In August 1981, the lease was granted. The annual rental of \$3650 was not even made payable until 1 August 1984 - 3 years later. Annual improvements worth \$150 000 were to be completed by 1 September 1984 or at a further time as approved by the minister. Then, it was to be available for freehold.

We come back to March 1982. The now Chief Minister was back as Minister for Lands and he introduced a new foreshore plan which allowed for 2 zones: one, covering 70% of Darwin's foreshore, froze development, and the other, covering the remaining 30% that included his own development, allowed development subject to existing restrictions - those that applied to his own area.

Mr Perron: It did not affect me. I had already developed.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, by that interjection the Chief Minister has shown that he just does not understand or accept what is wrong.

Mr Perron: No, I cannot. Tell me.

Mr EDE: I am trying to spell out for the Chief Minister, in words of 1 and 2 syllables, that it is not acceptable for a minister to utilise the information and power he obtains through the position he has in this parliament for his own private gain.

Mr Perron: Where have I done that?

Mr Coulter: Do you want to step outside and say that, and we will have an inquiry about it.

Mr Dondas: What are you talking about? Let us know so we can respond.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as I stated, the Chief Minister has become increasingly arrogant in the way that he treats the proprieties of his office. At least in that initial instance, he started by utilising a move from the lands portfolio to another portfolio so that Jim Robertson could come in and replace him, and then he went through the process. We were highly critical of that at that time, but at least at that stage he put a gloss on it.

The fact of the matter is that, with his increasing arrogance and his belief that he is above the standards demanded of ministers in parliaments right around Australia, he has now reached a point where he did not believe that he had even to notify his colleagues that there was a conflict of interest. He did not believe even that it would be responsible, on his part, to continue the normal process of making that legislation applicable as from the date of the budget, and now presents this specious argument that somebody else would have the ability, within a 2-week period, to go through a process which it took the Chief Minister 6 months to effect, and so could escape the consequences of the increase in this tax.

Mr Speaker, I return to where I began. The Chief Minister has demonstrated that he has an inability to distinguish between public purpose and private gain. Because of that inability, he must stand down. If he will not, there is an obligation on the honourable members opposite to remove him from the position of Chief Minister.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, I wish to move an amendment to the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I move that this Assembly omit all words after 'that', and insert in their stead:

this Assembly:

(1) deplore the action of the Leader of the Opposition in

(a) wasting the time of this Assembly by moving a censure motion relating to affairs which were fully and satisfactorily explained to the Assembly on Thursday 24 August 1989; and

(b) mounting a campaign of smear and innuendo against the Chief Minister without basis in fact; and

(2) give its full support to the Chief Minister and Treasurer in his efforts to maintain the Northern Territory economy on a stable basis.

Mr Speaker, let me pick up a couple of points that were made by the member for Stuart in speaking to the motion. Let us talk about Indo-Pacific Marine. There are so many places one could speak about and I will attempt to deal with it all in the 20 minutes that I have. Indo-Pacific Marine was offered a choice block of land on East Point Road adjacent to the old Fannie Bay Hotel site, and everybody knows where that is, at the Valuer-General's price, but it did not have the money to develop it. It was offered a choice block of land to

develop a tourist resort and resource in 1979 or 1980. I cannot remember the dates. After the cyclone in 1974, the owners rebuilt their facility in Fannie Bay, but it was far too small for what they were trying to do. They tried to borrow some money from the Darwin Reconstruction Commission to keep their heads above water and, because the Northern Territory CLP government of the day recognised the importance of that development, it offered a decent block of land on East Point Road for the project but they did not have the financial resources to develop it.

There was talk about road upgrading to Doctor's Gully. Before I comment on that, I want to say that, since 1985, the opposition has raised the subject of Doctor's Gully in 15 debates in this parliament ...

Mr Bell: That is because it is on the nose!

Mr DONDAS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would ask that you direct the honourable member to withdraw that remark. All we hear from members of the opposition is innuendo. I am trying to make a point and they seem not to realise that there is a genuine debate going on here.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I advise the member for Casuarina that there is no requirement for the member for MacDonnell to withdraw.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, on the 7.30 Report last Thursday night, the Chief Minister quite ably debated this particular point with Senator Bob Collins. I tried to fathom why it was Senator Bob Collins who was on the 7.30 Report that night. Why was the Leader of the Opposition not there raising this point? Why did the Leader of the Opposition stay at home and Senator Bob Collins appear on the 7.30 Report? Nobody has been able to explain that to me but perhaps we will find out during the course of this debate.

Road upgrading at Doctor's Gully took place many years ago, after the member for Fannie Bay purchased the property from Carl Atkinson in 1979. If my memory serves me correctly, Carl Atkinson had had the property on the market for over a year. That was not something that we all did not know about. In fact, at the time, I think I congratulated the member for Fannie Bay and said that I thought that he would be able to do something sensible with the property because Carl Atkinson had grown old and, over the years, had really allowed the place to fall into a state of neglect. I can remember, as a young man in 1954 and 1955, learning to water ski from that area and there was always an access, but probably only about 10 or 15 people a week used it to go down to Doctor's Gully.

In 1979 and 1980, as tourism started to develop in this region, 2 or 3 bus-loads a week were going to the foreshore at Doctor's Gully and it became a very dangerous portion of road. In fact, even the Navy requested the Northern Territory government to upgrade the road so that it could get its tankers in and out to maintain fuel supplies. At the time of Cyclone Tracy in 1974, the reserves in the fuel tanks at Doctor's Gully had been very low and the Navy was concerned about the possibility of that occurring again. That is why the Navy asked the Northern Territory government to do something about upgrading that portion of road, and I hope that satisfies the member for Stuart.

In calling for the resignation of the Chief Minister, the member for Stuart referred to Michael MacKellar and the colour television affair and to the Paddington Bear affair which led to the resignation of Mick Young.

Mick Young had to resign because, when 2 suitcases which came into the country from England were held in bond, he completed a statutory declaration saying that they contained no dutiable goods. On inspection, it was found that the goods in both suitcases attracted some level of duty. That was why he resigned.

Last week, in answer to a question from the Leader of the Opposition about stamp duty, the Chief Minister said that he had had discussions with his accountant in January and, on the advice of his accountant, decided to change the financial and business status of his block of land at Doctor's Gully. The accountant had advised him to transfer the title from the names of himself and his wife to the name of a company. That decision was made in January.

We all knew that taxes would rise and that tobacco and liquor prices would increase. We did not all go out and buy 44-gallon drums of fuel and cartons of tobacco goods to avoid the increased prices. What a load of nonsense! The opposition has used the phrase 'insider trading' several times this morning. Insider trading means using inside knowledge to trade for profit.

Mr Bell: \$5700 is not bad. It might not be much for the Chief Minister, but I would not mind it.

Mr DONDAS: Let me pick up the interjection from the member for MacDonnell. The member for Stuart referred to the transfer of title on the Doctor's Gully property. On 5 November 1979, when the Chief Minister bought that block of land, it had an unimproved value of \$23 000. Some 10 years later, when he transferred it from his own family name to a company name, it has an unimproved capital value of \$575 000.

Mr Perron: It is not UCV.

Mr Bell: That is right. It is not UCV, is it? You had better make sure he gets it right.

Mr DONDAS: The unimproved capital value is \$210 000. The work that has been done on that block during the last 10 years has resulted in a transfer of property at a value of \$575 000. That is the amount on which duty has to be paid. The Chief Minister said that he obtained a valuation from a licensed valuer to ensure that the amount of stamp duty that he paid was correct. That shows the integrity of the man. To ensure that he could not be accused of making an error in his valuation of the property, he paid probably \$2000 or \$3000 for an independent valuation for the purpose of transfer, to ensure that the Commissioner of Taxes would be satisfied.

The point I am trying to make is this. I have been to Doctor's Gully on many occasions and have seen the amount of work being done there in a personal sense. If I bought a block of land in Brinkin in 1983 and spent \$250 000 building a decent home on that block of land and subsequently transferred the title, that does not really count in terms of the budget measures. These only apply to business transactions. The Chief Minister has a quality home as well as a business on the Doctor's Gully site but nobody mentioned that this morning. He has lived there for over 10 years. It is not the first time he has lived near the water. Honourable members opposite would not know that he lived in Gothenburg Crescent which overlooks Frances Bay. What has not been said here this morning is that, in 1979, any member of the Northern Territory parliament or the public of the Northern Territory could have purchased Doctor's Gully from Mr Carl Atkinson. All we hear is this innuendo that deals were done, that he was the minister at the time and that Jim Robertson moved

backwards and forwards to accommodate him. It is all nonsense. The Chief Minister has been in this House for 15 years. No member opposite has been here for 15 years. They cannot question his integrity. He has been Treasurer 8 times. As I said earlier, in 15 debates since 1985, members of the opposition have raised all sorts of funny little things. Let me point out a couple of those funny little things, Mr Speaker.

On one occasion, the member for MacDonnell was talking about Docker River. That was Tuesday 12 November 1985. He started off: 'Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to talk briefly tonight about Docker River'. He spoke about different areas within his electorate, about sacred sites and Ayers Rock and then, for good measure, he threw in a reference to 'Doctor's Gully and feeding fish'. How do you bring together Doctor's Gully and Docker River? It seems he just felt in a good mood and thought he would sink a barb into the member for Fannie Bay and therefore threw in a reference to Doctor's Gully while talking about Docker River, Ayers Rock and everywhere else! The point I am trying to make is that, at every available opportunity, members opposite throw in the words 'Doctor's Gully' to sink the needle in so that the member for Fannie Bay perhaps might go home and have a sleepless night. That is the member for MacDonnell's tactic.

On another occasion, on 16 August 1988, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about budgets in New South Wales, things happening in South Australia and excessive expenditure over income figures for the Northern Territory. It is all at page 3458 of the Parliamentary Record for the information of the Leader of the Opposition. He may want to think about it later on. He was talking about overruns, budgets and loans, and the Chief Minister interjected and said: 'You said it was \$2400m the other day in the press'. The Leader of the Opposition said: 'Of course, I knew the Treasurer would fall in at that point'. The Deputy Chief Minister said: 'You were setting a trap for us'. The Leader of the Opposition responded: 'I did not even have to set the trap. Come in, spinner! Obviously, you get plenty of practice at Doctor's Gully'.

The point that I am trying to make is that, every time Doctor's Gully is thrown in, it is irrelevant. Members opposite simply think they will put the needle in. The Leader of the Opposition started an attack last Wednesday by asking questions, and his case was destroyed on the 7.30 Report. He was not even there, but he was stitched up and that ended in a situation where the opposition had to move a censure motion this morning. This is a waste of time. What have they raised this morning? Nothing substantial. They are just wasting this parliament's time.

The other strange aspect of this debate is that the Leader of the Opposition was on his feet for 8 minutes and did not say much ...

Mr Smith: 15 minutes.

Mr DONDAS: Then the member for Stuart started asking questions about roads and Indo-Pacific Marine and anything else that came to mind. At least this amendment will give the Chief Minister the opportunity to respond on some of those points, and I am quite sure he will do that. But, why didn't the Leader of the Opposition take up his full 30 minutes and say that he was moving a censure motion because it was very important to the people of the Northern Territory? The member for Stuart started by talking about the arrogance of the government. He used the word 'arrogance' 3 or 4 times. That line has been followed since it became clear who would be the new member for Wanguri in this House. The arrogance starts over there.

The member for Fannie Bay has been in this House for 15 years and he has served the Territory well. I made a point the other day in the superannuation debate about the member for Nhulunbuy, and what the Australian Labor Party had done to him. I would defend any member who has put his heart and soul into a job. In the view of some people, politicians rank in the middle order below doctors and dentists. Lawyers are ranked even lower than politicians. I will stand up for the member for Nhulunbuy over what the Australian Labor Party has done to him. And, most certainly, I will stand up for a colleague who, for 15 years, has really put his best foot forward for the Northern Territory. He said: 'Who would want to be a Chief Minister?' However, he accepted that responsibility to try to promote economic stability in the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition would not be able to do it nor would any of those other members opposite. The Northern Territory community respects Marshall Perron as the member for Fannie Bay.

In fact, as I was coming to work this morning, I wondered what would happen today. I thought that the Leader of the Opposition might move a censure motion against the Chief Minister. If one can believe the newspaper media, that was what was supposed to happen. I could not believe that would really happen because the Chief Minister explained the situation last Thursday. I thought that, for the Leader of the Opposition to bring on a censure motion today on this subject, would be a complete waste of the Assembly's time. Why are they wasting the time of the Assembly?

When the Cabinet goes to Cobourg, nobody really knows what line will be adopted as far as revenue is concerned.

Mr Smith: What!

Mr DONDAS: When the Cabinet goes to Cobourg, there is no preconceived idea on how revenue is to be raised.

Mr Smith: Not even the Chief Minister ran that defence!

Mr DONDAS: Well, I am going to run it because, if you read page 11 of the budget speech, the Chief Minister stated that revenue for stamp duty this year will be \$1.4m and, in future years, it will be \$1.7m. That statement was made in the knowledge that, by the time the amendment to the Stamp Duty Act has been put and passed in this Assembly, some 3 months will have elapsed.

The member for Stuart is sitting there shaking his head because they are being killed already, and there are still another 10 speakers on this side.

More importantly, when talking about taxes on liquor and fuel and so on, we are talking about revenue for a full financial year. That revenue can be estimated quite easily because the regulations and the laws are in place already to implement the increases. But, some duties and other items have to be put in place here in the Assembly. With all the goodwill in the world, sometimes things do not move as quickly as we would like them to in the parliament. Thus, to avoid losing out on revenue, statements are made that some taxes and charges will take effect from 1 July. However, in some instances, and this applies to conveyancing fees, the government knows that the relevant act will have to be amended and that no increase in revenue will be available from that source for at least 3 months of the financial year. That is why the Chief Minister indicated that revenue from that tax would amount to \$1.4m this year, and \$1.7m in a full year. He was not trying to pull the wool over everybody's eyes. He was not trying to cheat anybody because, as he said the other day, if he had wanted to cheat, he would have

told his Cabinet colleagues that he did not want stamp duty to be increased and would have suggested an increase in tax on liquor or larger increases elsewhere as an alternative. That would have been quite easy for him to do. At a time like that, one does not think to say: 'In January, my accountant told me that I should transfer my property over because it is the sensible course of action'.

Mr Smith: It is called a conflict of interest, and he should think of those things.

Mr DONDAS: It is not a conflict of interest at all.

Mr Smith: Of course it is.

Mr DONDAS: As was said, I could sign a transfer document tomorrow and pay the duty or not pay the duty - a very interesting situation.

The Leader of the Opposition says there is a conflict of interest. I am trying to sign a lease on a property in Alice Springs and I have been trying to sign that lease for some months but, until the property is completed and handed over, the lease cannot come into force. Does that mean that, if I had signed the lease last week, I would have had a conflict of interest as a member of parliament and that I was seeking to avoid increased stamp duty? No. Hopefully, the building will be handed over this week and I can sign the lease, but I will have to pay stamp duty. But what rate will I pay, just because I am a member of parliament? Life goes on. Business goes on. Where the government is able to say that ...

Mr Smith: You are a member of parliament, not a businessman.

Mr DONDAS: What?

Mr Smith: Goodness, gracious me! Life goes on! Business goes on! Is a member of the parliament of the Northern Territory saying that?

Mr DONDAS: Life goes on, and I will stand by that, Mr Speaker. Life goes on.

On 1 July, certain levels of tax were imposed for raising money in the Northern Territory. The Treasurer made a statement that there would be other revenue-raising measures that would take effect from a certain date during the month.

Mr Speaker, I know that my time is up. I hope that some members on the opposite side will support the amendment to the effect that the Leader of the Opposition, in moving his motion, is wasting the important time of this House. The information he provided in support of his motion led nowhere and contained nothing different from the questions that he asked last week in this parliament.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, if that little tirade was intended to further the ambitions of the member for Casuarina to return to the frontbench, I suspect that it will have delayed any such possibility - perhaps forever. The member for Casuarina put up a very patchy defence of the Chief Minister's behaviour. It is quite clear to me that, in fact, he has dropped the Chief Minister in it even further. The member for Casuarina said that the Chief Minister has served the Territory well. The point the opposition is making in moving this motion of censure is that the Chief Minister has served

himself even better, and I think that the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated very clearly that that was the case.

We are being asked to believe 1 of 2 scenarios. On the one hand, it seems we are asked to believe that, after the budget deliberations at Cobourg Peninsula on or about 16 June, the Chief Minister somehow advised his ministerial colleagues: 'There may be a little controversy over this. I am about to transfer my property at Doctor's Gully which is now worth \$575 000. Because it will happen before the stamp duty comes into effect, I am effectively saving myself \$5700'. We are asked to believe that all his ministerial colleagues said: 'Marshall, we all know how well you have served the Territory. We are not worried about that. We appreciate that, in the period between the announcement and the time the stamp duty comes into effect, everybody else will be able to take advantage of that as well. There is no problem with that at all'. That is one possible scenario and I would be very interested to hear from other members of the frontbench, who intend to defend the actions of the Chief Minister, if that was in fact the case.

The other scenario is that the Chief Minister did not mention it to his ministerial colleagues. I suggest that the 'other people are in it with me' defence that the Chief Minister tried to run on television last Thursday occurred to him about half an hour before he went on television. I think that it is straining the credibility of the government for members opposite to stand up and defend the honourable Chief Minister. It is certainly straining the credulity of the opposition and the people of the Northern Territory to suggest that the Chief Minister was not conscious and aware of the financial advantage that would accrue to him through the timing of these proposals.

I listened to the Chief Minister on Thursday on the 7.30 Report. I heard him say that it was all hogwash and then he blatantly misled the interviewer and the people of the Northern Territory. He said that 'all these acts' do not come into effect until they are assented to. For the Chief Minister, who has been in this Assembly for 15 years, to appear on television and actively, and presumably consciously, mislead the people of the Northern Territory that that is the case is an absolute outrage. I find it difficult to believe that somebody can be a member of a government for 15 years, a member of the Executive Council for 15 years, and not to know the difference between debate in this House and when the results of that debate come into effect. For a man who has been a member of this Assembly for 15 years to attempt to mislead the people of the Northern Territory in that way is absolutely outrageous. I draw the attention of honourable members to the ...

Mr Hatton: It appears you did not know.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Nightcliff. I suppose he would probably do well to make his bid for the frontbench at this stage because the member for Casuarina made such a dreadful hash of it. When I heard the outrageous suggestion from the Chief Minister about 'all acts', I knew that was wrong. Anybody who has been in this parliament for 5 minutes and has watched the passage of legislation knows that there is a vast difference between date of commencement and assent by the Administrator.

Mr Hatton: You obviously did not know last week.

Mr BELL: The fact of the matter is that, for the Chief Minister to go on television and for his lackey here, the member for Nightcliff ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw the accusation that the member for Nightcliff is a lackey. Let me rephrase it, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Hatton: Unreservedly.

Mr BELL: I withdrew it unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Let me just point out that the ardent but misguided supporter of the Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff, has in fact pointed out exactly what I did. For the delectation of the Chief Minister who does not seem to understand the legislative process particularly well, I recommend that he make a study of dates of commencement and dates of assent. These are appended to most bills. I suggest that he will find very few cases in which the date of commencement is the same as the date of assent.

Mr Perron: Every case. Is that right?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Chief Minister. That was exactly the case he attempted to make on television last Thursday night. He attempted to say that all acts come into force on the date of assent. In order to prove that that statement is false, let me just give the Chief Minister a brief lesson in logic. If he makes a broad-brush statement that all acts come into force on the date of assent, we have only to show that one did not in order to prove that he was misleading the people of the Northern Territory. The fact of the matter is that a substantial number of bills amending the Stamp Duty Act do not come into force on the date of assent. It is about time the Chief Minister got it right.

Mr Perron: Different dates for different categories.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I turn to the amendment moved by the member for Casuarina. I note in this context that there has been a rapid change in the government's tactics and I am curious to find out why. It has been drawn to my attention by an honourable colleague that the circulated amendment refers to the Leader of Government Business as its mover. It may very well be that the member for Casuarina has, in fact, enjoyed a very rapid promotion. However, I am rather at a loss to comprehend why a ragged government putting up such a ragged performance in this Legislative Assembly, led by a ragged and self-interested Chief Minister, is unable to get its act together sufficiently to pursue business in this Assembly in a sensible fashion.

The member for Stuart has dealt with the question of Doctor's Gully. As the member for Casuarina quite rightly pointed out, I have made frequent reference to the Chief Minister's dealings in relation to that particular property and I do not resile from having done so, whether it be once, 15 times or 50 times. The opposition is here to raise questions about that sort of behaviour. I believe that I have quite appropriately and sensibly raised questions of propriety in that regard. The fact is that, aided dramatically by the Chief Minister, there is a perception of corruption hanging over this entire government and members opposite are starting to pay the price for that. As evidenced by the recent Wanguri by-election, the people of the Northern Territory are starting to wake up to this government. This is another example of the sort of self-interested government which has been visited on the people of the Northern Territory for such a long time.

I would like to address briefly some of the principles involved in financial legislation, particularly tax legislation. It is not an area that I have had to study in depth as an opposition spokesman. I have never had to speak at length on financial legislation or fiscal policy. However, like any member who has been in this parliament for more than 5 minutes, I have a pretty fair idea of the principles involved. The fact is that there are 2 arguments for legislation taking effect from the date on which it is announced. The first argument relates to equity and the second to administrative efficiency.

The equity principle in taxation legislation is incontestable. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned, that is one of the main reasons for the pre-budget press lockup. It ensures that people are not able to take windfall advantage of budget announcements or to involve themselves in insider trading. That principle is incontestable and must be incontestable. I heard the Chief Minister say this morning that that applies to stamp duty on share transactions but not to stamp duty on the transaction of land.

Mr Perron: Can't you see the difference?

Mr BELL: Yes. I can see the difference between share trading and trading in land. Shares and land are different but the principle is exactly the same. If a government decides that share transactions are to be taxed at a higher rate, it ensures that that increase commences at precisely the time it is publicly announced so that people cannot make a windfall profit. The same applies to taxes on land transactions. The government has a responsibility, in terms of equity, to introduce such taxes at the time they are publicly announced in order to prevent windfall profits.

The Chief Minister's defence is that, whilst he made \$5700, other people could do the same. The possibility that other people may make windfall profits does not in any way justify the actions of the Chief Minister. The fact is that the Chief Minister has made a windfall profit through what can be justifiably termed, as the Leader of the Opposition put it, insider trading.

The second reason for commencing taxation legislation on the date of its public announcement is that it is administratively efficient to do so. I appreciate that we have some leeway in that respect in the Northern Territory because we have relatively small numbers of people. However, I ask honourable members to contemplate the administrative difficulties that would occur for the Commonwealth level or Victoria or New South Wales if a particular taxation proposal came into effect weeks or months after it was announced publicly. The public servants required to collect the tax would be inundated. It would be an administrative nightmare. However, just because the Northern Territory has a small population, the Chief Minister has been able to do it and to make a windfall profit on the Doctor's Gully transaction. There has to be some lead time to take advantage of the situation. I wonder how many other people are taking advantage of this opportunity to make windfall profits or to take part in insider trading. It does not remove the responsibility of the government to properly administer the financial arrangements of the Northern Territory.

I come to my final point. If the Chief Minister will not resign under these circumstances, under what circumstances will he resign? The Leader of the Opposition referred to House of Representatives practice in this regard and quoted from Pettifer, the bible on House of Representatives practice from which this Assembly draws its precedents. Pettifer is unequivocal that a minister should resign as a result of allegations concerning the propriety of

possible conflicts between his public duty and personal and family financial interests. Mr Deputy Speaker, in this case, the opposition has made out an absolutely conclusive and watertight case demonstrating that there has been such a conflict.

Mr Deputy Speaker, members opposite are sniggering. I find it difficult to believe that the Attorney-General and the member for Nightcliff can sit there sniggering. I look forward to the contribution of the Attorney-General. When he gets up to defend his boss, I want him to tell me under what circumstances members opposite are prepared to demand the resignation of the Chief Minister if they are not prepared to demand it in these circumstances? As I said at the outset, whether the Chief Minister has served the Territory well is a moot point. There is no doubt, however, that the Chief Minister has served himself far, far better.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, honourable members on this side of the House are not sniggering at the member for MacDonnell. On the contrary, they have waited patiently through the speeches of 3 opposition members for some constructive comment to be made. The Leader of the Opposition commenced by saying that he would present the facts. The member for MacDonnell attempted to use some of his normal vitriol to make his point. Whilst the first 2 opposition speakers, to give them due credit, spoke in the main without personal vitriol, there was clearly no substance in their remarks. However, when one hears the member for MacDonnell using vitriol in an attempt to provoke a response, it is difficult to sit here with a straight face. We will not respond to nonsense. We would respond if constructive debate were put forward in an appropriate fashion.

The member for Casuarina pointed out that the opposition has continually raised the subject of Doctor's Gully over 10 years or so. I am not surprised at that. I would not be surprised if it were raised over the next 10 years. I say that because the opposition has been able to beat up the subject so frequently that it has made some impact in the media. However, the reason it will remain an issue for another 10 years is not because there has been wrongdoing in relation to Doctor's Gully but because members opposite will not be able to raise any matter of substance during that time, if indeed any of them manage to remain here for that long.

From the start of this entire debate, both today and last week, members of the opposition have demonstrated their total lack of business understanding, business acumen and the processes involved in forming companies. Their use of the term 'insider trading' is in itself sufficient to bemuse anybody with the slightest understanding of the business world. The attempts of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition to imply that insider trading had occurred were quite hollow and ridiculous. The Chief Minister has said again and again that his accountant proposed the formation of a company some 6 or 7 months before the transfer was finalised. It was not his doing. When I was in business, I had the opportunity to form 2 companies at different times. On each occasion, the process took equally as long. The processes between lawyers, valuers, accountants ...

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr FINCH: I did not catch the interjection but, if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition would like to remain quiet for a moment and hear how the real business world operates, they may gain some knowledge that will be of assistance to them later.

It took some 6 or 7 months. What was the Chief Minister to do when, after 6 months of his accountants and lawyers running backwards and forwards, and knowing that he had to get in before 30 June at the latest ...

Mr Smith: Why?

Mr FINCH: For taxation reasons of course. The advice about forming a company in the first place is to arrange your affairs in the most appropriate manner to suit the level of business that you are undertaking to best advantage. That is the business game.

Mr Smith: What about the political game?

Mr FINCH: No politics come into it. His lawyer, his accountant and his valuer were not playing politics. What a nonsense argument! His lawyer and accountant are pursuing their own business. They are not involved in politics. They had the carriage of how long it took to get that company formed and into place before the end of June, not the Chief Minister. Was he suddenly to say, on the day when it was to go ahead: 'Hang on. In another 4 or 5 days, when the Cabinet discusses a great variety of taxes that this government may consider, there could be a chance that my colleagues might decide to double the stamp duty ...

Mr Smith: It won't work.

Mr FINCH: What was he to do? Was he to say that it would be done in a later financial year? The reality in the business world at the moment is that people have to maximise the benefits that can come from the formation of companies and other tactics to overcome the great burden that is placed on them by the federal government. The taxation system in this country is totally counterproductive. It stinks. Unless taxation and interest rates return to a reasonable level, there is no way that private enterprise in this country will advance. It is quite a normal procedure. The Chief Minister was not dealing with this on a daily basis himself. His lawyer and accountant are paid to do that for him. It is a nonsense to suggest that he should stick his hand up at the last minute, in respect of a matter that they had had in hand on his behalf for 6 or 7 months, and say: 'Stop Let us wait another year'. What a load of nonsense!

When it comes to debate in Cabinet about the variety of possible taxes, you could suggest that the smokers in Cabinet would race out and buy a couple of truckloads of cigarettes because the duty was to rise or that, if a minister owned 2 or 3 cars, he would race out and re-register them a month ahead of time to save himself the increase. What a load of hogwash! This is by far the cleanest government in Australia and probably in the world. It has an impeccable record.

Mr Leo: And you had a straight face when you said that.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I would suggest the member for Nhulunbuy come up with some substantive evidence to demonstrate that this government does not have an impeccable record and where its members are, as members opposite would like to put it, operating inappropriately. The Chief Minister is well and truly able to stand up for himself. However, one point which I tried to make last week relates to the fact that the principal operator of the business at Doctor's Gully, as every member of this House knows, is the Chief Minister's wife. She is not here to defend herself. I believe that the reflection on the integrity of the Chief Minister and his family is inappropriate, particularly when there is no substance to it.

We can argue as much as we like about dates of implementation of legislation. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, for example, tried very cleverly to confuse the issue in relation to 2 separate bills. I have checked the Hansard of August 1981. He linked the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill and the bill relating to tobacco. He suggested that there was a need to implement legislation by 1 September in order to prevent insider trading or people taking advantage of the situation.

Mr Ede: Stamp duty and tobacco licensing legislation was put in force to prevent speculation.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill proceeded then in exactly the same manner as it has proceeded on this occasion. It was introduced on 25 August, debated on 27 August and assented to on 1 September. Those dates are almost identical to the present instance, but the Deputy Leader of the Opposition deliberately failed to mention that. Quite spuriously, he tried to bring the bill relating to tobacco into the debate.

Mr Ede: It is the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill, page 1423.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader had his chance earlier. He failed dismally to substantiate a single point. The only credit that I will give him today is that, with the exception of his attempt to reflect on the Chief Minister by calling him arrogant, his contribution was devoid of his normal vitriol. However, I think there are some questions that members of the opposition need to ask themselves. For example, what deliberate action did the Chief Minister take for his own personal financial gain? Was it the action he took in December 1988? Is that what they are referring to, that he foresaw that far ahead? Or was it the confirmation with his accountant in January that was the positive action that he took for his own advantage?

Mr Bell: Did you know about this before Thursday, Fred?

Mr FINCH: Listen for a moment and you might learn a little.

Was it that he allowed his accountant and solicitor, after 7 months of toing-and-froing and the involvement of valuers, to finalise that arrangement that had been under way for the consolidation of the company some 4 days or so before budget day? It is a total nonsense. If it had gone another 3 months, I suppose there could be a question that, after the budget discussions, he would have been aware that, if something happened between then and budget time, there would be a commercial advantage. However, was he to sit around for another 3 months? But, that is not the point. The recommendation put to him by his accountant, quite correctly, would be to finalise it by 30 June, not because of some possible change in the stamp duty, but because of the very clear and very substantial benefits that come from formation of a company prior to 30 June in any one year.

Mr Ede: That is not true.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, you can check the records to see how many companies are formed, on the advice of accountants, leading into a financial year. I have not checked the records, but I will bet that there is a great predominance of companies being formed at that time.

Mr Ede: At the budget Cabinet, did he tell you that he had a conflict of interest?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, once again, by his interjection, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition demonstrates his total lack of business knowledge, acumen and experience.

What the Chief Minister did was to allow the events that he had put in train 9 months ago to take their natural course in the hands of those professionals whom he was paying to do the job at the best possible pace. All of these matters are complex. They involve a great number of dealings between the solicitor and the various other players. All the Chief Minister did was to allow them to do it at their normal, natural pace. He did not tell them to hurry the process or to slow it down. The Chief Minister took no deliberate action to intervene in any shape or form. What he did was totally normal and, of course, so far in this debate, the 3 opposition speakers have not demonstrated one point that would lead anyone even to suggest that the Chief Minister had done anything but the appropriate thing.

With regard to the amendment to the censure motion, there is no doubt in anybody's mind that the sort of tactics that the opposition has used, not only in these sittings but in previous sittings also, of attempting to denigrate members on a personal basis is wearing thin with the public. They are sick to death of this opposition raising matters against personal integrity. The public do not want to hear that. The Leader of the Opposition played to the public gallery this morning. The debate belongs in here among members on each side of the House. It ought to be delivered constructively and not in the tone which has been used during the last 2 or 3 sittings. Mr Speaker, I can assure you and honourable members opposite that people in the community are sick to death of this sort of performance. They want to hear something of substance from the opposition. What alternative policies do they have? What matters are of genuine public concern? Mr Speaker, I can tell you where this opposition is heading - nowhere. We will still be talking about Doctor's Gully in 10 years time because the opposition has nothing else to talk about.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as this debate progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that members on this side of the House have a different view of propriety from that of the people on the other side of the House. Basically, it becomes an apples and pears debate. I do not think it is worth trying to mull over or to address myself to the matters raised by the member for Casuarina, the Minister for Transport and Works or, indeed, the Treasurer. I would ask members to cast their minds back to a time when a previous Chief Minister sacked the member for Port Darwin from the ministry. The member for Port Darwin had not demonstrated any personal interest, had no possible chance ...

Mr Harris: I resigned.

Mr LEO: Resigned or sacked. Indeed, you accepted your responsibilities in terms of propriety.

I ask you to cast your mind back to that time, Mr Speaker. The minister accepted that he had acted with impropriety. That was clear and the Chief Minister of the day, the previous Chief Minister, quite correctly asked him to resign and the minister accepted that he should resign. He had no self-interest in the matter. The minister had breached the proprieties of this House and that was why he was obliged to resign. There was no question of it. The minister accepted his responsibility to this House and to the people of the Northern Territory.

Another previous Chief Minister accepted, to make no bones about it, that he had acted perhaps legally but perhaps immorally ...

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: That was from that minister's own mouth. If you want to correct me on those words, please do.

Mr Harris: He is not talking about me. He is talking about someone else.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, that Chief Minister had the guts to recognise that and to understand what it meant.

I appreciate that 3 members opposite intend to vote in support of their Chief Minister but I will address the remaining members. If those members do not support the Leader of the Opposition's proposition, they will be indicating that they do not recognise the proprieties of office. I bear the Chief Minister no personal animus. Anybody who checks the public record will see that. I am concerned about the office which he holds. He accepted that office and the obligations which go with it. He was not drafted. He accepted the office and its obligations. The same principle applies to ministries in all governments. People accept office and the accompanying obligations. I bear the member for Fannie Bay no personal animus but all members on both sides of this House must accept that the office which he occupies carries responsibilities.

If honourable members opposite do not support the motion, they will be saying to the public of the Northern Territory that there is a new standard of propriety in this House and ministers are not expected to make a disclosure to Cabinet when they believe that a conflict of interest may exist. We do not expect the Cabinet to debate that or to decide on it. However, if the opposition's motion fails, this House will simply be saying that any Cabinet minister can have the indulgence of this House if there is a conflict of interest. As politicians, we cannot endure that. We cannot enjoy the support of the public if we endure that.

Mr Speaker, I know that you and all members on the government benches know that, inevitably, the Chief Minister will be sanctioned. He knows that and I know it, as does every member on that side of the House. We know that when, 3 or 4 months down the track, polling time arrives, the political consequences will take care of today. He will be rolled as Chief Minister. It has been done before. It will occur simply because he will be unpopular. The political consequences of today will be recognised in time and therefore we will end up with the same decision but for the wrong reasons.

The Chief Minister will be rolled as a result of political consequences, not because this House has the guts to recognise its obligations to itself and to the people of the Northern Territory. That is what will happen. The Chief Minister will still be rolled. There is no question about that. In 2 or 3 months down the line, he will be rolled, but for all the wrong reasons. It will not be because he has breached the trust and faith of this House, but simply because he will no longer be politically tenable as the leader of the government. That will happen, Mr Speaker. I know it, you know it and every other member of this House knows it. If honourable members do not support the Leader of the Opposition's proposition, they will merely demonstrate that they do not and should not enjoy the confidence of the people of the Northern Territory. They will react to political pressure because they cannot react to normal, moral, human intellectual consideration of a minister's conduct.

Personally, I doubt very much that the Chief Minister was even aware that he might be breaching his ministerial obligations. But then, I do not think the government of the day believed that Mick Young was interested in trying to rip off the Department of Customs for the price of import duty on a Paddington Bear, but it was a breach of ministerial responsibility.

Mr Dondas: Nobody does things intentionally.

Mr LEO: And that is the core of it. It is not intention. It is not whether or not, as a minister, you go out and buy 50 packets of cigarettes. It is not whether, as a minister of the Crown, you fill up your motor car the day before excise is increased on fuel. It is that the trust of this House has been breached. It is a breach of ministerial propriety. It is not intention. The facts of life are that there are clear obligations laid down for all ministers, and we recognise them in our standing orders in respect of the obligations of members of this House.

In relation to serving on a committee of this House, our standing orders set this down. Standing order 263 says this, not in relation to a Cabinet member or for people who are making decisions on behalf of the government, but in relation to members serving on a committee of this House: 'Personal interest: No member may sit on a committee if he is personally interested in the inquiry before such a committee'. That is a standing order of this House. That is the requirement that we put on every member of this House, and yet we have a minister in Cabinet who has clearly breached the requirements of personal involvement in decision making. Nobody has even questioned that. The minister was personally involved, whether deliberately or accidentally. I accept that it was quite accidental, but clearly he was involved in a matter which affected him personally.

If this motion is not carried, the office of Chief Minister will continue to be the subject of the ongoing public ridicule to which, unfortunately, it has been subjected in the past. At least 2 other members of this House, the member for Port Darwin and the member for Barkly, have each recognised their responsibilities to this House and to the people of the Northern Territory. If the Chief Minister is not prepared to do so, this House must inform him of his responsibilities. The House must pass this motion. If it does not, it will do no more than endorse the public's dissatisfaction with and cynicism towards politicians and government generally.

Mr Speaker, those are the simple facts of life. I will repeat for the sake of the Chief Minister, for the sake of his office and for the sake of members opposite, who know this is true, that he will be rolled.

Mr Perron: Do you know that the tax has not changed yet?

Mr LEO: He will go down the drain.

Mr Perron: Do you know that it has not changed?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the interjections of the Chief Minister show the underlying psychology of some of the people opposite. The member for Casuarina enunciated it most clearly. He said: 'Life goes on. Business goes on'. Members opposite do not see the distinction between business and the responsibilities of public office. The basis of their approach is wrong and that is why I say this is an apples and pears debate. Members opposite see government as part of one big business. It is not. High obligations go with high office. I stress again that I bear no personal animus towards the Chief

Minister; I am talking about the office, not the person occupying it. It has nothing to do with the individual. If you people opposite ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: If honourable members opposite cannot recognise the difference, then I am afraid that the point of self-government in the Northern Territory is being sadly lost. It is being sadly debased and abused. I really do not care what the editorial writer in the NT News has to say about its being a personal assault against individuals within this House, no matter what side of politics they are on. I do not care about that. It is the office that is important to me. It is the office of the Chief Minister. That office - and nobody can deny it - has been seriously assaulted by an impropriety which it appears has not even been recognised by the bulk of the members on the benches opposite. If they do not recognise or understand that, then I am afraid the point of the powers and the obligations of office are also a mystery to them. They do not understand what is involved here. They have not read Pettifer. They do not understand their obligations.

What is equally tragic is that, within 2 months time, the Chief Minister will go anyway. The government will do its polling. Of course, it will recognise that the man unfortunately - and that is what really is tragic about this - is no longer viable. It will assault the man. This is a great tragedy because today we will have refused an opportunity to accept our collective obligation.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like make a few remarks this afternoon as my name was unceremoniously dragged into this debate last week by Senator Collins and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition by way of a comparison between my own circumstances in 1982 and 1986 and those of the Chief Minister in the assault that is being made on him. I would like to correct a few statements where great liberties have been taken with the truth of the matter as I understand it.

At no time did I or my colleagues believe that I had done anything illegal with regard to the travelling allowance. This was borne out by the very extensive police investigation that was commissioned in 1986 by myself to settle the matter. In his report, the Commissioner of Police said: 'I am of the opinion that the former Chief Minister has not been guilty of any criminal behaviour and all the payments and expenditures can be accounted for. There is no evidence of any intent by Mr Tuxworth to obtain more than that to which he was entitled'. The now Senator for the Northern Territory, Bob Collins, as Leader of the Opposition at that time also said that, on the evidence before him - and this is recorded in Hansard - he suspected that my motives were to my credit.

The basic facts of the matter in relation to my situation are very simple. The issue of the travelling allowance money was brought to my attention in 1982 by the then acting Chief Minister, the now Chief Minister, Hon Marshall Perron, who indicated it was his view and the Chief Minister's that I should claim Darwin as my place of residence. I repaid the \$9443 in 1982 on the basis of retrospectivity and not on the grounds of guilt at all. In other words, it was considered at the time that, in order to be consistent, I should retrospectively claim Darwin as my home base from the time that I moved my family to Darwin, despite the fact that the original transfer of my wife and family to Darwin was a temporary move only and I have always maintained a residence in Tennant Creek which I still consider to be my home.

The now Senator Collins also raised the issue in 1985, and I think it is fair to say that he made a fair amount of political capital out of it. It is worthy of note that the definition of 'home base' that he provided for the House on 20 March 1986 was that 'home base' is where you consider your home to be, and it is as simple as that. It is where your home genuinely is. In my case, Tennant Creek is and will continue to be my home. I was condemned for going too far to ensure that I followed the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law. I was condemned not once but twice, and the matter has been settled not once but twice.

Mr Speaker, I raise these events because there have been attempts to create a parallel between them and the Chief Minister's situation with the Doctor's Gully stamp duty issue. I think it is important that we get on with some more meaningful business. I would like to make a few remarks about the Chief Minister's situation and how I would see myself voting on it. Very simply, for me to be able to vote constructively on the Leader of the Opposition's motion, I would need to have access to information that is not available to me and that I think is unlikely ever to be available, and I will touch on that now.

In voting on the motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition's, I think it would be important to know whether the Chief Minister advised Cabinet at any stage that he was making a large transaction. I do not know whether he did or did not. I do not know whether it was even an issue in Cabinet, and it could well be one of those things that was legitimately forgotten and not even considered relevant. But, in this circumstance, if I am to vote for the motion, then I need to know that because I think it is a very pertinent piece of information. I think it is important to know also what the reaction of Cabinet was, if that information was divulged and, Cabinet solidarity and security being what it is, I think it highly improbable that I or anyone else is likely to know.

In considering this matter, it is important for me to know what the consideration was over stamp duty. Was the stamp duty consideration a matter that came out of a Treasury recommendation that had been seen for the first or second time that day or was it a consideration that recommended no change or a reduction from 6% to 4% in terms of the new financial year or whatever? I do not have the answers. Maybe others do but, until I have those answers, those considerations remain important.

Another point that is very important for myself is to know what discussions and decisions were taken in relation to the commencement date of the legislation. It could well be that, when Cabinet was considering the question of the commencement date, this did not even raise its head, that no one even thought of it. Members of the Cabinet could have made a decision then. I do not know whether they did or did not but, if they did, what was the decision? I do not know the answer to that either. Was it forgotten, as I mentioned a moment ago, or was it decided the other day when the furore broke? I do not know the answer to that either, but I am not prepared just to assume the worst on all of these points and assume automatically that the Chief Minister has taken advantage of the situation and that the answers to all the questions I have raised are adverse towards him.

Mr Ede: You have had plenty of opportunity to say something.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in response to that interjection, that I am one of the few people in this place who has been the butt of very harsh public criticism for perceptions that were

created in the community that were quite different to the truth and the reality. And I accept that. That is part of life, but perhaps that makes me a little more thoughtful and sensitive about the matter that is before me, and I am prepared to accept that.

I am not prepared to condemn the Chief Minister this afternoon, unless somebody is prepared to give answers to those questions that I have raised. But I would say, and I think this is a political reality too, that although the Chief Minister may not feel a need to resign today or at any time in the future over this matter, he will find, as the days go on - and I can say this from experience - that the public perception of events, as distinct from the truth and the reality of the situation, will make it extremely difficult for him to maintain his position. I understand that from my own experience, as you know, Sir. I understand what the Chief Minister will go through because, in the last week, the media has had a 3-day start on the Chief Minister in creating a perception, with the Labor Party as the architects of the perception. That is simply a fact of political life. It remains to be seen whether the Chief Minister can turn that perception around and create the environment in the community that he wants. Only time will tell if he is able to do that.

I am not prepared to vote on the censure motion until I have the sort of information that I would need to condemn the man for this. Earlier this morning, an amendment was circulated by the Leader of Government Business deploring the waste of the Assembly's time by the moving of a censure motion relating to these affairs. I have to say that I have a problem with that. Censure motions are put before this House twice a year at most. However, they are not insignificant motions. They are very serious and, if any member of the House feels the need to move a censure motion against any other member of the House, it is not a waste of the Assembly's time to deal with the issue. It is very significant. I must say that the proposition put forward by the Leader of Government Business ...

Mr Coulter: Why don't you read out the full paragraph so that you can read it in context?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I say to the Leader of Government Business that I am reading the first part which reflects on 'the wasting of the time of this Assembly by moving a censure motion in relation to the affairs discussed herein'.

Mr Coulter: Which 'were fully and satisfactorily answered on 24 August'.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the censure motion has been raised because other people do not agree with the Leader of Government Business's view in relation to the answer that the Chief Minister gave. Nevertheless, it is not a matter of insignificance and it is not a waste of time to have the matter aired and debated.

Mr Speaker, one good thing that has come out of this debate - and I must say that I think it is good for us all - is that the muckraking and the mud-slinging that was foreshadowed over the weekend has not come to pass - or at least not yet. I had better touch wood. I would advocate to all members of the House that, whatever feelings we have about matters from time to time and we all become a bit emotional about different things ...

Mr Coulter: Have you read your column in Sunday's paper? You were one of the major contributors over the weekend.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I was one of a few.

I would say that, if we are to reduce the decorum of the House through the use of personal abuse and mud-slinging, as was suggested over the weekend ...

Mr Perron: To the level of your Sunday column.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Chief Minister has ample opportunity to respond to my Sunday column at any time he wishes.

Mr Coulter: Do not try to say that you are holier.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am not adopting a 'holier than thou' attitude.

Mr Coulter: You were the major contributor.

Mr TUXWORTH: A perception was created over the weekend that today this parliament would degenerate into a forum for personal mud-slinging and abuse that probably has not been seen in years. The fact that that has been avoided is to the credit of the Assembly.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I would like to continue from the statements of the member for Barkly and note the very point that he made - that no case has been made by the members opposite. The question that the member for Barkly raised was whether the Chief Minister has taken advantage of a situation that arose out of a Cabinet decision. I think honourable members ought to ask themselves that question very simply. The opposition's attack over the last week or so has been built around emotive terms such as 'insider trading' and 'knowledge that was available only to the Chief Minister being used to somehow advantage himself'. Logic dictates that the process of decision-making would be that Cabinet made a decision and, as a consequence of that decision, the Chief Minister analysed his own personal situation, saw the potential to take advantage and moved to do so in advance of the decision becoming public. That is the concept of insider trading and that is what the opposition is trying to allege occurred to the community at large, nothing more, nothing less. Without all the fancy words around, it comes down to that.

The opposition is trying to reinforce its case by saying that there were 3 critical dates: the date of the Cabinet decision, the date of the transfer of title from private ownership by a husband and wife to a company and the date of public announcement. Those were the 3 critical dates that the Leader of the Opposition referred to - nothing else. Quite clearly, he is saying Cabinet made a decision, the Chief Minister somehow took a series of actions to gain a financial advantage that was available only to himself and, subsequently, told the rest of the community about the events that enabled him to take that advantage.

What was the reality?. It is undisputed. In January of this year, the Chief Minister's personal accountant told him that, for valid business reasons, it was appropriate that he restructure his business so that, rather than its being a husband and wife partnership or whatever arrangement it was, it became a company arrangement. That advice was offered on 4 January 1989. That is undisputed and is supported by a statutory declaration from the Chief Minister's personal accountant.

Subsequently - and the Chief Minister outlined the dates today - in early May, movement started to process the agreement in line with the

recommendations of the accountant. That recommendation - surprise, surprise - was that the changeover should occur at the commencement of the new financial year, which happens to be a very convenient date for setting restructured business arrangements in place. There is no question about that. It is not in dispute. It is accepted practice and it relates to taxation, administration and business arrangements generally. The process was commenced on the advice of the Chief Minister's accountant.

In early May, the valuers were called in to look at the property and make their assessment. In late May, the solicitors were called in to commence the process of restructuring the business. That is what happened. It so happens that, at that time, Treasury was preparing recommendations for the Treasurer and Chief Minister on options available for dealing with additional tax charges that might be required in the 1989-90 budget. Those options, some of which would be accepted by Cabinet and some of which would be rejected, were to be put to Cabinet in June. When it met to frame the budget, the process of restructuring the Chief Minister's business affairs had been commenced long before.

Eventually Cabinet decided, among other things, to increase stamp duty on transactions such as that in which the Chief Minister was involved. In considering that fact, the public must ask whether or not the Chief Minister should have decided at that point to delay artificially the restructuring of his business, in order to satisfy the pernicious inquisitiveness of the opposition, until after the budget was brought down. The public must ask whether the Chief Minister should have decided to do that on the basis that, like Caesar's wife, he would have been seen to be pure. The opposition believes that he should have done that. That is the basis of its case. It is a nonsense and I ask the opposition to recognise the illogicality of its argument in that respect.

The fact is that that restructuring had been under way for 4 months. There was no reason to stop it or to change its direction. The question is whether the Chief Minister derived any advantage from the situation. Clearly, the answer is no. The Chief Minister did not gain any advantage because the decision about his family business had been made well in advance of the Cabinet decision about stamp duty. He carried out that business in the normal way. There was no problem.

The corollary to the opposition's contention is that people who decide to restructure their businesses in the next few weeks or months may argue that they have been disadvantaged by a government decision to increase stamp duty. Of course, that is not the case. People base their decisions on the taxes and charges which apply at the time. There is no evidence that the Chief Minister took any decision as a consequence of information that was available to him as a minister of the Crown, as Treasurer or as Chief Minister. He took no decisions as a consequence of information made available to him. His decisions were made months earlier and the normal process of his business transaction was proceeding. The ministerial events occurred in the middle of that and subsequent to any such decisions. There can be no question of a conflict of interest or, to use the emotive terms of the Leader of the Opposition, of so-called insider trading.

I wonder how many members here understand what the term 'insider trading' means. Let me explain simply. Somebody who is privy to confidential information may become aware of some event that will occur that will lead, for example in shareholdings of companies, to unexpectedly high profitability, or that a special contract has been won by a business that will increase the

value of its shares and, with that personal and confidential knowledge gained inside the organisation, that person then buys shares knowing that, as soon as the information becomes publicly available, the share prices will increase and it will be possible to gain an immediate profit. That is insider trading.

There is no way in the world that what the Chief Minister has done in this situation could be compared in even the remotest form to that situation. What the Chief Minister has done is effect an accepted, recognised and valid restructuring of his personal business and, well subsequent to his decision to do so, government took decisions in relation to stamp duties. It so happens that, when these increased stamp duties come into effect, and they have not yet, some people will have to pay them. It so happens that the decisions that were taken by the Chief Minister and his wife earlier this year were such that they do not have to pay them. There is no evidence at all, not even a real imputation, that the decisions were taken as a consequence of Cabinet knowledge. The Cabinet considerations occurred subsequent to the personal business decisions of the Chief Minister. That makes this motion by the opposition an absolute nonsense.

We have to ask ourselves why members of the opposition persist with this, and the answer starts to dawn on us when we look at the events of the last week when members of the opposition thought they had latched on to something. They are really fighting desperately to find ways by which to paint this government into a corner as being somehow improper or corrupt or whatever in order that they may win government. All right, it is their job to try to win government and, if they want to gain it by underhanded, dirty means, that is their business. That is their objective and that is what they are looking for.

Any study of the history of members of the opposition over the last 2 or 3 years shows clearly they are not trying to promote themselves as an alternative government, but trying to destroy this government. We know what their objective is and we know their motive. Someone on the Leader of the Opposition's personal staff said: 'I saw a story in late June that the Chief Minister has restructured his business. Do you realise that that means that he does not have to pay the new stamp duty?' I can imagine them sitting over there. They must have nearly wet themselves in their anticipation of this debate in the House. You can see them clapping their hands, jumping around and saying: 'Wow! We have really got him on toast this time'. They would have been giggling and carrying on. Then, they decided to pull in the big guns so they brought in Senator Collins because they thought that he had done this sort of hatchet job before and perhaps he could draft the questions for them. He was sitting in the House when the questions were being asked and cursing the Leader of the Opposition because he was not following the script. He was saying: 'What sort of stupid fool is this? He cannot even follow a simple script that I have given him'. I know that because some of our people were listening to what Collins was saying.

But, he did not get it right. He made 1 fundamental error: he did not ask the critical question although it was a question that probably should not have needed to be asked. Given their incompetence and their inability to understand the fundamentals of parliament, members of the opposition failed to ask when the stamp duty legislation is to come into operation. They forgot to ask for the commencement date. If they had asked that question, they would have been told it would commence when assented to and they would have realised then and there that they were on a loser, that their whole, gleeful, vindictive attack would come to nought. But that question was not asked. They assumed that this legislation would apply from the date the budget speech was made, and that is where their error was made.

We heard the member for Stuart today crying: 'Foul! You did not tell us when it was going to apply and therefore we assumed it was on from the day the budget was brought down'. He had not looked back over such legislation over the last 10 years of government, at the dates when money bills came into operation. He did not look at that because that might have spoilt a good story. Members of the opposition did not look at that at all. They really screwed up, didn't they, Mr Speaker? It was Thursday night before any one asked the Chief Minister, for the first time, what the story was. All the earlier questions were: 'When did you know about this? When did you know about that?'. They did not ask him when the legislation would come into operation. He felt that it was about time he told someone and therefore he pointed out that anyone who was registering a restructured company at that time would pay the same stamp duty rate as he had in June. That applies this week and maybe next week.

Finally, it dawned on them and then we saw Senator Collins looking very sheepish on the 7.30 Report. I must give credit to the announcer on the 7.30 Report who handled the situation exceptionally well on Thursday evening. Senator Collins sat there very sheepishly. He is a very quick responder and he said: 'Specious answer'. Of course, 'specious answer' has become the response of the opposition this week. What they are saying is: 'We do not know what to do now, but we have gone so far down this track that somehow we have to keep the momentum going. We must beat this up a bit more because otherwise we will really look like geese'. The reality is that they do look like geese.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: There is nothing wrong with geese.

Mr HATTON: There is nothing wrong with geese except if you happen to be trying to be a politician. I am sorry, but the opposition look like geese. They do not look like politicians at the moment. They have really mucked this one up. The best thing they can do is drop it and let us get on with the business of this House because there is no case to answer. The performance of the Leader of the Opposition in this House today has been absolutely abysmal. That of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been even worse because he decided to engage in 'Doctor's Gully Revisited' and recount 10 years of history that has no relevance at all to this debate. He failed absolutely, but that is normal with the member for Stuart.

Mr Ede: You do not respect a code of conduct?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I support codes of conduct in this House. I will support them strenuously, but there has to be something to answer. There is nothing to answer. I do not think any member should be condemned for carrying out a normal and proper business activity which in no way has been influenced by the activities of government or confidential knowledge gained. The opposition has failed abysmally to demonstrate in any way ...

Mr Ede: Come on! Should he or should he not have advised the Cabinet that there was a possible conflict?

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

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart does not know whether he did or whether he did not. What I do know is that the honourable member's pecuniary relationships are stated quite clearly in the statutorily required declaration of interests and any potential for such would be readily available to members.

Mr Speaker, there is no case to answer and, unfortunately, we have now wasted 2 hours and 45 minutes of the Legislative Assembly's time debating an issue which the Chief Minister answered totally last week. The results were adequately and fully completed in the media debate last Thursday evening. There is no case to answer. This debate is all about face saving for the Leader of the Opposition, nothing more. There is no case to answer. If it went to a court of law, the Leader of the Opposition would have costs awarded against him and probably would be reprimanded by the judge for raising such a frivolous case.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to participate in this debate this afternoon, I do not intend to speak in fulsome support of the Chief Minister. Nevertheless, I will support him which is more than he or the party did for me when I was sent out of the Country Liberal Party. I believe that says something about my loyalty to ideals and his and the party's loyalty to me.

Mr Collins: So cop that!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, so cop that, young Harry.

I will not be agreeing with the censure motion put by the Leader of the Opposition. Nevertheless, because of the way the amendment is constructed, I will not be voting for that either. I do not know whether, by putting paragraphs 1 and 2 together, the Leader of Government Business hoped that he could con us into voting for it or whether he thought that we would not see all of it ...

Mr Coulter: As if I could con you.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, but you would try to. I know you.

Nevertheless, I cannot give my support to the amendment. I cannot support paragraph (1) because I do not believe a censure motion wastes the time of the Assembly. I believe that, even if a censure motion is not passed, it is the right of the opposition to move that censure motion to bring certain things to the attention of the public. It is its right and that should be maintained. It is certainly not wasting the time of the Assembly. If it moved censure motions each sitting day, that would be a waste of time. However, it does not move them very often.

Mr Deputy Speaker, perhaps not many members here have actually heard the radio serial Blue Hills. To some extent, the saga of Doctor's Gully could be likened to the ABC's Blue Hills serial. Probably because news is a little scarce, the pilot's strike is becoming rather boring, the balance of payments is old hat and everything else is a bit ho hum, the opposition has decided to bring on Doctor's Gully again. It is becoming the Blue Hills of Darwin.

I believe that the Chief Minister is to be congratulated on his, or probably his wife's, business sense in increasing the value of a property from some \$20 000-odd to \$500 000. I believe that, for them to have done that in that time, they deserve to be congratulated on their business acumen and the work that they have put into their business.

Mr Perron: You should see the size of the loan.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You have equity as well. The fact is, however, that the value of the business has increased.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr Palmer: You are quite happy for people to have to pay to visit Ayers Rock and Kakadu.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, do I have to speak above this noise?

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that one of the points which has really niggled the ALP is the fact that somebody has made good in a business. At first, I was surprised that nobody on the government side raised this but, when I thought about it, I realised that the interest of government members in small business is pretty negligible. However, I am a firm believer that small business is the backbone of any country.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is a pity that they do not do more than sit there and say: 'Hear, hear'. That is all they are capable of. They do not actually do anything.

Mr Finch: We are right behind you, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You are right behind me but you are not out in front of me. The people you have to watch are those behind you.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister would have to be really stupid to compromise his position for the sake of \$5000. If he wanted to tickle the till, which he has not done, he would be stupid to do so for the sake of \$5000.

I had my hair set by a hairdresser this morning ...

Mr Coulter: And very nice it looks too.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you.

Without any prompting from me, the lady who was setting my hair began to talk about the sittings of the Assembly ...

A member: Woman. She is not titled. She has to be called a woman.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I said 'the lady' and she is a lady.

The lady who was dressing my hair this morning commented, without any prompting from me, that she was sick and tired of hearing about Doctor's Gully and that the Chief Minister would have to be very silly to compromise himself for the sake of \$5000. Despite what members of the opposition have led us to believe today, I think people are sick and tired of hearing about Doctor's Gully. Although I do not believe that the Chief Minister has done anything untoward, I advise him that things not only have to be right but they have also to be seen to be right. He needs to upgrade his staff, do something to smarten them up a bit, and he needs to look after his own interests a bit better because they are not presenting him to the public and he is not presenting himself to the public in the best possible light.

I have said this before and I do not intend it as an insult. Indeed, coming from myself, it is a compliment, but I do not believe that the Chief Minister is a brilliant Chief Minister. However, I believe that he is a reasonably good manager, and he has my support. I will not be voting for the censure motion, nor will I be voting for the amendment moved by the Leader of Government Business if it remains in its present form.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think we need to consider what the Chief Minister had to gain and what he had to lose by deliberately trying to seize an advantage in relation to the increase in stamp duty and the budget. The public find it very easy to understand what the Chief Minister had to gain. Everybody understands \$5750. But looking at it from the other side, what did he have to lose? What did the government have to lose? What did his party have to lose? In the broader sense, what did the conservative side of politics have to lose? After nearly 15 years in this House, the Chief Minister has a pretty good reputation. He has made a few enemies and a few people would like to throw a bit of mud at him, but he has certainly earned ample respect. Indeed, he could have been Chief Minister much sooner if he had so desired because he had the respect of his colleagues and the support of his party. Would he blow that out of the water for \$5750? Would he be prepared to damage his own chances of winning the seat of Fannie Bay at the next election? Would he be prepared to give ammunition to the opposition?

I do not blame the opposition for latching on to this matter and playing it for all it is worth. That is part of the game of politics and it is not always a pretty game. Ever since the Chief Minister purchased the land at Doctor's Gully, we have been hearing about the matter. I have no doubt that the Chief Minister put his last penny on the line to buy that land, which had been on the market for something like 12 months. Anybody else could have bought it if he had so wished. That was his business and good luck to him. There has been innuendo about the change of zoning and the enemies of the Chief Minister drag these matters up from time to time.

It does not make sense to suggest that the Chief Minister has structured his business affairs deliberately to avoid paying a few thousand dollars when so much is at risk. That is just common logic. In fact, it is something of a wonder to me that the Chief Minister's accountant did not come to him and say: 'Look, Mr Keating has given this advantage to companies. You ought to jump in straight away'. If the restructuring had been finalised last year, a couple of months after the federal budget, I doubt whether anybody could have made anything of it. It would not have been possible to connect it to the increase in stamp duty.

I do not believe that the Chief Minister has a guilty conscience and I will not be supporting the censure motion. However, I will bet my bottom dollar that he wishes he could go back to the Cabinet meeting at Cobourg on 16 June with the knowledge he now has. I do not believe that the Chief Minister made the connection between his private affairs and the increase in stamp duty. I can understand that. He is a busy man with plenty on his mind. Had he made the connection, I am sure that he would have decided that, in the circumstances, the best thing might have been to delay his transaction until after the increase had taken effect. Even if the Chief Minister were to state now that he was willing to put \$5750 into the Treasury coffers, he could not win. People would argue that that was evidence of a guilty conscience.

This matter had done a great deal of damage to the Chief Minister, the government and the conservative side of politics.

Mr Coulter: That is exactly what they set out to do.

Mr COLLINS: I do not believe that the Chief Minister deliberately set out to do it. The man would be a fool to do such a thing. I believe that he has no guilt on his conscience whatsoever in this case.

As does the member for Koolpinyah, I have a problem with that part of the amendment that says that the debate on this motion is a waste of time. I believe a censure motion should be able to be moved in this House. If it is a foolish censure motion, then government members should welcome it because their debating skills should be able to demonstrate that, and the media would pick that up and report that the motion was a furphy and had no substance. Debate on a censure motion should never be considered a waste of the time of the House. I do not know whether the government is prepared to change the amendment, but I dare say some quick action may be being taken on that.

The whole incident is to be regretted by those on the conservative side of politics. It concerns a situation of which one might say: 'There but for the grace of God go I'. I believe that any one of us, in a similar position, could have fallen into that trap. I dare say the Chief Minister should be grateful that it is only the opposition that has picked this up and that he does not have powerful enemies within his own ranks or they might have tried doing a Tuxworth TA business, which was cleaned up years ago before it surfaced in this House. One has to wonder how the Leader of the Opposition at that stage, now Senator Bob Collins, got hold of it, and one has the gravest suspicions that the information was leaked to him. Let me say: 'Sayonara to rivalry'. Anybody who remembers the paper's headline on the day when Bob Collins broke that news may well get my meaning. I believe the front page of the NT News published on the day when Senator Collins, as opposition leader, broke that story in this House gave a good indication of where his information came from. That was a fairly serious matter and the party should have dealt with it.

This is a regrettable incident. It was not deliberate and I am more than happy to say that to people with whom I discuss it. I think the member for Nhulunbuy was wrong when he said that, in 3 months time and for all the wrong reasons, the people will put pressure on the Chief Minister and he will go. Certainly, the Chief Minister has a job in front of him to get the message over to the community because, democratically, it will be decided by the community whether the Chief Minister and his government remain as the government of the Territory or whether they should go. I believe that is where the real decision will be made and that is possibly the best place for it to be made anyway.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, listening to the Leader of the Opposition this morning, I was reminded of a little story about a fellow continuing to ride a bike that had lost its chain. The slower the bike went, the more furiously he pedalled. Eventually, the bike fell over and that was what we saw this morning. The Leader of the Opposition was pedalling furiously although the chain fell off the bike last week, and we watched the bike fall over today.

What has the ALP been trying to do over the last few days? It is pretty obvious. It has been continuing a campaign, which it started a few years ago, of smear and innuendo against the government and members of the government. It is something that members in this House have seen continuously. The member for MacDonnell quite often throws in comments about 'corruption', 'deals' and 'behind the scenes arrangements'. That has been happening for a while. Over

the few years since it started, no one has taken much notice but, as in all these situations, if enough mud is thrown around, some starts to stick. We have never seen any facts to substantiate any allegations of wrongdoing, of corruption or deals behind the scenes. Not one scrap of evidence to support any assertion that that is the case has ever been produced, yet members of the opposition continue to throw mud. There have been changes in the population of the Territory and changes in members of the media in the Territory and, gradually, what was seen as a bit of a joke 4 or 5 years ago is starting to stick.

As the member for Sadadeen said, it is probably quite rightly the opposition's role to play the game this way, but it is unfortunate that the tone of politics in the Territory is gradually dropping to this level. I am sure that not only members opposite but also members on this side of the House have a responsibility to ensure that everything is done properly and that people who are caught up in some sort of wrongdoing are prosecuted to the full extent of the law. That goes without saying. But to have this continual, unsubstantiated mud-slinging certainly creates a scenario in which eventually the people who are having the mud thrown at them will say that enough is enough, and they will start to throw mud back. Certainly, I would encourage members on this side of the House not to go that way, and I hope profoundly that, in future, we might see facts to substantiate any mud-slinging from members opposite and possibly our media might start asking for facts, not innuendo, not unsubstantiated statements, to support some of the more outrageous statements by members opposite. I hope sincerely that the member for MacDonnell will start to display a little maturity in the way he approaches his role and that, when he makes allegations, they are backed up with evidence. Today, instead of any facts to substantiate allegations that the Chief Minister acted improperly, we have seen facts that show the opposite - facts that demonstrate that the Chief Minister acted properly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, no member on this side of the House will condone impropriety. Rightfully, any minister, myself included, who uses his position for financial advantage deserves to be censured and deserves to lose his job, because we have been given a position of responsibility. We all have that attitude, and rightly so. To have allegations made that the Chief Minister acted improperly, and then to have facts that show the exact opposite, indicates just how low the opposition has stooped. What are the facts? The first fact we had was the production of a statutory declaration from the Chief Minister's accountant advising him in January to take a certain course of action. The next fact is that the solicitors advised him in May to proceed with the transfer, and the third fact is that a valuation of the property was obtained in May for the purpose of assessment of stamp duty and appropriate taxation. Those events took place in January and May.

The Cabinet meeting that we are talking about did not take place until 19 June - 6 weeks later. The whole business had been finished before the tax had been discussed, before it was even on the agenda, yet allegations are made that somehow or other the meeting on 19 June was an opportunity for the Chief Minister to take some financial advantage. What a load of hogwash! The facts are there. In trying to draw a bow that long, even the members of the opposition must be absolutely astounded that they have got this far with such insinuations. It is rubbish! They are talking about something that happened 6 months ago, and trying to say there is impropriety. What a load of rubbish!

When I used to smoke, I sometimes happened to buy cigarettes before the budget came down. Was I guilty of impropriety? Should I have waited until

the budget came down because I might have known that cigarette prices were to rise? I used to fill the tank of my car with petrol. If I had known the price of petrol was to rise, was I taking advantage? What a load of rubbish! This happened 6 months earlier and members opposite are trying to insinuate impropriety, and they are hooking it up to something that is very important: proper behaviour by ministers. But, the facts show that the allegation is garbage. Really, Mr Deputy Speaker, the community has to know what has been said and what has been alleged. We cannot do anything more than present the facts in this House and, hopefully, the media will be able to indicate the tenor of the debate today and point out what has come out of it.

The opposition makes it even worse. When the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition realised they were wrong, they introduced a censure motion and tried to carry on regardless. That is after they had found out what they should have known: that the legislation does not come into effect for another few weeks. If they had looked back to 1981, when stamp duty amendments were first passed, they would have seen that it was not backdated. It did not start until the legislation was assented to.

Mr Ede: Wrong!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is the sort of ridiculous behaviour that we have from them. They know the situation, they know the facts, yet they continue to try to present a case which is contrary to the facts.

It may be of interest to note that, in the month of June alone, there were 32 transfers of land valued at over \$150 000. I do not know yet what happened in July, but I will guarantee there were many. I guarantee that a number of transactions have been registered today. What happens right up until the legislation is assented to? Should those people be forced to pay the future increased rate? It is a ridiculous accusation.

If the Chief Minister had gone to the Cabinet meeting and, after the decision on stamp duty had been taken, had started to issue instructions to have the transfer processed, that would certainly have been an impropriety and steps would have to have been taken. But, the opposite happened. The matter was finished. These people stand condemned for throwing mud in the way that they have. They cannot get away with it forever because the worm will turn. Their own supporters will start saying: 'Let us have some facts on the board. Let us stop the rubbish'.

Did the Chief Minister gain any knowledge which would have given him an advantage? Of course he did not. Did the knowledge he gained out of the meeting on 19 June give him any financial advantage over other people? Of course it did not. Could the knowledge he gained give even a perception of advantage? Of course it could not. It is about time that we got away from the gutter tactics which are being employed by members opposite and put the acid on them to come up with facts every time they make unsubstantiated allegations because, if they do not, the community should condemn them.

I support the actions of the Chief Minister. I support the amendment, and we may have a further slight amendment to the amendment. I deplore the actions of members opposite in indulging in a mud-slinging exercise to try to get their way in a political sense. It is disgraceful and I hope that the tone of politics in the Territory rises above the examples set by their colleagues down south. The community has shown very firmly that it does not want to see politics on the level that is run by the ALP in other areas of Australia.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset, I would like to say that I am a little disheartened with the cavalier attitude of government members toward this censure motion. A most serious matter has been raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the lighthearted attitude of members opposite is quite incredible. The Attorney-General somehow painted a picture of a member of the public buying a packet of cigarettes before the budget ...

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr FLOREANI: Prior to the budget or after the budget. I do not think we are talking at that level, even if we are talking about frontbenchers. We are talking about the Treasurer, the person responsible for finances in the Northern Territory. It is a far more serious matter than would appear from the attitude being displayed on the government benches today.

A number of questions spring to mind in this debate. My first question is: did the Treasurer intentionally take advantage of his privileged position? I have listened to the debate and I feel quite satisfied that he has not taken advantage of his position. He was advised by his accountant - and I have no reason to disbelieve any of this - on 4 January, the valuers valued the property on 9 May and, on 28 June, the property was transferred. Commercially, that would seem to be quite realistic and proper. I have no problem with that. Personally, I do not believe that the Chief Minister in any way intended to take advantage of his position. But, I wonder if that is really the point.

This leads to my second question: has the Treasurer utilised an advantage over members of the public? Again, because the new rate of duty will not be payable until some later date, one would have to argue that he has not utilised an advantage over the public because the lower duty is still available to members of the public, as the Chief Minister explained. I have no problems with that either.

The only problem I have is with this question: when was the decision taken that the new rate of duty be made payable from the date of assent to the Appropriation Bill? In other words, to put it in cruder language, has the government orchestrated events to take the heat off the Treasurer? This is the question with which I have difficulty. My understanding is that there was no mention in the budget speech of when the stamp duty would be increased. The member for Stuart said that, in 1981, the duty was payable 6 days after the budget was introduced. That would reinforce the argument of the Chief Minister. In 1984, it was assumed that, from budget day, all the duties would be payable. In 1985, when my colleague was the Treasurer, all the duties were made payable from the date of the budget. I seek an answer to that, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a serious allegation. In terms of other cases cited, such as that of MacKellar and Lynch, it is very serious when assessing the propriety of the Treasurer's actions.

That raises other questions, and I would like these answered too. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Treasurer will not answer these questions. Did he declare his interest to Cabinet? We are talking about a substantial transaction of \$500 000 or more. Did he declare his interest to Cabinet and, if so, what was Cabinet's response? Was it simply overlooked? If so, why doesn't he tell us that? There must have been submissions to Cabinet from Treasury or from other sources. There must have been minutes or instructions from Cabinet to the various government departments indicating that the duty would be payable from a certain date. If those are tabled, I will be quite happy.

What I am saying to the Chief Minister and Treasurer is that I would like to vote against the Leader of the Opposition's motion. I acknowledge his long service and the obvious integrity that he has as our leader. I simply need a little more proof. It comes back to this point: what was the date of the decision that the duty would be payable on the day after assent to the bill? If he can give me that date, I will be happy to vote against the Leader of the Opposition's motion.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, much of this debate today has been based on the lofty heights of ignorance. What we are looking at here is a simple land transaction. If that transaction happened to be between 2 separate parties, a number of factors would have been different. To look at the nature of a land transaction, we have a vendor and a purchaser. The vendor has an interest in getting his money. He has the property on the market for some reason, and the purchaser carries with him an expectation of occupation.

We had the Chief Minister and his wife, as individual persons, transferring ownership of a parcel of land to a company which was, again, wholly owned by themselves. In a transaction where land is being transferred between 2 separate parties, there would be an exchange of contracts and, some time after that exchange of contracts, a transfer would be drawn up. That transfer would be executed and, along with a certified valuation indicating the value of the property, it would be lodged with the Northern Territory Commissioner of Taxes. Following the assessment of the duty payable, that duty would be paid and the documents stamped, 'Stamp Duty Paid'.

Following the lodgment with the Commissioner of Taxes, there can be no variation to the duty payable. It does not matter one iota if it is 1 month, 3 months or 10 years before that document is lodged with the Registrar of Titles for the transfer to be effected, the duty is payable as of the date the transfer is effected, and that transfer was effected the day the transfer was executed.

This transfer was between Marshall Bruce Perron and his wife, as individuals, and a company. There was no expectation of early payment nor any expectation of early occupation of the land, and there was no hurry on the Chief Minister's part to have this transaction in place at any time before 30 June or 1 July. That is why it took some time. There are dates in between. Normally, the stamp duty would be paid and the instruments lodged with the Registrar of Titles all on the one day, and that is commonly referred to as 'settlement'. In this case, there was no need to go through that formal process of settlement between 2 separate parties. We are dealing basically with the one party, and that brings me back to the point I made.

The time when notice was given in this parliament of the stamp duty rate being raised bears no relevance to the whole case. The commencement of the legislation bears no relevance to this. The only relevant date is when there was an intention to transfer and it is clear that, as early as 4 January, the Chief Minister, or Marshall Bruce Perron as an individual, intended to transfer that land to a company. As I said before and I will reiterate, there was no expectation of gain on the part of the vendor and there was no expectation of occupation on the part of the purchaser. I can see that a solicitor would not treat this matter as being particularly urgent given that it was not required to be settled before 1 July.

In instances like this, where we are talking details and where one would expect that, before accusations of impropriety are made, at least some

research would be done as to how matters work, how land is conveyed and the nature of the general rules and procedures, I think it is a great shame that members who have spoken in support of the Leader of the Opposition's censure motion have not bothered to make themselves aware of the simple procedures of conveyancing. I support the amended motion.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I rise to add my strength and support to the Chief Minister on this issue, and to express my dismay that yet another tradition has been broken today by the Leader of the Opposition. I am prepared to sit here and listen to the member for Barkly with his 'holier than thou' attitude talking about mud-slinging and his attempts to hide behind some veil of purity today despite his contribution to that mud-slinging over the weekend in his Sunday Territorian column which took him to new depths, but the Leader of the Opposition dismayed me. For a long time in the Northern Territory, conversations have been able to be carried out between staff from the Chan Building and the Leader of the Opposition's own personal staff. Indeed, we all enjoy the opportunity of being able to talk to one another on a whole range of issues. Today, the Leader of the Opposition brought into the Assembly a private conversation between a member of his staff and a member of staff from the Chan Building, and not only that, he misquoted him as well. In this so-called heated, private conversation with the Leader of the Opposition's staff member that the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to make public, the staff member from the Chan Building has informed me that he did not say: 'What do you want him to do? Lose money?'. In fact, what he said was: 'You are suggesting that the Chief Minister should pay money that he does not owe just because he is Chief Minister'.

However, that is irrelevant, Mr Speaker. What is relevant is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has now broken down another convention in the Northern Territory, and that is the free flow of dialogue that occurs between support staff of members from either side of this Assembly. I think that is a great pity and it is a great shame for the Northern Territory that has taken great pride in probably the most dynamic parliament in Australia.

It really has been a pleasure to be part of this parliament and, when one considers the amount of work that we get through, the manner in which it is processed and, in many cases, the bipartisan support that is offered for legislation passing through this House, to have had this series of incidents over the last week and today is very disappointing. We should all feel ashamed of this, when we consider the people who have spoken in this Assembly in years gone past and the manner in which they got on with the job of developing the Northern Territory. I hope that, throughout the rest of these sittings, we can repair that damage and get on with the business of governing the Northern Territory for the good of all Territorians as indeed our morning prayer in the House suggests that we should. This pettiness, mud-slinging and the breaking down of a convention resulting in a situation whereby staff members can no longer speak to one another without being quoted in the Assembly is unforgivable.

On the matter of censure motions, it is interesting to note that it was not until 1983 that we had a censure motion in this House. My records show that, in 1981 and 1982, there were no censure motions. It was not until May 1983 that we had our first censure motion in 3 years. In fact, there were 2 censure motions during that year. In 1984, there were 3 censure motions. I provide this information to point out that, as indeed Pettifer says, perhaps it is the most crucial motion to be considered by a parliament. All business of the day is cancelled to debate a censure motion. To have the Leader of the Opposition stand up and speak for 8 minutes on this motion and then sit down

Opposition stand up and speak for 8 minutes on this motion and then sit down indicates the level of the conviction that he felt. That is the reason why I added the words 'wasting the time of the Assembly' to the amendment because I believed that it was wasting time. However, I take the point made by the members for Koolpinyah and Barkly about those words and I will take that up later.

I have spoken to the member for Flynn about the drafting instructions to Parliamentary Counsel on this issue. On 21 August, the day before the budget was brought down, Treasury officers provided information to Parliamentary Counsel that the date of assent would be applicable for stamp duty. It was not when the Chief Minister handed down the budget or, as has been suggested, that the Chief Minister last Thursday somehow instructed people to change the commencement date to make it the assent date so that it would get him off the hook. That is not true. On 21 August, the day before the budget was brought down, it was agreed with Parliamentary Counsel that commencement date would be the date of assent.

We have some other assent dates. I think this refers to the conveyancing increase of 1986, when the member for Barkly was Treasurer.

A member: 1985.

Mr COULTER: In 1985. I am sorry. I had that wrong. I thought it was a mini-budget that he brought down in that year, on 4 June I think the date was, and that the change was to come into operation immediately but, in fact, it did not come into effect ...

Mr Perron: Actually, it did.

Mr COULTER: It did? The information that I have received says that it was assented to on 28 June. After receiving further information from the Treasurer, I stand corrected. With the brilliant mind that he has for detail and his integrity, he has remembered precisely what happened on 4 June 1985. That is just one indication of the Chief Minister and Treasurer's ability to remember such details.

Today, the Assembly will consider probably one of the most exciting packages of legislation that has come before it. It is likely that we will sit well into tomorrow morning and for much of the next 2 days to pass that legislation. We have to consider legislation which relates to kidney transplants and other organ transplants which are necessary to save the lives of Territorians. We have the Chief Minister's statement on the environment and the Greenhouse Effect. We have a statement from the Minister for Conservation on the Territory Wildlife Park and the wonderful contribution that will make to tourism. We also have to consider encumbrance legislation, which relates to the situation of people who buy motor vehicles in good faith only to find that they have been stolen. There are numerous other matters to be debated during these sittings. It is in the context of that volume of business that I referred to this censure motion, which relates to questions that were fully answered last week, as 'a waste of time'. Given the volume of important business that we have to attend to for the benefit and welfare of the people of the Northern Territory, I believed that the time being expended on this censure motion was a waste.

Another issue which has arisen from debate on this censure motion relates to the number of speakers, particularly now that we have members on the crossbenches. I believe that it may be appropriate for the Standing Orders

Committee to address this issue. I am not trying to gag debate. I have allowed the debate to continue today. If the Assembly really wants to have 20 speakers on every censure motion, that is fine by me. The government will not gag debate as we have not gagged debate here today. Everybody can have a say. However, I believe that the Standing Orders Committee needs to address the issue of the number of members able to speak in a censure debate. Perhaps there is no need ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr COULTER: In debate on a matter of public importance, there are normally 2 speakers from each side of the House.

Mr Collins: And we do not get a chance to state our views.

Mr COULTER: I am not saying that we should not allow all members to speak. I am saying that we should formalise the situation in standing orders. We need to consider the matter.

In consultation with the members for Sadadeen and Koolpinyah, I have drafted an amendment to the amendment moved by the member for Casuarina. I have shown a copy to the member for Barkly, who said that he would get back to me within 5 minutes, having stated that he found the amendment's reference to 'wasting time' offensive.

Mr Speaker, I move that the amendment be amended by omitting from paragraph 1(a) the words 'wasting the time of the Assembly by'.

Having said that, I know that the Chief Minister will have the support of this Assembly. The opposition has made no case for him to answer. That will not only be proven by the numbers in a few moments but has been proven by the substance of what has been offered in the House today. That does not worry the opposition which is more interested in mud-slinging. This has been a sad time for the Assembly, not only because of the personal attacks and mud-slinging which have occurred in recent days but because of the new low reached by the Leader of the Opposition which means that opposition and government staff members will find it very difficult to communicate with one another in future. I think that that is regrettable.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendment. The Leader of Government Business was amazingly hesitant to speak to the motion and one can only wonder why. When finally he rose, he did everything but speak to the motion and everything but extend his support to the Chief Minister. Again, one can only wonder why. I am pleased that, if the Leader of Government business has control of his own forces, the government will withdraw the first part of the amendment. That is obviously completely and utterly justified. The moving of a censure motion is never a waste of time. This opposition moves such motions only after careful consideration and reflection on issues we consider highly important. We do not resilie from saying that this issue is important. It is an important issue of principle.

The main thing that has come out of this debate for me is that 2 standards are operating in this House. One is the standard accepted by the government and the other is the standard accepted by the opposition, and the opposition standard is the higher. I have no hesitation in stating for the record that any minister in a Territory Labor government who behaved as the Chief Minister has behaved in relation to the budget would be sacked. That is the standard

that I would expect as Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. I give my colleagues notice that, if there is an occurrence like that when we are in government after the next election, the member concerned will be finished in terms of membership of a Smith Labor government. That is the bottom line. The bottom line is about standards and the clearest thing that has emerged from this debate is that this government has a lower standard and a lower sense of propriety on this very important issue than the opposition has.

The second part of the government's amendment refers to the Labor opposition 'mounting a campaign of smear and innuendo against the Chief Minister without basis in fact'. Mr Speaker, the facts have been stated. They have been agreed to by the Chief Minister. At the time when Cabinet was considering a change in stamp duty rates, the Chief Minister was processing a transfer of property. That is the fact. That is what this whole question of propriety hangs on. It is not a question of smear and innuendo. It is a question of proven fact. The behaviour of the Chief Minister has fallen short of the standard expected of him.

I will read from Pettifer again in the hope that the message might get through:

- ° at meetings of the Cabinet and its committees:
 - ° a minister disclose to his colleagues when he has an interest which does, or might reasonably be thought likely to, conflict with his public duty as a minister;
 - ° his declaration be noted in Cabinet records, and
 - ° the minister then either indicate that he will not take part in the discussion in question or else secure the explicit authorisation of his colleagues for taking part;

I quoted that extract 5 hours ago and 9 or 10 government speakers have spoken since then. Not one of them addressed that point. Did the Chief Minister tell his colleagues that he had a conflict of interest? Did he seek advice from his colleagues about that particular matter and, if so, what advice did he get? We have not heard the answer to that because the answer is obvious, Mr Speaker. He did not seek that advice. He is in a situation where he has a conflict of interest. His behaviour has fallen far short of the standards expected of a minister of government not only in the Northern Territory but in any government which operates under the Westminster system. That is why the opposition moved the censure motion and that is why it should be supported.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, one of the advantages of being in opposition is that you can afford to espouse marvellous principles without being likely ever to have to face putting them into practice. That is very easy to do. The opposition has attempted to beat up its allegation that I gained an advantage through my position as Treasurer. In all of its contributions today, the opposition has not demonstrated that I received an advantage of 1¢.

Mr Smith: You had an advantage of 6 weeks.

Mr PERRON: How did I receive an advantage?

Mr Smith: You knew the stamp duty was going up and others did not.

Mr PERRON: Where was the advantage that I received?

Mr Smith: It was an advantage of time.

Mr PERRON: The Leader of the Opposition is obviously having a great deal of difficulty in accepting the facts. I repeat that, if I were to undertake next week the transaction that I undertook on 28 June, I would pay the same amount in stamp duty that I paid on 28 June - \$23 000.

Mr Smith: It would have been a good story: 'Chief Minister rushes to beat his own tax increase'.

Mr PERRON: He is just incredible, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this amendment primarily because of matters raised by the members for Barkly and Flynn who wanted some clarification in relation to decisions taken to have this duty increase come into effect on the date of assent rather than on the date of the announcement. I have a short piece on the subject of the introduction of tax laws.

When introducing new tax laws, implementation must have regard for issues such as the potential for avoidance, the effectiveness of any proposed changes, whether or not it is reasonable to give some notice of the change to the taxpayer, and the type of administrative arrangements that need to be put in place to pay or collect the tax. Some transactions, such as new or increased tax on tobacco or petrol, can lead to significant revenue being forgone because large purchases can be made quickly. Each purchase by the end user is general, small and frequent. The mechanism for paying the tax is normally on the basis of periodic returns after the new tax has been applied and this presents no problems in application. It is normal therefore for taxes on tobacco and petrol to be made effective from the date of announcement, and this practice has been followed in the Territory and the states.

Conversely, with financial institutions duty, this duty will require the banks to implement new administrative arrangements and, accordingly, a longer lead time is appropriate and, indeed, essential. The date of commencement is therefore proposed as 1 December 1989.

Conveyancing duty is a specific charge where the government must take into account that transactions are relatively infrequent, and completed over a longer period and, importantly, may well be under way when changes in rates are announced and may or may not require completion before the act receives assent. It is reasonable that transactions such as these, entered into in good faith before an announcement, should be able to be completed, if possible, under existing tax arrangements.

There has been considerable debate recently about the desirability of introducing tax laws with the commencement date being the date of announcement. There have been lengthy debates, particularly in the Senate, and a number of distinguished lawyers have criticised the practice, including the now Chief Justice Mason of the High Court. The essence of the criticism is that much can happen to change the proposal between the date of announcement and the date it actually becomes law and commercial operations which must continue will be unsure of the precise legal requirements until the law is in effect. The area of conveyancing is particularly susceptible to these problems.

This increased debate has arisen with the advent of so-called 'legislation by press release'. The Commonwealth Treasurer has announced some tax changes with effect from the date of announcement - that is, the date of the announcement in a press release - which, in the case of tax on non-cash benefits, took over 3 years for the legislation actually to become law. That was 3 years from the time that he announced it in a press release. The recent amendments to the taxation of superannuation funds are another good example of legislation by press release where we had to wait over 12 months for further clarification of taxation details.

The public debate in this area set the background for the approach now adopted by the Territory. If the date of announcement is the date of application, it causes confusion because the law cannot actually be applied until it has passed through all stages, including assent. Documents must still be stamped at the old rate if lodged before assent. With all taxes and charges, the government cannot legally collect revenue until the appropriate legislation is in force. The method of introducing the changes to conveyancing duty in this budget - that is, from the date of assent, as was done in this Assembly in 1981 - removes all confusion. It also makes the Territory's practice consistent with that now operating in the states.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we are about to vote on this issue and we are about to see who stands by the code of conduct that has been set down for Cabinet ministers, rule No 1 of which states that:

- ° at meetings of the Cabinet and its committees:
- ° a minister disclose to his colleagues when he has an interest which does, or might reasonably be thought likely to, conflict with his public duty as a minister;
- ° his declaration be noted in Cabinet records; and
- ° the minister then either indicate that he will not take part in the discussion in question or else secure the explicit authorisation of his colleagues for taking part;

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member for Stuart is speaking to the amendment, not to the original motion. I ask that you direct him to confine his remarks specifically to the amendment.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Stuart will link his remarks directly to the amendment.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it has been stated in the amendment that we have been mounting a campaign of smear and innuendo against the Chief Minister without basis in fact. That rule No 1 is a fact. It is in Pettifer and it is accepted by all Cabinet governments throughout Australia and the Westminster system. It is a fact that no honourable member opposite has addressed himself to that particular point. It is a fact that, in his second contribution to this debate, the Chief Minister did not address that point. He has not stated whether he disclosed his interest, had it declared in Cabinet records and had discussion with his colleagues as to whether he should continue to take part. He has not addressed that issue.

What we will be voting on now is whether honourable members on both sides of the House will stand by the code of conduct as it exists or whether that code of conduct is to be thrown out of the window and we are to set new

standards in this parliament on what is acceptable behaviour by ministers. That is what we are about to vote on.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16

Noes 7

Mr Collins

Mr Coulter

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Vale

Mr Bailey

Mr Bell

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Eleventh Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Eleventh Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

TABLED PAPER

Publications Committee - Tenth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Tenth Report of the Publications Committee. I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

Greenhouse Effect

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the steps that the government has taken to deal with the Greenhouse Effect and to further protect and conserve our natural environment and cultural heritage. Environmental matters are of considerable concern to the government and to all Territorians because of their major bearing on our lifestyle and our livelihood. In the Territory, we have the good fortune to have inherited one-sixth of Australia - a beautiful area still largely in its natural state. We have the advantage therefore of being able to learn from the environmental mistakes and achievements of more developed areas. We have the golden

opportunity to improve on both our standard of living and our quality of life by taking measures to ensure our natural resources are utilised in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

In common with the rest of Australia and the world at large, one of the Territory's greatest environmental challenges is how to deal with the Greenhouse Effect. I am pleased to say that the government has already put in place the machinery needed to plan for climatic change and to advise on the implications of the Greenhouse Effect for the whole of the Territory and the protection measures required. We are committed to playing our part in addressing the issue locally and at the national level.

The Greenhouse Effect is actually a natural process whereby gases such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide and methane absorb radiation and trap heat and, in turn, warm the atmosphere. Without this process, there would be no life on the planet. However, human activity since the industrial revolution has added greenhouse gases to the atmosphere to such an extent that it has caused the warming of the atmosphere to occur at an unprecedented rate. The increase in gases is due mainly to the burning of fossil fuels, the loss of much of the world's plant life and tropical forests, and emissions from industrial and agricultural processes.

Scientists worldwide now agree that, in the first half of the next century, we will face a rise in global mean temperature greater than at any previous time in human history. The latest suggestions are of an increase of 2° to 4° by the year 2040, with an accompanying rise in sea level of from 20 cm to 50 cm. Just how much the world climate will change and in what ways, and how this will affect the Territory and other places, is still uncertain, but it is important that governments start planning now to limit or slow down the rise in temperatures and sea level as much as possible and develop long-term strategies so that we can adapt to the changes that cannot be avoided. The need for a global concerted effort places an obligation on all governments to respond and to set an example to others.

In September 1988, the Territory government established a committee to advise on the possible implications of the Greenhouse Effect for the Territory and to recommend appropriate action. The committee is well equipped to provide expert advice as it includes representatives from a wide range of disciplines. Members are drawn from such agencies as the Department of Lands and Housing, the Conservation Commission, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Northern Territory University, the Department of the Chief Minister, the North Australia Research Unit, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the Power and Water Authority and the CSIRO. The committee has been collecting information to improve our understanding of the effects of climate change and to help identify areas requiring further investigation. It is now finalising a plan of approach focusing on scientific investigations and assessment, impact interpretation and strategies designed to limit the emission of greenhouse gases, to adapt to climate change and to capitalise on any benefits that climate change might bring.

As I announced last month, the committee has recommended that the CSIRO Division of Atmospheric Research be engaged to carry out a 4-year research program on climate change in our region. The research would be designed to obtain the best possible estimates of the anticipated rise in sea level affecting the Territory so local agencies can evaluate the coastal effects. Other aspects to be addressed would include assessments of likely changes in Territory temperatures, rainfall, length and occurrence of monsoon conditions over the Top End, dry periods in the Centre and intensity, location and

frequency of tropical cyclones. This core research is important to our overall knowledge of the probable consequences of climate change in our region. It would complement other programs which are already being funded by the government through various Territory agencies and which are providing vital inputs to the Greenhouse Effect picture.

It is estimated that the regional climate research program would cost nearly \$400 000. In his recent statement on the environment, the Prime Minister announced that \$5.5m would be allocated for a Greenhouse Research Grants Scheme to begin in 1990-91 and we hope we will be able to tap into these Commonwealth research grant funds.

All relevant international agencies agree that energy use and conservation are the most important aspects to start with in trying to slow down the rate of greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, shifting from high to low carbon dioxide emitting fossil fuels is seen to be one of the best short-term options. The government's decision to change from diesel to gas-fired power has already reduced carbon dioxide emission in the Territory by around 70%. Use of natural gas means that the Territory can now be considered a relatively low producer of greenhouse gases.

Other energy supply strategies warranting further consideration by national and international policy makers include the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal and hydro and, most importantly, nuclear power, which has major economic implications for the Territory. Transport is another area where improved energy efficiency can be achieved. So far as the Territory is concerned, it brings home strongly the need for the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link which will reduce carbon dioxide emissions from diesel-powered road trains.

As an immediate step, the Territory government is also examining suitable policy options to limit the use of chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, and halons which deplete the earth's ozone layer and contribute to the Greenhouse Effect at the same time. Incredible though it seems, 1 CFC aerosol can has the same Greenhouse Effect as 1 t of carbon dioxide. In fact, CFCs are currently thought to be responsible for between 15% and 25% of the Greenhouse Effect.

At the national level, the Territory is participating in a special working group established by the Australian Environment Council to report on cooperative strategies for adoption by the states, territories and the Commonwealth. Over the next 12 months, we will be providing input to the Australian contribution to several major international policy meetings on climate change and ozone depletion. If warranted, we will also send delegates to selected meetings. The National Ozone Strategy, adopted recently by the Australian Environment Council, aims to achieve a total phase-out of ozone-depleting substances in Australia by 1998. The Territory government fully supports this goal, which is a significant advance on the 50% target set by the Montreal Protocol of the same year.

As the Minister for Conservation confirmed, after attending the Australian Environment Council meeting in New Zealand, the government will introduce legislation to ensure that the Territory plays its part in the national effort to reduce damage to the ozone layer. An interdepartmental committee is currently reviewing 106 recommendations of the National Ozone Strategy to determine how we can best ensure timely implementation of the strategy within the Territory. Once suitable alternatives to CFCs are available, the cost of converting equipment and plant will be substantially less in the Territory than in most places because of our relatively small industrial base. However,

it is recognised that incentives of some kind will be required to encourage the transition from long-held practices.

The national strategy for phasing out ozone-depleting substances will include the following steps: bans on products and manufacturing processes involving ozone-depleting substances, restrictions on installation and use of products containing these substances, labelling products so the public will know which products are ozone-friendly, recovery of and, where possible, reprocessing, recycling or disposal of ozone-depleting substances, the introduction of improved design and operating procedures to reduce CFCs and halon emissions by industry, programs to increase industry awareness of how servicing and maintenance procedures can be improved and programs to increase public awareness of what we can do as individuals to reduce our use of CFCs and halons.

I turn now to other action that the government is taking to further protect our natural environment and cultural heritage. The Conservation Commission is working on a conservation strategy for the Territory which will focus on the integration of development and conservation, the concept of sustainable development and utilisation of resources and the preservation of the Territory's genetic diversity and essential ecological processes. The strategy will provide guidelines and safeguards to ensure that our natural environment is properly considered and cared for by this and future governments, community organisations, companies and individual landowners and land users. It will provide guidelines for living and non-living resource development including tourism, recreation, mining, urban development, manufacturing processes, parks and wildlife, and primary production. In essence, the Territory conservation strategy will serve as an umbrella policy statement which will facilitate a planned and organised approach to the conservation and utilisation of our natural resources.

Later in the year, the government will issue a discussion paper to seek the views of community members on all aspects of the strategy before it is finalised. I hasten to add that we will be liaising with Aboriginal communities as part of the public consultation process. Conservation is a subject in which everyone has a stake, and everyone will be given the opportunity to have a say.

In addition to the overall conservation strategy, complementary strategies will be developed for particular aspects of conservation. As members will readily recognise, one of the most vital of these is soil conservation. Our soil conservation strategy will take full account of the national soil conservation strategy released in 1988 on how land degradation will be tackled in Australia. The main elements of the national strategy include community support, resource evaluation, land use planning, research, extension, cooperation and coordination, and management and preventive programs.

In order to ensure sustained utilisation of our resources, we must identify their extent and value and weigh these aspects against the benefits of particular types of development in particular environments. In the case of our coastal resources, for example, it makes sense to restrict development to uses which require a coastal location. This approach has been laid out already, in general terms, in the government's coastal management policy of 1985. More recently, the specific issue of mangrove conservation, management and development in Darwin Harbour has received attention. Mangroves play a vital role in the functioning of our near-shore marine ecosystems and support valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. It is important that early attention be given to mangroves in Darwin Harbour because

the pressures of development affect the harbour sooner than other coastal areas.

Shortly, Cabinet will be considering the results and recommendations of a Mangrove Zone Management Plan for the harbour and will be seeking comment from relevant authorities. The final mangrove zone plan will be a major step towards responsible planning and development of the coastal zone. The initial objective of the plan is to retain 80% of the productivity, as distinct from the area, of the mangroves while allowing necessary development to proceed. Conservation and development will be integrated and balanced.

The government is taking steps also to ensure the protection of wildlife which is special to the Territory. A good example is the research being carried out on our endangered Gouldian finch. This research is being funded by the World Wildlife Fund which, in turn, received money for the research from 2 companies exploring for minerals in the vicinity of one of the finches' breeding areas. These companies are Billiton Australia Gold Pty Ltd and Zapopan NL. I am pleased to say that the organisers of the Kangaroo 89 exercise ordered that no military activities be carried out in the finches' breeding areas.

Efforts to protect our endangered bilby are beginning to bear fruit. The bilby, or rabbit-eared bandicoot, was once found over much of mainland Australia, but is now confined mainly to the Tanami Desert. The Conservation Commission has successfully bred the bilby in captivity at the Arid Zone Research Institute in Alice Springs and surplus bilbies are now being reintroduced into the Watarrka National Park. There they are breeding well and have moved out across a 10 km² area.

A similar program has been started for the mala, or rufous hare-wallaby, which is perilously close to extinction. There are now only 20 to 30 of these animals left in the world, yet they once covered a quarter of mainland Australia. Captivity-bred malas are being reintroduced on Aboriginal land in the Tanami Desert and there are promising indications that this cooperative project between the Conservation Commission and the Walpiri people will be successful.

The wise utilisation of our natural wildlife can and should ensure conservation. The most obvious example of this has been the development of the Territory's crocodile farming industry. This industry is now well established and, at the same time, the wild crocodile population has steadily recovered since the 1960s when numbers were dangerously low.

The government is committed to protecting the rainforests scattered throughout our coastal regions. These forests comprise around 600 plant species, of which about a dozen are endemic to the Territory. In April 1987, we agreed to participate in the National Rainforest Conservation Program established by the Commonwealth government, and we are taking a number of other steps which can only benefit our rainforest resources. Already, several government departments have a wastepaper recycling program and the government will investigate the practicality of extending this program across all departments. Advice is also being prepared on the viability of government using recycled materials such as recycled paper, and we are investigating the possibility of using double-sided photocopying to greatly reduce the amount of paper used. Eventually, our plans to establish a pulp and paper industry in the Territory, based on the fibre crop kenaf, could have a far-reaching impact on forest conservation.

I am pleased to report that the government's commitment to environmental protection is supported by the Northern Territory Chamber of Mines. Conscious of the environmental responsibilities of its members, the Chamber of Mines has approached the government for assistance in developing appropriate codes of practice and safeguards for mining operations in environmentally sensitive areas. This request, and initiatives such as the support for conservation research, clearly demonstrates the willingness of the mining industry to work with the government in implementing effective environmental protection policies.

As well as protecting the environment, the government is concerned with beautifying and enhancing the natural and built environment. As members will be aware, recently the government contracted a design consortium to prepare guidelines for the beautification of Darwin, including the greening of the city, landscaping of parks and gardens and treatment of beaches and road reserves. The government is also providing funds to assist with a landscape beautification program in Alice Springs. In addition, the Conservation Commission has worked with councils, community groups and community members in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and smaller centres to identify areas needing beautification programs. A number of works are being undertaken throughout the Territory.

I am pleased to say that our children are taught about environmental issues in our schools. One-fifth of the social and cultural education curriculum concentrates on the natural environment and environmental issues are also included in the science curriculum. Over the years, the Department of Education has produced a range of curriculum materials on local environmental issues, in some cases in cooperation with the Conservation Commission. In addition, schools encourage environmental awareness through participation in KAB activities and through the work of the Environmental Education Link Group in Darwin and the Centralian Organisation for Outdoor and Environmental Education in Alice Springs, and through the Department of Education's Field Study Centre at Channel Island.

Already the Territory has a substantial body of legislation dealing with many aspects of heritage such as parks, wildlife and soil conservation. However, there is a need for specific legislation to cover our cultural heritage. Last November, the Minister for Conservation announced that the government would be introducing heritage legislation this year. This government will honour that commitment.

While this government will not swerve in its determination to aggressively promote the rapid economic development of the Territory, we are equally determined to protect and care for our natural environment and cultural heritage. We will protect, not kill, the goose that lays our golden eggs. The government's approach to economic development and environmental protection is one of balance based on scientific principles, sound practices and common sense.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this statement indicates that there has been a dramatic change in attitudes in the Northern Territory over the past 12 months, a change in attitudes of which we on this side of the House are also part, and that is to the good. For the first time, we have a statement from the government on key environmental issues. Certainly, it will not go down in history as the world's greatest environmental statement because that distinction has been claimed already by the Prime Minister. However, it

is a start, and it reflects the debate that is occurring both nationally and internationally. There is increasing concern that the way in which we are treating our world means that it may not exist in a useable form for much longer. There is a desire and an intention to come to grips with the global problems, and it is the global problems that occupy the first half of the Chief Minister's statement. I indicate our full support for endeavours to tackle those global problems.

Although we have one-sixth of Australia's area, we certainly do not contribute one-sixth of the problems in relation to the Greenhouse Effect and the ozone layer. However, there is an obligation and a responsibility on us to do what we can. Achievements in these matters are not easily won. One example of that is the question of importing timber from South-east Asia. I have had extensive discussions with people in the wholesale timber industry here about the problems associated with cutting back on the importation of Asian timbers for the local construction industry. It is simplistic to assume that, if we stop buying hardwoods from overseas, somehow we will contribute to a lessening of the Greenhouse Effect in those particular countries.

What we forget in that exercise, as in most exercises, is that moves that are good for the community really work only if there is an economic benefit in them for the people whom we wish to make the sacrifice. I know that I disagree with my federal colleagues on this but, in my view, saying that we must ban the importation of hardwood timbers from Asian countries means that the people in Asia who rely on that trade for a living will miss out on that means of livelihood and there is nothing to replace it. We must be rather sophisticated in our approach and I think that is one of the challenges that we face in this debate. We must take a sophisticated approach and recognise that many people will be economically disadvantaged, particularly in countries less developed than our own. As part of finding the answers to the problem, we must find alternative economic opportunities for them.

Apart from the general global debate and the national debate that centred on the Franklin River and Tasmania some years ago and, more recently, on the wood chipping industry in both Tasmania and mainland Australia, we have had the Wanguri by-election. There is no doubt that the Wanguri by-election demonstrated that people in the Northern Territory have an interest in, and a commitment to, the environment. The Green Independent candidate received 16.8% of the vote. Although it may not be possible for the Green Independents to reach that figure in a general election, the performance of the Green Independent candidate indicated that, in our community, there is a serious and a genuine commitment to the environment and that people want to see political parties come to grips with those matters.

Basically, we cannot really have too many problems with what the Chief Minister has said. I do not want to go through the statement page by page, however I was particularly interested in his comments about mangroves ...

Mr Perron: I am very big on mangroves.

Mr SMITH: I imagine that you would be because you have a very close personal involvement in that particular aspect, and I mean nothing detrimental in saying that. I make that as a positive comment in light of the previous debate. I think that more and more of us realise the value of mangroves. In fact, one of the most pleasant things you can do, in my view, is to venture a mere 20 m or 30 m into the mangroves at Rapid Creek. From there, you cannot see Darwin. It really is a terrific and very impressive sight to be surrounded by a forest of mangroves.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You should come out our way. You cannot see Darwin from there either.

Mr SMITH: There are no mozzies in Rapid Creek except at very high tide. Certainly, I want to say to the government that, if it is looking at cutting back mangroves and wants to tamper with those at Rapid Creek, it will have to take me on. I will start a 'hands off Rapid Creek' movement. That is one of the few relatively untouched green belt areas left in Darwin.

In his response, I would like the Chief Minister to provide me with a rationalisation for aiming to keep 80% of existing mangrove productivity. I do not quite understand why the figure 80% has been selected. I do not know if it is a trade-off that the government is prepared to make between protecting the mangroves and development or whether there is a scientific basis for it. Perhaps the Chief Minister can seek advice on that matter. Certainly, it is good that the proper role of mangroves in attracting aquatic populations to our shores is finally being recognised. I think that a person with one of the more interesting jobs in this town is Russell Hanley of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences who spends his life wading in and out of mangrove swamps both here and in parts of Indonesia. It certainly is incredibly interesting to talk to Russell Hanley about his work.

However, having said that, one has to look at the record of the Northern Territory government on a number of key issues over the past few years. We will all be watching to see whether in fact it has had a genuine change of heart or whether what we are witnessing is window dressing in light of what is perceived to be a shift in community opinion. For example, who can forget the attempt of the Deputy Chief Minister to lobby overseas against the listing of Kakadu stages 1 and 2 for World Heritage?

Mr Hatton: Stage 2, not stage 1.

Mr SMITH: I bet that that is not an activity that a Northern Territory government would undertake now if World Heritage items were coming up.

Mr Hatton: I would.

Mr Coulter: You have to be fair dinkum about it, though.

Mr Firmin: On exactly the same grounds.

Mr SMITH: 'On exactly the same grounds'. Hopefully, a minister rather than a backbencher will make that comment because that will certainly put the government's commitment into some context.

I guess a major problem that we have in the Northern Territory is land degradation. If the government is serious about land degradation, it is time that it started getting some runs on the board. There is no doubt that land degradation is our most severe problem Australia-wide. We have the unique experience of the prime pastoral body, the National Farmers Federation, and the prime environmental body, the Australian Conservation Foundation, agreeing that it is a major problem that needs to be addressed. It is certainly encouraging that the Prime Minister has been able to get those 2 groups to work on this problem.

At the time of the Prime Minister's statement, I issued a similar statement calling on the Chief Minister to get the environment movement in the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association to come

to a similar agreement to recognise land degradation as the key problem in the Northern Territory and to get to work on it. I do not know what has happened to that initiative. I have no knowledge that it was picked up by the Northern Territory government. Let us not shy away from the fact that land degradation is the most serious problem in the Northern Territory. We all know that there are pastoral properties in the Northern Territory which have suffered severe erosion. If we are serious about the environment, it is time that we put a stop to that. One action we might take is to provide the Department of Lands and Housing with a scientific and objective method of assessing the impact of soil erosion on pastoral land and how it can be stopped. It is interesting that, in the history of the Northern Territory, forfeiture provisions have never been used to prevent the misuse of land or to punish people who have misused the land and allowed extensive erosion to occur. It is time to address this seriously and to toughen up the covenants which apply to the use of our most precious natural asset, the pastoral land of the Northern Territory.

The irony of the greening of Marshall Perron is in its impact on his colleague, the Deputy Chief Minister, the member for Palmerston, the warhorse for the uranium industry ...

Mr Perron: The uranium industry will save us all.

Mr SMITH: ... the person who was prepared to stand up in public and claim proudly to be an 'erosionist'. He certainly will not be allowed to forget that. It was also the Deputy Chief Minister who, in his enthusiasm for development at any price, wanted to establish a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory. Who could forget that, Mr Speaker? It was also he, together with the member for Barkly, who strongly pushed the idea of a toxic waste facility in Tennant Creek. I would like to know where the Deputy Chief Minister stands now on the question of a nuclear waste facility for the Northern Territory. He may like to address that matter in his contribution to this debate.

Mr Hatton: Where do you stand on the nuclear industry or are you frightened to address that question?

Mr SMITH: I am not frightened to address that question. In fact, I have done so in this Assembly on a number of occasions.

Mr Speaker, the Deputy Chief Minister has been left behind. His attitude of development at any cost is no longer relevant. People are now looking for approaches which match sustainable development with the need to protect our environment for the 21st century. It will be very interesting to see how the Deputy Chief Minister comes to grips with this new ideology and it will be very interesting to see him change his stand. I will say in passing that it was extremely interesting to note that the high-profile Deputy Chief Minister was not sighted during the Wanguri by-election campaign. That is a reflection of the problems which members of the government are having increasingly with some of his stranger statements.

The Chief Minister's statement did not address the question of environmental impact statements. That is rapidly becoming an issue which must be addressed in the Northern Territory. In 1984, the Northern Territory government produced a guide to the environmental assessment process in the Northern Territory. It clearly indicated that the initial decision to require an EIS rests basically with the minister. We must develop set criteria for putting environmental impact statements in place. I would suggest that the

government might like to move in that direction before the pressure becomes too great and it is forced to do it. There is no doubt that there is widespread community concern about the lack of a proper environmental impact statement process. There is no set requirement on major projects. I am certainly not going to give a monetary figure at which they should become mandatory, but this is an area which must be addressed by the government.

The broad question of planning must also be addressed. Even after the second or third revision of the Darwin Town Plan, we still have no planning process. All we have is a zoning process. It really is time to give the Planning Authority the teeth to put some conditions on rezoning. As I have said publicly, a good place to begin this process would be with the proposed Doctor's Gully rezoning. I certainly have no problems with the proposed rezoning of Doctor's Gully and the proposal to integrate that particular piece of land with the Esplanade concept. However, it is important that, in that rezoning and integration process, the character of the area not be lost. That is the nub of the problem which exists at present. The Planning Authority gives a general rezoning. It has neither the power nor the authority to apply conditions. Such conditions would be perfectly appropriate in terms of the Doctor's Gully proposition. I am sure that the Darwin City Council would have no problems with it. It would be perfectly appropriate to say that the area could be rezoned on the basis that no trees were to be knocked down without the authority's permission.

There is a need for a more active involvement of the Planning Authority in zoning matters. Without that involvement, we have a town plan which does little more than say how high the buildings can be in particular areas and what sort of uses they can be put to. If we are serious about developing a tropical atmosphere in the City of Darwin, we really have to be more active in our planning arrangements and provide the Planning Authority with the opportunity to give a greater sense of direction to people who want to develop in the Darwin area.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude by saying that I welcome the Chief Minister's statement. It is a recognition of the increasingly important role of the protection of the environment in the political process and the increasing need to address very real concerns about the future of this planet. I indicate the opposition's support for the key objectives outlined in the statement and I put the Chief Minister on notice that we will be watching the government's actions very carefully.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the Chief Minister's statement, I want firstly to note the kindness and nobility of the Minister for Conservation, whose prerogative it was to deliver such a statement. I suppose, in view of other matters, it was considered politically advantageous for the Chief Minister to deliver it.

The statement says that its subject is 'steps the government is taking to deal with the Greenhouse Effect and further protect and conserve our natural environment and cultural heritage'. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I am pleased that the government has made such a statement. However, it is one thing to talk and it is another thing to do. I wonder whether this will be another situation in which there is a great deal of talk and very little action. As an illustration of that, I point out that the statement was made today, 29 August, which means that the government must have been thinking about it for some time. The same government has been the proponent of a development at Gunn Point which would result in the rezoning of land for a subdivision. Nobody would have any disagreement with that, provided that

certain environmental requirements were met. However, the proposal involved the creation of building blocks right on top of the cliffs adjacent to the beach. Such a proposal is in direct contrast with the approach outlined in the Chief Minister's statement. You would have to be blind in one eye and not able to see with the other not to realise that those blocks would be an environmental disaster. I am pleased that, in response to a question from me, the Minister for Lands and Housing stated in this House that, although not abandoned, the process was being considered further. That situation must be watched very carefully.

I am not talking about big issues here. I am talking about small issues. I am talking about day-to-day issues, which is what conservation is all about. It is not about big reports in glossy books, published by the government and written by a well-known journalist, filled with pretty pictures and promoted by a well-known person. That is not conservation. Conservation is actually doing things on the ground.

A recent proposal has been brought to my attention. It concerns an area in which I am interested even though it is not in my electorate. It has been brought to my attention that recently a large company wanted to buy some Crown land on which there were some trees, that had been planted previously by government branches, and some natural bush. When it made a development application to use the Crown land, it was its intention to uproot these trees and plant lawn. I believe there is a conflict of interest there because, on the one hand, we are told to conserve the trees we have and, on the other hand, we are told that the government intends to sell this land. I do not know if the development application has gone through as it was proposed or whether conditions will apply to it.

In that case, if for no other reason than the cash value of an actual grown tree, the government should have put a monetary value on the trees. Only by its so doing will people appreciate the value of the trees and bushes. I know that clearing is necessary in some instances, for example, so that crops can be grown that will feed the community but, at the same time, it is not necessary to wreck the bush and the countryside to do that. There are many other instances but I will refer to one other where the government's actions contradict its expressed proposals. I refer to the proposed sale of part of the gardens in Darwin to another 'gunna' development. We have already have too few parks and gardens around Darwin and, indeed, the government is proposing to provide more parks and plant more trees. Nevertheless, it is selling off the gardens we have already to large hotel groups.

I was very pleased when the government first said it had set machinery in place to advise on how to deal with climate change, and to advise on Greenhouse Effect implications. I know some of the people on that committee in the Northern Territory. I would be very interested to hear when the government intends to tell us of their suggestions on how the ordinary man and woman in the street can deal with the climatic changes that will come upon us. I think this is the basic problem with any such statement by the government. It completely ignores little people. There are so many little people in the community who actually want to do something. We have been told that if cans of hair spray, oven spray, fly spray etc contain CFCs, we should not buy them but should buy brands that do not rely on fluorocarbons because their use is less detrimental to the environment. We know that, but there are so many other ways in which ordinary men and woman could help to slow down the Greenhouse Effect.

There was a program on television on Sunday night - I think it was called 'Down to Earth' - which I found very interesting, if only because of the fact that most of the proposals made by the young people who are interested in conservation issues today involve a way of living that was practised by people of my grandmothers' and mother's time, not perhaps for the same reasons but with the same effect. In those days, those things were done in order to save money, through frugality, not in the interests of the environment because that was a not word that people heard used then. However, the end result was the same. Probably those people lived a far healthier life as a result. Certainly, it is probable that they enjoyed life more. There were not as many fat people around. People worked more and they used arm-and-leg power more than car power.

These days, ordinary people want to hear about the little things that they can do to help. Most of the people in the community are indians rather than chiefs. All of those people want to help in some way and I believe that it is the government's role to suggest ways in which people can help, by buying certain brands of materials, by recycling bottles and so on. I believe there is a firm in Darwin that recycles bottles, dirty used motor oil, plastics and many forms of metal. All of these things can be recycled and used again in some form. In doing that, not only do we save nature's resources, we also save energy through not having to make replacements for them.

I believe that it is in our own interests, as any thinking person would agree, to give serious consideration to environmental issues. Anybody who is conscious of his or her place in the grand scheme of things - and whilst it is a very small place, nevertheless a very important place - does not need to be told by the government. Some people are thinking these things out for themselves, but there are many people in the community who probably cannot think these things through, because they do not have the educational advantages that some of us have had, and they need advice about actual ways in which they can help the grand plan.

The statement rambled a little. It did not really stick to the point. In the first paragraph, the Chief Minister said that the government is taking steps to conserve our natural environment and cultural heritage, but the statement did not say a great deal about cultural heritage, just those 2 words. We know of the success of the Conservation Commission in its breeding programs with the bilby and the mala. It is a pity that the work of the Conservation Commission cannot be encouraged in other such areas which I regard as true conservation issues, and I believe the minister is at fault in not having a true appreciation of his portfolio.

Instead of the Conservation Commission being considered - and again, this is my hobbyhorse and I believe the honourable minister would do well to listen to the people in the Conservation Commission - as a body comprised of people who just plant trees and make parks in the northern suburbs, I think the honourable minister would be better off considering the Conservation Commission's interest in real conservation issues. I believe that the Conservation Commission does have a very important role in encouraging, building and developing national parks, like Litchfield Park and other parks in the Northern Territory, but not suburban parks. I believe that should be left to community groups and local government, not to officers of the Conservation Commission. I am not saying that parks and gardens are not necessary in Darwin. When they are developed, it will make Darwin a much more pleasant, prettier and greener place to be in, but I believe that to use limited government funds in an area like this is not in the best interests of the community. Again, with encouragement, the community could be persuaded to do a great deal for itself.

The Chief Minister talked about examining suitable policy options to limit the use of CFCs in the Northern Territory. The budget debate has not been finished yet and therefore I ask whether the honourable minister has thought of putting taxes on CFCs. The government has taxed most other commodities and, while it is doing that, he could also consider the Fire Service and all officers connected with fire control in buildings so that thought can be given to the use of CFCs in fire extinguishers. With some encouragement, they might interest themselves in research so that other types of extinguishers can be used.

This should be only the start of government statements on this subject. Future statements might come from the Minister for Conservation. Actually, I would like to see statements made regularly by the honourable minister giving us an update on action actually being taken by the government, not just what it plans to do. I know it is necessary to plan and to make a statement in the beginning to say what the government intends to do, but time is running out and people want to know now what the government is actually doing.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister that protection of our mangroves is of paramount importance because of the mangrove's place in the growing of food, from the tiniest molecular water creatures up to fish, in the marine food chain, but I believe the interest of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Conservation should not stop at marine food chains. They could look also at food chains on dry land. This is such an enormous subject that we could discuss it for days and only cover part of it.

I believe it is imperative that the Minister for Conservation keeps us up to date by means of regular statements on what the government is actually doing on conservation issues. In view of those few instances that I could bring to mind immediately about the government not acting in the interests it espouses in statements like this, I hope that it will not only talk about conservation but will ensure that people throughout its departments are thinking in terms of conservation.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement made by the Chief Minister. Before speaking on it, I would like to comment on some of the things that have been said this afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about mangroves and the fact that there was reference to ensuring that 80% of productive mangroves remain. He asked why it should not be 100%. Obviously, some allowance has to be made for the development of future areas of wharf and barge discharge facilities. However, a mangrove study group has been operating for a couple of years now and it has done ...

Mr Hatton: Since 1985.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Nightcliff just informed me that it commenced operation in 1985. It has done a tremendous amount of work in relation to the different sorts of mangrove in Darwin Harbour and the productivity of those mangroves. Some of the mangrove areas produce tonnes and tonnes of fodder per day that keeps the whole life cycle of the harbour going. We are very aware of that and we intend not only to ensure that those productive mangrove areas are protected, but will probably do everything we can to ensure that the environment is such that we can obtain an increase in those mangrove areas rather than a decrease. As most people in the community now realise, mangroves play a very important part in the whole food chain process.

In relation to the Leader of the Opposition's comment about Kakadu stages 2 and 3, he said that he certainly hopes that the government will not go through that process again. Actually, it is rather interesting that the process was gone through in an effort to ensure that the proper criteria for evaluation regarding National Heritage listing were followed in relation to both stage 2 and stage 3. I am very pleased to be able to say that we will not have to go through that process again because, at the Australian Environment Council meeting, the federal minister gave an undertaking to all states and territories that, in future, the federal government will not be proceeding along the lines it did with Kakadu in relation to nominating areas for World Heritage listing but will work in cooperation with states and territories and carry out the appropriate work to establish the value of an area nominated in accordance with the requirements of the World Heritage Committee.

We were very pleased to receive that undertaking because all the Territory government has been trying to ensure over the last 2 or 3 years was that the Commonwealth would follow that course. I am very pleased that, even though it was belated, an undertaking has been given. I certainly take the federal minister at his word. In answer to the Leader of the Opposition, we do not have any need to go again through the processes which we have been forced to go through in the past.

The member for Koolpinyah commented about the Conservation Commission being used for the development of parks in the northern suburbs of Darwin. I do not know whether she is talking about the park development that possibly occurred when she was the Minister for Conservation. That was the time when the successful water gardens was developed and, as honourable members would know, the council refused to participate in that. As the Leader of the Opposition quite correctly pointed out, the mangroves in the Rapid Creek region are indeed unique. The water gardens area was part and parcel of a planned process of development to ensure that the natural environment and beauty of that watercourse was maintained and enhanced.

The only other work that the Conservation Commission has done in the northern suburbs has been in conjunction with community groups. I refer to the headwaters of Rapid Creek, where Greening Australia and a number of other voluntary community groups, such as KAB, have banded together to undertake a large tree-planting program and a clean-up of that Rapid Creek area at the Freshwater Creek side of McMillans Road. They have developed an area that, hopefully, will inhibit the erosion that has been occurring, encourage the growth of native trees and also prevent fires of the kind that have destroyed the area over successive dry seasons. It will also prevent the area being used as a rubbish dump by some local residents. That is quite a productive role for the Conservation Commission to play. Because it encourages community groups to participate, it will be a great benefit to all.

With regard to the Chief Minister's statement, I would like to inform honourable members about some of the specific programs that are being undertaken by the Conservation Commission to meet the government's environmental commitments. First, I emphasise that, as the Chief Minister said, we are not working - and indeed we cannot work - in isolation. As I have said on other occasions, environmental issues do not stop at state or even national borders. The Greenhouse Effect, ozone depletion, land degradation and so on are issues that the Territory cannot isolate within its own borders. These are global issues and we must all contribute.

Honourable members may be aware that recently, as Minister for Conservation, I attended a series of meetings of the Australian Environment Council, which is now known as the Australian and New Zealand Environment Council, and also the Australian Council of Nature Conservation Ministers. The latter meeting was held in New Zealand. At these meetings, lengthy consideration was given to issues such as acid rain in Australia, protection of the ozone layer, trees in the global greenhouse, water quality, climate change, feral animals, recycling and so on. These meetings emphasised the fact that, although the states and territories are cleaning up their acts at home, our activities are really contributing very little to the global situation.

It seems, therefore, that the challenge which developed countries such as Australia face in helping to preserve our planet is to discourage the contribution that developing countries are making towards destruction of the environment. As the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly pointed out, it is all very well for us to do the right thing now we are developed and can afford to discover how we have harmed the environment in the past. However, third world countries, which are just embarking on significant development, certainly can be tempted to ignore our advice, particularly when we threatened the environment in the first place. Is it right for us to tell growing economies that they cannot share in the wealth of progress because of the damage that developed countries, including Australia, have done already? Not only must we set an example of environmentally sound behaviour but, as a nation, we must provide assistance to developing countries in human resources and, where possible, financially too. New Zealand has provided a pretty good example to its neighbours by becoming a leader in environmental protection in regions of the South Pacific. Obviously, in the Territory, we are well placed to play an ambassadorial role and show ourselves to our developing neighbours in the north as leaders in environmental protection.

In Australia, the prime responsibility for environmental protection rests with the states and the territories. As a result, much of the practical expertise is also concentrated in state and territory governments. International conferences and meetings, such as the one I attended in New Zealand, and others like the London Ozone Conference and the Toronto Global Climate Conference, are having an increasing impact on our domestic environmental policies. Accordingly, this government must ensure that, where possible, we are represented at meetings and discussions which will frame national policies and which, in turn, will be represented at an international level.

To highlight the importance now being placed on the environment, honourable members may be interested to learn that no less than 26 major international meetings on environmental issues are planned between now and next June. Each one of those meetings will have an impact on us, either directly or indirectly. This particular issue was discussed with the environment minister in New Zealand and it was agreed that there should be a cooperative arrangement between the Commonwealth, the states and the territories and New Zealand in relation to attending such meetings and distributing the information gained at them. It is important that, where feasible, the Territory is represented at such conferences and is able to make practical contributions to the recommendations and solutions which result.

I would like to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I am not advocating that the Northern Territory minister should be circling the globe at the taxpayers' expense for the next few years. There may be some conferences where the presence of the minister is necessary. There is a limit apparently

even on how much travelling the federal minister can do. The discussion in New Zealand indicated that, if it can be done on a share basis, each minister might undertake 1 trip a year. In other cases, it might be more appropriate for scientific personnel only to attend. That has been the case in recent years. By 'scientific personnel', we mean appropriate accredited scientific employees.

In many areas, the Territory is ahead on environmental policies. For example, the Territory government has been very effective in balancing the needs for economic development with adequate protection for the environment. To put it bluntly, it is certainly not an accident that Territorians now enjoy the best lifestyle in the country. Much of what our community enjoys is a result, directly or indirectly, of the foresight and the policies of the government. While the Territory is certainly one of the best places in the world to live in, we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that we are a developing community and it is possible for us to develop hand in hand with appropriate environmental protection.

Another area where the Territory is ahead of the states is in power generation. Obviously, our choice of natural gas for our power needs is a major development success. In terms of carbon dioxide emissions, it is also the most environmentally-acceptable fuel option available in the country today. Obviously, in some countries, the nuclear power cycle produces a great deal for very little, if any, emission.

As the Chief Minister has already indicated, the need to avoid or minimise acceleration of the Greenhouse Effect will be a vitally important environmental issue in future years. One of the major strategies of Australia, indeed the world, will be to limit the emission of greenhouse gases. It is interesting to note that 50% of the carbon dioxide emissions which can be attributed to Australia are created from exported fuel. We continue to export huge amounts of coal and we have turned a blind eye to its effects in the countries that burn it. I suppose that an analogy can be drawn with the drug pusher mentality. It may be time for Australia to reconsider its export options in view of these effects and, certainly, there is only so much that the planting of a billion trees can achieve while energy efficient uranium, which is in world demand, sits idle.

The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory will continue to monitor environmental issues, participate in forums about environmental protection, and recommend action and policies to ensure the preservation of our environment. The commission's Environmental Protection Unit, in conjunction with the Land Conservation Unit, the Wildlife Research Unit and other government agencies, will work to ensure the Territory is a responsible global citizen and that we can preserve our pollution free way of life for future generations of Territorians. In fact, the Conservation Commission's budget for 1989-90 provides for expansion of the Environment Protection Unit and restructuring within the commission will allow for staff numbers to be increased from 11 to 15, including the provision of positions in Katherine and Alice Springs to deal with environmental issues in those regions.

In addition to addressing the global issues that I have already outlined, the unit will continue to assess, under the Environmental Assessment Act, all proposed developments which could have a significant impact on the environment. The act itself will be reviewed over the next 12 months to see where it can be refined and improved. The unit also will continue its work on preparation of a coastal resources atlas and, in conjunction with other government agencies, will continue the development of contingency plans for implementation in the event of spills of oil or chemicals off our coast.

Through the Conservation Commission, the Territory government will continue to work at a national level on various committees dealing with the Greenhouse Effect, ozone protection, national environmental issues and the development of air and water quality guidelines. However, without in any way minimising the significance of this work, I believe it is important that honourable members recognise that the primary environmental issue facing this country over the next 10 years will be soil conservation. The matter is already being addressed on a national basis through the Australian Soil Conservation Council and the Territory is represented by myself on that council. An intensive program to inform the general public about the importance of soil conservation begins next year, and 1990 will not only be the Year of Land Care, it will also mark the beginning of the Decade of Land Care in Australia.

Fertile soil, which is the source of plant nutrients and seed reserves, is scarce and virtually irreplaceable throughout the Territory. Many factors, such as population expansion, cropping and feral animals, are placing pressure on this valuable life-supporting resource. This financial year, the government has allocated more than \$440 000 for projects under the National Soil Conservation Program and, with the federal government's contribution and funds carried over from last year, funding for the program totals \$1.44m. Projects funded range from continued development of a comprehensive Geographical Information System to assessment of crop-land erosion to raising public awareness about the need for land conservation. The use of the satellite in these new systems is quite an exciting development. We are rapidly gaining the ability to comprehensively survey much of our country from remote sources.

The Conservation Commission is working with landowners to establish land care groups in the Territory. At the national level, there has been the union between the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation. Obviously, there is recognition of the dual benefits and the need to involve the man on the land in the care of the land. The groups in the Territory assess, on a practical level, the problems particular to their region. They work collectively to overcome these problems. The Conservation Commission provides technical advice and assistance as required. Land care groups have been formed in the Victoria River region, the Mary River region, the central Australian region and the Barkly region. I believe that these groups will have a substantial impact on soil conservation in the Territory. Any attempts to proceed with soil protection measures without involving the man on the land will be futile. Obviously, the man on the land has a more direct interest in soil conservation than anyone else. It is his livelihood. He is the person who wants to ensure that he maintains and increases the productivity of his soil.

An important issue which impacts on soil conservation in the Territory is the control of feral animals. Unfortunately, it has become fashionable for so-called animal liberation groups to seize on this issue. Honourable members would be all too familiar with the wild allegations which are frequently made by these groups. One of the more impressive claims, made a couple of years ago, was that Australian governments were indiscriminately machine-gunning wild horses from helicopters. The great pity is that, in leaping to the defence of feral animals, these groups are totally disregarding the detrimental effect of those animals on the environment. Indeed, it has been estimated that feral animals have been major contributors to the great decline or actual extinction of up to 50% of arid zone native mammals. This is in addition to the damage they cause in terms of soil erosion.

This government cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the impact of feral animals on the environment in the Territory. Accordingly, \$270 000 has been allocated for research and control programs this financial year. Research and monitoring is continuing into the 2 major feral animal problems in central Australia, horses and rabbits. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be only too aware of the degradation caused by rabbits in the central Australian region.

Mr Ede: What about cats?

Mr MANZIE: Cats and foxes too - but rabbits are causing vast damage.

The Conservation Commission is cooperating with South Australian agencies to investigate ways of improving the effectiveness of myxomatosis for arid zone rabbit control, and research into other biological controls. I think most members will be aware of the fact that the flea which is used for the transmission of myxomatosis does not fare very well in the central Australian environment. Because of that, work is being done on the Spanish flea to determine whether it would be an appropriate vector for myxomatosis.

Of particular interest is the emergence of a highly contagious and lethal anti-rabbit virus in China and Europe. This virus has devastated rabbit populations in those areas. It is estimated that some 32 million rabbits died in Italy alone last year and the disease has recently broken out in Mexico. It is interesting to note that, while Australia and New Zealand are interested in the virus as a possible control agent, the rest of the world is trying to develop a vaccine to protect domestic and game reserve rabbits from its onslaught. Clearly, considerable work must be undertaken before introduction of the virus to Australia could be considered. In particular, it must be determined that the virus is species-specific to rabbits and would not decimate our native wildlife.

Mr Deputy Speaker, \$66 000 has been allocated for research into the ecological impact of feral horses and options for their control. A jointly funded Territory and federal government project to research the ecology and control of feral pigs, particularly in grain production areas, is continuing.

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, a further \$43 000 has been programmed for research into feral buffalo population dynamics. While these programs are important in their own right, the most significant work to control feral animals is the BTEC program. An important spin-off from this program has been that buffalo herds, which previously caused major environmental damage to the wetlands, have now been brought under control. Indeed, significant improvements in the condition of these ecosystems are already apparent.

The Conservation Commission is working closely with other scientific bodies such as the CSIRO to identify areas at risk from soil erosion. For instance, we will be jointly assessing the feasibility of using satellite imagery to assist in determining areas of erosion. This will provide assistance in land management in areas such as paddock planning, location of bores and so on. Another joint project with the CSIRO, the NT Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the Queensland Department of Primary

Industries and the Conservation Commission is a research program for land management in the semi-arid tropics. This project will utilise mathematical models to study the response of the land to erosion. The Territory government will contribute \$65 000 to the project this financial year.

Those are only a few of the areas where the Territory government is working to ensure that our greatest natural asset, the land, is protected. The major effort to conserve the land must not be a priority solely for governments but also for the community as a whole. Land ownership must also entail the principle of stewardship which recognises the need to conserve our resources for future generations. This certainly does not mean that we should stop planting crops or grazing cattle. Rather, soil conservation aims to conserve soil by protecting and managing it for maximum use without damage to its long-term productive capacity. Land should be used according to its capacity and protected according to its needs. It is for this reason that the establishment of land care groups, as I have already mentioned, is such a positive move.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to take much time to address the issue of the parks of the Northern Territory. I am sure that all honourable members will agree that our parks are, in many cases, not only of national standard but of international standard. Importantly, the work to develop new parks is continuing. Honourable members would recall my statement in the previous sittings regarding the proposed West MacDonnells National Park. They would also be familiar with the extensive capital works program undertaken by the commission to put in place the facilities which will cater not only for increased visitor numbers but will also ensure that the environment in the parks is given adequate protection from the impact of these visitors. In my response to the budget, I will speak further on the capital works program, in particular proposals for further development of our newer parks such as Litchfield, Gregory, Elsey and the West MacDonnells.

There are now more than 90 different parks and reserves throughout the Territory. The commitment that these parks and reserves represent has been reflected in the steadily increasing financial allocations to the Conservation Commission since self-government. From 1978-79 to 1988-89, annual expenditure for the commission has totalled more than \$257m. It should be pointed out that the figures used to arrive at that total have not been adjusted for inflation. When this year's allocation for the commission and its capital works program of \$43.4m is taken into account - yet another increase over previous years - the total expenditure will be more than \$300m since self-government.

The Territory is well placed to respond to both local environmental issues and global issues which affect us. A considerable amount of work has been and is being done on environmental issues in the Northern Territory and more will be done in the future. I commend this statement to honourable members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this is the second speech that I have heard the Chief Minister deliver in respect of the Greenhouse Effect. I have to say that this one was considerably more sensible than the one which he delivered almost 12 months ago at the North Australia Development Council meeting in Alice Springs. In that speech, the Chief Minister argued that the Greenhouse Effect would be a real boon to the Northern Territory. He presented a confessedly hypothetical scenario in which the deserts would bloom and there would be all sorts of advantages to the Northern Territory from the Greenhouse Effect. I thought that that speech was in particularly poor taste, given the real concerns about the Greenhouse Effect expressed by a large number of responsible authorities.

It is pleasing to note that today the Chief Minister has changed his tone somewhat and, at least in respect of the Greenhouse Effect, has expressed a more rational and considered view in relation to the Territory's response to what has become an international concern. There are many positive aspects to this statement. One of these is the proposal to seek a percentage of the Commonwealth's funds to study the possible impact of the Greenhouse Effect on climate change in the Territory. Another is the Chief Minister's concern about finding alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs as they are called. These are positive moves.

I must say, however, that I suspect the Chief Minister's motives. I do not think he had his vision on the road to Damascus. I think he had his vision on the Saturday before last during the Wanguri by-election. We are now seeing the greening of Marshall Perron, and that is a very interesting sight indeed. What he did not mention is one of the central issues in this sort of debate, which is the balance between the need for development and the need to develop on the basis of renewable resources, an issue which the opposition always raises when discussing subjects like this.

I thought aspects of the contribution made by the Minister for Conservation were particularly useful here. He gave an international perspective to some of the environmental concerns, such as the Greenhouse Effect, and he pointed out that it is all very well for the developed countries - and I sometimes wonder whether we regard the Northern Territory as part of a developed country in that sense, but that is an issue I will not pursue here - to call a halt to environmental degradation. It is much more difficult where people have mass poverty breathing down their necks. Let us face it, when we talk about developed and developing countries, that is basically a euphemism for rich and poor countries, and those of us in this electorate who represent Aboriginal communities, which are basically dirt-poor communities, have frequently to confront the same issue. For example, one of the reasons that Aboriginal people are very enthusiastic about mineral development is because they are so poor and, when you extrapolate that from the Territory situation and relate it to the hundreds of millions of people around the globe who do not have access to the sort of standard of living that we take for granted, the environmental implications and the implications for chewing up resources and forests and contributing to the Greenhouse Effect are phenomenal. In passing, the Minister for Conservation referred to that and, obviously, all those issues are keyed in together.

I noticed in this week's Bulletin, and it is the first time that it has been drawn to my attention, there was an expression of concern about the removal of rainforests in Papua New Guinea, and I suggest that concerns about the impact of the Greenhouse Effect on the climate in the Northern Territory will not be isolated from forest clearing programs in both East and West Irian, as the Indonesian people refer to it. It is a complex issue and that needs to be brought home.

Let us be generous about this. I suspect the Chief Minister of a degree of cynicism in relation to this issue. I said that the greening of Marshall Perron probably occurred with the blinding realisation that the Green Independent candidate in the Wanguri by-election had tapped a nerve in the electorate and that perhaps he should get into it. Certainly, he or his office has changed his tune over the last week or so because I have here a most interesting facsimile transmission from the office of the Chief Minister. It is headed 'supplementary message' and it says:

The attachment is for your urgent consideration, urgent immediate attention, property rights at risk.

Background - the Green candidate in Saturday's Wanguri by-election has raised the spectre of political intrusion into private property rights.

Actually, for the benefit of the Chief Minister's staff, I will just point out that that is a quality entry in this year's SPIEL awards. It actually says 'has raised the "sceptre" of political intrusions into private property rights'. However, I digress. It continues:

The issue is vital. Candidate D. Beattie-Burnett has alleged that a foreshore reserve is to be developed. On the ABC 7.30 Report of 14 August, she stated that the land on the Rocklands Drive/Trower Road corner had been rezoned R3 to allow construction of units. There was a Conservation Commission coastal reserve sign. She also revealed that she would shortly be residing near the block in question.

Thus, the Chief Minister, in fact, is having 2-bob each way. He was suggesting that the Green Independent candidate was attacking property rights and then accusing her of supporting her own property rights. But, I am sure that inconsistency was lost on the Chief Minister. It went on to refer to comments by the Minister for Lands and Housing about the rezoning downgrading and the zoning being consistent and so on.

There is something I would like to know, incidentally, while we are on that issue. This is irrelevant to the Greenhouse Effect debate but is relevant to this comment that has been raised in the context of environmental policy. I understand that that particular block of land was subject to a Crown lease term and, without the covenants being fulfilled, that lease was converted to freehold. I would like to have that explained to me at some time. I understand it was done under the ministry of the member for Casuarina. At some stage, perhaps in another debate, the minister might like to respond to that. Anyway, with ...

Mr Manzie: You cannot help yourself.

Mr BELL: ... this facsimile transmission - I know it is embarrassing for the Minister for Lands and Housing, and I do put him to work, but people come and tell me these things, and I have a responsibility, as opposition spokesman, to have them cleared up.

Mr Manzie: You would not think of writing, would you?

Mr BELL: I know how embarrassing they are, but then ...

Mr Dondas: It is in my electorate.

Mr Manzie: It is your reputation which is gradually being damaged.

Mr BELL: We will just wait and see. I am sure the member for Casuarina will be able to fit it in.

Anyway, with remarkable prescience, the transmission goes on:

It is possible that Ms Burnett will perform creditably in Saturday's poll, thus stimulating the expansion in Darwin of the Green Party noted elsewhere for its anti-development stance.

The Chief Minister's officer, Mr Coward, is obviously extremely astute.

Those concerned with the protection of private property rights should immediately publicly question the policies and the intent of the emergent Green Party ...

And so it goes on:

Recommended action: Tell your friends.

For the benefit of the Chief Minister, on the end of the facing sheet of the facsimile transmission it ends up by saying, as these fax sheets often do: 'Please notify by telephone number 89 7336 if any part of this transmission failed or was misdirected'. For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I can advise him that not only was it misdirected, but it also totally failed.

Several other issues need to be referred to in the context of this particular statement. The Chief Minister referred to a grab bag of environmental issues and I point out for his benefit and for your benefit, Mr Speaker, that the statement does refer to steps the government has taken to protect and conserve our natural environment as well as to the Greenhouse Effect. I would like to draw the attention of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Conservation to a letter that I wrote recently to the minister about the clearing of gutta-percha and lancewood from several stations in the north. I have not seen any press comment about this, and I would be very interested to hear what the actual details of that proposal are. If it is a blanket arrangement to clear wood from that area, I would be interested to know whether an environmental impact statement was to be provided for it and, if not, why not.

With respect to environmental impact statements, I remind the honourable minister that one of the reasons that he gave me for not pursuing the open-space development strategy in Alice Springs was the lack of an environmental impact statement. Of course, the minister has the power to direct that an environmental impact statement be prepared if he believes it is important. I would have thought that, in respect of the Alice Springs open-space development strategy, it was less important to have an environmental impact statement than if you are allowing the removal of timber from a particular area and therefore I am a little at a loss to understand the government's policy. I might say that it reeks of inconsistency.

Equally, the Chief Minister would be aware of the controversy about the clearing operation at Tipperary. I understand that, through the offices of some of Mr Anderson's employees, the environmental integrity of that particular operation has been maintained. In this context, I think issues of that sort need to be addressed. Anybody who has flown over Tipperary at any height below 25 000 ft or 30 000 ft can see the efforts that have been made to maintain habitats by connecting the natural bushland that has been retained. I would be very interested to see formal reports in that respect, as opposed to the anecdotal reports that I have received hitherto.

Mr Speaker, the question ...

Mr Hatton: You are a busybody.

Mr Manzie: That is a guy's private property. That is unbelievable. What are you trying to suggest?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection.

Mr Manzie: Why don't you try to suggest something that is grubby.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjections from the Minister for Conservation and the member for Nightcliff. What I am trying to suggest is that I want to ensure that there is not some cosy arrangement by the government ...

Mr Manzie: There always has to be something shonky behind the scenes. Why don't you throw a bit more mud?

Mr BELL: It has never been heard of has it, Mr Speaker, a cosy arrangement between the Northern Territory government and its friends? The fact is that I would not be doing my job if I did not raise questions ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, as for the accusations of muckraking, I will take them as long as they are served up. I will continue to do my job and ask the questions that need to be asked. I am not throwing any mud at anybody. I just want some sensible answers.

The Leader of the Opposition addressed the question of land degradation. I will not say any more on that subject except to reinforce his comments. It is an issue that should be addressed in a broad-ranging environmental debate about something like the Greenhouse Effect and conservation of the natural environment in the Territory. I point out to honourable members that this is something the opposition has taken seriously for a considerable time. Honourable members will recall that we sought to have this included as a reference for the Sessional Committee on the Environment. The government rejected that, of course, and I think that that was most unwise.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that an extension of time be allowed to enable the honourable member for MacDonnell to conclude his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I wanted to make some comments about nuclear energy, the mangrove policy, heritage legislation, bushfires in the rural area and, most importantly, about the question of limits to the growth of tourist development, which is an issue that I have had to deal with. About the other issues, briefly I think that the Labor Party generally in this country and the Labor Party in the Northern Territory have done public debates on nuclear energy a great service. We have adopted a steady-as-she-goes approach to the question of nuclear energy. We have said consistently that it is not good enough to involve ourselves in a mindless support of uranium mining without looking at the other end of the process. I accept the comment from the Chief Minister that that debate has moved on considerably over the last 15 years. Obviously, the question of conserving fossil fuels and of nuclear energy having less impact, at least in the terms of fossil fuel, is an important one. I could speak at length on that issue but I will not.

I endorse the comments of the Leader of the Opposition on foreshore policy. I am very heartened to hear, for the first time in the 9 years that I have been in this Assembly, the government raise mangroves as an issue. On several occasions, the opposition has referred to the need for a consistent foreshore policy. I think the figure mentioned by either the Chief Minister or the Minister for Conservation was 80%. It seems that, basically, the line being argued was that, if we retain 80% of the mangroves that is probably reasonable. I think that we have to adopt a policy that looks at what has been there and what will be there. The richness of that habitat, which both the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition referred to, is an important issue. It is an important public issue because it is so easy for the public to perceive those mangroves as rubbish country, if you like, and this Assembly needs to get the message out. I have had the opportunity of speaking to Mr Hanley from the museum in this regard, and I was most impressed with the information he gave me about the richness of that habitat in terms of its supporting other marine life and so on.

Heritage legislation in Alice Springs has been debated consistently in this House. As the Chief Minister would know, it is too little too late.

I refer the Chief Minister to the question of bushfires in the Darwin rural area if he is worried about the burning of fuel and so on. I wonder about the aspect of coal-fired power stations being removed, thus reducing impact in greenhouse terms when, at the same time, the Darwin sky is frequently blotted out with smoke from fires that presumably have considerable impact as well. I just raise that matter. I do not have a particular position on it.

The final point I want to make concerns the impact of tourist numbers on our tourist attractions in the Territory, and I think particularly of Ayers Rock in this context. The Minister for Conservation will be well aware of representations I have made in this House and elsewhere about the impact of increased visitor numbers on the West MacDonnells. At Ayers Rock, it is an issue of real concern. The impact of a great increase in numbers of people, particularly around the climb and Maggie Springs, for example, could be serious, and I think it is important that consideration be given to limits of growth in that respect. I remind honourable members that, at another famous international tourist destination, namely Stonehenge in the UK, concern about the impact on the area itself has been so great that a replica of Stonehenge has been built. In fact, if you want to visit Stonehenge, you cannot do so. Basically, you visit this replica and that is that.

Mr Manzie: What do you want us to do? Build a plastic Ayers Rock?

Mr BELL: No, I am not suggesting to the smarties on the frontbench that we build a plastic Ayers Rock. What I am suggesting is that, before it is too late and the area is totally degraded, consideration be given to what the limits to growth are. The Chief Minister said his statement was about steps to further protect and conserve our natural environment and cultural heritage. I am telling him that Ayers Rock, Uluru and Katatjuta are important parts of our cultural heritage and our natural environment and we cannot just say that we want more and more people to go there. At some stage, we will have to consider what the limits to growth are. I am not saying that we should arbitrarily set some limit, but it is an issue that has to be addressed.

I thank honourable members opposite for allowing me extra time to complete those remarks. Broadly, I welcome the Chief Minister's statement and the greening of the Chief Minister. I believe those issues that I have raised

deserve some consideration and I hope they will be accepted by the Chief Minister in the constructive spirit in which they were delivered.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, in the latter part of the 20th century, I doubt if any issue that has been the focus of public debate has contributed more to the rip-rip-woodchip syndrome as has the issue of the environment and conservation. In too many forums, including this, we hear platitudes mouthed without any real understanding of the issues and, far too often, those mouthing the platitudes are those who seemingly carry the banner of conservation or environmental protection, or claim to be carrying that banner.

It is not good enough for us to react to environmental problems. The problem with sewage outfall in Sydney is a typical example of reaction to a visible problem. The people can see what is happening. If sewage was odourless and colourless - and I would like to think people do emit odourless and colourless sewage - and could not be seen, there would not be a problem. The only problem with the Sydney sewage outfall is that it can be seen. As I said, it is not good enough to mouth platitudes. It is not good enough to talk about planting 20 million or 1000 million trees over the next 20 years. It may well make us feel cool on the outside, but rest assured that it will not solve the problem. It will merely dress it up.

We must act now to forestall the problems that otherwise will beset us in the 21st century. Indeed, some of those problems are with us today. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for MacDonnell touched briefly on the nuclear issue. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the storage or disposal of nuclear waste and toxic chemical waste. If we were to stop production of toxic chemicals today or to close down the nuclear power industry, the waste disposal problem would still run into megatons. It is with us today and we will not solve the problem merely by putting our heads in the sand. Already, thousands of tonnes of dioxin are stored in this country, and thousands of tonnes of high-level nuclear waste are inappropriately stored in repositories overseas. Some countries are using what is called the borosilicate waste disposal method which is effective for 30 years. Borosilicate glass breaks down under heat and radioactive nuclides can be expected to be released within 30 years. The problem is one for the millennium. It will not go away. If we want to make our proper contribution to the conservation of this planet, we must play a role in the disposal of waste from this consumer society. We benefit from the society and we must cop the consequences.

The same applies to toxic chemical waste. Dioxins, for example, are complex molecules. The only known way to destroy those complex molecules is to break them down into their component atomic parts by using high-temperature incineration. By merely storing them in 44-gallon drums in inappropriately constructed warehouses in Sydney without proper fire or other appropriate protections, we are simply denying the existence of the problem. It seems that the only time when anything will be done about the problem is when it manifests itself in some major industrial catastrophe.

The Minister for Conservation touched on the problem of feral animals. For some years, one of my hates has been feral cats. I can think of no greater blight on this country than the feral cat ...

Mr Smith: What about feral rabbits?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, it seems that feral cats attract more love from some sections of the community than do the nice floppy-eared bunnies. I would

hope that, in the distribution of moneys set aside for research into the destruction of feral pests, feral cats will be given top priority. I would willingly devote some time to their destruction.

The level of ignorance displayed in some of these debates is appalling. The member for MacDonnell spoke about bushfires in the Darwin rural area. Here is a simple science lesson for the member for MacDonnell: that which is put back into the atmosphere by the burning of vegetation is that which is gained from the atmosphere. A bushfire in the rural area is followed by the next year's regrowth and the net effect in terms of greenhouse gases is nil. The regrowth regains from the atmosphere what the burning put into it. There is no net greenhouse effect. That is schoolboy science.

On the subject of chlorofluorocarbons, I believe that it is our responsibility to ensure that major new plants are designed to minimise their use. The depletion of the ozone layer is equally as disastrous as the build-up of greenhouse gases and will affect equally the habitability of the planet Earth in the millennia to come.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's statement and the government's move towards a better enunciated conservation policy.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Chief Minister for bringing on this debate. It is certainly timely. The member for Karama spoke about the disposal of toxic waste. That subject certainly needs much more urgent and direct attention on an Australia-wide basis than has occurred to date. Australia can contribute much more directly than it has so far.

I have noted that a blind eye seems to have been turned to the development of Brown's gas. It is a very interesting concept. The person who developed it was born in Yugoslavia and now lives in Australia. He has been trying to get some backing for the development of spin-offs from this incredible discovery which appears to contradict many of the laws of science as we know them. Mr Brown has been able somehow to achieve an imploding force from the electrolysis of water which produces Brown's gas. This, in turn, can produce temperatures high enough to melt tungsten. It is almost impossible to measure some of the temperatures resulting from this process but there is a very definite possibility that it could play a significant role in the disposal of toxic wastes.

I congratulate the member for Karama on his restraint in respect of nuclear power. He did not attempt to say that it is the solution to all our problems. As he knows, if we were immediately to start a full nuclear program and devote all our resources to the development of nuclear power stations, the sum total of the displacement of nuclear fuels by the middle of next century would not be more than 1% or 2%. The honourable member referred also to cats, and I will address that subject later in my speech. It may be a subject on which we can agree.

I would like to congratulate the Chief Minister for indicating that he will take some action in relation to CFCs. There is one area in which we may be able to take relatively simple action and that is in the replacement of air-conditioning gases in cars. An item of equipment is now available for use in workshops. It removes the gases which were previously released into the atmosphere, cleans them and allows them to be reused. Obviously, the use of such equipment falls within the scope of our practical legislative powers.

Some points have been made in relation to rainforest areas, which are a highly emotional subject whether they are in the Amazon, Borneo or Papua New Guinea. I follow events in Papua New Guinea fairly closely and it is interesting to note that many of the companies which operate there are not fulfilling their original written obligations in relation to reafforestation of the areas that they are denuding. However, it is all very well for us to preach to developing countries and to tell them that they must stop their developmental thrust because it is affecting our atmosphere. I believe that we have to do more than that. We have to try to spread the pain a bit in some way. Developing countries are responding to forces from within their own societies which are the result of people's aspirations for higher standards of living. They are responding also to external forces which demand that they increase their export performances in order to reduce their debt levels. If the developed world wants to reap the benefits of restraint by developing countries in terms of their agreeing not to denude forest areas, it will have to look much more seriously at debt restructuring and other measures of assisting those countries to relieve the pressure of debt.

As an elected Assembly, we cannot do a great deal about this problem. We can pass resolutions and we can make pious statements, but we cannot have a great impact. There is one area, however, in which we can have a considerable impact. We can use the knowledge that we have at our fingertips and that we can gain through the examination of our own arid and semi-arid lands. This does not always have to be a matter of forking out Treasury funds. Many of these areas can provide a financial return to our economy.

Honourable members have heard stories about the numbers of gum trees growing around the world. I was told the other day it is getting close to a situation in which there are more gum trees outside Australia than inside it. In fact, they have grown so well in some areas that there has been talk of using some of our native pests to control them. That notion is probably apocryphal but it is certainly true that some Australian species can produce a very good financial return. *Eucalyptus victorii* is an example. It is a fairly scrubby-looking eucalypt which does not grow to a height of more than 12 ft. However, its seed is quite expensive because it is very tolerant of salt, will grow in very low rainfall areas, is amenable to repeated lopping for firewood and will continue to coppice.

Work on obtaining those seeds has been undertaken for quite some years by the Yuendumu Mining Company and by Rod Horner in Alice Springs. They have worked with Aboriginal people in getting these seeds together and trying to find markets for them. That is a real source of economic gain. However, there are major problems with cartels that hold back enormous amounts of seed from Australia and then dump them at times that are inappropriate for the smaller operators. They can starve a small operator out of cash before he is large enough to break into the market. The Department of Industries and Development ought to be looking at that and determining how it can assist these people to break into that market and establish a niche for themselves.

I have spoken before in this House about a certain Mr Beck who was working for the Conservation Commission. He worked on the development of a machine which would restore denuded areas in the arid and semi-arid areas through revegetation. He attempted to get the okay to develop a plant to manufacture that machine and utilise it in central Australia and also for export to other arid and semi-arid places around the world. He was unable to get the go-ahead and, to the best of my knowledge - and I have been unable to get an answer to this - the plans must still be sitting somewhere in the Conservation Commission. This development was essentially a very good idea and could have

provided another industry in Alice Springs. Hopefully, it still can be developed in the future.

I have talked before about the necessity to develop our bush foods and our bush medicines and to determine the essential properties in those that can be developed for commercial purposes. It is a source of shame to every Australian that ti tree oil is now imported from East Africa into Australia. It is possible to obtain a very high return from that crop and the tree is native to Australia. That is something that we ought to be involved in.

The matter of soil conservation was raised earlier. The other day, I flew at fairly low altitude over the Victoria River to see the degradation that has occurred on its banks. It is a classic example. I hope that the new owners will work with the land care groups to ensure that that problem is solved.

I have said before that one of our biggest exports from the Northern Territory in volume terms is that of our topsoils, certainly from the Barkly down the Georgina. I believe it to be a fact that, in the main, the owner-operated cattle properties have a far better record as far as conservation of their soils and their land is concerned than do the big multinationals which often are tempted by the need for short-term returns on the money market or on their shares. They may be under some pressure to overstock and to use practices which an owner-operator, who wishes to hand on that land to his children and their children in a form in which it can continue to be utilised, certainly would not use.

I commend the operation of the land care groups. It is an excellent concept which allows for those pastoralists who are really interested in their land as a long-term asset to generate wealth for themselves, for the country, for their children and for their children's children. As I have said, I would like the government to look at the economics of a breakup of some of the very large pastoral properties. I believe that, in relation to many of them, smaller operations with more intensive usage would not mean increased degradation of the land. In fact, it could lead to development of the land to a greater degree through improved pastures and, as a result of reafforestation, greater care of the land so that it would carry far more cattle per unit than before and provide far more wealth per unit.

I would reiterate what the member for MacDonnell said. The opposition attempted last year to have the Assembly extend the terms of reference of its Sessional Committee on the Environment so that it could look at this matter. Now that some time has passed, possibly the government can take that on board and no longer adopt a knee-jerk reaction to one of our proposals. I think that this Assembly ought to examine, in a more direct way, the base data in respect of soil conservation, ensure that we are looking at the processes that are being put in place and let the public know that we give it the priority that people are coming more and more to expect.

We have talked about the bilby, the mala and the bustards. If we were to get rid of feral cats, we would not have anything like the problem that we have in trying to maintain the bilbies and the bustards. Feral cats are among the biggest ravagers of small mammal and ground bird populations in the Northern Territory. They are worse than anything else that one could care to name. I seriously believe that, if we really want to keep these animals, we will have to go back to putting a bounty of \$5 a head or \$10 a head on feral animals and ...

Mr McCarthy: They will get you!

Mr EDE: They can come for me, Mr Speaker. If a few tame ones from next door get caught up in the net, that is something that should not occur. However, for many years, we have had a bounty on dingoes. I would far prefer to see it placed on feral cats. I recall that, when I was a youngster in central Western Queensland, the people from a number of properties would get together for large dingo drives. We killed a great many dingoes. However, with the competition from the dingoes reduced, the number of pigs in that area made any damage that the dingo did look like chickenfeed.

That is the situation that we have in the Northern Territory. We are talking about shooting out all the buffalo because they have TB. However, as they are cleared out, the pigs move in. The pigs carry TB in their stomachs. When buffalo or cattle with phosphorous deficiencies start to lick the bones of dead pigs, we will find the stock being reinfected. The damage that pigs are doing to the environment in the Top End is worse than anything the buffalo ever did. If we are serious about the environment and about obtaining some sort of balance, it is the feral cats and the pigs that we must now do something about. That is something that is within the ambit of the Northern Territory government. It is something that we can attack and demonstrate a commitment to.

Apart from those few words, I think that the statement represents a step forward by the Chief Minister in terms of environmental consciousness. I hope that it will be reflected in a clear definition of the outstanding problems that we have to deal with in the Northern Territory so that we can catalogue them and have a committee of this House monitor the work that is being done to rectify them.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement by the Chief Minister. In doing so, I must say that the nature of the opposition's debate today is a sad reflection on members opposite. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition say that this statement somehow indicates a change in the attitude of the government over the last year. We have heard members opposite say in the past that it would be really good if they heard more about what was going on and that they hoped the government would issue more statements in the future about what is happening. Since I became a member of this House in 1984, it seems to me that several times a year a number of statements have been delivered on such subjects as the mangrove studies, the establishment of coastal management committees, feral animal control, noxious weeds, soil conservation programs, the protection of endangered species, crocodile management plans and the development of national parks. Time and again, successive Ministers for Conservation have stood up and made statements about the progressive activities of the Northern Territory government.

What we usually hear from the members of the official opposition in all of these debates is a yawn and complaints about another 'boring ministerial statement'. That is the comment that usually flows from the members opposite. Suddenly, now that environmental issues are particularly important, they have become supportive and are pleased to see the government has developed an environmental conscience. It is a shame they have not paid rather more attention to what has been going on with the Northern Territory government over the last several years in the real achievements in avoiding environmental damage and correcting much of the environmental desecration of the Northern Territory that we inherited after 70 years of benign neglect by the federal government.

It is about time the federal government was brought to account for its disgraceful record on environmental management of the Northern Territory in that 70-year period. In that period, we saw the mining out of Northern Territory hardwoods. We saw the gross over-exploitation of the barramundi and prawn fisheries. We saw extensive degradation of land, the introduction and expansion of noxious weeds and the introduction of dangerous feral animals and the Commonwealth took no action to address those problems. Coastal erosion took place. And what have we seen since self-government? We have seen expansion of natural forestry at places like Murgarella and the development of national parks. There are some 4 300 000 ha of national park areas, parks and reserves throughout the Northern Territory.

It has been reported in this House, in ministerial statements and at question time, time and time again, that work is going on in the Conservation Commission. Great credit goes to a gentleman called Louis Beens who has been working with the Land Assessment Unit for several years doing a matrix assessment of the Territory to identify appropriate areas for conservation and recreational reserves and national park development to ensure we have proper, balanced protection of our environment and representative environments throughout the Northern Territory. I understand that that work is almost complete. No mention has been made of that magnificent work that has been done over several years in developing a coordinated program to create a matrix of parks and reserves throughout the Territory that are appropriate to proper environmental and cultural protection and conservation.

Excellent work has been done for years on protection of endangered species. We have heard today about the mala and bilby and the re-release of these animals into their native areas. These animals were thought to be extinct at one stage. There is the work that was done on crocodile management to turn the crocodile from what was allegedly an endangered species which was about to vanish off the face of the earth into a creature that every Territorian wants to see protected and which has real economic value to the Northern Territory, where conservation and development have come together magnificently. Remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, it was the Northern Territory that did all the scientific research that provided the Crocodile Management Plan. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service failed in its research and we had to pick up the pieces and do the job properly.

Work is being done around the coast on the protection of habitat breeding areas for bird life, and for water birds on the Mary and the Adelaide Rivers. There is work on the protection of Black Jungle and the Maluku Swamps for crocodile breeding areas and the seagrass areas between the McArthur River and the Vanderlin Islands which are major habitat areas for dugong and some turtle species and the breeding areas for prawns.

Work has been progressing steadily by a magnificently professional organisation - the Conservation Commission. It is ably supported by much of the work that is being carried out by organisations such as the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries which has done much research into the protection of our environment, the policing of our land resources and the development of land care units which we have heard about today. All of this began some 3 or 4 years ago, long before Bob Hawke had ever heard of a thing called the environment. Long before that, the Northern Territory was leading the way. Suddenly, the Prime Minister made what he called 'the world's greatest environmental statement' and somehow these have become big issues.

We have heard about the problems created by tearing down forests to make paper. The Northern Territory has been working for 3 years now on developing

an industrial potential to produce paper without tearing down forests for wood chip. I refer, of course, to research into kenaf. These are the quiet achievers, a professional planned development and protection of the environment.

Our waterways are clean because we have strong environmental legislation to protect them. Our water resources people are monitoring water quality in places like Darwin Harbour and our river systems to ensure that, if there is any threat to the quality of water, it is quickly identified and can be corrected.

Our farm development was undertaken with the Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act in place. As farms developed, people were obliged to implement appropriate soil conservation measures, and there was considerable criticism of the government by developers and farmers because of the extent to which we required them to put in contour banks etc to protect the topsoil resource. Today, finally, we are praised for that. That was foresight. That is prevention, not repair, and that has been the hallmark of the CLP government since self-government. It has developed a responsible approach to the environment that has avoided the problems. It has learnt from the past and avoided those problems.

Our Conservation Commission deserves the support and congratulations of this House and, in supporting and congratulating the Conservation Commission, one cannot ignore the fact that it was the government that supported and funded the commission and enabled it to follow those courses of action. It put the legislative framework in place to enable it to do that. In congratulating the Conservation Commission, congratulations are due equally to the Northern Territory CLP government.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Pat yourself on the back, why don't you?

Mr HATTON: If the honourable member had been listening, I have been congratulating her on her work when she was a minister of the Crown in the Northern Territory CLP government and on her contributions to that particular course of action. But, she was too busy talking at the time to have heard that.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Well, I will have to listen, won't I?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that really is what this debate should be about. It is not about the Johnny-come-lately grandstanding that is going on.

Those are the broader, larger issues that tend to be talked about. The Chief Minister has covered issues such as the Greenhouse Effect and I will not deal any more with that in what I want to say. What I would like to address is a comment made by the member for Koolpinyah to the effect that it is somehow irrelevant to consider the urban areas. I totally dispute that. I think the urban environment is at least as important ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The community should do it. Get the community organised.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it is pleasing to hear the honourable member finally recognise that. The community should be involved and people need to act as a catalyst and stimulate the community to become involved. Some of us have been doing that for some time in our own little communities, and I am pleased to say that the Northern Territory government has done a great deal

more than planting trees in the streets. When the member for Wanguri comes back to his seat in the House, I trust that he will come to learn about the magnificent environmental work that has been done in and around his electorate by the Northern Territory CLP government. I ask him to study the history of the restoration of the Casuarina beach area after Cyclone Tracy and the development of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve, which is a Conservation Commission project. It is an excellent environmental development and borders right on his own electorate.

I ask members to remember the work that is going on under the Soil Conservation Land Utilisation Act and the Environmental Assessment Act to protect the coastal areas and, in urban development, to avoid erosion and degradation. Many drainage studies etc have had to be done on subdivisional developments. Environmental assessment was required for the Cullen Bay development project. Work was done on the Nightcliff Beach area for the erosion control retention wall that was built in 1984-85 to protect against erosion of the foreshore. A previous speaker mentioned the development of the Rapid Creek area and the protection of the mangroves. There are also the extensive and valuable park developments, not only in Darwin but in all of the towns in the Territory. The low level area on the Katherine River, close to the town, has been developed and protected. In Alice Springs, there are the Olive Pink Flora Reserve, the Telegraph Station development and the national park development around that, and the proposed developments in the West MacDonnells. All that has been going on for years. This is not a Johnny-come-lately approach. It is a shame that members of the opposition do not listen when information is provided to them and, when debates such as this are brought on, say that they are glad that we have finally woken up. They have probably been told about it 10 times before!

Mr Speaker, I will not say anything further, except that I congratulate the Chief Minister on his statement which highlights once again the excellent work that is being done. I give my full support to the initiatives and direction being taken by the government to continue the protection of the natural environment and to promote responsible conservation in the Northern Territory.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's statement. In doing so, I would like to point out that, in spite of the smug comments from the members of the opposition, they do not have a monopoly on the issue of the environment. To listen to their comments, one would think that they invented the issue, but of course that is not true. What they have really done in the past is seize on that issue, embrace it to themselves and manipulate it, exactly as they have done with a whole range of other issues in this country.

Since its regrettable accession to power in 1983, we have seen the federal Labor government use this issue to suit its own political ends. A whole range of minority groups, fringe groups and environmental groups have been funded to a greater extent than ever before. The Labor Party has used those groups. In the last federal election, it targeted the green vote in marginal seats. We saw the Green Independent candidate play an important role in the recent Wanguri by-election. We heard her say that she was an independent, that she had nothing to do with the ALP and would make her own decision about the allocation of her preferences. We also heard the Leader of the Opposition say: 'We do not want that green candidate to join the Labor Party. She is more valuable where she is'. That is correct. They are hand in hand. By far the majority of her preferences went to the ALP. Whilst the green movement and the ALP try to create the illusion in the public arena that they are not

in cahoots, they are in each other's pockets. Make no mistake about that, Mr Speaker.

We have also seen environmental groups making political appointments. The most recent of these involved Peter Garrett who performs with the rock group Midnight Oil. He was appointed President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, and that is a political appointment if ever I saw one. The man's expertise is in singing or playing rock music, not in the environmental field. That is an example of the sort of thing these groups have been up to.

The Northern Territory government has had an excellent record on environmental matters since self-government in 1978. There is no doubt about that. In the past 11 years, it has undertaken a whole range of initiatives. I can recall the days prior to self-government. This place looked like a moonscape. There was hardly a park in the Northern Territory that was properly developed and there was hardly a nature strip that was cared for. There was rubbish everywhere. Driving along Bagot Road or Trower Road, one would see plastic bags and rubbish all over the place. The same applied to the Stuart Highway. In fact, in the early days of self-government, the Northern Territory government used to call annual tenders for the collection of beer cans and other rubbish along the Stuart Highway from the Berry Springs turn-off all the way to the Bagot Road lights. That tender was worth \$8000 or \$9000. The Boy Scouts won it on one occasion and I helped them with the clean-up.

In those days, there was an enormous amount of rubbish around this city. We do not see that today, Mr Speaker. Why is that? It is because organisations like the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the Territory Tidy Towns Committee, Greening Australia and various other community groups play their part. The same applies in Alice Springs and in Aboriginal and other remote communities. The people have made a tremendous job of cleaning up the Territory in the last 11 years.

Whilst the situation has improved greatly, regrettably it is still not as good as it could be. In spite of the fact that during the last 11 years the Conservation Commission, the Darwin City Council and many other groups have spent an enormous amount of money, time and effort in planting trees in a whole range of locations, unfortunately the results have been fairly poor. There is a reason for that. It is because the planning, the programming and the follow-up have not been as good as they might have been. In some cases, the wrong species have been planted. Sometimes watering has been insufficient or drip systems have not been installed.

The results are obvious in areas such as the vicinity of Bagot Road overpass where many trees have died and those which remain are stunted. Had proper watering occurred or a drip system been installed, the area would be quite lush. As the member for Ludmilla pointed out to me, if the right sort of species had been planted in the first place, we would have achieved a much better result for the money spent. Such situations are repeated throughout the suburbs of Darwin and that is a shame because it is a waste of limited resources. I was absolutely delighted when I heard the Chief Minister announce the funding of a study into the greening of Darwin. Whilst I live in Darwin, I can understand the reaction of members from other places. Nevertheless, it needs to be done and I was very pleased with the Chief Minister's announcement. I am quite sure that, as a consequence of that study, funds will be allocated in a future budget for the greening of Darwin. There is no doubt that Territory Tidy Towns, the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and Greening Australia have made a significant contribution to the

greening of the northern suburbs of Darwin. I know that my own local Territory Tidy Towns committee has undertaken numerous tree-planting projects in parks and along nature strips.

More recently, I have been pushing for the upgrading of the area on the Jingili side of Rapid Creek between the Water Gardens and McMillans Road. I certainly hope that the Conservation Commission will take note of my representations. I have been very pleased to note that it has upgraded the section of the creek on the airport side of the McMillans Road bridge. That work was carried out in conjunction with the voluntary groups which I have mentioned during the wet season late last year and early this year. I hope that it can be extended along the creek bank as far as the Water Gardens in Jingili because, at present, that area is covered in tall grass filled with vermin. The grass burns from time to time, creating a risk to the adjacent properties. The problem in this area really needs to be addressed.

The Leader of the Opposition and his deputy commented on the importation of species of hardwood timber from South-east Asia. As we well know, several Darwin businesses survive on the importation of that timber, not just for consumption here in the Northern Territory but also for export to the southern states. I was pleased to note the comments of members opposite on this matter. They did not echo the sentiments of some of their federal colleagues who, together with some of the greensies from down south, have been arguing that we must stop the importation of that timber. Such an approach would be a nonsense. It is not the answer.

The reality is that, with the way the environmental movement is going in Australia, our timber resources, particularly our hardwood resources, are being locked up. The northern Queensland rainforest areas are on the verge of being locked up. We have seen what has happened in Tasmania and I would suggest that the next target of the environmental movement will be the kauri forests of Western Australia. Within the next decade, it is likely to reach the stage where the only timber available in Australia will be softwood species from the pine forests which have been planted through the southern parts of Australia. That would be regrettable.

The answer to the problem is reforestation. The same applies in South-east Asia. I would be the first to admit that considerable areas of rainforest have been razed and I do not support that for one moment. What we should be doing, as a nation, is talking to representatives of the countries concerned. I was pleased to note that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Evans, and another federal minister recently have been in South-east Asia talking with officials about the need to conserve their rainforests and the need for reforestation.

As was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, we need to realise that many ordinary village people in those countries rely on timber exports to bolster their economies and to earn foreign exchange. If we simply deprive them of export markets, those people will be seriously disadvantaged. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there is a need to compromise and I was pleased with his approach to this issue.

Another matter which concerns me is the annual burn-off of bush areas in the Top End. I know that there are varying points of view on this subject. I have heard arguments put that the Aboriginal people have been doing it for 40 000 years. Perhaps that is true but I do not believe that they have been doing it to the extent to which it is done at present. Nobody can convince me that the mass burn-off of forests in the Northern Territory is doing the

country any good at all. I could accept the occasional burn-off but not the massive burn-offs that we now see. The young plants are destroyed. Fauna, including birds nesting in the trees, lizards, mice and a range of other animals that abound in those areas are destroyed. Whilst it is all very well for us to feel warm about planting trees and greening Darwin, Alice Springs and all the other places, at the same time we are burning our forests in the Top End annually and destroying them. I have observed that forests around Darwin in particular are far less lush now than they were 10 years ago. I think that we must address that issue.

There is no doubt that the Northern Territory has been a leader in Australia in respect of conservation and the environment. I would like to compliment the Conservation Commission on the excellent work that it has done in the last 11 years with regard to upgrading the various parks around the Northern Territory. The commission is a credit to this Northern Territory. I feel very saddened that, in certain places such as Kakadu National Park and Uluru National Park, it was cut off at the knees by the federal Labor government a few years ago. There is no doubt that it would do a far better job than the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has done since it pulled the rug out from under the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. A much better job would be done by our people.

In closing, there is one other matter that I would like to raise. I applaud the thrust that is taking place in the Northern Territory and in Australia with regard to the conservation of our environment, the cutting down on the emission of CFCs that is polluting our atmosphere, and overcoming problems such as the sewage flowing into the sea around Sydney which reflects the 10 or 12 years of neglect of the Labor government which had the responsibility to address that issue and did nothing. The current Liberal government in NSW has been lumbered with that latter problem. However, whilst we are doing these things in Australia, it concerns me that, in the rest of the world, particularly in the third world countries where the majority of the world's population lives, the environment and the atmosphere is being increasingly polluted at a rate that is hard to believe. Thus, the contribution that we will make in Australia to our region of the world in effect will count for nought unless we and other like-minded countries of the western world can sell the message to those third world countries and, if necessary, provide them with assistance and technical advice to enable them to address this issue. If we do not get that side of the environmental problem under control - and I am talking about the pollution that is being spewed into the world by the industries of those third world countries - then the efforts of the Northern Territory and of Australia and of all of the concerned third world countries will count for nought. I support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to welcome the statement by the Chief Minister. I think it is most timely because it is important that Territorians are seen to be as conscious of the environmental situation as other people in Australia. It is fair to say that, until now, environmental issues and the promotion of the environment itself have really been matters promoted by the radical fringe. That is to be regretted because, as a result of many of the causes that they have promoted over the years, they have turned many people away from serious consideration of environmental protection and enhancement to the detriment of us all.

However, in recent days, a changing attitude in the community has brought people to the view that we must do something. I do not think that any single issue has caused this. It is the result of a whole range of things. What is

very encouraging is that there is an understanding and awareness in the community now that we will have to pay good money to enhance or protect or promote our environment. The community accepts that. The first step in doing anything in relation to the environment is having the community understand that it will have to pay in some form or other for it.

Much has been written and spoken about the Greenhouse Effect and the ozone layer. All of those stories have helped the general populace become more aware and understanding of the problem and given them a more determined attitude to doing something about it. The fights over the years over the Franklin Dam, the Queensland rainforests, pulp mill construction and even the Fox Report, which was implemented in the Territory in the mid-1970s, have all gone a long way to creating an awareness that our environment is really under siege in different ways and that there is a need for us to stop, take stock and do something about it. People now know that it will cost money, and they are prepared to pay.

What is very encouraging to me is that many industry groups in the community - and I cite the farmers, the miners, the manufacturing industry and the forestry industry - have been aware of the environmental problems for some time. Over a period as long as 10 years, they have been putting their house in order and preparing for the occasion when their industries would have to meet the scrutiny of the general public so far as environmental matters were concerned. In fact, whilst the environmental conditions that were imposed on Ranger in the mid-1970s were seen as burdensome in some ways and an impost on the company in financial terms, many of the things implemented at the time have now become the norm for mining companies which have accepted much higher standards.

The debate over the construction of the pulp mill in Tasmania has also created a greater awareness in the community. People are saying that we need these things but that also we must have the answers about the disposal of the waste that they create. People are not saying that we should not do it, but that we must be certain that we do it properly. In all of these exercises, the community is now becoming more accepting of the fact that it will have to pay in some form or other for the environmental change.

In a sense, Mr Hawke's statement of some 6 or 8 weeks ago was a political coup for himself, but I think all he was reflecting was what everybody else in the community is saying: we need to stop, take stock and do something about it. With these things, acknowledging that we have a problem is quite often the first and most important step in solving it. Without any doubt, the people of the Northern Territory have the environment on their minds because it was clearly an important issue in the Wanguri by-election.

The Chief Minister's statement really reflects a similar sensitivity. I think that is very good because what the government is about to do, on behalf of all Territorians, is to say that we need to accept that many things must be done in the community to improve our environment. 'Protecting the environment' means different things to different people. Everybody seems to have a different idea of what 'protecting the environment' means, but there is one thing they all understand and that is that there are things that can be done.

I see environmental change being introduced as a way of life. I like to compare it with the problem that we had in the Territory mining industry some years ago in relation to safety. Safety was one of those things that was everybody else's problem - it was the boss's problem, it was the foreman's

problem, it was the problem of everybody else in the workplace, but it was not the problem of the bloke whose life and well-being was at risk. Over a period of time, with an education program, new safety regulations and new attitudes by management, safety in the workplace became a frame of mind. Everybody became conditioned to the fact that you did things that were safe, that you wore hats and shoes and took precautions that protected your life and everybody else's. What the government is embarking on now is a program that is quite similar to that: making environmental protection, enhancement and improvement a way of life. When we do that, we have to accept that it will cost a few dollars. We may have to put aside things that we have done in the past in order to spend money on these environmental matters.

I would like to run through some of the things that I believe are pretty important to the average Territorian. We are a great consumer community and there is no end to the amount of disposable containers that the Northern Territory community uses. What is of concern is the way we dispose of the container once we have consumed its contents. It is only a matter of time before the subject of returnable containers becomes an important issue. I am not talking only about soft drinks and milk packets, but also about kegs, gas bottles and everything else. I remember going to Umbakumba on one occasion and seeing on the beach the biggest stack of kegs that I have ever seen outside of a brewery. They had been collecting them for years and no one would take the empties away. Apart from the dollar value that they represented, they were an environmental menace and something should have been done about them. In respect of high-pressure gas bottles and a whole range of containers that we use in our everyday lives, we need to become more deliberate in the way that we dispose of them.

Car bodies are also a source of irritation for most Territorians. They are everywhere. No one cares, no one wants responsibility for them and no one does anything about them. They are on the sides of the roads, they are up back alleys and they are in everybody's backyard. You can find car bodies anywhere and I was a bit surprised ...

Mr Manzie: Deposit legislation.

Mr TUXWORTH: The honourable minister cracks a joke about deposit legislation. What I suggest is having a comprehensive program involving local government to compact these car bodies, collect them all and make a reef of them. Perhaps it could be done once a year. That will cost money. We pay for that ...

Mr Reed: You are not allowed to do that anymore.

Mr TUXWORTH: You can sell them to the Japanese. I do not mind what you do. However, the community is saying that we should get rid of this rubbish because it is an eyesore.

Tree planting was mentioned by a couple of honourable members as a very important program and I would agree with that. Honourable members who have been here for a while would recall that, immediately after self-government, there was a tree-planting program. As I recall, about 400 000 trees were planted in a couple of years. The reality is that, for several reasons, we have to go back to that program and do it every year. One is that the average life of a tree in the Territory, because of fire, white ants and flood or whatever, is 15 years. If you get more out of a tree, you are doing well, but most shrubs and trees just keel over at that point of time. If we want to keep them coming, we have to deliberately propagate them and then ensure that

they survive the first year. That sort of program might cost \$0.5m a year but it is the sort of thing that Territorians want. It can be done in every community and it can be done with the support of local government.

Mr Manzie: It has been done through Greening Australia.

Mr TUXWORTH: The honourable minister says that it is being done. It is being done in some places by some people, but it is not being done everywhere and it is not being done for all Territorians, and that is the point that I am moving to. We can take the list as far as you like, Mr Deputy Speaker. We can talk about eliminating mosquitoes, providing clean water and disposing of toxic waste. I heard somebody breathe those dirty words earlier this afternoon, but nevertheless the toxic waste has not gone away. People are just storing it wherever they happen to feel like leaving it, and that is a bigger problem for us than having a proper toxic waste facility.

One program that I believe the Territory government ought to take a really serious look at - and I do not believe for a minute that there is an easy solution to it - is the possibility of propagating trees on the Barkly Tableland. I think it was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who mentioned that the movement of Territory topsoil down the Georgina River was a matter of great concern. I would say that, out on the tableland, there is a problem that we need to try to overcome and it will be a very big challenge for the technical people. The nature of the black soil plains there makes it almost impossible for trees to survive. As the soil dries out and cracks, it breaks the roots off and very few trees can live. The challenge with that enormous expanse of black soil plain is to find what to do with it and how to overcome the problem. It would be good from the point of view of providing livestock with shade.

I will come back to the point raised a moment ago by the member for Jingili when he was talking about the greening of Darwin. I recall the Chief Minister's announcement well, and I do not decry the need for greening of Darwin. I would just like to put it in the perspective of saying there is a need to green everywhere in the Northern Territory, not just Darwin. If there is \$4m available for the greening of Darwin, let us make it \$3m for Darwin and \$1m for everywhere else. That may seem pretty narrow-minded but, if you consider the natural attributes that Darwin has and then look at places like Warrabri, Hooker Creek, Tennant Creek, Docker River, Yuendumu and Borroloola and all the rest of them, it is clear that they too would like to have greening programs and they too would benefit from a little government support in getting them going.

I do not know whether honourable members take an interest in growing trees. I am no green thumb by any means but I do enjoy planting trees and watching them grow. At every house that I have ever had, one of the features of it, when I have sold it, has been the number of trees that have survived in that yard. I can say from very hard experience that getting trees started and through their first 12 months in places below Katherine is a very difficult job. You have to be very determined about what you are doing if you want trees and plants to survive in that environment. It might take money, drip feeds, a little bit of care, attention and shade to get them started and the determination of people to make it work. I am saying to the government, when it is considering these programs of largesse for projects like the beautification of Darwin, that is terrific. However, it needs to remember that people out of Darwin have 5 times more difficulty in getting their shrubs and trees and gardens growing and they too would like to have a little support from those programs.

The important fact that I see emerging from the environmental debate is that we are about to make it a way of life, and I think that is really good, because once people start to think green, think environment, and think conservation, protection and enhancement as they go about their normal daily lives, it will really make a very big difference to the environment in which we live and the Territory that we all love so much. Today's statement by the Chief Minister is a very positive start and I welcome it. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I will support continuing moves in this direction very strongly.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's statement and it is with some pleasure that I take part in this debate. As I listened to what different members had to say, it seemed to me that there was a certain amount of confusion in relation to the environment and conservation. To give a couple of examples, I start with the Leader of the Opposition and his comments in relation to what has been achieved in the Territory and his suggestion that the government has to do much more and is only reacting now because of the results of a recent by-election.

I think the Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite sell what has been done by the government departments in the Northern Territory somewhat short. I refer in particular to the Conservation Commission, and we heard other examples. The member for Stuart has criticised just about every stock inspector, vet and clerk in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries over the last year, and the police and others have come in for their share of criticism. I really think that honourable members opposite should take a closer look at exactly what has been achieved.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the plan to conserve the mangroves in Darwin Harbour. In the Territory, mangroves are pretty well an untouched resource. Certainly in Darwin and in some other small areas around the coast where there has been some development, there has been some intrusion into them but, for the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that we should be striving to save 100% of the mangroves rather than 80%, indicates that he is really out of touch with what is occurring and what can be achieved. I think he is just taking an opportunity to gain a bit of political mileage out of the debate. The fact is that, on a harbour where the development of a city is occurring, it is not possible to achieve protection of 100% of the mangrove system. I think the plan that has been put into place by the commission to protect something in the order of 80% is commendable. It has to be recognised that this plan did not grow overnight. It has not come into place since the Wanguri by-election. I have no idea how long the Conservation Commission has been working on the mangrove plan for Darwin Harbour, but I think it would be years.

A member: Since 1985.

Mr REED: I am advised that it has been 4 or 5 years. To me, that seems to indicate that the members opposite are not up with what has been achieved with regard to conservation and the protection of our environment in the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition was at a cattlemen's luncheon in Tennant Creek in July when a very interesting talk was given by the guest speaker, Dame Leonie Kramer. She touched on a number of issues and pointed out that she had just returned from a trip to Britain where she had visited a place that was called, I think, Dibbsley Manor, which was 800 years old. One of the

things that struck her was that the establishment was 800 years old and, whilst the environment had been vastly modified, it was stable. A point that really struck her as she drove up to the house was the fact that there were cattle grazing in the grounds. She said that there were areas of native bushland and many native trees. Some very old trees still existed there. The point she made was that we should not be suggesting retaining the earth principally as a museum piece, a snapshot of 1989, but we should bear in mind that, if we are to survive as a race, we have to use the environment as well as conserve it. That is exactly what has happened in the case of places like Dibbsley Manor. Dame Leonie made the point that, if Australia continues along the road we are on at the moment, we will not have a future because nothing will happen. We have to learn to accept changes to the environment but do it in a sensitive way and enable production to occur for our society to proceed and progress.

We heard very little from members opposite about what their policy was on the environment and conservation. They mouthed platitudes about the cynicism of the government and its lack of action over a number of years, and I find that a little disappointing because there really were plenty of opportunities today for us to hear what the opposition had to offer in relation to the care and management of the environment.

The question of land degradation was raised by a number of members. I think that those honourable members, who have not had a chance to look at what is happening in the pastoral industry and appreciate the changes that have taken place in recent years, should do so. People in the pastoral industry have become much more aware of the environment and the need to manage the land that they control in a much more sensitive way, if for no other reason than to sustain production. Of course, if they do not sustain production and the resource on which they produce their product, they themselves do not have a future. We really must recognise what they have achieved in recent years through the establishment of land care groups throughout the Northern Territory in recognition of the fact that soil conservation issues must be addressed if they are to maintain viability and indeed be allowed to remain on the land, given changing attitudes among the general populace.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has not been inactive in this regard. Rangeland management activities and services have been provided to pastoralists in order to put in place sustainable land use practices and much work has been done by the Land Conservation Unit of the Conservation Commission. The aim is to ensure that major land users have the ability to change their management practices and put in place sustainable management regimes. There are many examples, Mr Deputy Speaker. On the cropping side, the agricultural side, there is the increasing use of minimum tillage whereby the preparation of the soil is minimised prior to sowing the crop. I believe that these and other activities will continue to be used and their use will be expanded.

I was rather surprised that honourable members from the southern region of the Northern Territory overlooked the dust control program in the Alice Springs area that has been under way for 10 or 12 years, and that has been a remarkable success. The program was established principally to stabilise denuded areas. Anyone approaching Alice Springs in an aircraft can see just how successful it has been. The patterns of plantings are very obvious. That program is a classic example of how much effort the Conservation Commission has made and how much success it has achieved in soil conservation and the stabilisation of our environment.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has in place a number of programs to ensure the sustainable use and management of our resources. The Barramundi Management Plan is a classic example. It was put in place earlier this year when 2 river systems were dedicated to amateur fishermen. As well as the Conservation Commission, other departments are pursuing these issues and implementing effective regimes for the management of our natural resources. The much-maligned BTEC program has played a part in the conservation of our environment. The BTEC program has seen a reduction in numbers of feral animals, concentration of feral animals and uncontrolled stock and, of course, in the northern coastal plains, the control of buffalo, and the elimination of swim channels and salt-water intrusion into massive paperbark swamps. In some cases, swamps have been completely destroyed and will take hundreds of years to regenerate, if they are able to regenerate at all. The results of BTEC, in terms of environmental conservation, exemplify the side benefits which are derived from some programs.

There are many other examples, including the noxious weed program, the control of *Mimosa pigra* and noogoora burr. As we all know, mimosa has the ability to take over vast tracts of land and has done so. Thousands of hectares in the coastal plains have been crowded out by this plant. It is a very vigorous plant and control measures are both difficult and expensive. Nonetheless, they are being implemented in a very productive way.

In his statement, the Chief Minister made some reference to the breeding and release of certain native species. I am not sure that people are generally aware how complex these programs are. The bilby and the rufous hare-wallaby are 2 examples. It is not simply a matter of breeding the animals in captivity and releasing them. They have to be released gradually into their natural habitat. Animals bred in captivity have to be protected from predators and have to adapt to native food sources as opposed to food sources supplied by man. They have to adapt to natural shelter and hazards such as fire. It is a very complex matter. Breeding and release programs take years to implement and, even when that has occurred, they have to be monitored constantly. I am not detracting from these programs. I am saying that the officers involved with them make a commitment which is quite outstanding and which has been most successful.

The member for Stuart mentioned bustards and the effect which feral cats have on the bustard population. He attributed the destruction of large numbers of bustards to feral cats. Whilst I do not disagree with him and do not wish in any way to be seen to be supporting the feral cat, it has been my experience over the years that there is another cause for the decline in their numbers. Many people, including rangers, police officers stationed in the bush and a whole raft of others have observed that bustards, kangaroos and small wallabies suffer severely because Aborigines, who formerly used traditional means of hunting, now utilise firearms. It is a fairly contentious issue, but it has to be addressed. We cannot continue to allow the use of firearms in this situation. Some of us would have seen Aborigines hunting in the traditional manner with spears which, if they are lucky, enables them to catch perhaps 1 or 2 bustards, which is an adequate number for a feed. If a rifle is used, however, it is not difficult to obtain 6 to 8 bustards. Sadly, once the campfire is lit and the tucker is cooked and eaten, it is found that 1 or 2 birds are enough to fill people's bellies and the others invariably end up going to waste. I believe that this issue, which is fairly contentious in the bush, has to be addressed. No one would deny the right of Aborigines to hunt but we really have to consider the means of hunting, particularly in the context of concern about the environment and the protection of endangered species.

The member for Barkly touched on what I thought was a very interesting subject - the planting of trees on the Barkly Tableland. It seems to me that the honourable member is rather confused about what constitutes environmental conservation and what constitutes environmental manipulation. I see no difference between clearing large tracts of land and turning it from woodland to grassland and what the member for Barkly advocates in the case of the Barkly Tableland, which is to change it from grassland to woodland. I do not deny that there might be some benefit to be derived from propagating trees on the Barkly Tableland although the honourable member admitted that black soils make it almost impossible to grow trees because, when they dry out and crack, the roots break and the trees die. The member for Barkly might have to realise that there are no trees on the Barkly Tableland for that very reason. To proceed along the course suggested by him is to attempt to manipulate the environment rather than to protect it.

Mr Speaker, in summing up, I reiterate that the Conservation Commission has an extremely good record throughout Australia in terms of its past achievements and the work it is undertaking at present. The Chief Minister touched on a number of those achievements. As I have indicated, other departments are having equal success in relation to the management of our environment and conservation issues generally. I do not think that the departments of the Northern Territory government or the government itself have anything to feel guilty about in terms of their approach to the environment. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that, if the government does feel any pangs of guilt, that would be because it does not sell its successes strongly enough.

That is really the nub of the matter. There are plenty of achievements but we really have to start telling the people what they are. Clearly, people are not aware of what has been achieved, the extent of the programs that have been undertaken and the extent of the programs that are currently in place. If we have a fault, I believe that it is in not sufficiently informing people about our achievements.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I will not speak for very long on this matter because I think most of what needs to be said has been said. I strongly support the Chief Minister's statement. Undoubtedly, it sets out a program of conservation and discussion that will further protect the environment in the Northern Territory. We are probably very fortunate in being ahead of most other parts of the country in terms of protection of the natural environment. We are fortunate because much of the natural environment is still in place.

I would like to take up the Leader of the Opposition on his claim that this statement is simply a result of the Wanguri by-election. We all know that, last September, the Chief Minister set up a committee to investigate the implications of the Greenhouse Effect. I have spoken to several members of that committee and I have great confidence in their ability to put forward proposals which will assist the Territory and, indeed, Australia, in protecting the environment. In addition, the Minister for Conservation indicated prior to the by-election that heritage legislation would be brought before the House this year.

As Minister for Conservation several years ago, I had the benefit of attending a Conservation Ministers Conference in Perth. A very good film depicting the results of the depletion of the ozone layer was shown. It was a rather frightening film because it showed clearly the effects of CFCs, methane and other gases which are being released into the atmosphere. They are

causing much harm to the ozone layer and I was certainly impressed. Obviously, the Tasmanian minister was very impressed too because he raced back to Tasmania and immediately brought in legislation on the basis that the hole in the ozone layer would affect Tasmania first. He went into a bit of a panic over that. However, it was an eye-opener to me to see the effects that these gases can have on the ozone layer and to know that gases emitted during the last 30 years are gradually moving up to the ozone layer and will have an impact on it during the next 30 years or so.

I want to respond to comments made by members opposite in relation to environmental damage caused by the activities of pastoralists in the Northern Territory. The Victoria River region, perhaps reasonably, was singled out. There are areas of environmental degradation in the Victoria River region, along rivers and in some other areas. Although some environmental damage has been brought about over the years by the activities of pastoralists, it has been caused largely by the presence of feral animals. We all know that a fairly substantial group of people in our midst would like to see them protected. There are very large numbers of donkeys and horses which do great damage in that area but some people would like those animals to be protected.

The pastoralists in the Victoria River region formed the Victoria River Conservation Group 2 or 3 years ago to identify areas of environmental damage within the Victoria River region and to take action to rectify the problems. Those problems were not necessarily created by pastoralists but the pastoralists saw the need to address them in order to protect the environment from which they drew their living and because they were concerned that environmental damage would worsen unless some action was taken. I attended the first meeting of the group, which was held in Katherine, and the pastoralists made it very clear to me that they were not after government assistance. They said: 'This is our problem. We are going to take the initiative and we are going to fix it. We are not looking for dollar support from you although we would certainly like advice from the experts within government. We are very keen to fix the existing problems'. That conservation group still exists and is doing good work in identifying the areas of environmental damage within the Victoria River region and fixing the problems so identified. I think that is a very commendable initiative.

In central Australia, the NT Cattlemen's Association has also shown its concern about environmental damage. It has become involved with an existing environmental group there and would probably be one of the strongest parts of that group now. It is playing an active part in that conservation group and is taking action to correct the problems in that area.

As I said, considerable damage is being caused by feral animals such as donkeys, horses, cats and pigs. Like the member for Stuart, I believe that the pig is a greater problem in the Top End than the buffalo. I know that there are others who will disagree with that but I have seen the damage done to the environment by pigs in the coastal regions. I am strongly convinced that, with the passage of time, they will become an even greater problem.

The Territory government has taken a very active role in research on eliminating the cane toad, an introduced animal that has caused considerable damage in Queensland and is moving across to the Northern Territory. The money that the Northern Territory government, along with Queensland and Western Australia, has put into research at the Captain Cook University to find a means by which those toads can be restricted or wiped out is very commendable. That has been going on for years. It commenced long before any

environmental statements were made by the Commonwealth, although I must say that the Commonwealth supports the research being done into cane toads.

Research is being done into mimosa which is another problem that was introduced into the Top End. The Territory government has been putting funds into research on mimosa for some time and, hopefully, that will bring about a resolution of the mimosa problem over time.

The burning-off of the Darwin rural area was mentioned. I do not know that we will ever be able to stop the burning-off of the rural area. The fuel there is meant to burn. The speargrass grows every year, dies and has to burn in order to re-seed and that has been a natural part of the ecological process of the rural area for many years. Those trees will probably die if we stop burning in the rural areas. If the speargrass fails to burn, eventually the mat under the trees will die off. The trees will not burn. Nematodes will be reproduced in the ground and the trees will die. That has been found to be the case in the hardwood forests of Western Australia with the control of burning. They have controlled burning now but, for a long time, they would not allow any burning in the forest at all and, as a consequence, the nematodes in the soil of the jarrah forests of Western Australia increased so greatly that dieback affected the trees, and they lost a considerable amount of very good timber.

We would find the same thing here. We have to allow nature to take its course. As the population grows and suburbs expand, the speargrass and the native trees will go and people will plant other trees. In general, I think Northern Territory people can be commended for the effort we put into planting trees. I do not think there is any other place in the country where people plant as many trees in their backyards as people do here. I have planted hundreds of them in my own garden in Batchelor and I know that, in the Territory, most people tend to plant many trees.

The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries talked about the work being done in relation to the bilby and the mala and there is no doubt at all that that research is second to none. It is putting those animals back into the wild. It is capable of bringing back from the point of extinction animals that were very much a part of wide areas of Australia in the past. The work on the crocodile industry was mentioned also. Crocodiles are proliferating in waters in the Top End. A few years ago, that was not the case and they have been protected by legislation for some time. The ability to give the crocodile a value and to breed from eggs that would almost certainly not have developed into full-grown crocodiles in the wild, by bringing them into facilities such as crocodile farms, will give us the capacity to return crocodiles to the wild if crocodile numbers are seen to be declining. I doubt that it will happen in the future but, if it should be seen to be happening, crocodiles can be put back into the wild. We will never be in danger of losing crocodiles from northern waters in the future. I know many people say that we should get rid of them all and that humans should be considered first. Many of us lose sight of the fact that human beings are the primates in this land. If you like, we are the form of animal life that has primacy here and, in fact, most of what is put on earth is here for our use, enjoyment and protection.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, protection of the environment, the ozone layer and the Greenhouse Effect are topics which one could talk about for many hours. Of course, there is a tremendous amount of literature about and a tremendous amount of interest in the environment and the possible outcomes of the pollution of our atmosphere with increasing amounts of certain

gases, such as CFCs which affect the ozone layer, and gases like carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide etc which have a Greenhouse Effect. I think it is worth trying to put on record a little more clearly what the Greenhouse Effect is. Of course, it relates to a greenhouse or glasshouse. As you would well know, Mr Speaker, if you make a house of glass, the temperature inside is at a higher level than that outside so one can grow plants out of their natural season - even during the winter - and produce various foods and plants for all sorts of purposes.

What actually happens is that the radiation coming from the sun is basically of a short wavelength. It is not simply one wavelength. It varies from invisible, very short wavelengths, the ultra violet, and then through the visible colours of the spectrum, the blue being the shortest, through to red which is the longest of the visible colours, and then into infra-red radiation, which has an even longer wavelength. The energy of the particular type of radiation is dependent on the wavelength. The shorter the wavelength, the higher the frequency and the greater the energy.

The glass of the glasshouse permits certain wavelengths to pass through it more easily than others. The short wavelength of the light coming from the sun, which is dependent on the average temperature of the sun itself, penetrates the glass quite easily. That radiation is then absorbed by the soil and the plants inside the glasshouse and the temperature of the soil and the plants is raised a little. Any object above 0°K, minus 273°, is radiating energy and its radiation depends again on its average temperature. Being much lower than the temperature of the sun, the radiation which it gives back is of a much longer wavelength and glass is virtually impervious to this. Thus, the longer wavelength tries to get out, travelling at the speed of light, but hits the glass, finds it to be opaque and bounces back. It bounces back and forth continually inside the glasshouse. It is trapped and therefore the energy is trapped and the average temperature inside is greater than the temperature outside.

One can easily note this effect, of course, if there is cloud cover at night time. In winter time in central Australia, the temperature will drop close to zero but, if there is cloud cover that persists all night, it has the effect of a blanket. The cloud itself traps the radiation, which rises and hits the cloud layer and comes back. In those circumstances, you know that the night will not be as cold as it would have been had there been no cloud cover. The problem with gases like carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane is that we are tending to create a more permanent blanket with them. Sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide tend to be fairly soluble in water and will come back to earth, unfortunately as acids and acid rain, and that produces another environmental problem for us.

If anybody saw Beyond 2000 last night, they will have seen that, in Canada, they have been deliberately putting acid into several lakes over the years to see what effect it has on the environment. For the first 4 or 5 years, it appeared to have very little effect because the environment seemed to be able to neutralise the acid but, after 4 or 5 years, the effects were pretty dramatic. I certainly hope that it will not be necessary to conduct many more experiments of this nature which are destroying lakes, before we get the message that we should do something. But, what on earth can we do? In the Northern Territory, we have 150 000 people and, in a world of 4000 million people, what on earth can we do?

I suppose we cannot be the total answer to the problem but then again we should not be exacerbating it. We could be a partial answer to the problem.

We can plant trees ourselves and encourage the people of the Territory to try to have an influence on other people around us. Of course, the point of growing trees is that the trees will take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere thereby reducing the amount of that gas. It is only a small contribution, but a contribution nevertheless and, in the process of taking in carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, carbon compounds are produced, sugars and so forth, which then go into other complex processes in the tree and release oxygen which, of course, is a gas that is necessary for life. The very fact that you and I are here, Mr Speaker, means that we are actually contributing to the Greenhouse Effect in a small way because, as we respire, we release carbon dioxide. To balance that, trees are one of the answers.

When you look at the earth and you see seams of coal thousands of feet thick and the oil that is trapped underground, it is pretty obvious that, at one stage, this earth must have had a great deal more carbon dioxide in its atmosphere than is the case today. I take a little bit of heart from the fact that the earth survived. Conditions would have been very different to those we experience now but, in the photosynthetic process of producing trees, and trees and plant life falling into lakes and the carbon dioxide not being returned to the atmosphere through fire, whilst that debris accumulated to form coal deposits thousands of feet thick, we have taken much of the carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

Of course, the world's population is now large and the demand for energy is increasing because energy provides us with a comfortable lifestyle. None of us intends to hand over our motor cars and go back to horses and carts. In fact, even horses produce gases. The horses produce methane and carbon dioxide.

Mr Hatton: You would need a lot of horses though.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, and think of the number of kerbside gutter plugs that would be around our streets. When I was a young lad, we lived on an orchard farm 13 miles out of Adelaide. We would come in to the Adelaide market and one of my memories as a toddler is of seeing gentlemen going around with a broom and a sort of dustpan arrangement on wheels scraping up the droppings from the horses which were still used in the Adelaide market area in the 1940s. Horses certainly are not an answer, but what is?

There are promising things on the horizon. One is a fuel which will burn to a harmless product. The gas hydrogen burns to good old water, and that is a pretty harmless by-product. We have plenty of hydrogen on the planet in the form of water itself. All schoolboys and girls have a chance to see that an electric current passing through water can transform the electrical energy into chemical energy and actually break the bonds of hydrogen and oxygen in water and produce hydrogen and oxygen. That is well known by most people. However, you do not get anything out of that which you do not put in. It takes a certain amount of energy to break those molecules. When you reform them by burning the hydrogen, you cannot get anything more out than what you put in initially. One can use solar cells to produce electricity by taking sunlight. However, these are not very efficient these days and are very costly. That electricity can be used to break the water back down into hydrogen and oxygen. The oxygen can be released into the atmosphere and the hydrogen can be used in cylinders to ...

Mr Manzie: Mix it up a bit. Enrich it.

Mr COLLINS: It is interesting. I saw the article that the member for Stuart spoke about. It related to Brown's gas. Instead of separating the hydrogen and oxygen and keeping them well apart, as our school teachers would have told us to do, because they will form an explosive mixture, Brown claims that, if you have them in their exact proportions - in other words, as they were in the water - instead of getting an explosion, you have an implosion. Do not ask me how because it defies all the science that I learned. However, there is more under heaven than there is in the science textbooks and I am prepared to look at the fellow's claim. He says that he is producing temperatures of 9000°. That struck me immediately as being ideal for disposing of many of our chemicals which require extremely high temperatures for their destruction. I am sure the scientific community will investigate this matter. Certainly, it is as good as cold fusion which has had considerable publicity but which seems to have quietened in latter days.

If we intend to reduce levels of emissions of carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide which are damaging our environment and creating this Greenhouse Effect, we must look for something else. If electricity can be used to break up water into hydrogen and oxygen, and the hydrogen put into cylinders, the cylinders can be fitted in motor cars. Rather than trying to run a heat engine, the way to go is what is called a fuel cell. It is possible to take the hydrogen and the oxygen out of the air, where they are always in plentiful supply, and convert them directly to electricity. This has an efficiency of about 98% which is far better than a heat engine which has only about 20% to 25% efficiency and the rest is wasted as heat. Fuel cells could produce electricity which could drive the motors of cars.

In general terms, the electricity that we have reticulated to us is the most useful common form of energy apart from that needed for transport, as I have mentioned. In that realm, in spite of Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, the record of the nuclear industry - and the world will come to realise this - has been a pretty good one in terms of producing energy which does not produce the waste products which we have from fossil fuels. There are, of course, radioactive waste products. What I advocate as Australia's gift to the world for the bicentenary is the commercial production of synroc.

This artificial rock is an Australian invention which can be used to trap high level waste in a chemically-bonded form which is far better than borosilicate glass. It would render the high level radioactive waste safe to the extent that, if it were buried a few metres below ground, the radiation from it would not escape to damage the environment. Of course, the big hope is not nuclear fission, the splitting of heavy nuclei, but rather nuclear fusion which is the joining together of small nuclei such as helium and hydrogen. It is the light nuclei coming together and forming heavier nuclei but, in the process, destroying a certain amount of the matter. That matter is converted into energy according to Einstein's formula that the energy released equals the change in mass times the velocity of light squared. That velocity of light squared is something like 9×10 to the 16th power and that is a lot of zeros. One kilogram of mass converted completely into energy will boil a lot of billies. The beauty of fusion is that it produces very little radioactive material in the process. We would have a virtually boundless supply of energy. The hydrogen is there in water. Deuterium and tritium, isotopes of hydrogen, are ideal materials for fusion. The problem is to get these light nuclei to fuse. It is very interesting that, for a few thousand dollars, ANSTO in Lucas Heights actually was able to maintain the fusion process for longer than the Russians and the Americans had using millions of dollars worth of equipment.

Mr Manzie: We put a satellite up too, didn't we?

Mr COLLINS: We were the third country to put a satellite up.

We measured the radiation from the earth, the earth's albedo. That is, of course, very important for the Greenhouse Effect. If you put a blanket on, you will trap more heat and the world will become hotter. If you take the blanket off or reduce the thickness of the blanket, more energy will escape and the temperature will drop.

I am glad the government is interested in this problem. I do not think any of us can ignore it. However, from the media reports, there are a variety of views on the Greenhouse Effect and the ozone depletion effect and on what will happen, what is happening and what may happen. A week or so ago, I read an article which claimed that the sea level would actually fall rather than rise. I dare say that only time will tell. However, it is good that people are becoming concerned and are interested. Whether people are looking for leadership or for clear scientific information which will measure the changes, it is up to each of us to do our bit. One thing that this parliament could do on a large scale would be to push for synroc as a treatment of high level radioactive waste in order to make nuclear energy more acceptable to the community. If we do that, we will have achieved something big. By the same token, let us plant a few trees and encourage others to do the same. Maybe the activity will spread across the world and we will maintain a good environment for the generations to come.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT
Territory Wildlife Park

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a statement regarding the establishment of the Territory Wildlife Park. The development of the Territory Wildlife Park near Berry Springs Nature Park was approved by the Territory government in 1979 following assessment of a number of sites around Darwin. It is interesting to note that the present Chief Minister, Hon Marshall Perron, instigated the original concept. I think history will record his foresight was indeed of great benefit to the Territory. Site works began in 1983-84 with construction of major displays beginning in 1985-86. On 2 October, after several years of hard work and commitment by Conservation Commission staff, the Territory Wildlife Park will be opened to the public. This event will mark the successful introduction to the Top End of yet another valuable asset for Territorians and tourists alike as a result of this government's foresight.

The main emphasis of the Territory Wildlife Park will be on wildlife native to the Territory. However, a variety of introduced animals which are present in the Territory will also be displayed. The park will complement other facilities already present in the Darwin region, such as the Crocodile Farm, Graeme Gow's Reptile World, Indo-Pacific Marine and the Yarrowonga Zoo. Stage 1 of the park will be completed in the near future at a cost of \$6.7m. It should be noted that a large portion of these funds has been used to provide roadworks and services in areas of the park which are to be developed at a later stage. This forward planning will ensure that the infrastructure is in place for future development thereby reducing overall costs in the long term.

Throughout the park, the bush has been left in its natural state as much as possible. At times, this has meant workers carrying out their duties under very difficult circumstances. However, the effect has paid off and the areas not used specifically for exhibits have been left virtually undisturbed. The exception to this is the entrance to the park which has been landscaped with tropical palms to create an oasis effect. The regard shown for the natural environment during the park's development is most evident in the boardwalk which winds through the lush tropical rainforest along the banks of Berry Creek. The boardwalk has been built so that it winds around the trees giving visitors the opportunity to look into rather than at the rainforest.

The park has been built to an open plan design with moated enclosures. This means that visitors will be able to see buffalo, banteng, emus, kangaroos, wallabies, dingoes and bustards without their view being obstructed by the ugly wall of mesh fencing so common in many zoos. In fact, visitors will be able to see Territory wildlife in its natural state throughout the park. Each exhibit is designed specifically to give visitors the illusion of being in the wild. Indeed, the wildlife is displayed as much as possible by habitat rather than by related species. Visitors to the park will be able to travel around the exhibits in comfort on 2 motorised trains, stopping at each exhibit as often and for as long as they choose. Special care has been taken to ensure disabled people will have access to the exhibits and the carriages have been designed to take wheelchairs.

One of the many impressive exhibits at the park is the aviary complex which has been designed so that visitors will walk past 10 aviaries, each depicting different Territory habitats and containing relevant bird species, before reaching one of the largest aviaries in the world - a walk-through rainforest aviary which stands about 6 storeys high. The aviaries and rainforest walk have been constructed at a cost of \$466 000 and will contain about 500 Territory birds of approximately 150 different species when collecting is complete. A specialist bird collector on secondment from Taronga Zoo is presently engaged in trapping for the aviaries some of the birds that are more difficult to obtain. A number of these species have never before been caught, kept or exhibited in captivity.

The Territory Wildlife Park contains 2 lagoons, 1 natural and the other artificially constructed. Bird life abounds at the natural lagoon which also contains many species of plants, including water lilies. The artificial lagoon is surrounded by landscaped lawns and will contain jabirus, ducks, geese and other waterfowl.

Perhaps the most spectacular exhibit at the park will be the aquatic display. The \$1m for the first stage of the display, which includes an underwater viewing tunnel through the main tank, was jointly funded by the Territory government and the Bicentennial Authority. The Territory government approved a further \$600 000 for construction of the second stage of the display last financial year.

The first stage of the display contains the fresh water species. Unfortunately, the developer of this display received a severe setback early this year when it was discovered that an exotic disease had affected some of the fish. This virus, lymphocytis, is still of concern to the government because, despite extensive investigations by the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, its source has yet to be discovered. About 6000 fish had to be destroyed following discovery of the virus. All tanks and aquariums were emptied, cleaned and sterilised. I am pleased to report, however, that restocking of the display is well under way with assistance from the

Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and there should be a good if not complete collection by the time the park is opened. Barramundi, saratoga, bream, archer fish and pignose turtles, among others, will all be displayed, most of them in the main tank for underwater viewing. Construction of the second stage of the complex, which will house further displays of fish, turtles and crocodiles, is now under way. When the display complex is complete, visitors will descend past a series of aquariums until they enter the underwater tunnel, exiting past a glass-fronted crocodile pool.

The project manager for both stages of the aquatic display is Barclay Brothers, Northern Territory. Barclays have employed local contractors for all the construction work. The exception has been the supply and installation of the acrylic underwater tunnel. This 15 m long tunnel was constructed at a cost of \$250 000 by Sea Structure, a specialist New Zealand company which has supplied similar tunnels for displays in Sydney, Perth and New Zealand.

The nocturnal house at the Territory Wildlife Park, constructed at a cost of more than \$780 000, is one of the largest in Australia. It has been landscaped in sections to provide examples of tropical woodland, escarpment, desert and billabong habitats. Special lighting systems create moonlight inside the nocturnal house during the day and artificial sunlight during the night. Separate air-conditioning systems have been installed in each section to cater for the particular needs of tropical and desert animals. On display will be possums, marsupial mice, rock wallabies, reptiles, ghost bats, bilbies and a host of others. Some of these species have already started to breed in captivity, including the bilbies.

I should mention that the bilby is one of the Territory's very rare wildlife species. The fact that we are able to display them at all is due entirely to the success of the Conservation Commission's successful captive breeding program in Alice Springs. This program symbolises the importance of the work being undertaken by the commission to conserve and protect endangered species of the Territory and, in recognition of this, the bilby will be the official logo for the park.

However, whilst the establishment of the nocturnal house has generally proceeded well, I must report that, as with most ventures concerning animals, not everything has gone according to plan. Of course, the animals which cause the greatest problems are those which are the most difficult to acquire. It took nearly 3 months for the Conservation Commission to trap a pair of water rats for the nocturnal house. Unfortunately, one of them responded by eating the other. The marsupial mice, trapped with great difficulty at Cobourg Peninsula, have taken so well to captivity that they are now living in the air-conditioning duct in their enclosure and only come down at night - that is during the real night, not the artificial version - to feed. These teething problems aside, the nocturnal house has already become a very high quality exhibit and I am confident that it will prove a great success with visitors.

On the subject of visitors, this year's budget provides an allocation of \$300 000 for construction of a retail outlet at the visitor terminal. This will include provision for sale of souvenirs and refreshments and is nearly complete, as are the picnic area, public toilets, mothers' room, first aid facilities and drivers' lounge. Both local and interstate tourist operators have already placed the Territory Wildlife Park high on their itineraries for the coming season.

In order to attract and maintain community support for the park, the government has decided to introduce a discount system to encourage return visits. To cater for local people who are expected to visit the park on a regular basis, each ticket will be printed on the reverse side to allow for a 50% discount on entry fees at the next visit. As an added bonus, members of the public will be admitted free to the park from 2 October to 8 October before entry fees come into effect. I encourage all honourable members to take advantage of this offer. Indeed, I certainly hope it will encourage their families and friends to visit the park as well. I have no doubt that they will all be deeply impressed with the park and will applaud the commitment of the Conservation Commission staff who have built it literally from the ground up.

Whilst on this subject, I would like to pay tribute to those people who have put so much effort into this project. With the exception of the aquatic display, all construction of exhibits has been by project manager Barry Rowe, his offsider Alwyn Nicholson and their staff, with the assistance of some local subcontractors and tradesmen. Indeed, the concept for most of the exhibits has come from Barry Rowe himself, with help from his staff. They have all pitched in to ensure that Territorians obtain maximum value for every dollar of taxpayers' money spent on the park's construction.

The government has given considerable thought to the question of entry fees to the park. After research into fee levels interstate and consultation with local tour operators, the fees have been set as follows: adult ticket, \$8; tickets for children aged 5 to 16, \$4; discount tickets for students and pensioners, \$4; and family tickets for 2 adults and up to 4 children, \$20. There will be a 10% discount for tour operators. As I mentioned earlier, each ticket will entitle the bearer to a return visit at half price.

The supporting detail, which can make so much difference to how the public perceives such a park, will be of very high quality at the Territory Wildlife Park. The signage and graphics have been prepared by local firm J.C. Boucher and Associates which won the contract against strong competition. Installation will begin in mid-September. In addition, a brochure and map to assist visitors to the park is being prepared in English, Japanese and German. A low-cost booklet about the park, initially in English only, will also be on sale. The uniforms for the 34 keepers, park attendants and scientists who will be employed in the park has been designed locally by Designer Uniforms.

As I mentioned earlier, the Territory Wildlife Park is located next to the Berry Springs Nature Park. I am aware that there have been some rumours that the government intends to amalgamate the 2 parks and to charge entry for the Berry Springs section as well as the wildlife park. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make it clear that the government does not intend to take this course of action and has never intended to do so. Although there may be some rationalisation of staffing and management to ensure optimum use of commission resources, a fee for entry into the Berry Springs Nature Park will not be introduced. In fact, the Territory government has allocated \$160 000 to provide access to another pool and more visitor facilities at Berry Springs to cater for increasing demand on the area. This demand is certainly expected to increase when the wildlife park opens to the public.

In concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, I again call on honourable members to take the opportunity to visit the Territory Wildlife Park and see for themselves the excellent work which has been undertaken there. The government believes that the park will become a significant asset to the Top End tourist

industry and, in due course, will be an important boost to our local economy. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise enthusiastically to support the honourable minister's statement. I know how much work has been done, both on the wildlife park and the adjacent nature park. I also know of the enthusiasm of Mr Barry Rowe and his staff. I was pleased to hear the honourable minister mention Mr Barry Rowe by name. I believe that much of the success of the wildlife park will be due to his boundless enthusiasm. To be perfectly honest, he is so enthusiastic that just listening to him speak is exhausting. I would like to think that his rather unusual way of getting results will overcome the difficulties that he has experienced with certain senior members of the public service, whose names I will not mention but whom I know very well - as does the honourable minister. The success of this undertaking in the early stages is due in no small part to the unusual entrepreneurial skills of Mr Barry Rowe.

I have referred in other places to his initiative in purloining certain items of equipment from the old Darwin Hospital before it was officially designated as the base for the university college. As that time, copper piping, sinks, refrigerators and metal benches were being vandalised and destroyed. Perhaps with the unwritten approval of some senior officers in the Conservation Commission, Barry helped himself energetically to fittings at the old Darwin Hospital and put them to very good use at the wildlife park. This sort of initiative has contributed greatly to the success of the project that we now see. Every post has been made a winner and I think the official opening will be quite an occasion.

It is a pity that it has taken so long to open this park. This is due in no small part to the parsimonious attitude of the Northern Territory government in relation to conservation issues. I know that some people argue that it is unnatural and cruel to keep native animals behind fences, in pens or in cages. Everybody knows that the animals in the Territory Wildlife Park will be kept in natural surroundings and restrained by scientific and natural means. When one sees how the animals are to be restrained, it is clear that a great deal of thought has been given to the animals' perception of the situation. The animals will be restrained without any undue stress being placed on them. Only by seeing animals in public places such as this can the general public begin to appreciate, not only the extent of our Territory wildlife, but its quality.

I believe that there will be exhibits of some of our feral animals. Whilst certain purists in the fauna scene might throw up their hands in horror at the thought of exhibiting camels, donkeys, buffalo and so forth, I believe that they are of interest to tourists and the general public. These feral animals have contributed something to Northern Territory development, even if that has been only because, in their many years of surviving in a feral state, they have created a gene pool which is resistant to diseases which beset their species in a domestic situation. If for no other reason, feral animals deserve to have representatives of their species preserved.

I was pleased to hear recently that the Conservation Commission has made an effort to 'talk' to the local people with regard to the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. I attended a meeting of the Darwin River Berry Springs Progress Association recently. The meeting was called to consider the sale by the government of a large tract of land roughly opposite the wildlife park. This sale had occasioned some concern in the minds of local residents and both the progress association and I had written to the minister on the subject. At

this meeting, local people expressed their concern that they had not been informed of progress and developments at the wildlife park unless they made a particular effort to ring up or talk to Barry Rowe or his staff. I believe that this situation has been rectified and I am very pleased that that is the case. I hope that the wildlife park will provide jobs not only for the wider population of the Northern Territory but, in certain fields, for local residents.

The honourable minister referred to comments about the possible rationalisation of the Territory Wildlife Park and the Berry Springs Nature Park. I do not believe that such a concept should be dismissed out of hand, as the honourable minister did. The amalgamation of the 2 parks could be considered at some time in the future. The upgrading of the nature park has been proceeding apace, but there is perhaps a need for a little more work to be done. I am not saying that there has been any negligence on the part of the rangers there. They work very hard for the safety of the public. Nevertheless, recently there have been several deaths of visitors to the nature park. I believe that signage has to be increased and perhaps more consideration needs to be given to restricting certain people from certain areas at certain times.

Mr Manzie: People have always drowned there.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know that people will always drown there and I am not blaming the Conservation Commission for that. The responsibility rests on the shoulders of the public. Somewhere along the line, people have to accept responsibility for their own actions. If they are not strong swimmers and they swim in deep natural pools, which have very cold water beneath the surface, or if they swim after heavy meals or after a happy lunch, they should expect that their swimming prowess will not be as great as usual, and they should adjust their behaviour accordingly.

I am very pleased that thought has been given to entrance fees at this early stage. I believe that the bread and butter of the wildlife park will be come from the attendance of the local population and that the jam and cream will be supplied by the tourists. Unless the locals frequent the park, it will not be the resounding success that we hope it will be. I cannot congratulate the people involved enough. The organisation has taken full advantage of the natural features of the lakes that the honourable minister mentioned, the jungle walk-through and the natural bushland.

I believe that a serious concern was expressed previously and I think remedial action was taken. Concern was expressed about the depredations of local, domestic dogs coming in and killing marsupials. This is a serious feature because whilst some marsupials, such as agile wallabies, may be relatively easy to replace, the antilopines and big reds will be much harder to replace if injured or killed by what could be called feral canines. The security of the outer perimeter fencing must be an ongoing concern, as I believe it will.

Consideration has to be given not only to the display of our fauna at the Berry Springs Nature Park. I believe that, with the planting of native species and the retention of native species there, there will be a display of our flora also and I can see this collection of static, botanical wildlife being increased in the future. I am not a bird or aviary specialist myself, but I am sure that even people who are not greatly interested in birds will find it a great experience to walk through the aviary. I am certain it is something that our tourists will talk about all over Australia.

In conclusion, as well as having fauna on display, other features should be considered. Flora could possibly be on display but, to maintain interest in and enthusiasm for this big project in the community, new ways have to be found all the time so that the attendance does not diminish. With a little creative thought, this can be done. It may be that Mr Barry Rowe has made personal plans but, when his contract expires, I believe that consideration should be given to extending a contract to him for another project. We should try not to lose his services because he certainly is an asset, not only to the wildlife park and the Conservation Commission but to everybody in the Territory through the work he has done at Berry Springs.

Now that the wildlife park is nearly up and running, I think it is time consideration was given to the entrance to the nature park. I know a road has been gazetted into it through a private property, and the entrance is not too bad. It was not first-rate a couple of years ago because of the habits of people who lived in the buildings on either side of the road into the nature park, but things have been tidied up somewhat. Rather than becoming bogged down through thinking along only one track, a little creative thinking could be extended. I know that road has been gazetted but roads can be de-gazetted. Perhaps consideration should be given to a new entrance into the nature park at some time in the future.

While I am on the subject of the nature park in conjunction with the wildlife park, it is not outside of the bounds of possibility that someone could undertake a tourist project to take people across the water from Darwin to the Territory Wildlife Park and perhaps through to Litchfield Park. Such a tour would take several days. Several local people in the rural area at Berry Springs and Darwin River have been speaking of projects such as that. The progress association has an interest in a boat ramp down on the Blackmore. I believe that the future looks good for the park and I await with interest the official opening on 2 October. I will probably visit it earlier than that in order to see once again the developments at the wildlife park.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the minister's statement. About the middle of last year, I had the opportunity to visit the wildlife park albeit it was in a partly completed configuration. I was most impressed with the design and layout and the work that had been done at that time. I understood from discussions that I had on that day that the work actually commenced in 1983-84 although the concept was first developed as far back as 1979.

I would like to compliment the Conservation Commission and the government on proceeding with that concept and taking up the challenge to develop what will doubtless become an internationally renowned wildlife park. From what I can gather, most of the basic design and construction work has been carried out by Conservation Commission staff, although I understand that a couple of the structures, particularly the aquarium and I believe, the roadway, have been constructed by contractors. When I checked this out, I was very pleased to note that, to the best of my knowledge, all of the work has been done by local tradespeople.

The park displays essentially Territory fauna and flora, plus a range of Territory feral animals. I share the member for Koolpinyah's enthusiasm for the flora and her wish to have the flora identified as well. As people wander through the park, they would have a wonderful opportunity to identify the plants. It would be quite a simple matter to erect signs identifying the different species of plant life, the palms and so forth that abound in that area. It is a really wonderful area because there is a range of habitat from

dry bushland to lagoons to the swampy rainforest or palm forest area. The beautiful, fresh-flowing Berry Creek meanders through the area and the way the whole concept has been put together is tremendous. As far as possible, the bushland has been left intact and pathways and the roadway wander through this huge site.

I understand that the total area that is dedicated to parkland and that will be developed eventually is something like 558 ha. Of that, some 400 ha is fenced at this time and, of those 400 ha, some 200 ha is being developed within stage 1. I understand that stage 2 of the development will also take place within that 200 ha. Much of the infrastructure for stage 2 has been put in place during the course of the development of stage 1. Stage 1 contains all of the service areas, parking areas and, of course, all the exhibits.

One of the great things that has happened around the Darwin area in the last 5 years is the development of tourism infrastructure that has occurred. When I cast my mind back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, I recall that there was very little tourism infrastructure around the Darwin area. It was all happening in Alice Springs, as I am quite sure you are aware, Mr Speaker. That is where it was happening but, in the Top End, there was very little indeed. Certainly, we had the Yarrowonga Zoo, and Kakadu National Park was evolving but, since that time, we have seen the development of the crocodile farm, Graeme Gow's Reptile World, the Adelaide River cruises, Litchfield Park and so on. It is all happening.

Something that impressed me when I went to Berry Springs and had a good look around was the way that the various displays and exhibits, with perhaps 1 exception, blend in with the environment. When heading towards the very large aviary, you pass along a meandering path and through about 11 different exhibits of bird life. Eventually, the path leads into the huge aviary. I do not know whether you have been to the Jarrong Bird Park in Singapore, Mr Speaker, but it is very similar.

Mr Coulter: I have been there. It is a wonderful place, good stuff. But this one was put up using 3 Landcruisers and winches.

Mr SETTER: There you go, instead of 10 000 pieces of bamboo all lashed together.

The interesting aspect of this is that the pathway comes out at quite a height within this great aviary. I am not sure how far above the ground it is but it is probably about 30 ft, and then a stairway meanders down to the ground, exiting from this huge aviary and straight onto a boardwalk that passes through the rainforest and across the creek. It is really a great concept that has been put together there. The hides provided enclose an area of natural bushland or grassland depending on the type of bird that is displayed ...

Mr Coulter: Natural habitat.

Mr SETTER: The natural habitat! That is the term that I am looking for. The natural habitat is there within these displays and the various birds are not enclosed in a wire cage as we have seen them in so many other zoos around the world. This is a very natural environment and I am quite sure that the birds feel very comfortable in it.

The other display that I thought was most impressive, apart from the nocturnal house, was the aquarium. The highlight of the aquarium consists of

a walkway through a tunnel which is made of curved perspex. You can actually walk through this and look up and see the fish swimming above. On one occasion, when I visited Auckland, I had the opportunity to visit what is called the Kelly Tarlton Underwater World Marine Aquarium. It is much larger than the one that we have here and it is extremely impressive. It has a horseshoe-shaped tunnel that would be several hundred metres long. Within that, there is a mobile walkway like those in airport terminals. You stand on this walkway and it takes you all the way through this long tunnel. If you ever visit Auckland, Mr Speaker, you should take the opportunity to visit the Kelly Tarlton aquarium because it is really something to behold. Whilst ours will not come up to the same standard, it will certainly be a major attraction in terms of the species of fish that we will be displaying.

Some of the external displays are enclosed by moats. That is a great concept because a high fence is not required to separate the general public from the animals. The moat provides an adequate barrier. Within those display areas, there are buffalo, banteng cattle, kangaroos, emus, wallabies, dingoes and so on. I understand that, several months ago, there was a problem with feral dogs attacking some of the animals. I seem to recall reading something in the newspaper about wallabies being killed, which was a great shame.

I understand that the total cost of the development is in the order of \$466 000. It surprises me that it could be done so cheaply. When I saw the development there, I thought it must have cost much more money than the figure that has been quoted.

Mr Coulter: How much?

Mr SETTER: \$466 000, according to the minister's statement.

Mr Coulter: Try \$6.5m.

Mr SETTER: Maybe I am just talking about the cost of the bird aviaries and I have taken it out of context. If that is the case, I stand corrected. Ah yes, the statement says: 'Stage 1 of the park has now been completed at a cost of \$6.7m'. I stand corrected. However, regardless of that, it will be a wonderful asset for the Northern Territory for many years to come.

I note also that an amount of \$300 000 has been allocated in the 1989-90 budget for the construction of a visitors' terminal. That is essential. We have a very attractive entrance and a circular road on which visitors will be transported on 2 rubber-tyred trains that will move from exhibit to exhibit. Visitors will come by bus to the terminal and then catch the train from exhibit to exhibit around the 200 ha. That is a good idea because many of our visitors will be elderly people. Whilst the young ones might enjoy the hike around, the elderly people would not be able to stand up to that sort of activity, particularly during summer.

There is no doubt in my mind that this park will develop an international reputation within the next 3 or 4 years. I can see tourist buses queuing up to take people down there to enjoy the wonders of what is to be known as the Territory Wildlife Park. I compliment the minister, the Conservation Commission, the Tourist Commission and the Chief Minister on their initiative and on the wonderful work that has been carried out there over the last few years.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have not been to the park at Berry Springs for at least 12 months. I think I have said in this parliament before that certainly it will be a tremendous asset. It will provide a major tourist attraction in the Darwin area. Quite clearly, it will play an important role in extending the period of time that tourists stay in the Darwin area by giving them a half-day or a day tour option if they combine it with a visit to Howard Springs Nature Reserve or into Litchfield Park. From that point of view, it is obviously very desirable and I look forward to seeing it in its completed state.

I would like to pay tribute to Barry Rowe who has stuck it out through thick and thin, and there have been some fairly thin times because of the government's failure to fund at the levels that it indicated at the start. I know that Barry Rowe has had to exercise incredible ingenuity to get the project up to its present stage on a minimum budget. I hope for Barry Rowe's sake and for everybody else's sake that the opening on 2 October goes smoothly and that the park becomes a major focal point for the tourist industry and for residents over the next few years.

It will be interesting to see what impact the entrance fee has, particularly on local visitors. I do not necessarily disagree with an entrance fee. I must admit that I was a little shocked at its size - \$8 for adults and \$4 for kids. It will certainly be very interesting indeed to see what reaction that brings from local people. Obviously, people booked on package tours will present no problem. The park will very quickly be included on the regular tourist route and we will have a steady flow of tourists. However, it would be a shame if the entry fee deters locals from going there. I guess only time will tell. I know there is a 50% reduction for a second visit and I hope, for everybody's sake, that that works.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Minister for Conservation on his statement. I visit the park on a regular basis and, on my most recent visit, I had an opportunity to take with me a representative from the oil industry who had flown out from Paris to visit the park. In fact, we went there by helicopter. We had the opportunity to be taken around at the time when the Governor-General's wife was being escorted through the park. Already bus-loads of people are turning up there and it is pretty hard to get on a tour at the moment in these very early stage of its, shall we say, 'soft' opening.

The provision of natural bush settings is the real heart of the theme behind the park. The bird hide area is absolutely magnificent, as is the man-made lagoon display. It is not only Barry Coulter who has man-made lagoons. The lagoon is magnificent with its trees and landscaping. The effort that has been put in is enormous and \$6.7m has been spent, largely on infrastructure such as roads, and reticulation of water and power. In fact, most of the wealth that has gone into the project has been buried. I would like to pay particular credit to Barry Rowe and the staff of the park. Alwyn Nicholson conducted myself and the French visitor around the park on my most recent visit there.

The quality of the exhibits is high. In particular, the dingo dogs and the bitch are very good examples of the species. It is interesting to note that there is a moat around the facility. There are no iron bars or cages. The dogs are kept in their compound with the aid of a moat. The dogs cannot jump up out of the water over the small fence which makes the compound secure. However, they have now had to fence the dogs back behind the moat because, in the heat of the day, the dogs would sit in the moat which itself is teeming

with wildlife. They have had to keep the dogs out of the moat because they like sitting in the water watching the people.

The bird aviary is truly something. It was virtually made on site by the workers at the nature park. Perhaps I should not mention this too loudly because the member for Victoria River might want to conduct some inquiries into how it was erected and the method improvised for its erection might not have been entirely satisfactory to the Work Health Authority. In fact, the enormous aviary was erected using winches on 3 Landcruisers. I understand it cost around about \$140 000 in material and welding. I understand also that Warren Anderson has developed his bird aviary along similar lines. At the very top of the aviary, there are the very large birds that fly to greater heights. A variety of parrots etc are accommodated and ducks can be seen in the water which flows through the bottom of the aviary.

The nocturnal house is something that all Territorians will want to see. In particular, it houses the bilby which, of course, is the symbol of the Territory Wildlife Park. There has been great discussion about that stylised representation of the bilby. It is a beautiful animal and I do not believe that the stylised symbol that is being used depicts the animal as it really is. I leave honourable members and Territorians to make up their own minds on that issue when they visit the park to view the bilby at first hand. The owls, mice and rats are also well displayed. The preparation of food for the animals in the nocturnal house is carried out in a clean and hygienic manner. The entrance to the nocturnal house leads off from a long walkway which allows one to accustom oneself to the darkness of the display. The entrance itself is lined with ferns and is very well-designed.

The honourable minister mentioned that an exotic disease had infected some of the fish earlier this year and stock had to be destroyed. I had an opportunity to see the aquarium when it was fully stocked prior to the discovery of the disease. It contained many barramundi and other local species and it was indeed unfortunate that they had to be destroyed. A great deal of work has gone into the restocking process. On my most recent visit, the restocking had only just begun. As the member for Jingili said, it is a very good display. Stage 2 is now being built and I believe that is where the \$450 000 referred to by the member for Jingili is to be spent. Stage 2 will provide additional windows and tanks to enable visitors to see many other species of Northern Territory marine life.

Some people in the Northern Territory are not familiar with the rainforests that can be found throughout the rural area of Darwin and, indeed, as close to the city as the area opposite the Berrimah Police Station. For someone who has not seen that type of rainforest before, with Carpentaria palms 40 to 50 ft high, the walk through the spring area of the park is wonderful indeed. There are banyans and various other species. The walking path has been designed to avoid the need to cut down trees and, in some places, one has to step around trees which are situated along the path. Mr Speaker, this will be a park of some significance. A further injection of money is required to make it the masterpiece which I think it will become. In fact, current bids for stage 2 of the park are in the vicinity of \$4m to \$5m. Almost \$7m has been spent on stage 1. Much of that money was spent on basic infrastructure and the results of further expenditure will be much more readily apparent.

As Minister for Industries and Development, I cannot pass up the opportunity to refer to some of the opportunities and spin-offs provided by the park. As I understand it, some \$40 000-worth of maggots are required

annually to feed the birds and various other creatures which consider them a delicacy. That provides an opportunity for local suppliers. There are many other examples in terms of the development and provision of facilities. One possibility now being discussed with some tourist operators is the potential to access the park from the water itself. As honourable members would be aware, there is an excellent river system at the seaward end of the park and some operators have already approached myself and the Minister for Tourism about the development of a facility which would allow visitors to arrive by boat, view the park by means of one of the rubber-tyred trains referred to by the member for Jingili and then board a bus ...

Mr Ede: That is the seventh time he has mentioned the member for Jingili. Perhaps he has the numbers.

Mr COULTER: Has the member for Stuart actually visited the park yet? If not, I suggest that he do so before the official opening. I am sure he would be both surprised and excited, particularly in view of his frequently expressed interest in the bilby.

Mr Ede: Do they have cats out there?

Mr COULTER: There are plenty of native cats or quolls. They have little white spots. You can see them there.

A member: What about rats?

Mr COULTER: The whiptail rat is there. It is a very nice species.

A member: What about the gold-toothed rat?

Mr COULTER: I did not see a rat with a gold tooth out there, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dondas interjecting.

Mr COULTER: I am not familiar with that variety, but there are sugar gliders and a range of other species that would greatly impress the member for Casuarina.

The attractions of the area do not end with the nature park and the wildlife park. There is a proposal for a large orchid farm in the vicinity. Various sightseeing venues are being developed in the region and I am sure that it will be nothing short of spectacular.

I must praise the member for Fannie Bay for his efforts in hurrying this proposal through Cabinet and securing funding for it. If I might be permitted to say so, it was a gutsy effort on his part to suggest that Cabinet should provide up to \$10m for a nature park. Convincing Cabinet was not an easy task, but he stuck with it and was very successful. He must receive much of the credit for providing the funding. Certainly, there have been some problems with the amount of money available to date and more money is required. However, that is always the case with such developments.

In closing, may I say that I believe there is a need and an opportunity to develop a similar park in the desert country of central Australia. I visited such a park in the desert country near Santa Barbara and I know that conceptual designs have been developed for an area of that nature here. I am sure that members from central Australia would be very supportive of the development of such a facility in the more arid zones of the Northern

Territory. Many Territorians have not yet seen a bilby and to do so will be a matter of great excitement for them and their children. I am sure that schools will be able to make excellent use of the facility and its arrangements for the viewing of the Territory's wildlife.

Mr Speaker, in closing, if you have not been there, please visit it as soon as possible. Be prepared to stay there for 2 to 3 hours to give yourself plenty of time to look around and to appreciate the wonderful job that has been done by Barry Rowe and his staff. I would like to congratulate them on a job well done.

Debate adjourned.

CASINO LICENSING AND CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 205)

RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 204)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this legislation. We had some difficulties initially but they are adequately taken care of by the minister's proposed amendments. I indicate that the opposition will be supporting both the bills and the amendments. As do a number of other honourable members, I believe that people who make money running gambling establishments should be reasonably fair game. However, I appreciate that, if certain devices and practices are allowed to go unchecked within such establishments, they can also go broke very quickly.

Mr Speaker, this is not a matter of great concern but I could not find an explanation for it in the bill. Could the minister identify the sorts of devices which would permit or facilitate cheating or stealing or lead to the obtaining of unfair benefit or advantage? Is he talking about an abacus, a simple calculator or a pen and paper?

A member: A computer strapped to the leg.

Mr LEO: It is not clearly defined here, and I am sure that there are people who do have views on what a very powerful magnet strapped to a person's belly means. Whilst I appreciate that there are adequate descriptions of loaded dice and shaved cards and God knows what else, I would hate to think that persons could not take in a pen and paper and note down their bets. People who go to these places have their betting systems. I think they are kidding themselves if not the licence holder, but that is their way. I would hate to think that they would be drummed out of a casino simply because that was a whim which they wanted to indulge.

I repeat that the opposition supports the legislation and we will support the amendments in the committee stage.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, it gives me some heart to hear that, on behalf of the opposition, the member for Nhulunbuy supports this bill. To continue from where he left off, it really does go much against the Australian ethos to support this type of legislation when, in that ethos, publicans and bookmakers are seen as fair game. Anyone who can cheat a casino and get away with it is more of a hero than a criminal in the eyes of the general population. Having said that, I believe that we need to have strict and stringent controls over the playing of games of chance in casinos and similar

establishments. This legislation merely brings us in line with other parts of Australia where legislation is in place and it brings us up to date with the methods employed by the less scrupulous among us who try to cheat casinos.

The Racing and Betting Amendment Bill merely consolidates the control of casinos and the Casino Licensing and Control Bill but, as I said, as much as it goes against the Australian ethos, the bill is necessary and it has my support.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation. I should also offer a word of thanks for the input that I received from members of the legal profession with regard to some of the clauses in the legislation which resulted eventually in the second group of circulated amendments.

Whilst I appreciate both the member for Nhulunbuy's and the member for Karama's feelings with regard to the Australian ethos and gaming and casinos, this legislation is designed primarily to create an offence of cheating and to control the actions of people because I am sure that, under Australian gaming rules, at the least everybody should be expected to play against the same odds when they are gambling in a casino. It would be unfair for some people to have an advantage over others around the table.

With regard to the member for Nhulunbuy's comments about devices, in these days, we are talking really about fairly sophisticated machines and devices relating to computers and the like that have already been tried out in a number of Australian casinos. We are merely conforming with the rest of Australia. I thank honourable members for their support.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

See minutes for amendments to Casino Licensing and Control Amendment Bill (Serial 205) agreed to without debate.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Amendment Bill (Serial 213) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (POWERS AND PRIVILEGES) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 213)

Continued from 23 August 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is a very simple amendment arising out of a serious mistake that the government has made. The simple amendment is that, in layman's terms, it extends parliamentary privilege first of all to the Nelson Building and, at an appropriate time, it will extend parliamentary privilege across the road to the Chan Building when this building unfortunately is deemed to have exceeded its useful life and is knocked down.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Which it hasn't.

Mr SMITH: Which it hasn't. Thank you.

Mr Speaker, I must take the opportunity to say once again that the opposition does not support the demolition of this perfectly adequate Parliament House and its replacement with a new super-duper Parliament House costing somewhere between \$30 and \$40m. The reason given for doing that is specious ...

A member interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I can even spell it.

I rise to speak tonight on this issue because of the comments made by that respected right-wing organisation, the IPA, on the Northern Territory budget. We can all remember that, last year, the IPA was proudly quoted by this government as saying that the Northern Territory government had brought down the best budget in Australia.

Mr Perron: You did not agree with it then.

Mr SMITH: Yes, but you agreed with it then.

This year, the IPA has rung the warning bells very loudly indeed, and said that the cash reserves of this government have been run down to a dangerously low level.

Mr Coulter: Did you see what Moodie said about your mob?

Mr Reed: Fascinating that you didn't notice it. You had to be told, is that right?

Mr SMITH: Would you like to go back to my budget reply last Thursday and see exactly what I said? I said that the cash reserves had been run dangerously low. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries is revealing his ignorance again, and I make the point that the IPA obviously has read the comments that I made and has decided that those comments were appropriate.

Of course, one of the reasons why the cash reserves have been run dangerously low is this foolish exercise of building a new Parliament House. That is the reason why I have stood up to speak on this matter again tonight. We have a situation where the cash reserves of the Northern Territory government have been run perilously low, and everybody is asking what will happen in next year's budget. One of the reasons why those cash reserves have been run so perilously low is because of the government's commitment to the State Square project. That is one additional reason why members on this side of the House oppose the building of a new Parliament House and suggest to the government that it is not too late to change its mind.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this legislation is purely a device. It is a device to save the government from having to come back to this House specifically to get the parliament out of this building and over the road into the Chan Building. That is the effect of the second part of this legislation. It takes from this House the ability to state where the precincts are and gives that ability to you, Mr Speaker.

Why are we to move across to the Chan Building? Honourable members know why we are to move to the Chan Building. It is so that this government can knock this place down and build a new Parliament House. I want it on record once again, as I will put it on the record at every opportunity, that members on this side of the House regard this new Parliament House as a waste of the taxpayers' money, as a misdirection of government finance and as something that should be stopped. The government agreed that a new Supreme Court and Parliament House was needed. We believe the argument mounted was specious and invalid. If it had any validity, that will no longer exist after the construction of the Supreme Court building. As honourable members who read the federal budget would know, the movement of the cavalry regiment has already started. It was argued by the member for Nightcliff that the State Square project would be a stopgap until the cavalry regiment moved here and gave new impetus to the economy.

If that is true, the fact is that the cavalry is on its way, thanks to the federal government. It has put money in already for the start of this movement. If that argument was valid, the construction of the Supreme Court has already taken up the slack. That is quite apart from the fact that we should have used the money on something that would have a social or economic purpose rather than on a Supreme Court. The fact is that the government is making a mistake and is compounding it into an insanity. If it goes on, not only will it be throwing good money after bad, it will be in real danger of doubling up on developments in Darwin while the rest of the Territory continues in the doldrums without the economic benefits or the flow-ons from the development. If it was necessary to create those jobs, jobs, jobs, it could have been done by development in places where development is really needed. The money could have been used for the provision of housing on Aboriginal communities. It could have been used on many other developments. I could go on with a list as long as my arm.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members on the government side will have adequate opportunity to debate this legislation.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I hope that 1 or 2 of them may get up and try because they are rightly labelled as wastrels in this regard. The size of the debt that we will have to repay as a result of proceeding with this folly is absolutely ridiculous. It is something that the opposition will continue to oppose. We hope that, at some stage in the near future, before we go too far down the track at this mad hatter's tea party, we will have the sense to pull back from the new Parliament House, put a new roof on this Chamber and continue with the good government of the Northern Territory without building new castles in the air next door.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell might like to contribute in relation to some of the concerns expressed by the construction industry in the Northern Territory about this absolutely shameful charade of a federal capital works budget that was used by his colleagues, Senator Collins and Warren Snowdon, particularly during the Wanguri by-election debate. The member for Wanguri himself might like to reflect on some of these matters and do a little homework on behalf of the constituents whom he now represents. The fact of the matter is that out of that \$373m ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! As I understand it, the bill before the House is the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Amendment Bill. It has nothing to do with building a new Parliament House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I was fairly lenient with the member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition. They raised this topic. There is no point of order.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I raise these matters in response to the rather shallow arguments put forward by the opposition regarding proceeding with the Parliament House. I mentioned the feeble attempts made by our federal representatives to paint a picture of great commitment to the construction industry by the federal government during the Wanguri by-election - \$373m of capital works program, plus an extra amount totalling up to \$460m, including the airports.

As I mentioned during debate last week, we are still waiting for some answers. The member for Wanguri now has the task in front of him of demonstrating how that \$373m or \$460m will benefit Territorians. When he does some homework, he will find that, at the very most, the cash that has been provided for the capital works program by his federal ALP colleagues is less than \$14m. It is absolutely ridiculous, Mr Speaker! If it includes any money for the cavalry that is riding in here pursuing those rainbows in the sky, I doubt whether it is more than a couple of million dollars from my understanding of the program.

Last year, I mentioned that some \$52m of cash that was supposed to be injected into the Territory construction industry was sliced by some \$13m back to \$39m. That is total justification of the Territory government's move to bring these 2 buildings on to the capital works program in a time of need. This government will stand behind its move and the electors in Wanguri will be more than satisfied. I believe that at least 30 of them have jobs directly related to the State Square project. That is 30 families in the electorate of Wanguri alone who are benefiting, who are eating, who are paying off their high mortgages and who are sending their kids to school. That is the benefit that is going to his electorate, not to mention the electorates of other members of the House.

With the opportunities that have been created there, we have filled a great gap in the construction program. It is a brave move, but this government is about making decisive and brave decisions for the benefit of the Territory.

Mr Collins: Brave is not the right word. It is foolish.

Mr FINCH: Despite his crowing, the member for Sadadeen has displayed a total disregard for the well-being of a very important sector of the Territory, that sector being the construction industry. That industry returns a greater amount of dollars to Territory pockets, directly and indirectly, than other industry can or does in the Northern Territory.

In response to the nonsense from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in relation to precincts, he well knows that the Parliament House Committee has been charged with making appropriate arrangements for a temporary Parliament House. It is not a matter for government to declare where the precincts of the parliament will or will not be. That is a matter that will be determined in a controlled and proper program from the Parliament House Committee that will require verification by this House. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will have plenty of opportunity to debate those issues. However, to raise in this debate this nonsense of the Parliament House construction is very shallow indeed.

There is a challenge there because the federal colleagues of the new member for Wanguri have not answered those basic questions for Territorians. Where is the capital works program of the federal government? How much is it worth? We are now another year behind on the airport development which was named last year as the great saviour of the construction industry. It still has not started and it is unlikely to start in this current year. Again, that is justification for the Territory government ensuring that the construction industry survives. If there was ever a better time to build ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I appreciate that the Chair has given the Minister for Transport and Works a great degree of latitude because of the latitude that was given to previous speakers. However, the minister is launching now into matters which are in no way related to the development of this site.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Minister for Transport and Works to confine his remarks to the bill before us.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that I have made my point very clearly and simply. The opportunities are there now for the opposition to pursue those matters raised. Obviously the bill before the House has been misunderstood and taken totally out of context by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in respect of its technical nature. I commend the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to support this bill, I am bowing to the inevitable. I will fight something up to a certain point, but there comes a time when you know you cannot win and therefore you pull out and live to fight another day. As honourable members before me have said, this Assembly building is to be razed to the ground and, while a new building is rising from the ashes, the Assembly will be accommodated in the Chan Building. When the new Parliament House is completed, we will leave the Chan Building and move into it. Like other honourable members who have spoken in this debate, I believe that there would have been no need to build a new Parliament House, let alone to move to the new site whilst it was built, if common sense had prevailed over the entire issue.

Whilst I support the construction industry and recognise its importance in the community in terms of providing jobs, I believe that public funds could have been put to better use to create jobs on a continuing basis. The money which is to be spent on the new Supreme Court and Parliament House buildings would have been better spent on supporting primary industry in the Territory, including the agricultural, horticultural and mining sectors. I believe that the present Chief Minister was caught in a bind and had to honour documents signed by the previous Chief Minister. I am not privy to any private contracts or private conversations in relation to this but, knowing something about the nature of the current Chief Minister, I do not believe that he would have been a party to this unless he had had to honour contracts previously signed. The only commonsense concession in terms of changes to the initial proposal has been the decision to eliminate the enormous white elephant of an office block that was to have been associated with the new Parliament House and various other white elephants that were to be incorporated.

It is my view that razing this Assembly building and constructing a new one in its place is a waste of public money which could have been used to better effect. Given the state of the Territory's finances, better use could have been made of that money. I will not rehash what I have said before and what other honourable members have said. I will simply bow to the inevitable and support this legislation.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, one of the beauties of being an independent member is that you can make up your mind on each issue as it comes along. In case the government thought that I was getting a bit too close to it on today's censure motion, let me reiterate my opposition to the construction of a new Parliament House, in particular, and to the State Square project as a whole.

The Territory has been hit very hard by funding cuts. We have to make the best use of our available funds and we should use them to support projects that will create wealth. The Minister for Transport and Works claims that the project has employed a large number of people in the construction industry. That, however, is the booze-up. The hangover will continue for 20 years as we pay off, with interest, the money which has been borrowed for this project under the loans program. Every Territorian, including my constituents in Alice Springs, will be affected by that. There will be no wealth benefit after the construction jobs cease.

I will always shake my head over the involvement of Mr Warren Anderson in this project. What is so special about a courthouse and a new Parliament House? He was not the originator of the idea, for heaven's sake! The idea of a new Parliament House has been kicked around for donkey's years. Yet, somehow or other, Mr Anderson, the best mate of the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, is to receive \$5.25m for his services. Incidentally, because we are not a state, it was Mr Keating who had to give approval for the loan raisings for this project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some people in the community think that Doctor's Gully has whiskers on it ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Some points of order have been raised in relation to the tenor of the discussion on the bill before the House. The member for Sadadeen is wandering from the subject of the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Bill and I ask him to confine his comments to it. Doctor's Gully has nothing to do with it.

Mr COLLINS: I appreciate your direction, Mr Deputy Speaker. Normally, directions from the Chair tend to come in response to a point of order that has been called. This is a new ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chair has the right to ask a member of the House to withdraw a comment or to remain within the confines of the subject matter before the House without a point of order having been raised.

Mr COLLINS: Thank you for that information, Mr Deputy Speaker.

A new Parliament House will not create wealth. The government could well have gone ahead with the university buildings. It took an inordinately long time to decide that the cost of moving the university to Palmerston, instead of developing it at the Casuarina campus, would be \$128m. The university is just one example of an opportunity for building construction which could have supported the industry during a lean period when, hopefully, intense competition would result in the best possible prices. Universities normally comprise a whole host of buildings. Such buildings would make an ongoing contribution to wealth creation in the Territory by providing an appropriate study environment for the students who will one day make their contribution to the Territory's development.

I can think of a number of other projects which would have supported Darwin and generated wealth. The development of our port's ability to handle containers is one. Another is work on the railway line, which is absolutely necessary. Even if the money borrowed would not create wealth immediately, it would at least give the project sufficient momentum to attract the further money needed to establish the railway line and to get the Port of Darwin going ...

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr COLLINS: I am delighted that the Leader of Government Business agrees with me.

I would get nowhere on my farm if I had used my resources to build a flash house before I had planted any grapes. I would get nowhere. I have to live in a caravan until my grapes come good. If they do and if I am able to create some wealth as a result, I may then be able to afford the luxuries. Wealth creation comes first, not the flash house. The analogy is very clear.

The decision to proceed with State Square is one of the biggest political mistakes the government has made. I was grateful that, when the current Chief Minister came to office, at least he vetoed the office development which had been part of the original proposal. We have to be grateful for small mercies. It certainly was not needed and it would have affected adversely the rental situation facing owners of office space which is already in existence. I am extremely disappointed that he did not have the foresight to cancel the whole project. I can only assume that there were some forces behind the scenes which convinced the new Chief Minister that he should continue with this project.

In response to his argument that the funds could not have been borrowed for any other project, I remind the Chief Minister of his reply to a question which I asked of him in October 1988. He said that the money could be used for other purposes, but that such a step might not make us any friends in Canberra. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not the job of the Chief Minister to go making friends in Canberra. It is a matter of his providing good government for the Territory, and State Square is not good government.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to speak for very long. I wish to make a couple of brief points because it is impossible to avoid commenting on some levels of financial incompetence.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that we are proceeding to build a new Parliament House with borrowed funds, approved by the federal Treasurer specifically for that purpose.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They could have been approved specifically for something else.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, there they go again. The funds were approved specifically for the purpose of building a new Parliament House and must be applied to that function. To say that that is somehow dipping into the cash reserves of the Northern Territory is a fundamental illogicality. It is to be constructed using borrowed funds obtained through borrowings approved by the Commonwealth for that project. It has nothing to do with the cash reserves in our budget at all.

There is one other point. I think it is the member for Stuart who has decided that the cavalry have arrived. If he bothered to follow the debates, listened to what was going on and actually talked to people, he would know it has always been proposed that the construction for the cavalry regiment is due to start in the 1990-91 financial year. There is unlikely to be any construction on the ground until 1991. I am sure those workers who currently live in the Wanguri electorate will greatly appreciate sitting on the footpath for another couple of years waiting for construction to start. If they do not want to sit there, they can sit outside the airport and wait for construction to start there or they can continue working on building a Supreme Court for the Northern Territory, a building which I think the member for Koolpinyah said is not an important social building.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did not say that.

Mr HATTON: The members for Koolpinyah and the member for Sadadeen have really solved the problem. They will issue every member with a flak jacket and a hard hat so that we will not get hit by the falling tiles in the wet season. We will put enough buckets around the floor to catch the drips, and we will be right. When the building eventually rots around our feet, we will go back to nature and adopt a truly environmental approach. The entire parliament can sit under the banyan tree outside the Civic Centre. We would not spend money on building a Parliament House. Oh no! We would sit outside in a circle under the trees. That is about the level of the logic of the members opposite. Parliaments are important buildings and the fact is that this Parliament House is a condemned building and it should be closed down. If we are going to build a Parliament House, let us build a decent one of which Territory people will be proud and that will last for the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill because it will enable the necessary procedures to take place so that we can get on with this vital task. Not only are we providing important public buildings for the Northern Territory, we really are keen to support the workers who live in the Wanguri electorate.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had no intention of speaking in this debate until I heard that, and I do not intend to expatiate. I found that contribution quite extraordinary. I think the ordering of priorities for public spending is a legitimate subject of debate in the context of this bill, and the imminent prospect of the Assembly conducting its business elsewhere is a matter of some concern to me.

What has really drawn me to my feet is the member for Nightcliff's description of this building as decrepit and so on. I cannot remember his exact words, but I have a great deal of affection for this building, and I want to place that on record. I had had no experience of the Assembly until I was elected to it, and I had no experience of this building until I was elected to sit in it in March 1981. As a youngster, I grew up in Melbourne, and I can remember reading reports - I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. One rarely confesses to it in the Northern Territory, but I did actually grow up in Melbourne.

Incidentally, before I return to this subject, I noticed that the member for Nightcliff's defence was that the federal government had decided we needed a new Parliament House and it cannot be wrong. 'The federal government is never wrong'. I am quite sure those words from the member for Nightcliff will come back to haunt him because, the next time he gets up and tells us that the federal government has got it wrong, we will tell him that he cannot pick and choose.

I have serious doubts about the virtue of this project, and I return to the question of my affection for this building. As a youngster growing up in Melbourne, I read the history of World War II and excerpts on various aspects of it with a deal of interest. I must admit that seeing the glass from the searchlight in the foyer outside, and the section of wall in the passageway, and the memorial out on the grass area was deeply moving to me, as an Australian. I am aware that considerable thought and effort has been put into retaining those aspects of this building and I entirely reject the suggestion from the member for Nightcliff that this is a decrepit, useless building. As I said, I have considerable affection for it and I am not satisfied that, in terms of capital works, its demolition and replacement is the highest priority for the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

DEFAMATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 180)

Continued from 18 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the Defamation Amendment Bill. I do not think there is any member in this Assembly who has not turned his or her mind to the possibility that he or she may either be being defamed or have been defamed or may have defamed someone else. In fact, I will confess to never having given any thought to ever having defamed anybody else, but there has been the occasional sling or arrow from government politicians outside this Assembly when I thought, well perhaps. It is obviously something that is very fresh in the minds of government members because accusations of that kind have been flung around in this House in the last week. As I recall, they are yet to materialise. However, I will not run the risk of exciting your ire, Mr Deputy Speaker, by referring to Doctor's Gully or even to the Chief Minister.

The amendments in this bill are not contentious. I point out to the Attorney-General that he does not have to take verbatim notes of my comments because the opposition supports the broad thrust of the amendments. Many involve procedural changes and cause us no concern. Honourable members will be interested to know that criminal libel will no longer be contained in the Defamation Act, and the thrust of criminal libel is changed. I mention in passing that the other aspect of this bill is to abolish the distinction between libel and slander and to collapse those into the single concept of defamation.

The defamation involved in criminal libel will be covered in the Criminal Code and, as the honourable minister said in his second-reading speech, it will be restricted, for example, to particular instances where people have actively intended to cause a breach of the peace or to cause loss and so on. There are a couple of interesting cases of which honourable members will be aware. One of the ancient cases, of course, is the 'Power Without Glory' case, in which its author, Frank Hardy, was brought before the court for criminal libel in Victoria. Any honourable members who are interested in this issue may wish to read the novel he wrote about that court case. As I recall it, the title is 'The Hard Way'. Honourable members will be aware of Frank Hardy and his work 'Power Without Glory' ...

Mr Smith: And his work with the Gurindji.

Mr BELL: ... and his associations with the Northern Territory, in particular, and his work with the Gurindji. His book, 'The Unlucky Australians', is one of the great modern documentaries.

A more contemporary example where criminal libel was mooted is relevant to the statement made in this House last week by the Chief Minister in respect of the Fitzgerald Commission. The now dismissed Police Commissioner in Queensland, Terry Lewis, attempted to use the criminality of defamation to commence proceedings against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation because of the difficulties that were occasioned to him in that case. I do not think there would be anybody here who would feel that the investigations and the charges that have subsequently been laid should have been hampered by the possibility of such defamation action. For those reasons, the opposition supports the distinction that is created here.

Of passing interest, and it is an indication of the change in the times, is the reference to and the repeal of the section 'of words imputing want of chastity to a woman'. It has a wonderful old-world ring about it, and I must confess that I am enough of a romantic ...

Mr Manzie: You like it.

Mr BELL: Goodness me! I probably should stop before I get myself into trouble. But, I really wonder if that equality of the sexes that has obviously dictated the repeal of this section means that women are better off. I really wonder if that specific reference to that sort of defamation should not be available. As the Attorney-General will tell me when he gets to his feet, that defamation will still be available. In fact, it will be more easily available because it will now be a defamation requiring the level of proof of libel rather than the level of proof of slander, which was a higher test. The Attorney-General is about to get to his feet and say that he is defending Northern Territory womanhood in a much stronger fashion. However, I think it is an instructive sign of the times that we are repealing references such as that in legislation, and I leave honourable members to come to their own conclusions in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has considered the implications of this bill and, for the reasons that I have already explained, we are quite happy to support it.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his comments. Heaven forbid that we should require an extra burden of proof against one who would impute a want of chastity in a woman. Indeed, we must ensure that the law treats us all equally. I thank the honourable member for his comments. I think that it is probably dangerous to go any further. It was interesting, but he can stew with own words.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Continued from 24 August 1989.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, if my memory is correct, the Leader of the Opposition's reply to the budget speech had one notable omission which was that he did not really mention tourism. Of course, in the Northern Territory, tourism is certainly a goods news industry. It is the second largest, if not the largest, industry in the Northern Territory. Tourism in the Territory has run parallel to tourism in the rest of Australia generally. Since the early 1980s, government funding for the Tourist Commission has climbed, some years with fairly dramatic increases and in other years with increases that have allowed the commission to keep just slightly ahead of the pace of inflation. The same is very true of the Australian Tourist Commission, but it is apparent that this year there is a split in the ranks, as the Australian Tourist Commission has received a drop in its budget of some 8.6% whereas the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has received an increase of almost 23%.

Over the past week or so, much has been said by the federal government about its supposed support for the tourist industry. Indeed, I can remember reading last week the federal Minister for Tourism's press release which stated that tourism was directly responsible for maintaining 443 000 jobs throughout Australia. Contrary to the federal minister's statement, the Australian Tourist Commission's budget is \$37.7m, which reflects an actual decrease of 1.6%. In real terms, of course, this decrease does indeed represent a decrease of 8.6%.

Even the former Minister for Tourism in the ALP government, John Brown, who was the Minister for Tourism when I was a member of the Australian Tourist Commission, has been strongly critical of this decrease. He said: 'Due to lack of attention to the importance of tourism at a national level, the end result has been that Australia has gone off the boil in the international marketplace'. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me assure honourable members opposite that we do not regard either national or international tourism as being 'off the boil'. In fact, we intend to superheat the Northern Territory economy, through the tourist industry, by injecting a large increase of almost \$4m. This will restore the industry, which functions in a very competitive market both domestically and internationally, to the top of the tree with regard to marketing when compared to any state in Australia.

If the Labor federal government is prepared to destroy the very good umbrella that the Australian Tourist Commission has provided until now which, in turn, has allowed the various states and the Northern Territory to specifically promote their products overseas, then it is obvious that we must fill the gap that it has left. Even with inflation, advertising and promotional costs, not to mention fluctuations in currency values, we do not intend to let our domestic or international markets be eroded.

In the Northern Territory, the industry employs nearly 10 000 people, and I believe that this figure could be doubled to 20 000 people by the year 2000. The industry earns over \$400m a year for the Northern Territory, and it provides a natural flow-on of benefits to the commercial sector and to Territorians in general. There is hardly anybody in the Northern Territory who does not receive some form of benefit through the tourist industry. The standard of our product and the people who work in the industry have still a long way to go before they can say that they are truly first rate and every

one of them is truly professional but, over the last 10 years, we have certainly travelled a million miles down the road.

To enhance, to improve and to capitalise on these values, from this year's budget allocation, the Tourist Commission is committed to spending \$5.74m on national and domestic marketing and, in the international area, it will spend a further \$2.726m. To enable the commission to undertake proper planning and research, it will spend some \$300 000. In the rapidly-emerging area of Aboriginal tourism development, it will spend over \$100 000.

The problem that existed in the 1970s and 1980s - that is, the inherent disadvantage of marketing a product that is more time-consuming and probably dearer to purchase - still exists today. No doubt, because of our distance from major population centres, these factors will still exist in the year 2000. The seasonality of the industry is more acute in the Territory than almost anywhere else in Australia with the possible exception of Tasmania. The inroads that have been made towards attracting both international and domestic visitation out of season are good, but they are not enough to support the capital investments in excess of \$1000m that have developed over the past 10 years.

I point out that this year is not Australia's bicentenary, the America's Cup is long gone and the only evidence of Expo in Brisbane is the argument over what to do with the site. The southern economy is such that people are looking for cheap holidays. Low-cost holidays abound in the marketplace and, if anything, offshore destinations are cheaper today than they were 2 years ago. The Tourist Commission's marketing thrust must be directed carefully and must become effective even more quickly if it is to compete with the emerging South-east Asian tourist destinations such as Korea and China. The Japanese market must be captured and the numbers increased because Australia is already losing its flavour-of-the-month appeal. Younger Japanese are already moving to the United States and Europe for their holidays.

I intend to lobby as hard as this government can to satisfactorily conclude the Darwin Airport and a number of new services. Thai International and Malaysian Airline Systems have already signalled their intention to fly into Darwin from Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. Qantas has indicated its interest in direct flights from Japan and Continental Airlines have signalled its intention to fly from Guam. We have had enough of interest and good intentions now, and we want to see some planes actually arriving within the next 12 months. If it means that we have to twin Darwin and Adelaide to obtain these flights, so be it. I have already indicated to the South Australian Minister for Tourism that we will work with that state to ensure this happens.

Within a couple of months, our first international series of charters out of the United Kingdom will arrive in Darwin. These 7 flights will bring some 1500 visitors to the Top End during the off-peak period. To ensure the spread of these visitors, a series of programs will be offered which will include not only travel to Kakadu and Katherine, but also to central Australia and Ayers Rock. Like everybody else, I await with interest the completion of the new airports in Alice Springs and Darwin and it is interesting to note the comments by Pannell Kerr Foster in the national media on its examination of the effects of last week's federal budget on the industry. The company highlighted these comments or complaints:

- ° The Labor federal government had failed to reinvest in international and domestic airport facilities.

- ° It had failed to resolve the Qantas and Australian Airlines dilemma of whether to privatise or reinvest in the airlines.
- ° It had failed to provide any incentives or initiatives to boost investments in the tourist industry.

The report went on to comment on the Australian Tourist Commission's funding and the substitution of Senator Graham Richardson for Mr Clyde Holding as Minister for Tourism which they interpret as the general downgrading of the portfolio.

Already the airline strike looks like having a crippling effect on Australia's tourist industry. Massive cancellations are beginning to flow through and the Territory's tourist industry is slowly being starved and drained of its visitors. Some local major tour operators are already preparing to close their doors if the strike continues any longer. I note in the media today that there is talk of a figure lost to date of some \$600m. It is quite incredible that this state of affairs can continue. The federal opposition shadow minister for tourism, aviation and sport, David Jull, said last week that the strike had already cost the nation millions of dollars and that Australia is now suffering in tourism circles overseas because of its 'unreliable' reputation brought on by the industrial dispute. I fully support Mr Jull's call for the government immediately to inject emergency funds into the Australian Tourist Commission so that it can prepare for a mass marketing campaign that will enable the industry to recover.

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission still has the best ratio - that is, the smallest number of staff employed in a head office situation compared to the number of people out in the big wide world actually selling. Its decision late last year to open offices in New York and Vancouver and to increase sales staff in the United Kingdom and Europe is to be commended, but this should not overshadow what is basically our bread and butter market area - Australia. New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are still very much major sources of visitors. I am sure the opposition will still carp about our closure of the 3 offices in Canberra, Hobart and Parramatta. At the time, some people described that action as brave, but it is interesting that the Victorian Tourist Commission immediately followed our lead and the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation consolidated its operations, and both closed down what they perceived to be uneconomic bureaus.

Some years ago, the Tourist Commission took all of its staff out of the public service and into the world of private enterprise. Despite the cynics, this action did not result in mass displacement, retrenchment or sacking. It was particularly refreshing, at the recent opening of their refurbished office, to hear the Adelaide staff arguing as to whether or not they would beat the Melbourne bureau with their sales figures in the coming year. That particular office in Adelaide is one that, in a short number of years, has grown from sales of \$500 000 to nearly \$4m per annum.

The Tourist Commission is very conscious of the constant increase in operational costs, particularly administrative costs, and it has embarked on a major exercise to improve its cost efficiency and to allocate as much of its funds as possible into marketing. This year, despite the tremendous loss associated with national television advertising, the Tourist Commission will run a year-round television campaign promoting the Northern Territory. This does not suggest that money is being poured into that side of the business without much thought. It means that, throughout the year, there will be enough carefully researched television advertisements constantly to draw the

general public's attention to the delights of holidaying in this region. Utilising the wide coverage of the Imparja footprint and combining it with Darwin commercial television, the Tourist Awareness Campaign will be directed towards Territorians, to promote the value of tourism to our economy and to increase awareness of the need to be friendly and hospitable to tourists.

For the first time, selective direct marketing will be targeted at the travel industry and selected special interest groups. With the major increase in funding, even more effort will be available to encourage both Australian and international television networks to visit the Territory to file stories for their home markets. An example of this was the Early Morning program which was shown last year. That cost \$50 000 but, in turn, generated \$2m to \$3m-worth of free publicity. To continue the outstanding success of Crocodile Dundee I and II, the Tourist Commission will actively encourage film-makers to shoot their movies in the Northern Territory. We have been doing that already this year with Roadshow Productions which is about to start filming in central Australia a new movie with the international star Tom Selleck.

I would like to complete my remarks on the tourist side with the comment that the Tourist Commission is poised to embark on a major advertising campaign throughout Australia immediately we have a firm indication that the national airline strike is over. We are ready to place select advertisements both on television and in the printed media to try to replace some of the business we have lost over the last fortnight. Unfortunately, it does not appear that that strike is anywhere near resolution at present.

This year's budget does not include any increase in liquor fees. The Northern Territory government considers that any increase would be an unacceptable burden on Territorians as the Commonwealth has already indexed liquor to the CPI on a quarterly basis. However, there are some new initiatives that will be taken this year to involve Aboriginal communities more actively in the working process of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. Some discussion has already taken place to canvass the idea of representation from various communities in the form of a team of assessors for both the northern and southern regions of the Territory and this, of course, would enable Aboriginal views to be discussed more generally in the situation where licence applications or changes can affect Aboriginal communities.

Discussions will start soon in Alice Springs to see what assistance can be given to a pilot scheme to combat alcohol in the town camps. I am committed to seek continually a solution to the devastating effect alcohol has on certain sections of our community. Revenue obtained from alcohol sales represents but a tiny proportion of the amount of money spent in health and community services and with the police force to combat the effects of alcohol.

A marketing officer is to be appointed to the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to market more effectively our Territorian and Instant Sports lotteries and I have asked the commission to look at the possibility of marketing a Territorian millionaire's lottery. It must be remembered that all profits from lotteries go to the Youth, Sport and Recreation Development Fund whose main beneficiaries are the youth of our Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will turn now to the TAB, another of the many successful initiatives of the CLP government. The Northern Territory TAB commenced operation on 1 July 1985. In its first year of operation, it had a turnover of \$18.5m. Net profit for that first year was \$878 000. In the year just concluded, the TAB turned over \$37.75m, a doubling of sales in just

3 years. Added to that, net profit for the year just ended was 3.5 times greater than that in the first year of operation. In the coming year, the TAB is aiming to sell some 4 million bets with a total value in excess of \$42m. After providing for the Racecourse Development Fund and other reserves, the TAB estimates there will be a net profit of at least \$2.4m, and that will be distributed evenly between the Racing Industry Assistance Fund and Consolidated Revenue. That is 4 times the amount made available just 3 years ago and 20% over the \$1m estimated in the Bennett Report which I tabled in this Chamber earlier this year. I have recently announced that, from the extra profits generated by the TAB, there will be an increase in funding to country race clubs which play a social and community role in their areas of activity.

The areas in my portfolio are certainly good news areas and I reiterate that the tourist industry alone employs over 10 000 people in the Northern Territory. An employment report that has been done by the Tourist Commission indicates that there are some 3000 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory who are now reliant on the tourist industry for a major proportion of their income. These people are involved in the handicraft areas and also in the various Aboriginal tourist enterprises that have sprung up around the Territory in the last few years.

We can only go on to bigger and better things in the tourist industry. I assure members of this government's commitment to ensure that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the industry will receive all possible financial assistance to enable them to create as many jobs as possible over the coming years and to further the prosperity of the Northern Territory. I commend the Appropriation Bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill and to comment in respect of my responsibility for the Department of Lands and Housing, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, the Conservation Commission, the Museums and Art Galleries Board and the Department of Law.

The portfolio of lands and housing encompasses 2 bodies, the Department of Lands and Housing itself and the Northern Territory Housing Commission. While each body has its own budget allocation, the administrative functions of the Housing Commission are undertaken by staff of the department. The overall budget for the 2 bodies this financial year is \$182.1m. This is an increase of nearly \$20m or about 12% over the 1988-89 allocation of \$162.4m. The major reason for provision of additional funds is the substantial increase in funding for Aboriginal housing-related projects, which I will discuss later.

The provision of serviced land for residential, commercial and industrial purposes has been one of the key planks of this government. As the Chief Minister will recall only too well, the problems facing the fledgling Territory government at the time of self-government were nothing less than massive. In recognition of those serious problems, the Territory government embarked on a broad and dynamic program to reform land development policies, and that process continues to this day. As a result of the emphasis that this government has given to strategic planning and land turnover in past years, the Territory now enjoys adequate supplies of serviced residential land at affordable prices. While families struggle to meet crippling mortgage repayments elsewhere in Australia, the average home loan in the Territory requires only 20.2% of average family income to meet repayments. The Australian average of 33.6% is much higher. In New South Wales, it is a huge 41.1% of average family income.

With the exception of some Aboriginal communities, urban centres around the Territory presently have adequate supplies of serviced land to meet demand over the next financial year. Therefore, emphasis on land turnoff will be directed to areas of particular need. In this year's capital works program, \$1m has been provided for preliminary work, including site investigations and design work, associated with the first stage of development of an industrial subdivision at Middle Arm Peninsula. A small industrial subdivision of 10 lots will be built at Batchelor at a cost of \$242 000, to supply sites for light industrial purposes. More than \$600 000 has been programmed for access and services to the Leanyer Shooting Complex site. Progress on this project has been hampered over the past couple of years because of the need to clear the site of unexploded ordinance. This program was coordinated by the RAAF and was beyond the control of the Territory government.

The servicing of land on Aboriginal communities will continue at a similar rate or level to that of last financial year with \$3.3m programmed for 1989-90. This program is designed to provide serviced land to support the Aboriginal housing land of my department and the Aboriginal Development Commission. It dovetails with the Serviced Land Availability Plan program which is basically responsible for the forward planning necessary to provide for the process of land turnoff on Aboriginal communities that I have just described. The SLAP program has been allocated \$253 000 this financial year, an increase of \$153 000 over 1988-89. SLAP plans and reports are now available for more than 40 communities throughout the Territory and the commitment to prepare reports for the remaining 15 or so major communities will be maintained. However, emphasis will now be placed on planning for future needs, not just on meeting immediate demand.

\$195 000 has been set aside in this year's budget for an access road to the Karnte Town Camp on the southern outskirts of Alice Springs. This will complete the government's commitment to provide services to the newly-established camp. Funding to develop the camp itself, including housing and landscaping, is to be provided under the Town Camps Housing and Infrastructure Program. A total of \$350 000 has been allocated for remedial work on stormwater drains in the Larapinta area to repair damage to the drainage system caused by flood rains in Alice Springs over the past 2 years. This work will incorporate improvements to the drainage system to ensure that there is little chance of serious damage in the event of future serious flooding.

The department's role as the forward planner for land use was demonstrated in 1988-89 with the release of the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Structure Plan 1989. This role will continue through 1989-90 with preparation of land use structure plans for a number of other Territory centres, including the Litchfield Shire, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Finnis River regions.

The government will continue its program of fire control on urban vacant Crown land and \$100 000 has been allocated to this program in 1989-90. In addition, the government has programmed \$277 000 for the maintenance of urban vacant Crown land and \$55 000 for maintenance of rural vacant Crown land.

I turn now to the Territory government's housing program. Some \$58.43m has been programmed for actual housing construction throughout the Territory in 1989-90 and this does not include the components for administrative support services. The breakdown of this total is: \$13.67m for general public housing, \$10.48m for the redevelopment program to upgrade older Housing Commission dwellings, \$1.2m for special purpose housing, \$14.57m for town camp and infrastructure programs, \$17.51m for the Aboriginal Housing Program and a further \$1m for minor works.

I turn first to the urban housing program. As with the supply of serviced land, this government's commitment to provision of public housing during past years now means that only minor dwelling construction is required in the Darwin/Palmerston region this financial year. A total of 24 new dwellings are programmed to be built in Palmerston at a cost of \$1.61m - 10 1-bedroom units, 10 2-bedroom units, and 4 4-bedroom houses. The categories of dwelling to be built are a direct reflection of the demands shown on the relevant Housing Commission waiting list. \$3.44m is programmed for the construction of 51 dwellings in Alice Springs this financial year - 5 1-bedroom units, 17 2-bedroom units, 22 3-bedroom houses and 7 4-bedroom houses. Just under \$1m is allocated for the construction of 14 dwellings in Katherine, and \$280 000 is programmed to provide 4 new dwellings in Tennant Creek. A total of \$7.35m has been programmed for 65 dwellings in other centres. These include \$1.59m for 12 dwellings at Nhulunbuy, \$1.37m for 15 dwellings at Jabiru, \$1.09m for 8 dwellings at Borroloola, \$450 000 for 6 dwellings at Pine Creek, \$360 000 for 5 dwellings at Batchelor and \$220 000 for 2 dwellings at Ti Tree. Included in the allocation for other centres is a total of \$2.27m for departmental housing in smaller Territory communities.

The government's commitment to upgrade older Housing Commission dwellings throughout the Territory will continue this financial year. Further to the \$11.4m allocated last financial year, a total of \$10.48m has been allocated to the program for 1989-90. This breaks down to \$6.5m in Darwin, \$2.4m in Alice Springs, \$1m in Tennant Creek and \$600 000 in Katherine.

I turn now to Aboriginal housing. The Territory government and the federal government have continued to make a major commitment to Aboriginal housing in 1989-90. The total program for Aboriginal housing, including the allocations for provision of serviced land on Aboriginal communities, will be approximately \$40.5m this financial year. Funding for provision of houses in Aboriginal communities has increased again this year and is now a record \$17.5m. This is in addition to the amount of approximately \$5.2m to be spent on housing for Aboriginal people in urban areas. Special funding support is to be provided for the Tangentyere and Julalikari Councils to assist these major town camp organisations fulfil their role. Funding is provided also for continued operation of the successful Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service in Darwin and Katherine, and negotiations to establish a similar service in Alice Springs are in progress.

As I mentioned earlier, a total of \$14.57m has been allocated under the Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program this year. Of this, \$3.3m is programmed for the Alice Springs region, \$3.3m for Tennant Creek, \$2.3m for Katherine, \$2.5m for Darwin, \$2m for Elliott and \$1.1m for Borroloola. This program is a joint initiative of the Territory and federal governments and is aimed at rapidly improving the living conditions in Aboriginal town camps throughout the Territory. A total of \$30.3m is to be spent on the program over 4 years, of which \$18m will come from the Territory government's coffers.

Some \$6.3m was committed to the program last financial year, primarily for planning prior to commencement of major construction works. A similar process to that used for the Serviced Land Availability Program is applied - that is, land use plans are prepared for the maximum population capacity of each camp. The wishes of Aboriginal people are of great importance in this process and a key element contained in the plans developed is the allocation of sufficient land within each camp for ceremonial and/or cultural purposes. The Territory government is aware of the circumstances peculiar to life on Aboriginal communities, such as the extended family structure, and has taken care to ensure matters such as this are addressed in housing design. Further, the

major umbrella organisations serving town camps generally design their own housing. Nor does the work stop at simply providing basic utilities and housing. High quality landscaping, appropriate to the climate, is an integral part of the Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program, as is the provision of children's playgrounds where appropriate.

It is abundantly clear that this government places a high priority on the provision of adequate housing to meet the needs of Aboriginal people throughout the Territory. However, I must make it clear that much more could be achieved if the federal government were prepared to provide the significant additional funding required to overcome the backlog of housing needs in remote areas. It would make a great deal of sense if the housing program presently administered by the Aboriginal Development Commission was transferred to my department. This would lead to improved delivery of services to Aboriginal people as well as savings in administrative costs, and would allow the ADC to concentrate its efforts on economic development. I think it is important to note that, already, the department provides support services to the ADC for its housing program because it does not have the ability or sufficient staff to carry out that role at the moment. I should point out also that the federal government's decisions relating to excisions of living areas on pastoral leases and stock routes and reserves are also crucial to the delivery of welfare services to groups of Aboriginal people who are clearly in need of assistance.

The government has allocated \$1.2m to provide special purpose housing for people with disabilities and crisis accommodation for women. In Darwin, \$270 000 will go towards the construction of 3 2-bedroom units which have been designed specifically for people with disabilities. This will allow for the further repatriation of Territorians from institutions in southern states. Two 2-bedroom units and 3 3-bedroom houses are to be built in Alice Springs at a total cost of \$480 000 for similar purposes. The consultant architect will work closely with user groups and the Departments of Transport and Works, Lands and Housing, and Health and Community Services to ensure these are tailored to meet the needs of the potential occupants.

The remaining \$450 000 will provide for construction of a new Women's Community House in Alice Springs. The Women's Community House provides vital assistance to women and children who are temporarily homeless because of domestic violence or for other reasons. The house will be replaced by a special purpose-built facility because the present accommodation, which consists mainly of rapidly deteriorating demountables, is beyond economic repair or upgrading.

The Territory government will significantly increase the allocation for the Interest Subsidy Scheme and the Home Establishment Grant. Honourable members should be aware that, although the schemes were introduced less than a year ago, they have been greeted enthusiastically by the Territory community. This initiative from the Territory government clearly has been beneficial to many Territory families, the real estate industry and the economy generally. Unfortunately, I am forced to qualify that statement by pointing out that, over recent months, the federal government's high interest rate policy has seriously eroded the effectiveness and attraction of these schemes. It seems that even the most generous housing package in Australia has difficulty when interest rates are over 17%. Nonetheless, the Territory government has allocated \$1.7m this financial year to the Interest Subsidy Scheme in comparison with the \$100 000 allocated in 1988-89. In addition, nearly \$1m has been programmed for the Home Establishment Grant in comparison with last year's financial allocation of \$523 000. It is worth noting that the \$523 000

represents actual sales of 523 homes, worth up to \$100 000, throughout the Territory in the first 7 months of the scheme's operation.

I turn now to the revenue side of housing. The cost of operating public housing continues to increase but, over the past 12 months, these costs have been absorbed following the government's commitment not to increase rents in 1988-89. The rent increase announced by the honourable Treasurer in the budget represents an overall increase equivalent to 7%, which is marginally lower than the federal Treasurer's estimate of inflation over the coming year, and it is also the first rental increase in 2 years. The increase will be applied across Housing Commission stock relative to rents for equivalent private sector accommodation. This means rents for flats and units will increase by between \$3 to \$5 per week while rents for 3- and 4-bedroomed houses will increase by \$8 and \$9 per week respectively. These increases must be considered in the context of the federal government's proposed changes to the rent-fixing guidelines in the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Under the guidelines, the states and the Northern Territory would be required to recover, through rents, the notional interest on past and future grant funding and concessional loans, even though no such costs actually exist.

If the Territory government agreed to this proposal, it would mean that not only would we have to apply an increase to catch up for the rent freeze last year, but we would have to impose further large increases over a 3-year period, and this would put Territory rents - on the formula that has been proposed - to approximately \$10 a week above current market rents. The Valuer-General determined market rents for 3- and 4-bedroom ground level houses in Darwin as at June this year to be \$160 to \$200 a week respectively and, when honourable members compare those figures with the new levels for 3- and 4-bedroom homes of \$111 and \$119 a week - and the massive increases which would be required to comply with the new formula - it is easy to understand the Territory government's concern over this aspect of the redrafted CSHA. The states and the Territory are currently negotiating with the intention of putting a united approach to the federal government to modify the redrafted guidelines.

I must stress that the increases to rents announced by the honourable Treasurer will not impose financial hardship on low-income tenants or those on fixed incomes. The Rental Rebate Scheme applying to public housing in the Territory has always protected those tenants and will continue to do so. Nearly 40% of Housing Commission tenants now receive some form of rebate. Indeed, the rent forgone for these tenants in 1988-89 was nearly \$11m. The rent increases will apply from 9 October this year whereas rents for pensioners will be adjusted as their half-yearly pension increases are paid by the federal government.

Rents for pensioners, like rents for other low-income earners, are calculated under the Rental Rebate Scheme as a percentage of income. As in so many other areas, the Territory's concessional scheme is the most generous in Australia. Indeed, increases for pensioners have not been reviewed since the increase in December 1987 which is to say that, effectively, the Territory government has given pensioners a rent freeze for almost 2 years.

All of the programs I have outlined in respect of lands and housing exist as a result of coordinated, sensible forward planning. Later this year, the Department of Lands and Housing will release 2 significant public documents which will highlight the future direction of the government in this area. Those documents, which will complement the Northern Territory's Economic Development Strategy released last year, are the Lands Development Strategy

and the Housing Development Strategy. A Conservation Strategy will be released by the Conservation Commission. These strategy plans will provide a framework through which the government can work for the continued development of the Territory, not just for today but also for the future.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make some brief comments about the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. The authority has been allocated \$1.4m in this year's budget, which is an increase of almost 25% over actual expenditure in 1988-89 of \$1.127m by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. A significant amount of this extra funding, some \$169 000, is for increased staffing.

There has been considerable comment about the introduction of new sacred sites protection legislation in the Northern Territory, and I certainly do not intend to continue that debate today. Suffice it to say that this government firmly believes that the new Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act will provide a far more efficient and less contentious framework for the resolution of sacred sites issues than did the previous legislative regime. Further, this government is committed to ensuring the new authority has the resources necessary for it properly to carry out the role conferred on it by the new legislation.

I turn now to the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. At first glance, the commission's budget appears to have been reduced in 1989-90 from actual expenditure in 1988-89 by \$1.78m. The reason for this apparent decline is that, this year, the capital works component of the commission's budget has been included in the Transport and Works budget. The estimated cash allocation for capital works this financial year is \$8.4m which, when added to the commission's allocation of \$35m, is a total of \$43.4m, and that is certainly a significant increase in real terms over 1988-89 funding levels. In these times of fiscal restraint, this increase in financial commitment reflects the importance this government places on ensuring the appropriate strategies for the protection and preservation of the environment are implemented. At the same time, we recognise also the need to put into place the facilities which will allow one of the Territory's most important industries, tourism, to expand.

There is concern throughout Australia and the world about environmental issues. Issues such as the Greenhouse Effect, depletion of the ozone layer, coastal management, heritage preservation and land conservation, to name but a few, are as relevant to the Territory as they are elsewhere in the world. Environmental issues do not stop at state or even international borders and, even though this government has an excellent record of balancing the need for economic development with necessary environmental protection, we cannot afford to be complacent.

One of the most important but less obvious measures contained in the Conservation Commission's budget for 1989-90 is provision for expansion of the Environmental Protection Unit. Internal restructuring within the commission will allow for the number of staff members in the unit to be increased from 11 to 15, and that will include positions in both Katherine and Alice Springs in an effort to provide on-the-spot experts to deal with environmental issues in those regions. In addition to addressing global issues, such as the Greenhouse Effect and ozone depletion, the Environment Protection Unit will continue its environmental assessment role. Members will be aware that all developments which will have a significant impact on the environment must go through the statutory clearance processes laid down by the Environmental Assessment Act. The act itself is to be reviewed over the next 12 months to

identify areas of possible refinement and improvement. Also, the unit will continue its work on preparation of a coastal resources atlas which will include contingency plans for accidental pollution of our coastal areas.

Soil conservation is another problem which is being addressed by the government. The Territory government has allocated more than \$440 000 for projects under the National Soil Conservation Program this financial year and, when the federal government's contribution and funds carried from the last year are taken into account, the allocation is actually \$1.44m. The 9 projects funded in 1989-90 range from the continued development of the Comprehensive Geographical Information System to assessment of crop land erosion to raise public awareness about the need for land conservation.

I spoke earlier about our landowners group, but something else that I had the pleasure of being involved recently in was the launching of a booklet for use in Territory schools, which explains the importance of soil conservation to school students. The Minister for Education helped me to launch that booklet. The booklet was developed by the commission and the Department of Education and we launched it at the Parap Primary School, and that is quite an impressive school.

Mr Coulter: What about Palmerston?

Mr MANZIE: We did not have time to get out there.

The booklet was developed jointly by the commission and the Department of Education and it will certainly assist our efforts to ensure that future generations are educated to appreciate the importance of soil conservation to our country.

While on the subject of soil conservation, I think it is important to inform honourable members that a program to address soil erosion and salinity problems on the Mary River floodplains will be allocated \$35 000 this financial year. Commission employees have been working for some time to combat severe salt water intrusion into the Mary River system upstream from Shady Camp. Salt water intrusion, believed to be largely a result of feral buffalo activity, has destroyed fresh water vegetation, including large stands of paperbark forest. A large earthen weir was constructed last year to stem the flow of salt water up the river at high tide and, in turn, to slow the drainage of fresh water down the river at low tide. The weir proved successful although it suffered damage during the wet season. Work to repair and modify the weir is now under way and should be completed within 2 months. The commission has employed a consultant who, together with commission staff, will undertake a 3-year study of the Mary River system to determine the most efficient and effective way to restore the fresh water billabong system.

An important issue which impacts on soil conservation in the Territory is the control of feral animals. Again, the government recognises the significant impact feral animals have on the environment and \$270 000 has been committed to research and control programs this financial year. The main research and monitoring will be done in the central Australian region with the horses and rabbits, and \$56 000 has been allocated for research into the ecological impact of feral horses and options for their control. A major project, jointly funded by the Territory and federal governments, is continuing into the ecology and control of feral pigs, particularly in grain production areas, and \$82 000 has been allocated towards that this year. A further \$43 000 has been programmed for research into feral buffalo population dynamics. Again, I must emphasise the significant work that has been done in

the BTEC program to control feral animals, and improvement to the condition of the country where these programs have been in place is already apparent.

The Assembly legislated last year to establish the Strehlow Research Centre which will receive total funding this financial year of \$227 000 for operational expenses. In addition, detailed design work for a purpose-built research facility to house the collection of Aboriginal artefacts and associated materials collected by the late Professor T.G.H. Strehlow has commenced. The centre is to be sited next to the Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs and is expected to cost \$3m to build. Negotiations with the federal government regarding joint funding of the centre are continuing.

Nearly \$600 000 has been allocated to the heritage program for 1989-90. This includes the anticipated federal government component of \$267 000 for the National Estate Grants Program and the anticipated appropriation of \$120 000 for the Northern Territory Heritage Grants program. The operating subsidy of \$72 000 for the National Trust will continue to be included as an ongoing budget allocation through the heritage program. Honourable members will recall that I gave a commitment last November that the government would introduce heritage legislation into the Assembly this year. I advise honourable members that we will be honouring that commitment and I also advise that, following the release of a discussion paper earlier this year, drafting of the legislation is now under way.

The Conservation Commission will continue to address the problems of the noxious weed, *Mimosa pigra*, which is threatening so many of our parks and reserves. The commission will contribute \$37 000 to the government's mimosa control program this financial year, which is receiving overall government funding of \$510 000. Nearly \$70 000 has been allocated for continuation of the BTEC fencing program for Territory parks and reserves which commenced last year. The Bushfires Council will receive funding of \$1.77m this year, an increase of \$100 000 over 1988-89. Planned activities include the expansion of the Equipment Subsidy Scheme to cover the new Katherine Fire Control Region and continuation of the public awareness campaign, with the theme 'Don't Burn Yourself Out This Dry', and investigation of remote sensing imagery to assist in more accurate fire weather forecasting. Of course, fire control measures and strategies will depend on seasonal conditions, but a high-fire risk must be anticipated through the Top End and the Centre.

The commission has been allocated \$1m this financial year for the greening of Darwin. These funds are to be used to ensure Darwin becomes the tropical gateway to Australia, and to ensure that the community's expectations of the Territory's capital city are met.

Honourable members may be aware that the Conservation Commission in Alice Springs operates from 3 separate premises - a regional office in Gap Road, a regional operations office in George Crescent, and a portion of the Arid Zone Research Institute on the Stuart Highway. This situation is both unnecessary and inefficient and, as a result, the government will consolidate these operations on one site this financial year. \$1.5m has been included in the Department of Transport Works capital works program for construction of a 2-storey office building at the Arid Zone Research Institute to cater for the commission's office requirements in Alice Springs. Plans for the building have already been approved by the Planning Authority and it is expected that a contract for construction will be let in October. It is anticipated that the Gap Road and George Crescent premises will be sold when the new building is completed.

I turn now to the commission's highest profile activity - the parks of the Northern Territory. Again, the government has committed significant funding for capital works in parks throughout the Territory. The commission is well aware of its role in the future development of the Territory. As tourist numbers grow, the commission will continue to provide the necessary facilities in our parks and, at the same time, manage our natural resources to ensure they are protected for the enjoyment of future generations. Projects such as the Territory Wildlife Park at Berry Springs will continue to be supported by the government to encourage expansion of tourism in the Darwin region and to provide further facilities for Top End residents.

A total of \$6.7m was allocated for construction of the first stage of the park and a further \$600 000 was approved last year for the second stage of the aquatic exhibits. These extensions, which will include crocodile tanks and accommodation for turtles and salt water fish etc, are to be completed this year. \$300 000 has been allocated this financial year to provide for construction of a visitor terminal and souvenir shop. As I said in an earlier debate, the park is to be opened on 2 October. I also stated earlier that \$160 000 had been allocated for work in the Berry Springs Nature Park. That is to provide access to the lower pool and to provide picnic and toilet facilities.

The development of Litchfield Park will continue this financial year with an allocation of \$1.24m. This follows a commitment of \$1.2m last year. This year's allocation will provide for further development of visitor facilities at Florence, Tolmer and Wangi Falls and Sandy Creek, construction of walking trails throughout the park and upgrading of access roads into and through the park. An important project due to be completed this financial year is the suspension bridge at Tolmer Falls which will allow visitors to the park to enjoy this attraction while minimising their impact on the environment. The commission is also examining the potential for commercial development and management of activities and services such as horse trails and camping facilities within the park.

Mr Speaker, I urge members who have never visited Litchfield to take the time to see this beautiful part of the Territory because it really is a unique area.

Mr Collins: Better than Kakadu.

Mr MANZIE: We are getting comments from tourists and visitors to the effect that they have found Litchfield more exciting and pleasant than Kakadu. It is a different environment, and it really is exciting.

\$370 000 is to be spent on upgrading the camping and day-use recreation areas at Douglas Hot Springs and Butterfly Gorge. Construction of ablution facilities, water reticulation and extensive planting of native trees will significantly improve facilities at the hot springs, and improved access to Butterfly Gorge will make this unique park more easily available to the public.

A total of \$170 000 has been allocated for development of the Gregory National Park this financial year. This park, west of Katherine, covers an area of more than 1 million hectares and is certain to become a magnificent attraction. \$530 000 will go towards building a road from Bullita to Limestone Gorge, and the provision of visitor facilities such as picnic and day-use areas within the park. In addition, \$340 000 has been allocated to the Department of Lands and Housing for construction of residences and associated buildings at the Gregory Ranger Station.

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

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, in the Katherine region, \$600 000 is to be spent on the Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park to provide full-year visitor access. Following a commission-funded study in 1988, it was found that there were 2 more caves which could be opened up to visitors - and both are free from vandalism. One new cave is to be opened this financial year and it is expected that the second will be opened in 1990-91. More importantly, these caves are to be developed in a manner which will allow them to remain open during the wet season. This means Katherine will have access to a high-quality tourist destination the full year round.

Edith Falls, in the Katherine Gorge National Park, is also to be substantially upgraded this financial year. \$375 000 has been allocated to provide new campgrounds at Edith Falls, including landscaping, water reticulation and ablution facilities. The existing facilities will be converted to day-use only. Near Mataranka, there will be further development of the Elsey Park during this financial year. This was formerly known as the Upper Roper Park. Following last year's allocation of \$400 000, an additional \$350 000 has been allocated in 1989-90 for provision of new camping and day-use areas along the Roper River with safe swimming areas, water reticulation and ablution blocks.

Honourable members will recall that, during the last sittings, I made a statement on the proposed development of the West MacDonnells National Park near Alice Springs. Following the allocation of \$600 000 for visitor facilities in the West MacDonnells in 1988-89, I am pleased to advise that a further \$1.5m has been allocated to this area for this financial year. This will provide day-use and camping areas at the Ochre Pits, Wigley's Waterhole, Ellery Creek and the Serpentine, Glen Helen and Redbank Gorges.

Another feature of the proposed park, the 220 km Larapinta Trail, will continue to be developed this year. The first 5 km of the trail was opened by the Chief Minister in July this year and a further 21 km will be opened in September. This financial year will also see the completion of the section of the trail between the Telegraph Station and Standley Chasm, some 64 km in length. Future development will see the trail continue through some of the most spectacular country in Australia until it reaches the Territory's highest peak, Mount Zeil, which is on the most western boundary of the proposed park.

More than \$400 000 has been allocated this financial year for the recently declared Watarrka National Park which includes Kings Canyon. This will provide for construction of a ranger residence and administrative support and follows a \$1.3m development program undertaken over the past 2 years. Watarrka is becoming increasingly popular with residents of central Australia and with tourists. As a result, further development of the area is planned this year to meet the growing demands of visitors. In particular, the commission is examining the possibility of providing further camping facilities to cater for ever-growing visitor numbers. In addition, design work on stage 2 of the walkway through the Garden of Eden area will continue.

While on the subject of centralian parks, \$150 000 has been allocated to construct an access road and upgrade and relocate the campground at

Rainbow Valley and a further \$150 000 has been allocated for construction of a new access road to Trepkina Gorge. An increasingly important aspect of developing parks in the Territory is emphasis on interpretive facilities - the signage and literature which explain the environment to visitors, direct their behaviour in our parks and enhance their enjoyment of their visit. In recognition of this, \$300 000 has been allocated for the marketing and promotional aspects of park development. It is intended that visitor information will be developed under this program to encourage domestic and international tourism, advise visitors of potential hazards and help them to appreciate the value of the resources that they are using.

This government does not charge for entry into commission parks and reserves and we do not intend to do so, with the exception of the Territory Wildlife Park. However, from 1 January 1991, the government will introduce fees for services, such as camping, provided in national parks. The intention of this move is to offset the costs of providing these services, which is high, and to ensure the government does not compete unfairly with private tourist operators offering similar services outside of parks. The commission is working with the Tourism Advisory Council in liaising with the tourist industry to determine which services are offered, what should be offered and the appropriate level of fees for those services. There may be opportunities for private enterprise to become involved in providing these services and also secondary services such as tours, trail rides and bushwalks. However, I stress that those people wishing only to visit a park, have a picnic and enjoy the setting will not be charged fees.

I turn now to the Museums and Art Galleries Board. This government recognises the educational, scientific and cultural importance of museums and art galleries to our community and that they are a valuable asset to the Territory tourist industry. Accordingly, the government has made significant financial contributions to their development and expansion in recent years. This financial year will see the board's appropriation increase by more than \$1m over the 1988-89 level, to bring it to \$5.7m. This increase takes into account the additional costs required in the Alice Springs region to staff and operate the recently-acquired Stuart Auto Museum and the full-year operation of the Spencer and Gillen Gallery.

An important initiative which has received support this financial year is a cultural exchange program between the Darwin museum and museums in Malaysia and South-east Asia. The government has allocated \$100 000 to the program and it is anticipated that the Malaysian government will also provide the equivalent of \$100 000. So far this year, the program has included the participation of 5 artists from Sarawak and 1 from Indonesia in the annual artists' camp in Kakadu, a tour of a major Aboriginal art exhibition throughout South-east Asia, the establishment of a training exchange program for museum curator techniques, an Ambon marine scientist studying with the Darwin museum's fish department and a curator from Kupang gaining experience in museum administration and display at the Darwin museum.

A significant capital works program, which commenced in 1988-89, will be completed this financial year. A maritime gallery at the Bullocky Point complex will be completed in mid-1990 at a cost of \$3.1m while construction of a display workshop and carpark at the complex will be completed early next year at a cost of \$700 000. A new hangar for the Central Australian Aviation Museum will be completed at a cost of \$400 000 by mid-October and the new aviation museum at Winnellie is expected to be completed in September at a cost of \$1.9m.

I turn now to the Department of Law. The allocation for the Department of Law covers a variety of functions, including the Corporate Affairs Office, the Registrar-General's Office, the court system and the department itself, which provides legal services to the government. None of these functions is altered significantly in this year's budget so I will touch only on a few particular items of interest.

The department's budget for 1989-90 is increased by \$700 000 from actual expenditure in 1988-89 of \$19.67m to \$20.38m. The major increase occurred in the legal services area with the expansion of the Major Projects program, which has had a staff increase of 10 positions to a maximum level of 13. The Major Projects program provides a flexible pool of law officers who can be allocated across divisional boundaries to provide support at need, hence the title 'Major Projects'.

This year will see the continued development of the electronic title facility within the Office of the Registrar-General at a cost of \$40 000. Development of the Integrated Justice Information System will continue this year at a cost of \$500 000. Work on the system, which will be capable of tracking offenders from the point of arrest through the court system, began last year. When complete, it will enhance the administration of courts by assisting judges, magistrates and court staff to effectively manage the flow of cases through the system.

Stage 1 of development of the Katherine courts complex will begin this financial year. \$500 000 has been allocated for the demolition of the present court building and for preliminary site works. Stage 2 of the project, which is expected to begin next year, will see a new complex constructed at a cost of \$4.5m. The new complex will include 2 court rooms, 1 of which will be used as a Supreme Court. It will be a marked improvement on the present court accommodation. The court is to be relocated in the old community development buildings in Giles Street while the new complex is constructed.

There have been significant changes to the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court and the Local Court and, of course, costs have risen considerably. The jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court has risen from \$2000 to \$5000 and a new fee scale will see the fee for claims less than \$100 abolished while fees for claims from \$100 to \$2000 will be levied on a sliding scale equivalent to 1% or less than the value of the claim. The jurisdiction of the Local Court has increased by 400% to \$40 000. However, fees will only be increased from \$25 to \$50. The present fee for filing a suit in the Supreme Court is \$50. In the ACT, it is \$240 and, in New South Wales, it is \$300. Given that most disputes are private, civil or commercial disputes with no public benefit element, and that the fee represents the amount charged by a junior barrister for 30 minutes in court, clearly the fee should be increased so that it reflects actual costs more closely. Accordingly, the listing fee is to be increased to \$100. In addition, the trial fee is to be increased from the \$100 set in 1982 to \$300, which is the equivalent of the salary of a judge, associate and monitor for 3 hours. The filing fee of \$150 for the Court of Appeal was set in 1987 and will not be increased. It is estimated that the revenue generated from these changes will total \$166 000 in a full year.

I should point out that, even after these increases, it will still be cheaper to lodge a claim for up to \$12 000 here than it is anywhere else in Australia, except the ACT and Tasmania. Supreme Court fees will still be lower than those charged in New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland, and less than half those charged in the ACT.

Mr Speaker, the last issue I wish to address before concluding my remarks is that of claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. This government continually faces a barrage of allegations from vested interest groups that we challenge all land claims and automatically appeal every decision that goes against us. There are certain variations to this theme, such as the blatantly false claim that the Territory government has lost every appeal lodged ...

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

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to canvass a very serious matter in relation to the Year 10 external examinations that will take place in a couple of weeks time. The question that I intend to raise is not whether there should be an examination, because I have raised that a number of times before in this House. I will make the point that, if there is to be an examination, it should be done properly and the integrity of the examinations should be safeguarded.

There are a number of areas, with regard to mathematics specifically - and I believe that, by extension, some of these would cover the English examination also - where the integrity and the confidentiality of the examination are being placed at serious risk. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that it would be ludicrous if some students were to be permitted to sit the examination early, but I have been advised that that is to be the case. Where students have commitments, for example, a sports excursion or, as I understand is the case in one instance, to attend national ballroom dancing championships, I understand that those students will be able to sit the examination before they go and will be asked to sign a pledge saying that they will not reveal the contents of the examination papers.

It is a fact that school kids are probably as honest a group of people as their cohorts outside of the school system, but it is neither fair nor just to place the sort of pressure on students that an idea as bizarre as this creates. It would be absolutely ridiculous to expect that those students, some of whom are presently members of the same classes as other students who have no reason to take the examinations early, will not be subjected to an incredible amount of pressure from their peers to give a few hints about the examination papers. It is absolutely ludicrous and incredible that such a situation is to occur and yet that is what various teachers and various groups around the Northern Territory have been advised will be the situation. That is the first point.

Secondly, I am advised that a number of teachers, who were involved in organising the examinations, are teaching Year 10 students. At least one such teacher has a son in Year 10. The point of the matter is that teachers who were involved in drawing up and setting the examinations are now back in their classrooms coaching their students on how to sit for the examinations and running them through model papers. In that situation, how could teachers, unconsciously even, not coach their students towards that exam? It places the whole of that examination under a cloud because other people will believe those students have been coached along a particular line even if they have

not. It is another area where the integrity of the examination system has been put at risk.

There is a third aspect that I have been unable to tie down. I heard about it from 4 different sources before I raised it in this House, but I have been unable to tie it down completely. However, if it is true, the integrity of the examination has been blown completely. I am advised that, not long ago, at the Darwin High School, a Year 11 class was asked to sit for an examination. The covers were torn off the paper, but it was in exactly the same format as the coming examination paper is to be, and it was done as a trial to see whether the answers would come out all right - whether they fitted on the pages provided and various things like that. I am told by people who are in a position to know that that mock examination paper was the actual examination paper. I am aware that these are serious charges and they will require the honourable minister either to have a fresh paper prepared or to defer the examination for this year and try again next year. I do not know if the resources are available to do the former. At this time, the matters need to be investigated urgently. If such an investigation shows that the situations I have described do not exist, it will be necessary for the minister to give to every parent who, like myself, has a child about to sit for those Year 10 examinations, more than just his personal assurance that the integrity of the examination has been maintained.

The students who most need those results are not those who will go on to Year 11 and 12. Those students will not use those results because they know that they are irrelevant to their future careers. The students for whom the results will have relevance are those who will leave school at the end of Year 10 and go out into the work force. If the integrity of the examination has been prejudiced, because it is shown that various students sat the examination early, that various students were coached by teachers who had knowledge of the contents of the paper or that students had prior information obtained through a trialing situation, then the entire examination process will be fruitless. The credibility of results would be destroyed for employers and parents and the credibility of a system which went through such a farcical process would be non-existent.

I am afraid that this is just the latest event in a sequence which was launched when the government set out in this foolish adventure into Year 10 examinations. It is unfortunate that the foolishness did not end with the actual decision, but has continued through into the operation and now threatens the integrity of the examination itself. If the minister has nothing conclusive to say about this tonight, I would ask that he take it on board and conduct an immediate investigation so that he is able to give us some specific assurances before the end of these sittings. At the same time, I would ask that he put himself in the position to give us his full assurance about the integrity of the storage of the examination papers themselves. I will not go into too much detail on this, because this information is based on a rumour only. However, I have been advised that the papers are - or were - stored on a disc on an Apple Mac in the Professional Services Section in the NML Building, and that there is a real danger that they have been accessed.

It will be necessary for the minister to examine those 4 areas. He will need to trace through the actual setting of the examination, check on the people involved in it and establish how the integrity of the whole line has been maintained. Honourable members who are in the same age group as myself and who sat for such examinations as young people would recall just how much security was attached to the examination papers. There was a complex security

system to oversight their preparation, handling and storage and everything was checked and double checked.

Mr Collins: Seals.

Mr EDE: That is right. Seals were placed on them and they had to be signed etc. The whole system was designed with an ordered trail of security procedures right through, from the word go to the word end, so that there could be no impugning of the integrity of the examination.

I realise that these are very serious charges and, as I said, it is absolutely essential that the honourable minister be able to describe to us the trail of security that has been set up to ensure the integrity of the Year 10 examinations. Tonight, I am speaking specifically about the mathematics paper, but I require the same information and assurances about the English paper also. The points are as follows. Will any student be able to sit the examination prior to the date set? Is there any possibility that a teacher who has knowledge of the contents of the papers could, albeit unconsciously, be coaching students along that line? And is there any chance that the papers could have been accessed without authority from the computer on which they were stored?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, a small problem has arisen in the rural area recently. Whilst I say it is a small problem, it is a problem that could become bigger if something is not done about it. As it has arisen in the Darwin rural area, probably it has arisen in other parts of the Northern Territory also. I refer to the interest that so many people have in growing tropical fruit on trees on their blocks and the fact that, because they are growing crop trees, chemicals are sprayed on the trees to kill predatory insects. Where this is occurring on small blocks, the danger of the spray misting over to other blocks and houses is becoming something of a problem and I can see that, at some time in the near future, consideration will have to be given to this matter.

I would hate to see people prevented from growing fruit trees or from protecting them by spraying. However, on the other hand, I believe that their own safety and the safety of their neighbours is also important. I would hate to see legislation or even regulations introduced in relation to this. Initially, it would be best to advertise the potential problems and ask people to use common sense. Spraying should be done on suitable occasions when there is no breeze and there is less danger to the humans doing the spraying and to the neighbours.

Recently, I attended a meeting of the Northern Territory Horticulturists Association, and I must say at the outset that it was one of the best meetings that I have attended for a long time. The chairman was extremely competent. There were 2 guest speakers and adequate time was allowed for questions to be asked and answered. In addition, information was provided by officers of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. All this occurred in a 2½ hour meeting. It was one of the best meetings I have been to for a long time.

The subject of poisoning and trapping of wildlife was raised in relation to farming in areas where wildlife presented a problem. The feeling was that people did not mind wildlife taking some of their crop but, when this became excessive, they felt that measures had to be taken to poison or trap the wildlife. This is a great pity. In the normal course of events, the wildlife would exist in the bush. If there were no introduced fruit trees around for them to feed on - rambutans, lychees, mangoes, bananas etc - the populations

of these birds and other animals would be considerably smaller. The argument was that, by trapping and poisoning them, their numbers would be reduced but not below the levels that would have pertained if this food source had not been introduced.

This brings me to another matter which was discussed at the meeting. The government should encourage primary producers and others to trap, husband and breed wild birds and animals. Most of the depredation on the horticultural crops was done by birds. The matter was discussed at some length by the Conservation Commission officer at the meeting and he answered many questions. The time is coming when we could kill 2 birds with 1 stone, so to speak. We could ease the effects of birds on fruit crops and, at the same time, breed the native birds. This could interest people overseas in our native fauna and bring about a more humane control of our pest species. It would also generate quite a large amount of export income for the country. By trapping, husbanding and breeding these bird species, we would do away with much of the terrible black market dealings in these species.

However, before this happens, it is imperative that the federal government encourage state governments to continue an active management and conservation program of these birds in the wild. Management is essential because we would not want to be exporting a particular species and suddenly find that it had become an endangered species in the wild. To avoid that situation, a proper state-wide and Territory-wide management program should be in place before any export occurs so that it is known that there are full populations of the species still in the wild. The impetus need not necessarily come from the federal government in the first instance. I believe that the federal government should be encouraged to look at this matter by the Northern Territory government through the Conservation Commission. This is very important so that our native fauna will be appreciated by Australians and people overseas.

There is a matter that I had intended to raise during the last sittings. I was approached by a gentleman who has a small business in the Winnellie area. This gentleman has developed a unique product which he markets. He has run a very efficient business for some years and, no doubt, will continue to do so for some time in the future. He had been approached by government officers - I think they were officers from the Department of Transport and Works - who wanted to know the specifications of his product and, in all innocence, he gave them the actual specifications. The government then advertised a contract with those exact specifications. When this gentleman put in a tender to manufacture for the government the item that he has been manufacturing for years, he was knocked back in favour of somebody else who submitted a lower tender but who had a reputation for not producing anywhere near the quality of product that this gentleman produced.

Actions like this are adversely affecting the small business people in this community. This will not ruin this businessman but he was a little disappointed that he did not win the contract when it was his information that was being used. He believes that the government was less than fair in its approach to him and in the awarding of the contract.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):
Mr Speaker, I rise briefly tonight to draw to the attention of honourable members another sleight of hand on the part of the federal government. Members might recall a headline in the NT News on Wednesday 16 August: "'No Snap Polls", says Prime Minister!'. The article went on to indicate what was in the federal budget for the Northern Territory. It is the practice of the

federal government at present to have either Warren Snowdon or Senator Bob Collins announce these things. Warren Snowdon dutifully took up the figures that he was provided with by the Treasurer. According to the newspaper, among the items that Mr Snowdon listed was \$19m for Aboriginal housing.

I have no doubt at all that the federal government is putting \$19m into Aboriginal housing this year. However, what exactly has it done to put that \$19m into the areas where it wants to spend it this year? Mr Speaker, 12 months ago, in consultation with the Northern Territory government, the federal government established the Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program. That program was to provide \$30m over 3 years, \$18m from the Northern Territory and \$12m from the federal government. I think my figures are correct and the time frame is correct. One of the provisos to that agreement was that the Northern Territory government could not take Aboriginal housing funds from other areas and put them into the TCHIP program. Its contribution had to be in addition to what was already being provided for Aboriginal housing in other areas. Once again, I suspect that the federal government has done this tongue in cheek, knowing full well that it would withdraw funding from other areas of Aboriginal housing itself to put into the TCHIP program, but locking the Northern Territory into an agreement that our government would not do that.

The basis for my accusation - and I think it is a reasonable one - is that, in the last week or so, communities around the Northern Territory have been receiving letters such as this one from the Aboriginal Development Commission. I intend to read this into Hansard because, once again, the expectations of Aboriginal people are being smashed against the shards of the federal government's broken promises. This letter is addressed to Miss Miriam Rose, Chairperson of the Nauiyu Nambiyu Community, Daly River. I might say here that this community, as had others, had already received its approval funding from the ADC for housing this year, and I am aware of other communities that have received similar letters.

Dear Miriam,

Re: The 1989-90 ADC Housing Program.

As you are aware, the Aboriginal Development Commission plans to provide the following housing grant funding to your community for 1989-90: housing grant - \$159 000 - 2 x 3-bedroom houses.

For the first time in recent years, the federal government has made reductions in financial appropriations to the ADC. As a result, the ADC rental accommodation program, community housing grants, in this region has had a funding cut of \$1 105 900. Unfortunately, the funding previously planned for your community is no longer available this financial year.

I am available to make a visit to your community to explain this significant funding change if your executive or community so desire. I apologise for the unexpected nature and short notice of this advice. However, the associated circumstances are beyond my control. Please feel free to contact me if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely,
Lex Dodd
Acting Branch Manager, Darwin.

Mr Speaker, it is very clear to me that the federal government is doing to the ADC what it has already done to the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation. It is cutting off its life blood, cutting off the funds that would keep that organisation going. The ADC has been the major provider of housing funds for Aboriginal communities under federal government programs. Of course, the Northern Territory government equals that effort and, in fact, goes beyond it. Certainly, under TCHIP, we were to put in \$18m to its \$12m. Quite clearly, under the agreement, our \$18m was to be over and above other funding.

Mr Speaker, you heard the Minister for Lands and Housing indicate that this year we are at an all-time high in funding for Aboriginal housing. On top of the allocation of \$3.3m for serviced land for Aboriginal communities, on top of the SLAP allocation of \$253 000, the allocation for housing on Aboriginal communities is a record \$17.5m under the Aboriginal housing programs of the Department of Lands and Housing. However, the Commonwealth government has cut funds to the ADC, the body that has been funding housing on Aboriginal communities for years and the only body currently established, except for the Aboriginal Affairs program with TCHIP, to provide that housing on Aboriginal communities.

It is quite clear to me that the federal government has ripped off the ADC moneys that would have gone to Aboriginal communities around the Northern Territory, and provided them to TCHIP - the exact move that it said we could not make. It is not reasonable. It is again an indication of the dishonesty of the government we have in Canberra which does this sort of thing constantly to Territorians and perhaps to other Australians. I am sure the Aboriginal people around the Northern Territory will see through this move and recognise what the federal government is doing. They are already saying to me that the Northern Territory provides more support than does the federal government. This will be another indication that that is the case.

I am amazed. The honourable Minister for Aboriginal Affairs speaks about a '38% boost to Aborigines this year'. Boost to what? It will just go on programs and will probably fall into the hands of the land councils, and we know that the land councils put no money on the ground in Aboriginal communities. Not 1¢ is spent by the land councils to develop anything in Aboriginal communities. They develop large bureaucracies in the major centres, and do nothing else for the Aboriginal people.

I am appalled at what the federal government has done in this case. I know that Nauiyu Nambiyu is not the only community that has suffered in this way. I know the community of Nguiu, which the member for Arafura represents, has received a similar letter in the last few days because, whether or not the member for Arafura is going to take it up, I have had notification from people on Bathurst Island that they have received the same letter and that funds for housing on Bathurst Island have been cut, unilaterally. There is no question of whether houses might be necessary or not. The funding is no longer provided because the ADC has had its funds cut.

I mentioned the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation. This is exactly what the federal government did to the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation. The foundation incurred the wrath of the land councils, and what did Hand do? Hand cut its funding and simply wiped it out. That is the sort of thing that he is now doing to the ADC. The ADC disputes the federal minister. The federal minister cuts off its dollars, and it will die. That is obvious. It is probable that the ADC has been the only federal government agency that has been putting dollars on the ground in Aboriginal communities. None other is doing it, apart from the ADC, and I am not saying that it was particularly

efficient. It was not, but no other agency of the federal government was putting the sort of dollars on the ground in Aboriginal communities that the ADC was.

It is quite clear to me, as I think it is quite clear to all of us, and it has been said by none other than Hon Warren Snowdon anyway, that the Northern Territory government does it better than anybody else. Why then does the federal government not provide us with the funds it has taken from the ADC? We will provide housing at Nauiyu Nambiyu. We will provide housing at Nguiu and we will provide the housing in other communities that are now going to miss out - those communities which had a justifiable expectation that they would get the dollars this year because they had been given a promise. The federal government has broken a promise. Indeed, I believe that it has broken a contract with the Northern Territory government in saying that it would maintain its dollars in other areas, as it expected us to do, and that dollars for TCHIP would be additional.

As I have said, once again this is an indication of how this federal government plays the game. It does not play it honestly. It breaks the rules constantly. I believe it has done it again in this instance, and I think that this government and this Assembly should condemn the federal government for its activities. I notice that the members from the Aboriginal seats are not on the opposite benches at present but, if they have any feeling for their constituents, I am sure they will support me in condemning the federal government for this action.

Mr Speaker, sometimes I am at a loss for words ...

Mr Tuxworth: Never!

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I am. Sometimes I am at a loss for words ...

Mr Tuxworth: Don't tell whoppers or your nose will grow long!

Mr McCARTHY: ... when the current federal government is able to get away with these sorts of actions and be supported constantly by the members opposite. No doubt, they will say: 'Oh, but there is no loss to the Aboriginal people. They are not getting houses, but they are getting something else'. The point is that they want houses at this time. They do not want social programs. They want houses and they want jobs, and building houses provides jobs. Since the members holding Aboriginal seats have all gone home, I would expect that the Leader of the Opposition and his new-found friend from Wanguri will take this matter up with them and help me to bring some pressure to bear on the federal government to put right the wrong that it has done.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, the member for Stuart, the shadow spokesman on education, made some very serious allegations in relation to Year 10 examinations. He referred specifically to mathematics. He acknowledged that the matter was a very serious one and I view it in the same light. Whilst I have not been able to obtain the information that is necessary to satisfy him this evening, I can assure him that I will obtain that information as quickly as possible and he can ask me a question and I will give an answer during question time.

Mr Speaker, may I just say that, as far as the government is concerned, we are very much aware of the need to ensure that there is integrity and confidentiality in relation to the examination papers. We were aware of the

possibility that some groups of people would try to leak information. In fact, because of the feeling that some people had towards the introduction of examinations, it had been suggested that they would try to leak this information to put the integrity of the examinations at risk. Those people who would even think about that should be condemned. However, bearing that in mind, the government is able to look at that situation and we do have contingency plans. If that did occur, we would introduce a new set of examination papers at very short notice. We are aware that there may be efforts to leak that information, which would put at risk the integrity of the examinations, and we will be looking at that.

The disappointing aspect of all this is that it questions the integrity of the teachers who have been involved in some cases. Before I make any further comment, I would like to check the whole issue, but I would say to the member for Stuart that I take the matter as seriously as he does. I will be examining in detail the issues that he has raised this evening. In fact, I have called for a report to be on my table in the morning covering the procedure that has been followed in setting the examinations.

As far as the computers are concerned, the information is stored on Apple disc, but I can assure members that those particular machines are stand-alone machines and they are not networked in any way. They are under strict security and I assure members that all the papers will also be under strict security. We have done everything we can to ensure that those papers are protected and, as I said, we have contingency plans. If there is any doubt, we can swing those plans into action. I will be looking at the matter further and I will provide the answers to those questions in question time tomorrow.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, the allegations of irregular or illegal procedures taking place at the Alice Springs casino mentioned in questions in the House last week prompted the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to give a well-researched and properly prepared response to the events outlined in the 7.30 Report and the practices of the casino operation.

During the course of the minister's reply, he attempted to discredit Mr Michael Cafe, a former government casino inspector, on the grounds of his political leanings and supposed dissatisfaction with his job. Mr Speaker, I put it to you that the only factors that are relevant in discussing this issue are the facts, and that the issues raised are serious enough to warrant investigation that would make Territorians confident that the casinos are run in a manner that is above reproach. As the minister's response to questions in the House last week was very critical of Mr Cafe, I took the opportunity over the weekend of relaying to Mr Cafe the contents of the minister's reply in the event that he might wish to respond to the minister and defend himself, or even to comment on other aspects of the minister's response.

I have received from Mr Cafe a detailed statement which he has asked me to read into Hansard. His statement notes dates and times, refers to written reports and mentions names, all of which there should be no difficulty in checking. Mr Cafe's record of events appears to contradict many of the statements made by the minister, and I will read Mr Cafe's response verbatim because I believe it is important that the matter is not dismissed.

Thank you for informing me of what was said by Eric Poole in the Northern Territory parliament, 23 and 24 August 1989. I would like you to correct the untruths spoken by the minister for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. The following is the correct sequence of events.

1. I deny that I ever supplied the ABC 7.30 Report with documents.
2. I deny making the photocopies as alleged on 12 December 1988 at 6 am or any other time.
3. For the minister to accuse me of covertly entering the Alice Springs casino on 12 December 1988 at 6 am is deliberately misleading. All government casino inspectors are issued with a door key and Mr Poole ought to be aware that anyone could come or go at any hour of the day or night.
4. To suggest that the 7.30 Report story was manufactured by me because I was a member of the Territory Nationals is nonsense. The illegal acts and improprieties which I complained to Mr Poole about were carried out over a period of approximately 12 months, and I visited Mr Poole on no less than 6 occasions.

On each visit, I stressed to him that these offences were serious and were not being attended to by the staff of the casino's division of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. These irregularities were being ignored by people from the chairman down through the government casino controller through to Mrs Y the senior government inspector, Alice Springs.

5. My last 2 visits to Mr Poole were on 4 November 1988 and 10 November 1988 and on these visits I showed Mr Poole 2 reports: one from Miss C, a government casino inspector, titled 'Blackjack Game 5.11.88. BJ9' and the other report was titled 'Breach of Ministerial Directions Credit Betting', dated 11.11.88.

These reports were read carefully by Mr Poole and afterwards he made the following comments. I thought it was a strange thing for him to say to me. 'The Chairman (of the Commission) has misled and even lied to me concerning a change of licence conditions for the Old Vic Hotel in Darwin. I spoke to Marshall Perron about him and he said be careful what you do, he has probably covered his tracks by now'. Mr Poole then went on to say: 'Mrs Y is a useless bitch and she will be moved'.

6. I told Mr Poole that contrary to what was contained in the report of Miss C, and contrary to what Joe Borg the casino manager at Alice Springs had said, about the cashing of Mr Heavy Gambler's cheques, which he used for gambling on 29 and 30 October 1988, the official banking slip supplied to the government casino inspectors from the 31.10.88 until 5.11.88 showed that these cheques were not handled within the period as claimed by the casino manager, and as stated by the minister in parliament on 23 and 24 August 1989.
7. These cheques had been removed from the casino cash desk by 9.11.88, 0130 hours as indicated by an inspection made by Inspector C of the Alice Springs inspectorate.

The minister, Mr Poole, is telling a lie when he said that I had written up cheque entries concerning Mr Heavy Gambler. The entries he refers to were made by Mr M, the duty government inspector, on the duty pm shift of 30.10.88. I did not work

after 04.30 hours on 30.10.88 and was not aware until 1.11.88 of what had transpired.

However, when I became conversant with the situation, I submitted the report dated 1.11.88, the same report shown to the minister on 10.11.88.

8. The amount in cheques cashed by Mr Heavy Gambler on the night of 29/30.10.88 was \$6000 not \$4000 as stated by the minister in parliament.
9. I refer to the original dishonoured cheques written by Mr Heavy Gambler. These were presented to the casino in exchange for cheque credits on 21.12.87. According to Mr Poole the casino was asked not to bank the first cheque because it would not be met on presentation.

The casino management had already breached the ministerial directions by at least 2 days at that stage. Approximately 3 months later, and only after a complaint by government inspector Mr C and myself, written in the log on 22.3.88, and directed to the senior government inspector in Alice Springs, Mrs Y, the casino then wrote to the people who were involved with the dishonoured cheques about steps that should be taken to honour them.

The date quoted by the minister, ie 7.4.88, as being the date the casino was advised that their application for an extension of time to bank the valueless cheque was denied, was never relayed to the government casino inspectors at Alice Springs.

To the contrary, a letter dated May 1988 was the first and only correspondence received by the government inspectors concerning this application. The reference number of the correspondence was 86/030/11 19.5.88.

10. By 7.6.88, at least 3 offences regarding the passing of valueless cheques had been committed and still the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the minister who had been advised of the situation allowed Joe Borg, the casino manager, to continue on in the manager's role.
11. According to Mr Poole, a meeting was held on 24.1.88 concerning the casino manager's licence. Nothing was made known of these meetings to the government casino inspectors; no notation was made in the daybook at the Alice Springs casino.

I say that this is a pure fabrication by Mr Poole because of the fact that the dishonoured cheques were lying in the casino's cash desk and nothing was mentioned about them until Mr C and myself complained to the senior government inspector, Alice Springs on 29.3.88 - then and only then did any action take place by either the senior government inspector or the casino management.

12. I refer again to the statement made by the minister, where he refers to the casino manager notifying the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission of cheques again being cashed for Mr Heavy Gambler.

If this was ever done, which I doubt, it was only done when Joe Borg and the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission management became aware of my report dated 1.11.88. In this report, Mr Borg lied to me regarding Mr Heavy Gambler's method of funding his gambling for the night of 29/30.10.88.

13. Mr Poole was well aware of the fact that Mr Borg had been untruthful with me when I questioned him as to Mr Heavy Gambler's source of funds. He knew because he had read my report dated 1.11.88.
14. In all, 7 cheques were cashed by Mr Borg and casino staff for Mr Heavy Gambler over a period of 11 months. No action was ever taken against Mr Borg to my knowledge for carrying out this practice. When I raised my concerns about impropriety at the casino with you in March 1988, you advised me to speak directly to Mr Poole about my concerns. I did this on no less than 6 occasions and, on completion of my last meeting with Mr Poole, he said: 'I will attend to these matters and get to the bottom of it'.

Prior to my final meeting with the minister, several attempts were made to discredit me by senior management. I realised that the minister was not in control of the situation and steps would be taken to get me out of the commission. Rather than spending the rest of my life fighting with them, I chose to resign.

15. I recall quite clearly the minister telling me that he would not interfere with the running of the commission, irrespective of what happened, and it was obvious nothing was going to change so when I was approached by Mr Rochester of the 7.30 Report, I volunteered certain information.

Michael Cafe.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Under standing order 256, will the honourable member table the document which he has read out?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, as you can see from the statement that I have just read from Mr Cafe, the comments made are so divergent from the statement made by the minister that the matter has to be resolved. It is possible that the minister is correct and that Mr Cafe, for some unknown reason, has made a conscious and very serious decision deliberately to mislead the House with the statement which I have just read. It is also possible that the claims made by Mr Cafe are correct. It would seem to me that this could be verified by a close examination of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission's records. If the claims made by Mr Cafe are correct, it is possible that the minister is unaware of what is going on in the commission or that the minister has misled the House.

It would seem to me to be a pointless exercise to continue the argument on the floor of this House and to spend the rest of our time playing 20 questions about who is right and who is wrong. The number of people involved, the complexity of the issues and the importance of the matter really

requires that a special investigation be set up to look into the allegations and report back to this House. It is also possible that the breaches in themselves may not have been illegal but demonstrate a level of impropriety that has been concealed by management, the inspectorate and/or the minister himself. Such a shadow should not hang over the operation of the Alice Springs casino and every step should be taken to clarify exactly what has happened, whether there was any impropriety and what should be done about it from this point on.

In conclusion, I would say that this is one of those sagas that ought to be put to bed very quickly because it has the potential to do a great deal of damage to the gaming industry as well as the individuals involved and, right at this moment, the Territory economy just does not need that.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it is not often that I wholeheartedly concur with the member for Stuart, but the matters that he raised tonight are important to all Territorians. The examination system must be beyond reproach. I appreciate the minister's statement tonight. He feels that the allegations are extremely serious and he will inform the House on what measures are taken to protect the integrity of the examinations.

The member for Stuart raised the allegation that classroom teachers have actually been involved in the setting of examination papers. If that is the case, the only course of action is to appoint a person, who is not a classroom teacher but who is a competent mathematician, to draw up a new paper along the lines of the original papers. I have no problem with its being similar. In the old days, part of the students' preparation for examinations was answering the questions set in past papers. I have no problem with the idea that the students should have some trial papers of a similar nature so that they can be aware of what they are up against. That is only common sense.

However, if teachers who are actually teaching the course in the classroom have been setting the examination, to my way of thinking, that is definitely not on. I am pleased the minister says that there are contingency plans to thwart any attempts that may be made to sabotage the system. I find the very thought that anybody would do that despicable and deplorable. However, I dare say there are many people who oppose the examinations, and that brings me to a pamphlet which is being circulated in Alice Springs by the Teachers Federation. It is certainly worth looking at and needs a reply. It talks about Year 10 assessment and about moderation being the right alternative. 'What you need to know about assessment at Year 10'. The claim is that 'external moderation' - at least they have the word 'external' in it - is the way to go. I could talk for a very long time on this topic, but I do not have time this evening to do it real justice. However, I would like to put a few questions forward about integrity. Even as the exams must have integrity to gain respect in the community and the confidence of the community, so must the moderation have integrity.

I am sure that this document has gone around the traps pretty well and most members will have read a copy. If they have not, they should be able to get one from someone in their electorate. It talks about English and mathematics. Under 'English', it says: 'Year 10 students maintain a folio of work ...'. Mr Speaker, what would happen if a student happened to lose his folio of work or if a teacher happened to have mislaid some of it? If a student has intelligent parents, wouldn't it be fairly easy for the student to get assistance from them in making up the folio? On the other hand, a dedicated student might be a bit of a plodder but turn out quality work and build up a pretty good folio ...

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I hear the member for Stuart saying, as he leaves the Chamber, that that is the point. That may be the reward for slow plodding effort. However, I really think that the people who employ others want employees who can get the goods together pretty quickly, and that is one of the key things which examinations determine. In a 2- or 3-hour examination, I believe - and as honourable members know, I have been a teacher and I have been through the system - that a student has passed the examination or failed, not in that 2 or 3 hours, but on the work that has been done over the year. I believe that 2 or 3 hours is certainly adequate to demonstrate a competency or otherwise in being able to handle the subject matter.

One of the strongest points of the examination method, which moderation does not come even close to, is the fact that, for an examination, you have to get it all together at the one time in the one place. The entire subject has to be studied, revised and brought together as a whole. At the moment, as I have said before, we have a system where, effectively, a student can learn a unit of work, polish it, be tested on it or produce a moderation of his various folio articles, and then forget about it. He then proceeds to another unit and polishes that up. It is a learn-and-forget situation and, at the end of the year, that student does not have a very cohesive grasp of the relationship between the various aspects.

On occasion, I have told people that it is a bit like a theatrical production. Take the example of a production of, say, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*. At the first lesson, you teach the first chorus and the associated acting. At the second lesson, you teach the next song and the associated acting. You work through the entire opera in blocks like that. At the end of 20 lessons, you say: 'Right kids. There you are. You have done the *Pirates of Penzance*'. But, the whole exercise would be pretty pointless if you did not go back over it, revising and polishing it up as a whole.

I have heard teachers say: 'Oh, but we do have revision'. Mr Speaker, what is the point of having revision if you are not going to have a live show? When you have prepared your production of Gilbert and Sullivan, you say: 'We really should do a little bit more than this. We should have a full dress rehearsal'. Having a dress rehearsal, without a public performance, really does not prove much. Anybody who has been involved with these things with students or adults knows that dress rehearsals are normally such abysmal flops that the person who is trying to put the show together finishes up tearing his hair out because the performance will not gel. However, an audience really seems to draw the best out of the participants. And that is what a public examination does: it brings the best out of students and shows what they are capable of, especially when, dare I say it, there is a thing called pass or fail and, if you do not pass, you do not go on.

I welcome these exams, but I still say that they are not enough by any means. I hope this will be only the start of a whole process. Those examinations will be of some use to students who are leaving after Year 10 to enter the work force. If it were a full intermediate exam, as it was called in South Australia and under which the Territory operated at one time, I believe that our students from Year 10 would go into the work force well-equipped. Employers would know that the students who had passed those examinations knew how to study because they had demonstrated that they had grasped an entire course. That is the sort of training which the students are missing out on badly today. It demonstrates their ability and nobody can ever take it away from them. I know a person, who is not so young now, who

presented his intermediate certificate to a prospective employer a couple of months ago. That was welcomed by the employer who felt that there was integrity attached to it.

We must have integrity in the whole education system. I can think of many ways - and I have not really thought all that hard - whereby I could rort the moderation system. I do not believe that it measures the sort of things which we need to measure. Certainly, it does not train the student in grasping the totality of a course. Moderation can never do that and it is also quite possible, without too much imagination, to rort the system. One could cheat quite effectively by all sorts of means. I am sure that honourable members could think of ways and means by which a student could enhance his results under a moderation system.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS

Strip Shows on Licensed Premises

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 611 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to prohibit the use or employment of persons appearing naked, semi-naked or wearing see-through clothing in any licensed premises or public 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 the Speaker and members of the Legislation Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that: (1) they are opposed to striptease shows and the use or employment of persons naked, semi-naked or wearing see-through clothing in licensed premises or other public places; (2) the above said are morally degrading and reinforce the perception of men/women as sex subjects; and (3) sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault and alcoholism are common occurrences in the Northern Territory and these shows further exacerbate the problem. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory will legislate: (1) to prohibit the use or employment of persons in any capacity appearing naked, semi-naked or wearing see-through clothing; and (2) to prohibit all forms of entertainment described as striptease shows or strip acts, lingerie shows, erotic dance acts, demonstrations of wrestling in mud, jelly or other substances in a naked or semi-naked state, or any entertainment of a lewd or indecent manner in any licensed premises or other public places in the Northern Territory. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Fire Service in Katherine

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1040 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to maintain the Katherine Fire Station on a 24-hour basis. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in parliament assembled, we the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory do humbly petition you to retain the Katherine Fire Station as a 24-hour facility staffed by fully-trained fire personnel.

STATEMENT

Filming in Chamber

Mr SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that Channel 8 has been allowed back in the Chamber to continue filming the library footage which was curtailed yesterday as a result of the censure motion.

MOTION
Airline Pilots' Dispute

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- (1) express its concern at the damage caused to the Northern Territory economy by the airline pilots' strike;
- (2) note the damage caused to remote communities, the tourist industry and industry generally; and
- (3) call on the federal government and the Northern Territory government to commence developing short- and long-term strategies to lessen the direct impact of this strike and its long-term consequences.

Mr Speaker, may I say at the outset that I move this motion in a spirit of bipartisanship. It is certainly not a political point-scoring exercise. It is moved as a result of the frustrations that members on this side of the House and, hopefully, members on the other side of the House feel at the present situation regarding the airlines. We have a situation where the prolonged airline strike is starting to have disastrous consequences for the Northern Territory economy. Like most members, I have received phone calls from people who are affected. Of course, when we think about the effects, we think first of all about the tourist industry and the passengers who are stranded and then we think of the passengers and the tourist operators who cannot get here. Quite clearly, as time progresses that will cause both an enormous short-term problem and a longer-term problem.

The short-term problem is such that I understand that many tour operators are now down 80% on what they expected to be achieving at this time. This is the busiest part of the tourist season and the time when they generate their cash flows to help them get over the quieter time in the wet season. They are down 80%. They are starting to lay off staff and, of course, that has a multiplier effect right through the economy.

However, it is not only the tour operators and the direct tour industry itself which are being hit, and that is the problem. Already, a major conference which was to be held in Darwin, the Master Plumbers Conference, has been cancelled. 150 people were to be hosted by the Beaufort. Our major hotels have appallingly low occupancy rates. I understand, for example, that the Alice Springs Sheraton, in what should be its peak season, has had an occupancy rate this week of about 9%. That has a direct implication for the taxpayers of the Northern Territory who are financially underpinning the Yulara, the Alice Springs Sheraton and the Darwin Sheraton Hotels.

As I said, not only tourist operations are being hit. The horticultural industry is also being affected. The owner of the Acacia Hills herb farm has expressed his concern on ABC radio. I have also had phone calls from people involved in the export of mud crabs to the south. Those people are being seriously affected and they are not the only ones. The other day, the proprietor of a sandwich shop gave me a serve. She told me that, if the strike continued until the end of this week, she would have to move out and live in a tent. That may be an overdramatic statement of the effect of the airline pilots' strike, but it certainly demonstrates that the strike is having a widespread effect on the Northern Territory economy. The strike is also having serious effects on towns such as Nhulunbuy, Alyangula, Angurugu

and Umbakumba which rely on a regular air transport system for their fresh foods and perishables.

I believe that it is justifiable for this Assembly to take some time today to debate this matter and to express its concern and frustration at the present situation. I accept that there is very little that this Assembly or this government can do to reduce the impacts. I believe, however, that on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory and as their elected representatives, we have an obligation to ensure that we express our feelings very strongly indeed on this matter. That is why the opposition has moved this motion.

I personally feel very angry at the selfish attitude taken by the airline pilots. Other people may want to blame others but, for me, the problem lies fairly and squarely with the airline pilots. Their claim is outrageous. No federal government, whatever its political complexion, could allow such a claim to proceed. It would bring the whole industrial relations system down around our necks. Let there be no doubt that the stakes in this dispute are very high indeed. Unfortunately, ordinary people and ordinary small business operators throughout the Northern Territory community and throughout the Australian community are bearing the brunt of the very selfish stance being taken by the airline pilots.

Mr Speaker, the third paragraph of this motion calls on the federal government and the Northern Territory government to 'commence developing short- and long-term strategies to lessen the direct impact of this strike and its long-term consequences'. This is not a political point-scoring exercise and I recognise that the Northern Territory government - and the federal government - for that matter - is very limited in terms of what it can do. We have had extensive consultations with the affected industries and they realise that. There is no easy answer and there is no easy way in which the government can become involved.

We toyed with the idea of a scheme similar to the drought relief scheme. It is very difficult, however, to come up with a proposition that covers acts of pilots as against acts of God which are covered by the drought relief scheme. We also toyed with the idea of a self-insurance scheme to guard against unexpected eventualities such as this but, once again, such a concept would be very difficult to implement. Obviously, very high premiums would be required to provide cover for any event which might lead to a significant downturn in business. The major role available to the government, particularly in the Northern Territory, is in bringing together the affected industries to discuss the problem and any actions which they might be able to take. One possibility relates to legal action against the pilots for loss of income and that is a matter which should be investigated by the Northern Territory government.

As far as possible in the Northern Territory, a united approach is required. The Tourist Commission, the government, the tourist associations and the tourist operators should agree on how to handle situations of a critical nature such as this. Everybody involved needs to be saying the same things. At the moment, that is not happening. It is quite understandable that the attitude among those directly affected seems to be one of every man and woman for himself or herself. The problem, however, is very serious. People are already being laid off, particularly in the tourist industry. We have not only a short-term problem, but a longer-term problem as well. That longer-term problem exists throughout Australia and it relates to confidence in the tourist industry, confidence in our industrial system and confidence

that people can move to and from their desired destinations. I believe that the strike will create a long-term problem in these areas.

The Northern Territory government, at least in a limited way, has an opportunity to address this problem through the activities of the Tourist Commission. I would be interested to hear the Minister for Tourism's comment on this, but I believe that the activities of the Tourist Commission, particularly in its overseas offices, must be directed towards damage control. I understand that the Australian Tourist Commission, in its overseas operations, has changed its emphasis towards damage control and I would like an assurance from the Minister for Tourism that everything possible is being done overseas to minimise the damage that has been caused by this strike and to reassure people that the Northern Territory will remain an attractive destination in the future. Much as we like living in the Northern Territory, we would like visitors to choose to stay here rather than being forced to stay here as a result of the loss of air transport services.

Mr Speaker, I do not want this to be a long speech. My point is quite simple. It is important that this Assembly take the time to speak out on behalf of those people in the Northern Territory who are affected and to raise the concerns that people in the Northern Territory have on this issue. The motion has been framed in the hope that it will gain bipartisan support. Obviously, if that occurs, this Assembly would want to make its feelings very plain to the airline pilots. I urge all members to support this motion.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, the government certainly shares the very great concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the results, both short term and long term, of this very unwelcome disputation. I have attempted to look at the problems as they have developed over the last month in order to see where the answers might lie and, quite frankly, we have 3 different parties going down 3 different tracks, not even recognising at this stage where the others are. Whether or not that is an indictment of our industrial relations system is something that needs to be examined.

In terms of trying to find a short-term solution, certainly government has been doing quite a bit. The Minister for Industries and Development, the Minister for Tourism and myself have been endeavouring to find some short-term solutions. Some of those of course lie in our fairly extensive general aviation capacity. The charter operators have been able to handle some of the interstate loads for people in dire straits. Obviously, they have only a limited number of seats. However, they have also been able to handle some of the intra-Territory travel.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned Groote Eylandt and a number of other places which depend almost entirely on air services for their fresh fruit, vegetables and so on. Ansett NT, which holds the Territory RPT licence over those areas, has allowed any charter operator to fly over its existing routes, and rightly so. Not only that, it is cooperating by assisting with bookings and handling of those aircraft. Air North is servicing the Gove and Groote route principally at the moment. Obviously, all charter operators are absolutely flat out endeavouring to meet the demand.

It is timely for us now to think about some of our restricted access to transport avenues. About 6 months ago, we held a forum in Darwin to discuss that very matter in relation to the horticultural industry. We brought the transport people and the horticulturists together in an effort to get them to understand each other's requirements and demands etc. Whilst lessons were

learned from that, I dare say there are still many more to be learned. In respect of horticultural products such as melons, a road freight system has been put in place by McGowans and perhaps others to transport produce to market.

What is required - and I would plead with horticulturists to get their act together - is a different method of preparation. One of the things that came out of the seminar 6 months ago is that each of the 2 parties needed to understand the other's requirements. There has been a reluctance by some operators to properly prepare their product so that it would be suitable for road transport.

In respect of many other goods, the road freight people are certainly having a heyday. The overnight express operators are handling much of the general goods requirements. Except for the isolated communities, the Territory is dependent almost entirely on road transport for its general commodities and goods. It is fortunate that at least that area is not being impacted on.

When it comes to tourism and many of its other industries, the Territory is heavily reliant on air freight. Much of our cargo is freighted in containers on the regular national airline system. We are exposed in that our only alternative is road transport. Shipping services to and from the Territory are still extremely weak and we need to develop those in the long term, along with a rail system, to provide an alternative transport option.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that, as far as tourism is concerned, this could not have occurred at a worse time. The damage will be quite significant and one hopes that not too many operators will suffer irreparable damage. However, there are operators, particularly those new to the industry, who have not yet been able to develop their assets to a suitable strength. They will be particularly exposed in terms of high mortgage payments, repayments on equipment etc.

In regard to other interim solutions, it has been mentioned that international carriers were able to pick up passengers for routes between ports at which they currently call. There is a need to extend that to allow international carriers to cover whatever legs they can during down periods. In Darwin, that would be particularly helpful as long as the airlines can solve the crewing problems. Singapore Airlines, for example, has planes on the ground overnight, as does Merpati. It would be helpful for those airlines to have landing rights or access to other ports where they do not currently have them. I am aware of a group of local business people who are negotiating with Merpati for a charter operation to and from Cairns. That would provide them with access to the greater frequency of other international airlines to routes south. The proposal is to fly F28s twice a week to Cairns. That is gaining the support of the department and we are busy negotiating with the federal Department of Transport to gain the required landing approvals.

In the longer term, what we need to do is encourage the federal government to allow greater access by international airlines in terms of picking up of passengers internally. I think 'interlining' is the term that is used for it.

Mr Bell: Do you support the motion, Fred?

Mr FINCH: Entirely. I think I clarified that I do. I am trying to offer constructive suggestions, as the Leader of the Opposition called upon members to do, which might enable us to find common ground solutions for all parties.

I think that interlining or utilisation of overseas airline operators would be helpful in the long term. It would also provide some additional competition when we get to deregulation down the line.

When we start looking at some of the longer-term solutions in terms of deregulation, if we are to open the skies to increasing competition it is important to be sure that Qantas has the opportunity to gain strength. It is currently seeking a great capital injection, and correctly so. That can be provided very readily by privatisation and that is a separate debate for a separate day. However, it is no use us finding solutions unless there are appropriate levels of support to make them work. My suggestion is to open up the skies to provide greater access to overseas airlines to various ports and not simply restrict them to certain ports with limited numbers. That would be helpful but, for the sake of Qantas, it would need to go hand in hand with an ability for Qantas to compete.

With regard to the industrial relations system, one really has to sit back and ask where the problems lie in a system that does not allow parties to get together. I am aware that the commission is meeting today with a view to reviewing all agreements in the aviation industry. Some people, particularly in the general aviation area, have expressed their feeling that they would not want to see their current status change. Of course, if it were to change, the results would be catastrophic because it is those small operators, the general aviation people, who are providing the limited amount of air transport that is available at the moment.

The Leader of the Opposition expressed concern about workers being laid off. That is already happening, as members are well aware, with those ancillary workers operating facilities at the airport. They are not direct airline staff, but I am aware of ancillary workers who have been told to find other jobs. Thus, the rot is starting to set in already. Airline people themselves are being looked after currently but I understand from comments by the airline industry that that would need to be reviewed at the end of this week.

The conference that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned is just 1 of a number. In fact, a conference involving some 300 or 400 engineers and their spouses from all over Australia was to be held today at Yulara. It has also had to be cancelled.

As far as putting the blame entirely on the shoulders of the pilots goes, I do not side with the pilots over their actions and the way they have gone about this dispute. Apparently, they started putting their plan together some 6 months ago and have put their house together so they can hold out for at least a month. That is my concern. They are ready for a month's stoppage. The Prime Minister has gone down a trail on which he cannot turn back. The airline companies have indicated that they will not budge and there are probably a number of reasons for that. One reason would be that they are trying to organise themselves for deregulation next year. If they can get themselves re-established on contract arrangements, that would probably be in their interest.

One has to sit back and understand, at least to some extent, the point of view of the pilots. They look at overseas conditions and overseas pressures in relation to recruitment. I understand that some Australian pilots presently on salaries of \$75 000 have been approached by overseas concerns with offers in the vicinity of \$200 000. There are phenomenal differences in remuneration and that is something to which there is no answer. I guess we

simply have to rely on people's commitment to this country and to their families here and, hopefully, the great majority of pilots will stick it out and stay in Australia. If they do not, we will be in a worse bind than we are now. Already there is a great shortage of pilots, and they are high demand operators.

The same applies to aircraft engineers. Australia is really in a pickle there with a 30% shortage which, again, is the result of a disparity between the remuneration in Australia and overseas. Aircraft engineers from Qantas and Ansett have been recruited by overseas companies. That has brought us to the stage where much of what is virtually routine work on aircraft has to be done in Europe, Bangkok and elsewhere. That is not in the nation's interest but the problem has been festering for a couple of years with no positive solution. Appropriate training and appropriate conditions of service need to be put in place.

It is clear that these people cannot be paid more unless there is some return. This is where there is room for people to move in terms of employment agreements which offer trade-offs against higher salaries. I am told by the airline people that some of our flight officers spend only about 8 hours per week behind the stick and that is pretty ridiculous when you think about it. Aircraft themselves have very low utilisation rates given the down time, maintenance checks and repair work. I think that aircraft are in the air less than 50% of the time. There is a very high demand on pilots and engineers per aircraft. What is needed is room to move with industrial agreements that will enable the airline companies to achieve greater productivity from the higher rates that, in the end, I am sure they will have to pay.

The sooner we can find the solution, the better. The damage is quite phenomenal and I believe that the Northern Territory is affected more than anywhere else in Australia. I think that the damage to some businesses will be repairable. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that the pilots ought to cop the full flak. I do not agree with that. There are 3 parties involved: the airlines, the pilots and the Prime Minister, who jumped in rather early in the piece. I am not sure that he should have declared war quite as early as he did. However, all 3 parties need to get together and try to find a way out because, quite simply, without it, we will all suffer in one way or another.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of both the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Transport and Works in relation to this motion. Of course, I rise to support it strongly. To set the record straight, obviously there is a high degree of bipartisanship in this debate, but a slight shift of emphasis between ourselves and the government. It is quite clear that it is important for members on both sides of the fence to support the motion that the Leader of the Opposition has moved, basically because of the extent to which, in the terms of the motion, this dispute is affecting life in the Northern Territory, particularly economic life.

The Leader of the Opposition and the honourable minister gave a clear indication of the effects of the dispute. For those of us who do not live in Darwin and who have been travelling by charter aircraft from outlying places to Darwin for these sittings, the effect of the changes is very obvious. I draw to the attention of members as a simple example the circumstances of the hire car operators who collected the Alice Springs members from Monday's charter flight from Alice Springs. It was a matter of serious concern to me and, I am sure, an even greater source of concern to the operators, that that job on Monday was the first job they had had since the previous Thursday,

despite the fact that it is the height of the tourist season. Dollars tied up in vehicles and wages have to be paid. Those expenditures are not being serviced by income.

The effects of the strike can be gauged quite informally in Darwin and elsewhere. It seemed to me on Monday morning that I could have just about fired a shotgun down Mitchell Street without hitting a soul. Usually, during August, there are visitors from everywhere sightseeing, backpacking and so forth. At present, those people are simply not here. Much of the bus trade has been curtailed because many of the packages that are sold involve bus travel in one direction and aircraft in the other. That is certainly the case in Darwin and Alice Springs.

I also draw attention to the plight of the constituents of the member for Nhulunbuy and the member for Arnhem. In their corner of the world, as the Minister for Transport and Works indicated, there are no alternatives to air transport. You cannot drive from Nhulunbuy to Alyangula unless you happen to have an amphibious vehicle. Many such issues need to be considered.

I would like one of the government speakers in this debate to address the question of the impact of the airline strike in budgetary terms. Quite obviously, the government faces possible exposure in relation to Yulara, the Alice Springs Sheraton and the Darwin Sheraton. It is important for this Assembly to have some idea of the impact of the strike on the obligations met by the public purse. There was reference in the budget statement and subsequent comments to the fact that support for Yulara and the Sheratons has been reduced by \$10m. I am wondering about the impact of the strike in that regard. Will we still be able to afford to cut \$10m? I could make several more comments about our exposure in Yulara but I will leave them until a later date because, at this stage, we are talking about the specific impact of the airline pilots' strike.

I thank the Minister for Transport and Works for his contribution to this debate. It was obviously a well-informed one. In an interjection across the Chamber, the Leader of Government Business referred to the minister as Biggles simply because, along with me, he shares the insight of having a private pilot's licence. I thought that was a bit below the belt. I cannot imagine that the Leader of Government Business would have been directing the interjection towards me.

Mr Ede: Have you had an offer of recruitment from Australian Airlines or Ansett? \$100 000 per year?

Mr BELL: Unfortunately, in an aeroplane of the type I can fly, it would take about 5 days to get from here to Adelaide. I am not in the race.

The nub of the comments made by the Minister for Transport and Works was that, because airline pilots are in demand elsewhere around the world, we cannot afford to take a rigid line with them. He took a swipe at the Prime Minister for dealing with this dispute in a cavalier fashion. I think it is worth while spending a few minutes talking about those issues because it is in exactly this area that the opposition's approach differs from that of the Northern Territory government and its federal colleagues, who have basically rejected centralised wage fixing. They have rejected and constantly criticised the constructive efforts of the federal Labor government and the trade union movement to arrange an organised wage fixing system which, until the recent dispute, was characterised by a degree of industrial harmony rarely seen in this country's history. Obviously, a conservative government in the

Northern Territory cannot afford to say that the federal Labor government has anything right.

The plain fact of the matter is that the demands being put forward by the airline pilots are so far out of court that the Prime Minister must be supported in his determination to see this dispute resolved within a sensible industrial relations system. That should be supported by both sides of this House. I do not think that it is good enough simply to say that, because the airline pilots could obtain \$200 000 a year if they fly elsewhere, they should be able to hold this country to ransom. The pilots concerned are employees of the major airlines. They are obviously highly qualified employees and they are obviously people in whom the public has to place a great deal of trust. Nonetheless, like others who are also well qualified and in whom the public places a great deal of trust - and I cannot think of too many employees in whom the public does not place a great deal of trust in one way or another - there is no reason for placing them outside the wage-fixing system. I believe that this Assembly has to give assent to the principle that this dispute should be resolved within the framework of a coherent wage-fixing system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I conclude by reiterating my 2 main points. Firstly, it is important for this Assembly to adopt a bipartisan determination to see this dispute resolved. Secondly, I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that the dispute is resolved within the context of a coherent and sensible national wage-fixing policy.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it was unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition, who often chastises us for not giving sufficient notice of matters to be introduced into this House, chose to give us such short notice that he wished to debate this matter. The first time we received notice of his motion was in the middle of question time.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr PERRON: Did you say that it was not a motion?

Mr Ede: I said it is a motherhood motion, something which we can all get together on.

Mr Coulter: Well, why didn't we?

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to properly prepare material for this debate. However, I have prepared an amendment which is now being circulated. There is a great deficiency in the Leader of the Opposition's motion ...

Mr Smith: This makes you a laughing stock.

Mr PERRON: ... and that is that it avoids the issue of the cause and the resolution of the dispute. The motion says, in effect: 'The dispute is happening. Isn't that terrible! What can we do about accommodating its effects?' It adopts a head in the sand approach. It totally ignores the causes of the strike and what can be done about them.

Mr Smith: It has happened because there are a number of greedy pilots out there.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that there are a number of greedy pilots out there. That is very interesting. I can recall other occasions - and some of them have been raised in this House - when various groups have gone on strike or imposed industrial bans which affected the livelihoods of people and inconvenienced them. Obviously, the effects were nowhere near as bad as those of this strike, which is causing disruption, heartache, pain and loss of jobs across this country. It seems to me, however, that to the opposition it is not a matter of principle but a matter of the size of the hurt. If the whole nation is hurting, the opposition believes that we should condemn those who are on strike. I am not saying that we should not condemn those who are on strike. I am merely suggesting that the same principle should apply when another group of employees goes on strike, causing great discomfort, loss of jobs and enormous inconvenience to the public on a smaller scale. On such occasions, the honourable members opposite are usually very quick to defend the workers' right to strike.

Mr Smith: When did it happen last?

Mr PERRON: The union movement fought for that right for a very long time. Honourable members opposite would know much better than I the history of that struggle for the right to strike. In the minds of unionists, it is an absolute and immutable right. Everybody must have it. I wonder whether honourable members have perhaps bent their principles a little in this case simply because the workers involved earn a lot of money. We all have to acknowledge that.

Mr Smith: Look at the text of the motion.

Mr PERRON: The pilots are a highly professional and highly paid group. I guess that does not help them gather much sympathy from the community or, indeed, from any of us, for creating such enormous disruption. No doubt, the disruption has already resulted in some loss of employment and it may result in the loss of lives in some situations.

In response to those parts of the motion which seek action from the Northern Territory government to alleviate the effects, I can say that we have acted already and are considering further things that we may be able to do. We have established hotlines for tourists seeking information and assistance and the tourist bureaus are open 7 days a week. We have also established phone numbers so that primary producers can obtain advice and access to any coordinated transportation arrangements which are available. We are assessing the number of schoolchildren interstate to see whether we can prevail on certain parties who have control of transportation to assist them.

Mr Speaker, before I go further, I would like to state on the record that I do not support the action of the pilots on this occasion. I think that they have reacted much too strongly. I think they could have made their point in other ways. Even if they had insisted on industrial disputation, they could have applied pressure, if that was their aim, in a million different ways. They could even have escalated it progressively over a period of time if they were not being responded to. I do not necessarily agree with those tactics, but that is an opportunity that they had.

In fact, they started that way with their 9 to 5 working ban, but it seems to me that the skills of the Prime Minister, who formerly had a reputation as a great negotiator and settler of impossible disputes, have somehow slipped. There is absolutely no question in anybody's mind, and commentators in southern media are making this comment, that the Prime Minister's intervention has made this dispute considerably worse.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr PERRON: Honourable members opposite know full well, because they have made this point in the past, that you do not settle an industrial dispute with the politics of brinkmanship. I understand that the Prime Minister has publicly questioned the degree of skill needed by pilots and has questioned their commitment to their country, should they seek to leave for overseas to take up a job that pays more money. He has called them greedy, and he has talked about 'being at war'. Mr Speaker, are these the words of a man who is an ace negotiator, a man who would like to see himself as an international champion at settling very difficult disputes? I think that he has done fairly poorly in this instance because this dispute is really between the pilots and their employers.

I recall seeing the representative of the Pilots Federation on television a few nights ago, trying to get the message across to the media that what his organisation wanted to do was to negotiate with the employers. The pilots had made an ambit claim for a 30% pay increase, but what they were seeking was the ability to negotiate with their employers on increased wages. Of course, under the ACTU/federal government accord, that is impossible. The ACTU, which sadly has assumed the status virtually of a de facto government in this country, has made a pact with the federal government on behalf of all Australians and determined that people will abide by a particular system or get naught - that is, of course, unless they happen to be executives, judges, politicians or others who can refer matters to some tribunal or other.

There was also a suggestion that a solution to this dispute might be to let the pilots go to the tribunal which determines the salaries of judges and politicians. While they are at it, they might get a \$30 000 stamp allowance because the federal Remuneration Tribunal is being pretty generous with taxpayers' money these days. It may sympathetically consider the plight of the pilots and their claim.

That is where the problem is in this dispute. It is in the inflexible system which says that one cannot go outside the system. One cannot negotiate employment conditions with one's employer nor vary the employment conditions that one has with the employer, reach an agreement and get on with the job. It seems to me that that is what the pilots are trying to do.

Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

- (3) note that the current crisis is a direct result of Australia's over-regulated labour market and the rigid application of an inflexible wages accord imposed by the federal government in its desperation to conceal the ineffectiveness of its current economic policies;
- (4) condemn the federal government for its failure to move constructively to alleviate the problems caused for the Territory community and for Territory businesses and families by the pilots' strike; and
- (5) call on the federal government to immediately recognise the particular problems which the Territory faces as a consequence of the pilots' strike and put in place measures to overcome these problems as a matter of priority.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory and Tasmania are probably the 2 areas in Australia that are suffering most as a result of this strike for the obvious reason that we do not have the alternative transportation systems which are available within the states, in particular the ability to move goods by rail. Whilst Tasmania no doubt has that ability within its borders, it could hardly run anything into Victoria.

I urge honourable members to support this amendment. I would like to hear their views, particularly on the role that the Prime Minister has played in aggravating this dispute by threatening people. It seems to me that his most recent threat was to the Qantas pilots. I have not followed this dispute very closely in the media. I am not sure whether the Qantas pilots, who are at present alleviating some of the problem by flying people back and forwards across this country, have issued any threats about pulling out themselves. However, I understand that the Prime Minister has now threatened the Qantas pilots. This man is supposedly trying to settle this dispute. Perhaps he should facilitate the Pilots Federation being able to talk to its employers and see if the 2 groups cannot come to some arrangement.

Mr Speaker, my amendment mentions an over-regulated labour market. Could I add to that an over-regulated airline market? Why is it that we have to put up with a situation where there are hundreds of thousands of empty plane seats in planes flying across this country every year because of this monopoly on domestic air carriage? We are supposedly advocating saving the environment and using transportation efficiently yet we allow a situation of absolutely massive waste in the transportation of people, not only in and out of Australia but across Australia.

That is an aside, Mr Speaker, to the major point that I am making. The Leader of the Opposition's motion is a 'head in the sand' motion. It does not address the issues. It simply whinges that we are being affected and asks why the Territory and Commonwealth governments cannot do something about our problems. I would rather that the Assembly called on the federal government to do something about the strike and its causes.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise today to place on record my comments with regard to the airline strike and to support the Chief Minister's amendment to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. There is no doubt at all that this airline strike is causing enormous problems for industry in the Northern Territory. We are all aware of the problems to the tourist industry and the numbers of people who are stranded in the Territory and around the country by this airline strike, not only visitors to the Territory but Territorians who need to travel within Australia and within the Territory. There are real problems associated with that.

The motion from the Leader of the Opposition refers to remote communities. I assume he means that the Territory is a remote community. All communities in the Territory are affected by this. Darwin is a remote community in terms of the country as a whole. From Sydney, it is so easy to hop in a car and be in Melbourne or Brisbane in 8 or 10 hours. From the Territory, it is a 3- or 4-day trip. Down south, people can decide to travel from one city to another because it is only an overnight trip. That is something that we cannot do.

It is very important to note that the major cause of the dispute is the rigidity of the wages accord. It is not that there is no scope for certain conditions to be met as a part of the accord. However, the clear picture that

has been presented over the last few years is that, once an agreement has been reached between the ACTU and the government, between Bill Kelty and Paul Keating, once that deal has been struck, there is very little room to move. It is that sort of rigidity that is referred to and that the Chief Minister is highlighting in his amendment to the motion.

In my view, the Industrial Relations Commission is in an unenviable situation. It either ratifies what has already been agreed between Kelty and Keating or is seen to be disrupting the accord. In those circumstances, it is very difficult for the commission to move. It has very little scope to take any action because the agreement has already been reached in large part. It leaves very little room for individual unions or employers to negotiate agreements suitable to their own workplaces. I recognise that that is a part of the overall social agenda of the Labor Party in that it wants to equalise people right across the board. It does not like to see tall poppies. It does not like to see anybody receive more than the other. Therefore, it has made the system very rigid so that, eventually, people will be brought to one level.

Mr Speaker, I had the misfortune - and I have to call it that - of travelling with Qantas recently and suffering a fairly long delay and disruption because of problems with the Qantas aircraft. Qantas, which once had a very good name in Australia and internationally, has lost much of its credibility in the last few years. On arriving in London, we were 24 hours late. Our luggage was left in Singapore and all sorts of strange things had happened to us. The people on the British Airways desk said: 'You must have been travelling with Qantas'. That was their first reaction. If those things happened to you, you were on Qantas. Qantas is having problems because it is not able to offer the packages that it considers appropriate for its employees. It needs those packages to retain its employees and to improve its services. The Prime Minister has told Qantas that it must not pay more to its employees. As a consequence, Qantas aircraft engineers have left for overseas employment.

Qantas has been forced to contract much of its servicing to the Irish airlines based in Shannon because it could not keep enough employees to carry out that servicing in Australia. Only a few years ago, Qantas was servicing aircraft from all over the world and earning foreign currency in that process. It is no longer in that position. It requires 600 additional aircraft engineers just to maintain its own fleet. The Irish servicing group was in fact able to offer far more money than Qantas and the former employees of Qantas are going there and to other airline companies around the world. They are not staying in Australia. They are going elsewhere because they can earn more. Under the accord and the requirements of the Prime Minister, Qantas is unable to offer sufficient money to keep its staff.

The Northern Territory is facing very severe problems. In the last few days, a large number of people who live in my electorate have phoned me personally and have phoned my electorate office to indicate that they could not get their children home from school, mainly from Queensland because that is the state where holidays are about to be taken in the next week or so by children who have not been home for 10 weeks. If they cannot get home now, they will not be home for 20 weeks. Their problem is that it would take 3 to 4 days to get them home by road and 3 to 4 days to get them back, and they have less than 2 weeks off school. It is crazy to think of that as an alternative even though it is possibly the only alternative at present.

The producers who are trying to get their goods interstate are unable to move them because there is nothing available in the way of air freight which is the only suitable transport for much of the goods that are produced in the Northern Territory. If they arrive in interstate capitals in anything less than top condition, the edge the Northern Territory has on providing good produce at the right time will be lost.

I spoke earlier of the tourist industry. We are all aware of the enormous damage that is being caused to that industry and to people who are visiting the Territory as tourists. The Northern Territory government is assisting these people with the hot lines it has established in order to determine who requires support and to direct them to where services are available at present. At present, 1 or 2 707s are flying here per week. Certainly, a 707 arrives every second or third day. However, those flights are operating between the southern capitals which, as I said, are able to be serviced by road fairly adequately. I have done the bus trip between Sydney and Melbourne. It is not a big deal. You can board a bus late in the evening in Sydney and be in Melbourne early the next morning, certainly in plenty of time to meet with business people or whatever. It is very easy to move down there, but it is very difficult here.

It is a shame that the federal government, through its current control of the systems that are in place, is able to provide for travel along the eastern seaboard but is able to provide only very limited services to the Northern Territory, the remotest part of Australia.

Mr Smith: That is not what you said when you took air fares away from public servants. We were not isolated then, were we? No!

Mr Ede: Yes, that is so.

Mr McCARTHY: It has nothing to do with air fares for public servants. This is home, but it is still the most isolated part of Australia. The other cities have alternative means of transport available to them that we do not have.

The Leader of the Opposition is attempting to score political points in this. His motion is worded in such a way that, by innuendo, some onus is placed on the Northern Territory government for not doing more to settle this dispute. We are already doing all that we can possibly do to correct the problem, but he tries to put more and more on to us and becomes upset when we throw the responsibility right back where it belongs - with the Prime Minister of Australia.

I hope that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues on the other side of this House are prepared to condemn the Prime Minister for his actions in this dispute. If there is one constant in industrial relations, it is that disputes are resolved by negotiation.

Members interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: I would like to pick up what members are saying. All we need to do is have market forces prevail, Mr Speaker. If we cannot keep our aircraft flying because we cannot pay our airline pilots enough, that is as bad as their going on strike. The result is that we will lose them. The Prime Minister publicly denigrated pilots and said that they can be trained in 8 hours. Would any member opposite or the Prime Minister fly with a pilot who had only 8 hours of training? He may have been speaking tongue in cheek, but

the Prime Minister was talking in the context of a very serious dispute which is currently crippling activity throughout this country. He is making comments like that and running down the pilots. As I said, if there is one constant in industrial relations, it is that you handle these things through reasonable negotiation and discussion, not by declaring war, as the Prime Minister has done with his comments about the pilots on public radio and television. There is no way the Prime Minister will overcome this dispute with the sort of tactics he is employing at present.

Nor is the situation improved by the actions of the Industrial Relations Commission. In cancelling the pilots' awards, the commission has basically cut itself off from any further action in attempting to overcome this dispute. It is no longer in control of the situation. It can no longer order the people back to work. It has cut itself off and my view is that, in so doing, it has placed itself in an unfortunate position.

Mr Speaker, I strongly urge this Assembly to endorse the amendment moved by the Chief Minister. The amendment picks up paragraphs (1) and (2) of the opposition's motion. There is no doubt that damage is being done to Northern Territory industry and Northern Territory people, and to visitors to this part of the world. There is no doubt that that is the case. I strongly support paragraphs (1) and (2) of the motion. I also strongly endorse the Chief Minister's view, as expressed in paragraphs (3), (4) and (5) which the amendment seeks to add to the motion.

I am not disputing the need for restraint in wage growth. However, we cannot condone the sinister social agenda of the Labor Party, both federally and in the Northern Territory, in trying to cut down the tall poppies. It wants everybody to be the same with no recognition of qualifications, expertise, training or responsibility. The Labor Party wants everybody on the same level, with no chance for anybody to move beyond it. That is no secret. The members opposite put that concept forward at every opportunity. The same applies to their colleagues who hold positions in the major unions in the Northern Territory. It is quite clear to me, from the comments of those people over the years, that they believe that there is no room for people to seek to be paid what they are worth. The fact is, however, that the marketplace determines what labour is worth. We are finding that out already in the case of domestic pilots. Domestic pilots, crews and engineers are moving overseas to earn the extra dollars available to them there.

Mr Ede: Where is the restraint?

Mr McCARTHY: There is room for restraint. As I said, we must have restraint but we also need to consider the market. You can preach restraint as much as you like. However, you must recognise that, if higher wages are being offered overseas, people will be attracted by that. If the economy is to be kept afloat, market needs must be met. At present, overseas demand for many trades is not high and, as a consequence, overseas wages in those areas are not great. However, where people are being attracted overseas because the money there is far greater, we must do something to address the problem. That is exactly what is happening here. I know members opposite will say that, if we increase payments to attract a doctor or an engineer to work for the Northern Territory government, we should give a related increase to the A1 or A2 public servant. That is clearly rubbish. At present, the market is being met in relation to certain grades of employees and it is not being met in others because we cannot offer the value in those other areas. You cannot maintain a nexus through an accord if in fact that accord is not working.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendment. At 3 o'clock this afternoon, 5 major tour operators in Darwin are going to meet. At this stage, it is their intention to discuss their position. Their likely final position is that they will close their doors on Saturday. It is disgraceful that, when people are finding themselves in that situation, all we hear from the Chief Minister and his responsible minister is a load of ideological claptrap.

I took the opportunity to run the Chief Minister's amendment past one of those tour operators. His comment was very succinct and to the point: 'He is not too interested in us, is he?' People are hurting. There are people who believe they are about to go through the back door and not return and all we have from the honourable members opposite is claptrap. As well, we have the Tourist Commission telling operators that they must proceed with tours of 3 or 4 days duration even if they have only 1 passenger. How ridiculous is that? People are about to go out the door backwards yet the Tourist Commission says that, for the good of the industry, they have to take tours of 3 or 4 days duration even if only 1 person is booked. I want to tell the honourable minister that there will not be an industry if the Tourist Commission continues with that line and says that, if the operators do not do what the commission wants, it will black ban them and not advertise their product. That is happening at this very moment.

I want to make a couple of suggestions about how the government could become involved in helping the tourist industry out at this stage. It could coordinate a voucher system which would allow people who have had to cancel because they cannot get here, to obtain vouchers for corresponding tours later in the year. The advantage of that is obvious. The tour operators, who are feeling the crunch now, would not have to give back the money. They could hold the money and offer the tours at a later date. That would help. The Tourist Commission could also play a role by helping tour operators to pool their tours so that, instead of 3 or 4 operators going out with 1 or 2 people, a single tour could take all the passengers.

Mr Coulter: Why didn't we think of that? There is an original idea if ever I heard one.

Mr SMITH: That is right.

Mr Coulter: Why couldn't we have thought of it?

Mr SMITH: That is a very good question. Perhaps you might get the opportunity to answer. The member for Nhulunbuy will have some other suggestions. However, all that we have from members opposite is ideological claptrap about how the wages system is the cause of this dispute.

Let me put another suggestion, which also came from a tourist operator this morning. Mr Deputy Speaker, I take you back to the comments that we made in this House last week and also to comments made by the IPA, that distinguished right-wing body, about the run-down of Northern Territory government cash reserves. If the government had any cash reserves, this would be a perfect opportunity to give temporary assistance to people who are adversely affected. In the words of this tourist operator, the government can prop up the Sheratons and the Yularas on a permanent basis but is not in a position to offer some temporary assistance to tourist operators who, through no fault of their own, are being adversely affected.

What do we get from the Chief Minister? A lot of ideological claptrap. Let us be very clear indeed about what he is saying. He is supporting pilots and other powerful groups in the community holding the community to ransom. He is saying to them: 'Go for it, fellows. Use your industrial muscle. Get what you can out of the system and we will pay'. He is encouraging people to go outside the system. He is encouraging people to use their industrial clout to get what they think they are worth. In the meantime, while he is supporting 1600 pilots - none of whom lives in the Territory on a permanent basis - wrecking the Northern Territory economy, some of his own constituents are suffering and are about to go out the door backwards. What sort of commitment to the Northern Territory and protection for people in the Northern Territory is that? What sort of regard have members opposite for the Northern Territory economy and the small business people, the backbone of this economy? What sort of regard do they have for them when they can take the side of 1600 pilots, none of whom lives in the Northern Territory on a permanent basis, against the people in the community who are being adversely affected by this current dispute? That is the stupidity of the position adopted by the Chief Minister. This is probably one of the craziest amendments to a motion that he has ever moved. I can tell him, Mr Deputy Speaker, that to do so was quite stupid.

Let us look at another aspect. The market forces rhetoric about wages is a disaster for the Northern Territory because we are one of the most exposed areas in the whole of Australia for people with industrial muscle and clout. That is because our transport systems and our transport modes are so long and so vital to our activities. This week, under the Chief Minister's rationale, we have the pilots out. Next week, we will have the wharf labourers using their industrial might to go out. The next week, we will have the electricity workers using their industrial might to get their wage justice and obtain their market demands. The argument is nonsense.

Let us look at the system that we have. It has regulated wages and kept them below the level of inflation over the past 3 to 4 years. At present, through an historic accord with the ACTU, it is resulting in very significant productivity improvements right across the board. This government wants to chuck all that out and, on some obscure concept called market forces, adopt a free market philosophy. Anybody who operates in the industrial relations field recognises that that is a nonsense. Sir John Moore, the government's own consultant, advised against a free market philosophy, in the event of the Northern Territory achieving statehood, because the history of the free market approach to wages in Australia and in the world is that they go through the roof. History has demonstrated that and there is no doubt about it.

Let us have a look at the rhetoric and the action of this government. Government members talk about deregulating the airways, as long as it is a federal responsibility. They talk about deregulating the wages system, as long as it is a federal responsibility but, in their own system, they do exactly the reverse. We have a tightly regulated air system in the Northern Territory.

Mr Coulter: Don't mention shipping. Manski is not very happy with you.

Mr SMITH: Both on the major routes running across to Nhulunbuy and Gove - and don't get the member for Nhulunbuy going on that - as well as on the smaller routes in the Northern Territory, there is no deregulation and no competition. It is all right for the big boys, it is all right for the federal government to be criticised for not deregulating, but in its own activities, this government does not do that.

We have this crazy system whereby the government wants to deregulate market forces for wages, but has screwed down the wages and conditions of its own public service so much that it cannot keep staff. The government cannot even properly staff its premier high school with teachers for Year 12. That is what it has done with its own wages system. It will not pay people properly and it will not give them proper conditions so that they will be attracted to come here and remain here. I have news for this government. If it goes to a free market system for the public service and for teachers, the government's wages bill will go through the roof because those people have the worst conditions in Australia, and they are showing that by voting with their feet. The reason why we do not have sufficient teachers at Darwin High School is that they can obtain better wages and conditions elsewhere in Australia. That is the problem.

Mr Manzie: This is real school story stuff. You would not even get a place in Darwin High School if you behaved like that.

Mr Bell: You would not get one as a student.

Mr Manzie: I am talking about as a student!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Attorney-General has been interjecting continually during the last few minutes. I ask him to refrain from so doing.

Mr SMITH: Of course, we know what this dispute is all about, and we know what this amendment is all about. This amendment is about the Remuneration Tribunal Report that is to be tabled later today. We all know there will be significant increases in that and there will be some difficulty for the government in selling that. Therefore, the government cannot afford to be seen to condemn the pilots when, from all reports, parliamentarians are about to receive increases in salaries significantly greater than the average Australian worker has received over the last 12 months to 2 years. That is what it is all about.

Today or tomorrow, probably late in the night when there are no press representatives around, we will use our political muscle and give ourselves a healthy little increase. That is what this debate is all about: the powerful and the mighty. According to this crowd opposite, the powerful and the mighty deserve to police the system and get all that they can out of it, but they do not worry about anybody else. They do not worry about people in the low-income groups who are least able to help themselves - the cleaners at the hospital and people who do not have any industrial clout or muscle and who need the protection of a system which says that there are minimum standards that should be applied, that there are minimum wages and conditions that people should be paid in 20th century Australia. We do not want to go back to sweat shops.

This government has forgotten about those people. It hit them hardest in the budget last week. It increased their rents by \$8 a week. It slugged them with increased bus fares. They cannot afford to travel on airlines, but the government slugged them with rises in bus fares, motor vehicle registrations, driver licence fees, water charges. This government's contempt for low-income earners in the Northern Territory is reflected again when it stands here and gives us nonsense about market forces determining wages. It knows that the direct result of that will be that the rich few will become better off whilst the majority, the low-income workers, will be squeezed and squeezed because they do not have the industrial clout which would give them higher wages and

better conditions. When we had a more deregulated system, it was industrial clout and muscle that put pilots at the top of the heap. It is the same system that kept hospital cleaners at the bottom of the heap. That is the problem with this nonsense about deregulation. It is not a fair nor just system. It hurts the people who can least afford it.

This debate was initiated in a spirit of bipartisanship with a view to having this Assembly express its concerns about the effects of the strike on the Northern Territory. Let us get back to that. Let us forget the ideological claptrap and recognise that some people will be attending a meeting in 25 minutes time and that the businesses of those people are on the line - businesses that they have built up patiently without government help over the past few years. Let us work out how we can help them rather than trying to score silly political points on an issue that members opposite do not really understand. It is interesting that, in this debate, the member for Nightcliff has been most significant by his silence and now by his absence. He is the one person on that side of the House who does understand industrial relations and how it works. I will bet my bottom dollar that he does not speak in this debate or, if he does, he certainly will be doing it out of the side of his mouth.

The amendment proposed by the Chief Minister is an absolute disgrace. We have people in the community who are hurting. We have people in the Territory community who have been stood down from their jobs already. We have some of the major tour operators in the Territory saying that they will have to close their doors unless they obtain some assistance. Despite that, all that we have from the government side of the House is ideological claptrap about changing the wages system and allowing selfish people like pilots to rip off the system and obtain their 30% and, of course, allowing us later today or tomorrow to justify massive wage increases for parliamentarians.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, before I get on to the positive things that this government is doing to assist Territorians during this ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition is speaking whilst not in his chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I think it is an example of his contempt for this House that, after delivering a speech which ridiculed the government for lack of bipartisan support, he turns his back on the Assembly, makes some inane comment as he leaves the Assembly, and is off now with his press officer to organise yet another coup for the federal ALP government.

Our comrades at the Waterside Workers Federation have come to our aid today. A few changes to the working of paragraph (4) of our amendment would make it identical to what our comrades in the Waterside Workers Federation are saying. Let us hear what they said in today's paper: 'The Waterside Workers Federation, Darwin Branch, deplores the federal government's action'. That is not far from the wording of paragraph (4) which 'condemns the federal government'. Our comrades in the Waterside Workers Federation are well aware of what is going on in Australia today. Its spokesman sums up by saying: 'I am afraid that it is not the Australian Labor Party that is going to be able to overcome the problems that are in today's Australian labour market'. That

is Comrade Manski, the Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation in Darwin. He supports the amendment which the Chief Minister has put before the House today.

As the Leader of the Opposition leaves the Chamber, I want to make the following observations. A central figure in the continuing airline pilots' dispute is, of course, the Prime Minister. Whilst the pilots and the airlines were distinctly in conflict, at least there were prospects for further discussion and negotiation. The Prime Minister then entered the arena. In a classic display of brinkmanship in industrial relations, he huffed and puffed and blew away any prospects for further negotiations between the disputing parties, making such remarks as '8 hours to fly an aircraft' and '10 hours at the stick'. He was well aware of aviation jargon. Indeed, no one knew more about the airline industry than the Prime Minister. He denigrated a group of people who are committed, usually from childhood, to the airline industry. There are some latter-day pilots like the member for MacDonnell who aspire to take wing later in life, but most career pilots begin with the Air League at 9 or 10 years of age. They join aeroplane clubs and devote their lives to their interest in flying. During their teenage years, they wash aeroplanes and perform all sorts of menial tasks in order to save up for their all-important licence.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Some people do not. They become politicians and begin their flying when they have sufficient money and security, and the taxpayer helps to support them in their habit. If there was ever a group of people who are dedicated to their careers, that group is the airline pilots. I speak from personal experience. Many of my relations are involved in the aircraft industry and I have grown up with them. I know about the trouble and the turmoil they go through and the dedication and commitment which they show to the industry.

The Prime Minister, however, says things such as '8 hours to fly an aircraft' and '10 hours at the stick'. He denigrated a group of brilliant people who have given the Australian airline industry a record of safety which is unequalled throughout the world. In the last 30 years, I think there has only been one commercial airline accident in Australia, involving an F27. I will stand corrected if ...

A member interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Well, when were the Viscounts flying? It was before the F27, I am sure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is the record. I am not saying that I support the pilots in this particular case. I am simply saying that the dispute has been aggravated by the intervention of the Prime Minister. He pushed the pilots into a position in which they could do nothing but put up the barriers. Of course, I realise that the Prime Minister had a past record of successfully intervening in major industrial disputes in his previous occupation as head of the ACTU. The most celebrated example occurred 12 years ago when Mr Hawke met personally with Frank Sinatra to allow the American crooner to leave Australia. How I wish we could get the Prime Minister to consider the option of leaving himself! Frank Sinatra's departure had been blocked by transport union members who sympathised with journalists who, in turn, were outraged by Mr Sinatra's description of them as 'pimps and hookers'. In this current dispute, however, the Prime Minister demonstrated that, apparently, he has

lost those skills. There is absolutely no question that his intervention made matters worse.

Honourable members opposite know full well - and, indeed, they preach it here often enough - that the politics of brinkmanship do not settle industrial disputes. I raise this point because it is not enough for the members of the Labor opposition to move a tearful motion deploring the circumstances of the dispute while they cry into their beer. I am not saying that the Prime Minister caused the dispute, but he certainly did not help to settle it. The Labor Opposition in the Territory can put its money where its mouth is and endorse the motion as amended, thereby giving the Prime Minister a firm message from all Territorians that he should swallow his pride, personally go back to the disputing parties and seek to resolve the issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if all goes well I may be in a position later today to pass on some good news for Territorians. During the course of my travels overseas promoting the Territory and its investment potential, I have made a point of visiting head offices of major international airlines. Consequently, I have made many useful contacts in this industry. As I speak now, my office is seeking to charter large commercial aircraft for use by Territorians. Under normal circumstances, I would expect such negotiations to be successful virtually immediately. However, at this time, the aviation world is suffering from an acute shortage of available commercial jet aircraft and, unfortunately, it is not as simple a matter as we had hoped. I give honourable members my assurance, however, that no stone will be left unturned in this pursuit.

There is more at stake than the convenience of travellers moving to and from the Territory. The strike is having a disastrous effect on tourism and the accommodation industry in the Territory, not just on occupancy figures but on the financial performance of major tourism projects.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about the farmers?

Mr COULTER: I will move on to the farmers in a moment. The member for Koolpinyah has raised a very important point. May I say that it is not only the horticulture sector which is affected. Primary industry in general has been hit, particularly the fishing industry. We have all heard of recent instances in which the transport of fish in aircraft has been prohibited. I will have more to say about that in a moment.

The financial performance of major tourism projects is, of course, at risk. I understand that the revenue loss for Yulara and the Sheraton hotels in Darwin and Alice Springs is close to \$200 000 per week. There is little the operators can do to lessen their operational expenditure. Sacking staff is hardly the way to go. In any case, staff reductions only have to be made up at a later stage and that involves a considerable recruitment expense.

An even greater crisis is looming for the tourist industry generally. It is not simply a matter of tourist operators losing business and money during the life of the current dispute, although that is enormously serious. Forward bookings have also had to be cancelled and, quite frankly, it looks as if the Territory tourist industry will be in terrible shape right through the coming wet season as a result. As honourable members would know, the industry traditionally relies on heavy traffic during the dry season to see it through the leaner period of the wet season. Thus, the industry is suffering a double whammy effect through no fault of its own.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had consultations with the Chief Minister today on the crisis and, as a consequence, the Territory government is now urgently considering financial assistance measures to the industry. I would like to read into Hansard the press release which the Chief Minister has issued today.

The Chief Minister, Marshall Perron, today directed government departments to urgently consider implementation of financial assistance schemes for tourism operators and exporters of primary products hit by the national air crisis.

We are told by the opposition that that action by the Chief Minister is 'claptrap'.

Mr Perron said he would also cite the Territory's special circumstances in seeking the Prime Minister's backing for the assistance package.

Let us see if he wants to come to the aid of these people in this case.

He said that release of funds from the Department of Industries and Development Assistance Fund was under consideration, and said he would ask the federal government to contribute at the rate of \$2 for every \$1 from the Territory. 'There would be strict criteria set for levels of assistance. I will put it to the Prime Minister that the Territory can justify a special case for assistance', Mr Perron said. 'We are more reliant on air transport and air freight than any state. Our tourist industry is being crippled in what should be the most profitable period, and horticultural exports along with fishing are being left to rot. In no state are these industries affected so badly, particularly given that it is winter in the south, and our case for federal assistance is compelling'.

Mr Perron issued the directive following consultations with the Industries and Development Minister.

That is the type of action that the Chief Minister has commenced today to resolve this issue, and I understand that some tourism operators are meeting as we speak to discuss the need for aid or assistance. I might say that it is my information that these particular operators have not approached us for assistance until this stage. But, once again, action and people are talking. All we are seeking is a continuation of the bipartisan approach that this debate began with.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: We moved an amendment to the motion because it makes the approach more meaningful.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is supported by none other than Comrade Manski from the Waterside Workers Federation, from the very depths of the Labor movement itself. What greater support could you want?

Mr Ede: No mate. That is not the Labor movement. That is the commos.

Mr Perron: What is the difference? Explain the difference.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I heard the member for Stuart interject. 'That is not the Labor movement. That is the commos'. I will personally send that to Comrade Manski for him to take whatever action he thinks appropriate against the honourable member at the next Labor Party conference.

We are taking action. We are writing to the Prime Minister in an effort to negotiate a joint subsidy for those operators who are seeking assistance. As I said, I have had consultations today with the Chief Minister on the crisis and, as a consequence, the Territory government is now urgently considering financial assistance measures to the industry. That has happened during the course of the day. I am looking at releasing funds from the Industry Assistance Fund which is administered by the Department of Industries and Development. Of course, criteria will have to be set for levels of assistance and, regrettably, there is a limit to the amount of funds that might be available. To supplement those limited funds, we will communicate urgently with the Prime Minister and the federal government seeking their involvement. We will argue that the Territory is justifiably a special case for assistance, given that tourism is our second biggest industry, that it relies heavily on airline travel and it employs about 17% of the Territory work force. We will seek contributions from the Commonwealth towards an emergency assistance fund for Territory tourist operators. That contribution should be at the rate, as I said, of \$2 for every \$1 contributed by the Territory government.

That is not an unreasonable proposition in the circumstances. The Territory's tourist industry is in a far more vulnerable position than that elsewhere in Australia. This will be the chance for the federal government to make up for the financial cuts that it has been hitting us with since 1984. It is the chance to do something positive for an industry which, on a per capita basis, makes an outstanding contribution to the country's economy. I urge the Labor opposition in the Territory to join us in this most reasonable request. Likewise, I call on the Territory's federal members to support the bid in the corridors of power in Canberra, both the member of the House or Representatives and the 2 Senators.

As I said before, shedding tears about the effect of this airlines dispute is one thing, but getting things done for Territorians is another. It has long been my contention that we are isolated from the rest of Australia. If we really want to open up our tourist industry, the possibility of leasing aircraft to pick up these people and bring them to the Territory has real potential. I would like to hear what the opposition has to say about the prospects of our becoming involved in that. We hear so much criticism from them about shortfall payments to the Sheraton Hotels in the Northern Territory. What if those payments were put towards a leasing arrangement of a large international aircraft to service the Northern Territory? What would be the reaction of members of the opposition be to that? There should be no overall cost to the government because we could bring the tourists here and not be at the mercy of the whims of Qantas, Ansett or Australian Airlines. We could be masters of our own destiny. That is the type of discussion that should be occurring in this debate. That is the type of bipartisan support that we should be getting.

The Labor opposition will vote against the amended motion at its peril. Territorians want action. We have provided that action today. We are fair dinkum about getting this resolved and, as I say, what greater support could we have than Comrade Manski, Mr Deputy Speaker? If you change a couple of words in paragraph (4) of the amendment, you have Comrade Manski's suggestion. The difference lies merely between the use of the word 'condemns' and the word

'deplores'. I believe that we can come to some arrangements to provide assistance here. I hope that the federal government sees the opportunities that are available to it, and I commend the amendment of the Chief Minister to all honourable members.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the speech of the Leader of the Opposition was full of a great deal of passion and sympathy for many people who are being hurt by this dispute. I will not call it a strike, because it is more of a lockout. That is the real situation. The pilots claimed certain conditions. The ACTU and the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Robert James Lee Hawke, prevailed on the Industrial Relations Commission and intimated that the airlines should sack the fellows.

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition about the effects of the dispute. He did not deal at all with the causes. The pilots wanted the right to negotiate with their employers about their conditions. That is what they wanted, but we have a very weak and dangerous ACTU. It is a body which today has only 32% of the private work force as its actual membership, but which determines the wages and conditions of nearly 90% of people in free enterprise and it is dead scared that it will lose more of its membership. Of course, when membership declines, the revenue from membership fees declines. The amount of money it obtains is being reduced and one does not have to be too smart to follow some of the articles, particularly in the Bulletin, about the union movement. It is losing power and the unions are dead scared, but they have a stranglehold on the federal government. They are holding the elected government to ransom. They are saying: 'You crush this pilots' dispute because, if you do not, the accord will be gone. We will not hold our members back from wage demands. If the accord does not hold, then you, Mr Hawke, will be gone'.

That is the truth of the matter. That is why the Prime Minister has come out in this outlandish manner. It is really a hoot to think that the great union man is out there calling in scab labour to break this dispute. Of course, he has been rather rude to them in saying that they do not deserve any increases outside the guidelines. I am sure that all that has done is to make the pilots far more firm in their resolve to stick together. If the Prime Minister had any wisdom or knowledge of human nature, he might have thought before he made some of the outlandish statements which other members have mentioned already. That is why the dispute is so serious for the federal government. Its return to power is virtually impossible if the wages accord breaks down. The ACTU will cling on to power. Even though it has only 32% of the private membership, it determines the wage conditions for roughly 90% of the people in the private work force.

There is another point that I read in a paper recently, but I have been unable to find the exact article. It was referring to the fact that the guidelines have not been observed by the government itself. Certain sections of the public sector have had advances over and above the wages accord. However, when it comes to the private sector, that cannot be. The Prime Minister is not as pure as he might seem.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we could not have a free market situation whereby people negotiate their wages and conditions with the employers because that would lead to the law of the jungle. Let us look at another market of which I have considerable experience. Table grapes in the Northern Territory have the advantage that they become available a couple of weeks earlier than those in other parts of Australia. For that reason, the producer can obtain a high price. Would the Prime Minister say that, because

the producer might get \$10 a kilogram for grapes in the early part the season, he is greedy and that, because the average price of the grapes over the whole year is 89¢ per kilogram, he should not receive more than 89¢? The point is that, if there were a controlled price of 89¢, there would not be a grape produced in the Territory. Nobody could afford to do it. It would cost nearly that much a kilogram to have the grapes flown to market, let alone all the other costs involved.

The market forces operate. The Dahlenburgs were in Ti Tree and the message got around that a producer could obtain \$8 kilogram for grapes in the early part of the season. I was the second producer in the area. Then, Territory Grape Farms came in and planted 120 acres and a further 40 acres the following year. Thus, there were 12 acres at first, another 11 acres were added and then a further 160 acres. Later, a fourth producer, Central Australian Produce, put in 40 acres. The net effect was that the price of grapes plummeted. I learnt last Sunday that Central Australian Produce has decided to opt out of its 40 acres of grapes. The market forces have been operating. In my view, this is the way that this dispute should have been handled.

Mr Ede: You use your parliamentary salary.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, I would say that, last year, without my salary, I would have gone bankrupt.

Mr Ede: Well, you are not exposed to free market forces, are you?

Mr COLLINS: I am working every bit as hard as you are.

If the pilots are able to negotiate with their employers for higher wages and conditions, the market forces will operate. People will be attracted to flying because good wages are paid. The supply of pilots will increase and the employers will have some leverage. The wages could be reduced because of the market forces of supply and demand. That is how a proper market works. The best way to get things on an even keel is to increase the supply of pilots.

What really has to happen is for negotiations to take place. In this situation, however, they are not permitted under the accord and the industrial relations legislation that is imposed on us. That is crippling the country and it is preventing the best people getting into the best jobs. This country is in a mess. We have huge debts and everybody is starting to realise that we must become more productive. To become more productive, we must make more efficient use of our resources. One of the resources which we are prevented from using because of our stupid industrial relations rules is that of the labour market. We do not have a labour market.

America has reached a stage where only about 9% of the work force is in the unions and that country is doing pretty well. People are on contracts and that is not seen as a bad thing. In Australia, people reject that idea because they feel insecure and say they would not want to negotiate a contract each year. In the United States, there is a better attitude. There are contracts of varying terms. Once you have satisfied your contract, you are free to leave and go somewhere else. If you are good, you will get offers or you will market yourself and pick up offers. What is happening is that the people who can afford to pay more are the people who are producing goods and services which the consumer wants.

Mr Ede: Why don't you go over there?

Mr COLLINS: I would like to try to straighten out the mess in this country.

Mr Ede: You are not doing much good.

Mr COLLINS: It is because of our industrial rules. They are not a help. It is time Australian people had enough get up and go to demand that they be able to negotiate their deals with their employers. It would lead to the most efficient use of resources because the best people would be in the top jobs. There would not be stratas where everybody on a certain level is paid the same rate. We kid ourselves if we believe everybody on the same level in any work force, public sector or private sector, is of equal worth. A member of this House who used to employ people said to me that he used to pay people what they were worth. If they were good, he would pay them more so that somebody did not pinch them off him. That is the way we will obtain efficient use of our very important resource of labour.

The dispute is hurting the Territory and all Australians and is costing millions. I believe it is time that we grew up as a nation and removed these legislative props. We should let people negotiate their conditions in the work force. I do not know how we would go as politicians because we are in a rather different position with our employer. Each one of us has about 3000 bosses.

Mr Ede: You would not want to ask them what we are worth.

Mr COLLINS: That could be a bit embarrassing. I have not quite solved the problem about how we would determine whether they would be happy with our receiving a pay increase. I suppose the only happy ones would be those who think they might be able to take our jobs off us at the next elections. It might encourage a few more candidates. There again, even that is a part of the market system. If the pay rates for politicians become more attractive, there will certainly be increased competition among people who want to get in and have a go, and I do not see that as totally unhealthy. I believe that the electorate deserves a good range of people with varied capacities when it comes to election time and they are choosing the people who are to serve them. 'Serve', of course, is the operative word.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table several newspaper articles. The first appeared on page 2 of the Weekend Australian last Saturday and was written by Paddy McGuinness. The second and third articles appear in Monday's Australian. The first is on page 13 and is headed: 'Why the Wages Accord is Tail-spinning to a Crash'. The third, written by Gerard Henderson, is entitled: 'Flying in the Face of Death'. It underlines the various weaknesses of our industrial relations system, which prevents us from having a free labour market.

Leave granted.

Mr COLLINS: A free labour market will not lead to a jungle but will result in the efficient use of the most productive people in the country. Those people might well be the cleaners at the hospital. Even in the cleaning business, there are ways and means of getting ahead in the system. In the free market system, good cleaners will be worth their weight in gold. Frequently, the menial jobs such as cleaning up rubbish are those in which big money can be made.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Where there is muck, there is brass.

Mr COLLINS: Yes. Where there is muck, there is brass. If other people are too proud to do particular tasks, those who are not too proud can show a bit of initiative and reap the benefits under a free market system.

We have heard a lot about the effects of the strike and they are greatly to be regretted. The costs are far higher than they would have been had the pilots been able to negotiate with their employers. Pilots' wages might have been very high for a while but those wages would attract more pilots and, in time, the demand for their services and therefore their wages would level off. The dispute is costing us a great deal because the Prime Minister and the ACTU are desperate to retain their power over workers throughout the country, particularly those in the private sector. One of the best things that could happen would be for more and more people to wake up and opt out of the union movement. Then, we might have a proper labour market. When we have that, the pilots' dispute will be a thing of the past and we will be able to get on with the building of a prosperous nation.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will not spend too much time on the member for Sadadeen's speech, except to say that a compatriot of mine in the federal parliament once described a certain type of economic thought as being 'away with the fairies at the bottom of the garden'. The honourable member has gone beyond that. He is over the fence and down with the troglodytes.

The Minister for Industries and Development contributed a few ideas which bear examination. The original purpose of this debate was to spark ideas, to get people thinking so that we could determine what could be done to alleviate the effects of the strike on the Territory. That purpose, of course, is completely destroyed by paragraph (3) of the Chief Minister's amendment. So that honourable members recall what we are talking about and understand why there is no way in the world that this opposition will support the amendment, I will read out the relevant paragraph again. It would have the Assembly 'note that the current crisis is a direct result of Australia's over-regulated labour market and the rigid application of an inflexible wages accord imposed by the federal government in its desperation to conceal the ineffectiveness of its current economic policies'.

The point that the government seems to have missed is that the pilots are now out of this so-called over-regulated labour market. They have left it, Mr Speaker. So why is the Chief Minister complaining? The pilots' award has been cancelled. It is quite obvious that the Chief Minister is blindly echoing the line taken by the federal coalition even though it is in direct contravention of the best interests of the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, that is disgraceful.

Let us look at the current situation in relation to the pilots' dispute. It offers us a role model for exactly how all disputes will be settled under the coalition's policy. That policy aims to get rid of the accord and to deregulate the marketplace. In that situation, small but powerful groups which occupy key positions in industry, by force of blackmail, will be able to hold the rest of the country to ransom. What would happen if the coalition's policy were implemented? Firstly, the pilots would get their increase and run. But, they would not be the only ones. The waterside workers might be next in line. Obviously, the Leader of Government Business has to support that because he has to be consistent with the attitude that he has expressed here today. I will be interested, if that ever does happen, to see whether he changes his tune or not. Then, in crucial industry after crucial industry,

key people will utilise their industrial muscle. They will get what they want, not due to weight of numbers, or as a result of productivity or because they deserve more than they are getting, but simply because they have the economy by the scruff of the neck. They can wring it and wring it until the pips squeak and they get what they are after.

Look at the way that the flow-ons would occur and what would happen to the economy. But, first, think about what would be the result for the people at the bottom of the ladder. They are the people who, over the years of the accord, have consistently tightened their belts notch after notch in the interests of the economy as a whole. They are the ones who have reduced the number of strikes in this country to an all-time low. They have lost money in real terms year after year. They traded off productivity gains and superannuation to assist the welfare flow-out in the next 20 years. They are the ones that have been doing all the work and they are the ones who, under the coalition policy that is being espoused here today, would continue to lose because they do not have that muscle. They do not control those vital areas that would enable them to apply the screws.

Meanwhile, what has been happening, Mr Speaker? The unfortunate aspect is that, while they have been tightening their belts, other people at the other end of the scale have been getting their noses deeper and deeper into the trough. People in high executive positions are in that group. That is what really got up the pilots' noses, and it is the only area where I have a modicum or tinge of sympathy for them. They are not comparing themselves to other people through the award system. They are saying: 'Look at what has happened with the boss of Australian Airlines. Look what has happened with the bosses out there'. All of those senior executives have received or are receiving increases of 50% or 60%.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: These increases are being negotiated outside the present wages system, through a system which government members are promoting and which is putting an intolerable burden on the blowout in costs and prices in the Northern Territory. Politicians must be included in that. We have to be fair dinkum about this, and we have to acknowledge what the Leader of the Opposition said. There is talk about a 20% increase, or something of that order, in salaries for members of this Assembly. We know that people in the community will turn their noses up when they hear about that. They ask: 'What in blue blazes is going on here? At the same time as we are fighting this battle and putting up with the suffering resulting from the pilots' claim for a 30% salary increase, our own politicians are voting themselves an increase way above national guidelines. That is ridiculous!' We have to realise that, over the past 6 years, it has been the federal Australian Labor Party and the ACTU which have consistently held the line in the face of enormous increases negotiated by executives and in the face of all the pressures that those increases have placed on the system. There have been increases in prices and the people at the bottom of the scale are hurting. Nevertheless, in the face of all that, they have held the line for the national good, for the good of all of us.

Let us have a look at what will happen if the pilots win. Those politicians and those union leaders, the people in the ACTU who are being decried so thoroughly here today, will not be able to hold their members. They will be bypassed and there will be a grand rush for a massive catch-up. There will be massive catch-ups or flow-ons right across the board. That is what will happen, and that is the real situation. If honourable members look

into their hearts, they will agree that that will be the result of a 30% or 20% increase to these pilots. The whole accord will go by the board and it will be open slather; everybody will catch as catch can. What will happen when that happens? Prices will follow. The member for Sadadeen will say that that is all right and that it will sort itself out. Does he know what the misery of stagflation is like and what that can do to the economy? That will destroy everything that we have worked so hard for over the years.

Members opposite complained earlier that the Prime Minister had said that we were at war. It is war. It is a war being waged by the pilots on an orderly wage-fixing system. That is what we are up against here. It is a war against economic growth and against an orderly system of controlling wages in a way that is fair to all whilst we increase productivity, tackle the debt level and get the economy moving again after all the miserable years of Liberal National Party government. This is one war we must win. There is absolutely no way that we can even contemplate losing this. That is why the Prime Minister has been making such strong statements. He is signalling that there can be no compromise, no weakness, no shillyshallying. We must win because, if we lose, we may as well all pack up, go back to the farm and revert to a subsistence economy. That would be about the only chance that we would have because the massive spiralling of wages and prices that would accompany blowouts of this sort is something that this economy cannot stand. It would destroy everything that we have fought for.

That is why the absolutely ridiculous paragraph (3) proposed in this amendment is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe that members in this House must reject. We must get back to organising ourselves within the real world of an orderly industrial relations system with orderly salary gains. We must condemn the pilots for what they are doing and get them back in line. I hope that, later today, we will set an example by rejecting any overboard increases to our own salaries.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I will not take much of the House's time, but it is interesting to reflect on some of the comments made by the member for Stuart, particularly in relation to his suggestions that the economy cannot stand claims of this nature, that they are ridiculous claims and that we must get back to an orderly world of reasonable claims. The member for Stuart is the shadow spokesman for primary industry and fisheries. Recently, a claim has been lodged by the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia. The member for Stuart is the opposition representative in this Assembly of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. He is the opposition spokesman for the pastoral industry yet, nevertheless, he can rise in here and speak in that grossly arrogant way.

We are talking about a claim by the pastoral workers and we are talking about a claim by pilots. The pilots have claimed 35%. I do not support that claim for 35%, but it was a claim. The Prime Minister took the pilots to the brink. He said: 'Well, resign. You are a mob of cab drivers. You only work 8 hours a week'. Continuously in this House, despite the fact that he is responsible for shadow spokesman for primary industry, the member for Stuart puts down the primary industries in the Northern Territory. He says that the cattlemen should not be able to export their cattle live but should keep them in the Territory. He says that they should give up their land, that they should have 50 km² excisions on their pastoral leases. He says that such things do not matter, that they are nothing. This is the man who is supposed to represent primary industry in the Northern Territory and this is the man who tells us that we have to get away from ridiculous claims and return to an orderly world of reasonable claims.

The Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia has put in claims. It is not talking about 35% - that is chickenfeed - it is talking about 200% and 300%. Mr Speaker, you have to ask yourself why claims of this nature go unnoticed and unmentioned by honourable members opposite.

Mr Ede: Because they are within the system.

Mr REED: Oh, we are told that it is because they are within the system. Isn't that fascinating? It wouldn't have anything to do with a little bit of success and equality in the system. I agree that those people are at the lower end of the wage scale and they have every right to put in a claim, but the member for Stuart is dead right about the fact that it should be a reasonable claim. It should not be ridiculous. The honourable members opposite contradict themselves. They are out of touch with reality and they have no idea of what the nation is all about, nor the direction in which we are heading in relation to claims of this type.

I have every sympathy for anyone affected by this strike, particularly primary producers in the Northern Territory, and I do not refer only to the growers. Horticulturists have spent a great deal of time and committed a lot of money in recent years to establishing reasonable operations, getting their crops to a point where they are of good quality and consistent, and they have been able to key into markets throughout Australia and even overseas. They have reached a stage where they have proved that they can supply a product of consistent, high quality and that they can meet the market demands. After all the effort and all the money they have put into it, they are faced with ruin because of this strike. They have been put in this position through no fault of their own. I must say also that the government has committed considerable effort to the industry and has provided extensive assistance to these people for the benefit of the Territory.

A similar situation exists with fishermen in the Northern Territory who have established the reef fishery. Like the horticulturists, they have put in a great deal of effort in establishing new products and finding new markets. The establishing of new markets and satisfying the transport requirements has not been easy. I guess the fishermen are marginally better off inasmuch as that, if really pushed, they can freeze their product. Of course, that has its limitations, but they have a marginally better chance than the growers of perishable products of saving their money and getting their produce to the market. Nevertheless, I do not think that detracts from the fact that the strike is seriously damaging their position and seriously damaging the economy of the Northern Territory and our ongoing stability. Other speakers have mentioned the difficulties that are being experienced personally by other residents of the Northern Territory in the tourist industry..

Principally, I rose to draw to the attention of the House the hypocrisy of the members opposite. The fact that they can very conveniently ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that reference to members opposite.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, I refer to the hypocritical attitude in that they can very conveniently overlook claims by one sector of our community, but take up the cudgels against the claims of another sector. I do not particularly support the pilots. I think it is a shame that the Prime Minister has handled the situation in the way that he has. I would have thought that he would have held back and had other ministers or officers attend to the problem and, if it had reached a stage at which it seemed beyond resolution, he would have been able to step in.

Where we will be led now, I do not know. The people involved in the dispute certainly cannot be referred to an authority higher than the Prime Minister, who has jumped in so precipitately and pushed the pilots to the brink. Indeed, he virtually forced their resignation. It is not a pretty picture. I hope that, for the sake of our primary producers, fishermen and residents generally, the problem will be resolved soon so that we can all get on with the job of developing the Territory. I ask members opposite to direct their energies to that cause.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in this debate, I think the first thing that must be recognised is that the Leader of the Opposition deserves some credit for raising this subject in the Assembly. I believe it was incumbent on the Northern Territory government, the Country Liberal Party, to have had precedence in a case like this. I think it is to its discredit that it did not raise the subject last week. Having said that, I believe that the amendment moved by the Chief Minister is the better motion to vote for. I will be voting for that amendment rather than the motion as moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Recently, I attended a meeting of the Northern Territory Horticulturists Association where the log of claims, which the Minister for Primary Production has just been speaking about, was discussed. I do not have the details, but it was an ambit claim. Really, it is the same sort of claim as that put forward by the pilots. Whilst not excusing the actions of pilots, I see it as a very similar position. In this log of claims on the pastoral, agricultural and horticultural industries, as well as farming of livestock, including the goat industry, a claim was made for something like a \$1000 wage for a 30-hour week with annual leave of 6 months. It was something like that. It was absolutely ridiculous, as was the claim by the airline pilots for an enormous salary increase.

On the one hand, we have the Miscellaneous Workers Union pooh-poohing the idea that its claim was a real one and saying that it was only a paper claim open to negotiation. On the other hand, we have the airline companies and the Prime Minister not acting in the best interests of the community in the actions that they have taken, which are exacerbating the effects of the strike.

I believe that, when the pilots went on strike, they had no realisation of the ramifications of their actions. I was told that by one of my constituents who is a producer. He rang them up because he was at his wit's end at the weekend. He and other growers had 6 t of button squash to move from Darwin last Saturday and they were unable to move it. The best that they could do was to get trucks to take 6 t out on Monday. Those trucks are still delivering this produce round Australia. By the time it reaches the markets, it will be in a very deteriorated condition and that will not do anything for the good name that these small producers have worked very hard to build up. There is an observation that I have made on many occasions and I think it holds true in relation to the government. It is a slow learner and it does not learn from experience. I am mainly interested in the growers of primary produce, but tourists and people who are stranded by this strike also must be considered. However, I believe that the action instigated by the government, if it is not very careful, will be too little too late. It should really have taken some action as soon as this occurred.

I rang the office of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and spoke to one of his staff when my constituents first brought their invidious situation to my notice. I must say that the member of the minister's staff

was helpful. He also put me in touch with a staff member at the experimental farm at Berrimah who was also helpful in trying to arrange road transport of all the produce out of the Territory. The lesson to be learned from this is that the government must not let it happen again. It is bad enough that it is happening now. People will go to the wall, not only people in the tourist industry, but small primary producers as well. I believe that perhaps the emergency services legislation could be used. Something must be on the books so that we are not left in this situation next time.

I will give an example from my electorate where a grower with a crop of button squash stood to make an income of \$100 000. I am talking about a gross income. Because he cannot move his produce, even with the best efforts of the government, he has ripped out about 12 acres of button squash and immediately planted pumpkins. He does not know whether his crop will bring him a decent return. Some produce left here last Monday by truck and, although further trucks will be leaving, the grower is concerned that there may be a breakdown in the system and that he may lose what is in the paddock.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the grower has lost an income of \$100 000, which means a profit of about \$50 000. You might say that he must be a pretty big operator to be talking about sums like that. That is not the case. He and his wife operate the business and they employ locals at picking time. He is a very small operator but he is a good farmer who knows what he is doing. He has worked very hard to reach his current position. He is only one of many. There must be people in Alice Springs and Katherine, as well as many others in the rural area, who are in the same position. I really feel for those people. They have spent a whole season growing the crop. Farmers do not work for 8 hours a day. They get up at first light and they usually go in for a cold beer at dark, before falling into bed. They work very hard and, after working for a whole season, find it totally soul-destroying to see their crops rendered worthless by events beyond their control.

Whilst the actions of the government will help to some small degree, they are not nearly enough. I was also told that Ansett may provide an airfreighter this weekend to take out a cargo. Again, that will be too little too late. This airfreighter should have been here last weekend to immediately fill the gap. The fact is that, like the grower I am talking about, other growers may have ploughed in their crops or made other arrangements for transport. It is possible that this Ansett airfreighter will leave the Top End without being filled to capacity, thus not representing the true situation.

I believe that the Chief Minister, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, the Minister for Mines and Energy and probably the Minister for Tourism should put their heads together in relation to this. There is an old saying that two heads are better than one, even if they are only sheep heads. Surely, with a little lateral thinking, somebody should be able to come up with some constructive ideas to keep our economy afloat, especially our primary industry.

The current situation also draws particular attention to the disadvantages we suffer because we do not have a railway line from Darwin to Alice Springs to link with the line from there to Port Augusta. We must never leave ourselves in this position again. I know it is crying over spilt milk and it is easy to be wise with hindsight, but I have to keep hammering home the point. It would have been far better for the government to have put its money into the railway than into the State Square development. I do not know how the economics compare but I think it would have been a far better approach.

Because of our sophisticated marketing procedures, we have come to rely very heavily on air transport. This is a weakness in our economy. We rely heavily on transport to move our primary produce out of the Northern Territory as well as to move the tourists in. I think it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a situation like this could occur again in the future. The government must not allow the damage that has been caused to the Northern Territory economy on this occasion to occur again.

It is very pleasing that road transport is available to shift some of our produce in these circumstances and that extra buses can be called in to move people. However, we should not rely on roads as the solution. We should not be encouraging additional road traffic. Because of our climatic extremes, road maintenance costs are very high. In this situation, the government could do no better than to resurrect the report on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. Situations like this call for drastic action.

In closing, I will give the Leader of the Opposition some credit for introducing this motion into the House. Nevertheless, I believe that the amendment moved by the Chief Minister more clearly reflects my views and the views of my constituents.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to rehash the remarks of members on both side of the House in relation to the effects of this strike. We all accept that the strike is a disaster and realise that the financial effects of the strike on the tourist industry and, in turn, the economy of the Northern Territory, will be very far-reaching. In fact, I would suggest that the effects of this strike are much more far-reaching than anybody has suggested to date. The hotel industry in the Top End needs to obtain full occupancy in some 3 or 4 months of the year if it is to achieve decent utilisation levels and an average income per room that will carry it through the remaining 8 months of the year.

I want to make a number of points which relate to remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. Pool-sharing occurs when tour operators get together and swap bookings so that at least 1 operator has a reasonable quantity of people who can travel together. The Leader of the Opposition criticised the Northern Territory Tourist Commission for insisting that tour operators stick to their advertised tours, no matter how many customers they have. The fact is that pool-sharing has been tried for many years in the Northern Territory. In almost every off-peak season in the Top End and the Centre, efforts have been made by the Tourist Commission to get operators to work together so that, on at least 1 day of the week during the off season, an operator would carry a reasonable number of customers on a coach tour. It has never worked. The smaller operators seem unable to cooperate to do this satisfactorily. I should mention that a couple of companies have successfully worked various pool-sharing arrangements for a number of years.

The Tourist Commission does ask tour operators to stick to their advertised tours. That is essential to the integrity of the tourist industry. Indeed, the regional tourist associations in Alice Springs and Darwin have passed motions in the past few months requesting the Tourist Commission to ensure that tour operators carry passengers on the tours which they have advertised, whether such tours carry 1 passenger, 2 passengers or 22 passengers. I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that, even now when visitor numbers are well below normal, one has to remember that the majority of visitors to the Northern Territory do not arrive on air transport. As far as the hotels are concerned ...

Mr Smith: Their bookings are down 80% if that is the case.

Mr POOLE: Their bookings are down by a considerable percentage, depending on the establishment, with regard not only to tourists but also commercial travellers. The Leader of the Opposition would know that the majority of people who stay in the larger properties are in the higher-income brackets and can afford to pay the higher costs associated with those establishments. This morning, I had a meeting with the owner of one of those properties. He told me that he had budgeted to make a small profit in his large establishment this year but that, in the present circumstances, it appeared that the pilots' strike would result in a loss of \$200 000 to \$500 000. He also told me that he had lost 7 conferences which were booked for September, involving 4000 or 5000 people. The effects, depending on the situation in the establishment concerned, are very great.

On the other hand, some areas of the industry are benefiting. Express coach operators and some of the tour operators who are running long distance hauls - for example, between Darwin, Alice Springs and Adelaide - are carrying more passengers in and, in some cases, have had to put on extra coaches. Obviously, however, that situation will not continue. People will not travel to destinations if there is uncertainty about their travel arrangements.

Another point needs to be particularly noted and I seek the cooperation of the opposition in relation to it. Since the start of the strike, there have been virtually no flights from the Centre to the south. If my memory is correct, there was just 1 Australian Airlines service in the very early days of the strike. Two 707s have come through Alice Springs on their way to Darwin. I received representation this morning from tour operators in central Australia to put some pressure on the federal government - and we will certainly be trying to do that - to ensure that, whether it be operated by the RAAF or whatever, any emergency air transportation service will include Alice Springs and give Alice Springs residents the opportunity to fly through to Adelaide or Sydney.

There is no answer to this strike. I suspect the end result will be that Australian Airlines and Qantas will merge earlier than is probably intended and, in return for that merger, Ansett Airlines will be given the right to fly short haul international destinations. It will be very interesting to see how both the airline pilots and the Prime Minister back out of their respective corners. I hope that the respective compromise positions that I am sure will eventually be adopted do not extend the strike any longer than it will last under the present circumstances.

I commend the amendment moved by the Chief Minister. Obviously, I support the operation of free market forces. That does not mean that I approve of or support the pilots' quest for the increase they are asking for. But, I certainly say that I can see the problems on the horizon with Qantas. If one believes the media reports, it appears that Qantas pilots are financially disadvantaged in the world marketplace. I can speak with personal experience after talking some months ago to 13 or 14 international airlines in South-east Asia and to Boeing in Seattle about 6 or 8 weeks ago. Most certainly, there is a worldwide shortage of pilots and the market is very competitive. I do not see how Australia will attract international pilots. I will be very interested in seeing the results in respect of the 500 or 600 pilots reported to have applied to the domestic airlines this morning. I will be very interested to see on what rates and conditions these pilots are employed. I certainly share everybody's concern that the strike does not go on for 1 day longer than necessary and that everybody gets back to work as quickly as possible.

To put a guesstimate on the economic damage that will be done to the Northern Territory, we will probably be talking in terms of \$200m or \$300m if the strike continues for any length of time. It will certainly cause terrible hardship, particularly to the accommodation industry and to some of the smaller operators. I have already stated in this House that the Tourist Commission is ready in the international marketplace to immediately enter into a damage control program. It will be out in the marketplace spending a considerable sum of money in an effort to restore some of Australia's reputation overseas. Regrettably, our reputation overseas has been damaged, not only by pilot strikes but also by air traffic controllers disputes and, more particularly, refuellers disputes in recent years.

I do not think that anybody realises the damage that is done in the marketplace by industrial disputes such as the one that is occurring at the moment. I remind all honourable members that, at the end of the day, it is highly unlikely that we will pick up much of the business we have lost. Conferences that are due to be held in September and are cancelled today will probably not be held in the Northern Territory until the next year. They will simply go elsewhere.

People who are uncertain about their travel arrangements will get into a car and drive up to Surfers Paradise from Melbourne and Sydney, but they will not come to the Northern Territory on this holiday break. People do not traditionally reschedule their holidays because of industrial disputes. They either stay at home or they go somewhere in their own vehicle. No matter how much money we spend or how hard we work with Tourist Commission advertising, internationally and domestically, it is unlikely that we will pick up the money that we have lost. However, I assure honourable members we will be endeavouring to do exactly that. We are ready to go at 5 minutes notice, with television, newspaper and magazine advertisements etc, to push out the word as quickly as possible throughout the country to get the economy and the tourist industry moving again.

With regards to assistance to operators, it is apparent that some operators are really bleeding, probably the smaller operators. I will certainly cooperate with my colleagues in making representations to the federal government to cooperate in a scheme which would make use of the Industry Assistance Fund to help people who are in dire straits. However, I stress that it will be extremely difficult because there will be many people in need of assistance and it will be hard to work out exactly who is in dire need and who is not. The comment has already emanated from the Regional Tourist Association this afternoon that it cannot see why one particular operator should be assisted over another. Thus, we will have those sort of problems to contend with.

Mr Smith: Does that mean you are into Sheraton funding?

Mr POOLE: No. I am talking about small operators who as yet have to apply to the Tourist Commission or the government for some form of assistance. I am quoting a communication that I have received this afternoon, from the Regional Tourist Association. Obviously, nobody in this House wants to see anybody go out the back door, particularly in an industry where there are so many small operators who work so hard simply to feed themselves without necessarily making a lot of money out of the industry. I commend the amendment.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, speaking to the amendment, which is all that I am allowed to do, I can see that we have very little to address in this

House. As is traditional with the Northern Territory government, the amendment blames everybody else but it does not examine its own actions. Members opposite argue that the wage-fixing policy instituted by the federal government is horrendous but their lack of knowledge of industrial history allows them to believe that there is some Utopia at the foot of the deregulation rainbow.

The member for Sadadeen spent some time ignoring industrial facts and history in this country, and I suspect that he and other members in this House ignore current industrial realities throughout the world. If we look at successful industrial nations like Japan, West Germany, and the countries in northern Europe, we see that they all have highly-regulated labour markets. The reason that they are successful is because they are able to regulate that component of their internal economy. Those are the facts of life and honourable members can study the history themselves; they do not need to accept my assurances. However, they should try to imagine what would happen if this country went back to the bloodbath that existed at the turn of the century. Do honourable members honestly want to drag this country and the Australian population back to that? If they do, they are off their heads.

There are 2 things that I am particularly proud of in respect of this present federal government. For a very personal, humanitarian reason, I am very proud of the reintroduction of socialisation of medical costs. I am personally very proud that the federal Labor government has done that, and I am personally proud that it has struck the accord. The accord has been the foundation of this government, and it will continue to be its foundation. The social wage will continue to be the foundation of this government and, until the federal opposition wakes up to the fact that it is the foundation of any sort of sanity in any industrialised society, then it will never be elected. Do not accept my word for that. Go and ask the employer organisations. Go and ask an employer representative who is known to the member for Nightcliff, one Jim Strong. Ask him about his view of the organised labour market and he will tell you straight that it is the only rational option. Anybody who says otherwise is preaching pie in the sky. The members opposite do not know what they are talking about and their ignorance of industrial matters is profound. They do not know anything about industrial relations or the consequences of even contemplating what they are suggesting. They live in fairyland. They have no idea at all.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to consider the consequences of continuing to pursue the policies of the Fraser government. We had double-digit inflation in those days. Inflation would have been through the roof by now. We had unemployment in those days that was double-digit, and that would have been through the roof by now. The single thing that has restored this country to some sort of economical rationality has been the accord and ...

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: If members opposite want to return this country to industrial war, then they should keep preaching deregulation, because that will be the result.

Mr Setter: Single-digit inflation?

Mr LEO: You will end up with single-digit inflation and you will end up with 3-figure unemployment because nobody will be working. It will be back to war. If you do not think that that will happen, you have no sense of reality. You have never read a history book and you have such scant regard for the

dignity and the role of working people that you cannot even hope to understand them. That is the simple reality. Those are the simple, harsh realities of industrial life in this country. Let me make no bones about it, organised and regulated labour has served many industrialised countries very well.

I recommend that honourable members have a look at the countries where there are deregulated labour markets. Go to South America. Go to Africa and India. Have a look at countries which have deregulated labour markets.

Mr Perron: How about the US?

Mr LEO: A deregulated labour market? I am afraid that the Chief Minister does not have much knowledge of the US industrial system.

Mr Perron: But they stick to agreements once they enter into them.

Mr LEO: Of course they stick to agreements when they enter into them. That is precisely what the accord provides: a mechanism for reaching agreement. The pilots have broken an agreement. They have walked out on it. They have quit.

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: Don't you understand? Have we been reading different papers or watching different programs or some damn thing? Don't members opposite understand what is happening?

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: The pilots had an agreement with their employers, which no longer suited them. As a group of employees, they wanted to change that agreement. The employers refused to change it and, as a result, the pilots quit. That is deregulation. That is what has happened.

Mr Perron: That is not deregulation.

Mr LEO: Perhaps I do not watch the same television channels as you. Maybe I have not been reading the same newspapers as you. Members opposite are so blinded by their ideological claptrap that they cannot even recognise reality. They live in a fairyland. They are full of nonsense.

The amendment that the Chief Minister has proposed is so ridiculous that I cannot understand how even he could propose it. It is absolutely ridiculous that he is prepared to offer comfort to people who are prepared to blackmail my constituents. I come from Nhulunbuy. I know that there are people in the community who are hurting. Their industries are breaking down around them and, while that is happening, the Chief Minister introduces this nonsensical amendment. I come from Nhulunbuy where people starve because they cannot get fresh fruit and vegetables, where sick people cannot fly in and out and where kids are stranded at school. That is the reality of what this airline dispute means to me. What do we have from the Chief Minister? An absolutely nonsensical amendment that no rational or sane person could ever support.

I want to see the member for Nightcliff rise in support of it. We may have been on opposite sides of the fence for many years, but at least I know he understands it. He is prepared to apply logic where the best the Chief Minister can do is apply ideology, which is absolute nonsense. It does not serve him well, it does not serve this House well and it will not serve the

Northern Territory well. Nobody who wants to apply an ounce of logic to the proposition put by the Chief Minister can ever support it. It is simply nonsense.

Mr Speaker, clause (5) of the Chief Minister's amendment calls on the federal government to do something about the problems that we have in the Northern Territory. Of course, this House is not going to call on the Northern Territory government to do anything to alleviate the hardship caused by the loss of services which has resulted from this dispute. Mr Speaker, do you know why this House will not call on the Northern Territory government to do anything? It is because we know it will not do anything. We know that it cannot do anything. It consists of such useless people. They are so used to blaming everyone else that they are incapable of doing anything for the Northern Territory. We will not call on our government because we know it cannot do anything and will not do anything and that is the simple reason why the Chief Minister has proposed that clause (3) of the Leader of the Opposition's motion be omitted. Clause 3 asked the Northern Territory government to do something. The Chief Minister's amendment inserts a clause (5) which conveniently omits to ask our government, the government of the people of the Northern Territory, to do anything, and quite justifiably so, because it cannot and will not do anything. There is no reason why any member of the public, let alone this House, should ever expect it to do anything.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not take up much of the time of the House but, after that outburst from the member for Nhulunbuy, something should be said. He kept telling us that he is from isolated Nhulunbuy. Of course, he probably would not like to go back over some of the words he has said in this House over many years in defence of the provisions of the Land Rights Act which prevent the government building a road to link Nhulunbuy with the rest of the Territory. I am sure that people in his constituency will remember his words and, if they do not, we will certainly remind them, because Nhulunbuy is at a severe disadvantage compared to the rest of the Territory as a result of the air strike. There is no means of moving in and out of Nhulunbuy because the provisions of the Land Rights Act expressly prevent the government from building a road to treat people in Nhulunbuy as equals with the rest of the Territory.

I would like to pick up a couple of points that the honourable member made. He said that it would be a disaster if we had a deregulated labour market. He said that we must have a system which regulates wages very strongly or all will end in disaster. I ask the honourable member to cast his mind abroad and think about Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan, areas where development is moving ahead very rapidly, living standards are rising extremely rapidly, and education and quality of life standards are moving ahead in leaps and bounds. Their economies, their balance of payments and their currencies are becoming so strong that the Japanese yen is taking over the world. What happens in those areas where there is heavy regulation? For instance, Australia is rapidly going down the tube. In that context, it is important to reinforce the contents of the amendment moved by the Chief Minister. The rigid application of the inflexible wages accord is the cause of the situation that we are in.

That is not all, Mr Deputy Speaker. The behaviour of the pilots, in using industrial muscle to try to enforce an ambit claim has initiated the problem.

Mr Ede: An ambit claim?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart questions that. He is not even aware of what the Pilots Federation has said. He would rather ignore the words of representatives of the Pilots Federation. I believe that it is important to take note of those words. Of course a 30% salary claim is over the top. Nearly every member of the Australian community would agree with that, although it was not as much as the claim made by the Miscellaneous Workers Union on behalf of workers covered by the pastoral award. That was absolutely ridiculous.

The present situation was caused by the Prime Minister. He decided that he wanted to look good on television and to show himself as the strongman. He immediately forced the pilots into a situation where they had to counteract his behaviour in a show of brinkmanship and one-upmanship. The result is the present disaster. It is not only a disaster to the Northern Territory but to Australia as a whole. And what has caused it? A man with silver hair trying to look good on television and a bunch of pilots who are trying to get rich quickly. What a ridiculous situation!

Instead of trying to look at ways and means of bringing this matter to a close, members opposite are playing the ideology game. The Leader of the Opposition stands in this Assembly and screams at the top of his voice. What a performance from a man who tries to present himself as an alternative Chief Minister of the Northern Territory! He became quite incoherent. He behaved in that way on the grounds that he had it right, that the Labor party and the Prime Minister had it right, and that the problems were the fault of the pilots and the Northern Territory government. According to him, the problems had nothing to do with the federal government, the Prime Minister or the industrial relations system that we are operating under. It was an appalling performance.

The member for Stuart followed suit. He carried on like a pork chop and failed to address the facts. Everyone forgot about what is occurring in this country. The pilots are out of the system and the aeroplanes are grounded. We cannot move the hundreds of thousands of people who are here as tourists. We are not moving goods or people. The economy is crippled. It is going down the tube, internally as well as externally, at a million miles an hour.

Instead of actively working to bring about a solution to the problems, we see public posturing which is meant to bring further disruption. Today, the Prime Minister attempted to wind up the Qantas pilots. The obvious intention is to involve Qantas in the dispute because that will assist in the amalgamation of Qantas and Australian Airlines. Whilst this scenario may be of some personal satisfaction to the Prime Minister, he has forgotten about the rest of Australia, the Australians who do not live in the golden triangle, in the Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne corner. He has forgotten about Territorians and Western Australians or perhaps it is closer to the point to say that he never thought of us. He never thinks about this part of the world, the part that produces the wealth that this country needs to stay afloat. He does not worry about the fact that we do not have the ability to move people and goods by train. He does not worry about the fact that our road systems are thousands and thousands of kilometres longer than the roads in the golden triangle. He does not care that it is impossible to carry out daily commerce using our roads and road transport system. We are forgotten. We are not important, Mr Deputy Speaker.

There really has to be a concentrated effort to make the federal government face what is happening in this country. We have to get the aeroplanes back in the air. We have to start moving people and produce

immediately. All the ideology spouted by the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to say that the Territory government has contributed to the problem and that the federal government is not at fault is ridiculous.

Mr Smith: I did not say that at all.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, all parties involved in this dispute must be condemned. The pilots must be condemned for their attitude and their actions. The Prime Minister must be even more thoroughly condemned. The responsibility rests on his shoulders. His behaviour and the circumstances he has engendered have really brought matters to a head and this part of the nation is suffering as a result. Mr Deputy Speaker, I wholeheartedly endorse the amendment moved by the Chief Minister.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have listened to this debate with some fascination. I have been even more fascinated by the way the opposition has been calling on me to speak as if I were some sort of guru on the subject of industrial relations. I must say that I am somewhat flattered by that. Flattery from that quarter, however, is never a very comfortable experience. Nonetheless, I think that I should add my comments to this debate.

I will preface my remarks in this way. I do not think anybody in this House supports the precipitate action taken by the Australian Federation of Air Pilots. I do not think that anybody supports the pilots in their efforts to hold the Australian people to ransom in the pursuit of their organisational and pecuniary goals. The Chief Minister is supporting my position and I know that it is the position which he adopts. Let us be very clear that no member on this side of the House supports the precipitant blackmailing tactics of the Australia Federation of Airline Pilots.

The key question is this: why did the issue escalate so cataclysmically in such a short period of time? Initially, the pilots said that they needed a 30% wage increase. The ACTU, particularly the metal trades unions, said: 'If the pilots get 30% or anything like it, no matter under what conditions, we will blow the wages accord with the federal government out of the water. We will go for broke'. The ACTU then engaged in a little blackmail itself. It said: 'It does not matter whether the pilots' claim is justified. It does not even matter whether it meets the wage-fixing principles of the Industrial Relations Commission'.

Mr Smith: Are you trying to tell me that it does?

Mr Ede: If it goes beyond the wage-fixing principles ...

Mr HATTON: Have you read the wage-fixing principles? Have you read the National Wage Decision of 7 August? You ought to. In particular, you should look at principle 3 on page 21.

I am not saying that 30% is justified in any shape or form nor am I commenting on whether the pilots can demonstrate justification under the structural efficiency principles. I do not know whether they can. I doubt that anyone in this Chamber knows whether they can. What I do know is that the ACTU gave an ultimatum that the pilots' claim could not be considered under any circumstances. It effectively said that 12% was the limit. I will just read this special cases principle which was enunciated in the National Wage Decision this month. It says:

Any claim for increases in wages and salaries or improvements in conditions which exceed the maximum increases allowable under the National Wage Case Decision of 7 August 1989 will be processed as a special case before a full bench of the commission. Such cases should be considered in accordance with the structural efficiency and other relevant principles.

No maximum limits were set under that principle. It was the ACTU which said that the pilots' claim could not be considered.

The opposition argues that we need a strictly regulated system and that a deregulated system would be inappropriate. I have operated under regulation and deregulation in a multitude of forms since I first started working in the industrial relations field in 1965. I worked with the basic wage and margins, the metal trades work value cases of the 1960s, the establishment of the total wage and the supplementary wage, full indexation, partial indexation, quarterly indexation, annual indexation and no indexation. I have worked with a 3-tiered system, which included the basic wage, the margin and the over-award payments. I was caught up in the round robins when they were going on in the suburbs of Sydney, in the days when unions could be hit very hard with sanctions. I remember when sanctions against the metal trades unions were flowing at the rate of about 1 a minute in the work value cases of the 1960s. None of these systems worked perfectly. That is the lesson to be learned from a study of industrial relations systems: no set of rules works perfectly at all times.

The important thing is the overall trends which emerge in the course of various approaches to industrial relations. The real need for Australia now is to contain the cost of production. At the same time, we need to develop a mechanism whereby Australian industry can become more productive and more efficient. If we can enable employees to improve their standard of living through improved wages and conditions and, at the same time provide a net productivity benefit to the employer, that is a task which we should address. We need to link the wage development process to the improved efficiency of our industry. That happens to be an important principle which has been enunciated by the coalition parties over the last 2 or 3 years.

Members of the opposition really should do their homework because their federal Labor colleagues are slowly being dragged screaming towards a more flexible approach to the industrial relations system. There is a move away from the totally inflexible, fixed national wage decisions and away from the indexation process based on CPI movements, because they were not working.

Mr Ede: That was Fraser's system, not Labor's.

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart continues to demonstrate his ignorance. The cost of living quarterly indexation system came in under the Whitlam government. It was phased out under the Fraser government and reintroduced by the Hawke government. Those are facts of life.

Mr Ede: Fraser had indexation for 3 years.

Mr HATTON: He inherited it from Whitlam. Go and study your history. It was phased out under the Fraser government.

The Labor government is slowly coming to recognise the importance of linking salaries to productivity and efficiency. In May this year, Hon Peter Morris issued a statement entitled 'Award Restructuring - The Task

Ahead'. I will quote from page 7 of the document: 'Negotiations at the industry and award levels need to be complemented by discussions at the enterprise level. It is ultimately at the enterprise level that restructuring agreements will be implemented and the benefits derived. That is the basis of the potential for restructuring and structural efficiency'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our problems arise because we have an overregulated, clumsy system of wage fixing and deals and counter-deals between the federal government and the ACTU. That has confused the daylights out of people this year.

One has to look at industrial relations in the light of its own history: a tradesman working in one factory will look at what he used to get compared to a tradesman in another factory or compared to how much the tradesman's assistant is receiving. A clerk working in one place will look at someone else working somewhere else. They call it comparative wage justice, but this relativities concept is imbedded in Australia. It has to be broken if we are to obtain real efficiency in industry. However, it is still imbedded in the mind of the worker and the trade union official at the grassroots level. I do not say that is the case in the upper levels, but it certainly is at the grassroots level. Workers are still thinking that way.

Over the last 3 or 4 years or so, not only have wage increases been less than inflation, there has been also a compression of relativities. We have seen maximums set for pay increases, in both dollar and percentage terms. If a group of workers such as the pilots formerly received 20% more than another group and then found that they were only receiving 10% more, they would argue that, in terms of their relative standard of living, they were exercising much greater restraint than others. That is the cause of much of the anger of the pilots. The system says that, if you want to address that, the whole industry operation must be made more efficient so that you do not simply add costs. There have to be some structural efficiency negotiations if you want to achieve those goals. The problem is that they have not come to terms with that. The pilots say: 'Just give us 30% and we will be okay'. That is not good enough.

Over the years, I have had considerable respect for the Prime Minister in respect of industrial relations because he has had the sense to understand human nature and behaviour in an industrial dispute. Sometimes, he would sit on the sidelines until everyone had beaten themselves half to death and then come in and make a name for himself. However, he understood the process that was going on. Why, then, did he posture and describe airline pilots as taxi drivers? Why did he tell them to quit and say that pilots could be hired from around the world and that it only takes 8 hours to train a pilot? Does that help the situation? Has he applied his much-renowned ability to negotiate, conciliate and mediate and to try to get the pilots to understand the dynamics of the process and where the opportunities lie for them? No! He postured and inflamed the situation.

He did not try to bring the parties to a logical approach in accordance with the rules set down by the Industrial Relations Commission which enable the system to free itself to meet the competing needs of the employer and the union. The Industrial Relations Commission has done an excellent job in providing a mechanism for that. He is frightened of the ACTU and therefore he postured, drove the pilots out, shut down the airline industry in Australia within 48 hours and talked them into resigning. This man, who is opposed to common law sanctions in industrial disputes, threatens the pilots with common law sanctions. This man has inflamed the situation. He has not sought to

enable due processes of industrial relations to take place by encouraging the parties to sit down and address the problem rationally.

That is why paragraph (4) of the Chief Minister's amendment quite rightly states that we should condemn the federal government for its failure to move constructively to alleviate the problems. It has failed to do that. It has acted destructively. It is playing politics with the welfare and lives of people around the country and it particularly hurts places like the Northern Territory which are on the outer extremities of the mainstream Australian community.

In respect of the new paragraph (3), I maintain that we do have an over-regulated labour market. The system has been far too inflexible in the past. There are attempts to remove the inflexibility but the confusion created by trying to link tax policy with wages policy, of saying that taxes will be reduced if wages are held down, does not allow the true opportunities of structural efficiency to flow through. Enterprise-based negotiations do not occur. The system bogs down and is further confused because of the government's side deals. That makes life very hard for organisations like the Industrial Relations Commission, which cannot properly move in a direction we would all like to see, which involves restructuring the demarcations, artificial restrictions and blockages which are costing Australian industry a poulitce. However, the government cannot do that and then put hobbles around the commission's legs and handcuff its hands behind its back. It has to be able to do it properly.

The government's deals with the ACTU, in its mean-minded jealousy towards people who have developed their skills and are being paid a bit more than the average, are designed to cut down the tall poppies and to bring more highly paid people down to the level of labourers. That is simply wrong. There must be incentive for people to try to improve themselves relative to others. You cannot kill that off. That is where this approach of upper limits is really hurting.

I believe that the new National Wage Guidelines potentially provide an avenue for resolution if the pilots are prepared to abandon their precipitate action. If they were prepared to bring their minds into line with today's thinking on industrial negotiation, if they were prepared to sit down and talk seriously about structural efficiency, if they were prepared to fly for more than 8 hours a week, they could probably obtain an increase of up to 30% at no cost to the airlines. But, the executive of the Australian Federation of Air Pilots has to be honest with its own pilots and say: 'Nothing comes for nothing any more'. The executive of the federation has to be pulled into line to do a decent job for the pilots.

The federal government has done a disgraceful job, the Prime Minister in particular, in dealing with this dispute. He has been provocative in the worst possible way. I have been accused of being provocative from time to time in my career in industrial relations, and I readily admit that at times I have been, but I must say that I have never gone to this extent. The Prime Minister's action is incredible, and he has taken it as the first gambit. The parties have each committed the first error of industrial relations negotiation. They have each made sure that they do not have a back door. There is no room to talk without some blood on the floor.

Mr Dondas: There is something bigger behind that door.

Mr HATTON: And that is a worry, Mr Deputy Speaker. We should be applying the National Wage Guidelines properly.

To summarise, I say that members of the opposition have it all wrong when they promote the cause of a strictly regulated industrial relations environment. They are at odds with the federal government and with the Industrial Relations Commission in promoting that idea. Everyone is moving towards a more deregulated, freer and more flexible approach to industrial relations, within guidelines and principles that enable that to happen. It is a process that we should encourage. However, it is not helped by a federal government that is too busy trying to tie up wages and monetary policies to cover up for the crazy lengths it has gone to with its economic accord. The accord has never been a success yet we are paying for it with \$108 000m of overseas debt and interest rates at 17% to 20%. That is our problem. That is why he is trying to fight this interference with a necessary movement for more flexibility in the wages system and why he is forcing people with home mortgages to pay 17.5%-plus in interest rates.

Mr Smith: What is the connection?

Mr HATTON: You raised the economic accord. That is the cost of the accord to the people of Australia. I am on record as having said that in February 1983.

Clearly, apart from that, we all need to drive ourselves. I support the Chief Minister's amendment and I encourage the Northern Territory government to do whatever it can to alleviate hardship and assist the Northern Territory community to combat the desperate problems that are being caused by this unnecessary national war.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

STATEMENT Report on Safety in Mining Industry

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in February this year, I directed the Mining Board of the Northern Territory to investigate and report on the appropriateness or otherwise of the Mines Safety Control Act. This course was taken following 3 deaths at Northern Territory mining sites during January and February this year. My directive to the Mining Board was that it should advise the government as to whether legislative or policy changes were needed. Mr Speaker, I received the report this week and I will table it today.

In brief, the Mining Board concludes that the fatalities did not occur because of a breakdown in the regime administering safe working conditions on Northern Territory mining sites, and that the provisions of the Mines Safety Control Act 1982 are generally appropriate to administer safety. However, some changes to the application of regulations are recommended, and one such change has already been implemented. As a result of the investigations into the fatality at the Goodall Mine, the Chief Mining Engineer has taken action under section 14 of the Mines Safety Control Act which allows him to impose additional conditions on mining operations. The Chief Mining Engineer has placed more stringent conditions on the use of operating machinery on live stockpiles. The Mining Board also recommends an expansion of safety training at all levels of mining operations. The implementation of this recommendation

is currently being considered by the mining industry and the Department of Mines and Energy.

The report of the Mining Board will be considered fully with a view to changes to the act that might be considered necessary. It is regrettable that the fatalities occurred, but mining is a relatively dangerous occupation and it would simply not be possible to legislate for a framework of conditions which would prevent deaths from occurring.

Finally, honourable members may be aware that another unfortunate fatality occurred at a Territory mining site only last week, when a man died at the White Devil site. This matter has not been addressed in this report, and it will be the subject of separate investigations. When the incident is assessed fully, matters relating to it will be taken into account in conjunction with this report.

Mr Speaker, I table the report of the Mining Board, and move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly on the honourable minister's statement, which he used as a vehicle to deliver the board's report. Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to read the report in the detail that it deserves and therefore my remarks will be confined to a fairly narrow problem that I have with the matter of mines safety control generally. It is a matter that I have raised in this House before and it is a matter that the Chief Executive Officer of the Work Health Authority has raised in the body of this report.

Appendix 5.4.2 is a letter from Jim Moore, the Chief Executive Officer of the Work Health Authority. In paragraph 2 on page 2 of that written submission, he says:

I still believe that the most effective way of ensuring this is to have one overall piece of occupational health and safety legislation covering all workplaces and administered by one independent organisation responsible to one minister.

Mr Speaker, this is a view which I have put to previous ministers responsible for industrial relations. I would be more than prepared to entertain a case put forward by the government for industrial health and safety legislation relating to mines if it applied only to the coalface, to the mining operation. The problem that I have with the present Mines Safety Control Act is that it applies to all work conducted on a mining lease.

For the sake of members who may not remember my words in this House and who may not appreciate the consequences of the definition of 'mines' within the Mines Safety Control Act, it means that the health and safety standards of any person working on a mining site, not necessarily as a miner but perhaps as an electrician, plumber, fitter, driver or clerk, are controlled by the Mines Safety Control Act. In Nhulunbuy, that means that people working in the same occupation in locations only metres apart have their health and safety standards covered by different organisations. For example, the health and safety standards of a clerk working on a mining site are a matter for the Work Health Authority whilst those of another clerk doing the same sort of work in another location only a few metres away are dealt with by another organisation.

To my mind, we must deal with that problem if we are to come to any real solutions in relation to work health and safety standards in the Northern Territory. I repeat that I can realistically entertain an argument that we need a Mines Safety Control Act which applies to people working in the mining industry. Various types of mining can be very specialised. There is working underground as opposed to working in open cut and there are variations in work methods according to the nature of the minerals being extracted. I can understand that there are persons employed by mining companies who are perhaps more qualified and more aware of the specialised nature of that work than a person whom a government department may be able to employ. There may be a very good case for self-regulation of safety standards at the coalface.

Mr Speaker, I do not necessarily insist on being listened to in this House, but could you please ask members opposite at least to cease their chatter. That would assist. Otherwise I will have to raise the decibels again and I do not want to do that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy has a complaint that he is not able to be heard or that no one is listening ...

Mr LEO: I do not care if people do not listen, Mr Speaker. I can put up with that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much chatter on the government benches. I ask that the honourable member be extended the normal courtesies.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I can understand that there may very well be a case for specialist mines safety legislation that applies to people who are involved in the extraction process. In Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt and, I suppose, wherever there are processing operations on mining leases throughout the Northern Territory, the employees on mining leases, be they clerks, electricians, fitters, or plumbers, should not have different mechanisms for controlling safety standards than those applying to other employees - in some cases employed by the same employer - doing similar jobs a few metres away.

It is something on which the Department of Mines and Energy and the minister responsible for the Work Health Authority must reach agreement. It is simply not appropriate for that situation to continue. It is administratively cumbersome and I know that it does not produce the best results for either the employee or the employer. No employee knows where to go for appropriate standards. Employers have the same difficulty, despite some of the correspondence I see and hear from various employers, one being a fairly major employer on the Gove Peninsula. Attempts to obtain information about appropriate standards lead to great confusion. It behoves the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and the Minister for Mines and Energy to reach an agreement on this matter so that employees carrying out the same sort of work in the same industrial environment are covered by the same standards of industrial safety.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT

School Specialisation in the Arts and Other Areas

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, early last month, I addressed the first South-east Asia and Pacific Region of the International Society for Education through Art Congress and the Ninth Australian Institute of Art Education Conference held here in Darwin. Throughout history, the arts and

education have been inseparable. In all societies, determined teachers and astute students have used artistic expression as an important tool in transmitting or receiving information on the world around them. In my address, I referred to an old quotation which says that, through artistic expression, we are holding a mirror up to life. In education, the same principle applies and it is natural that the arts should play an important part in the education process.

In the Territory, we have unique evidence of the educational importance of art and of artistic expression. I am referring to the ancient Aboriginal classrooms, like the one now visited by tourists at Obiri Rock, which are scattered throughout Arnhem Land and the Territory. Paintings used by Aborigines for thousands of years are now an education for tourists, and I think that, when we consider the future of the arts in Territory education, those paintings have a message for us too. The message is that artistic expression is fundamental to human existence. The Kakadu paintings held a mirror up to the life of traditional Aboriginal people which was used for thousands of years in the process of learning. To enhance the arts in our education system today, we must ensure that the same vitality exists in the way our students benefit through artistic expression.

For example, the Northern Territory was one of the first Australian states or Territories to include the arts as part of the core curriculum for Years 1 to 10. The decision provided for the development of a full curriculum, the recruitment of specialised staff and the provision of basic facilities. This is a significant achievement and has provided a firm base for an improved performance and genuine interest in the arts among Territory students. However, initiatives of this sort guarantee only that all students receive an important grounding in the arts as part of their education. For students who respond that those initiatives, we need to be able to offer ways of developing their skills to the full and a system that will encourage them to do so.

I acknowledge that, as we are about to enter the 1990s, the Northern Territory has some way to go to catch up to the rest of Australia in the arts. That is nothing surprising given our remote location and some of the other factors which apply, such as our small population spread over such a large area - some 1 600 000 km². In education, I believe this artistic shortfall is not as severe as in the other parts of our society. That is due largely to the dedication of individual teachers and students who work in their schools to develop an enthusiasm for the arts which is reflected in our society as a whole. There are schools in which teachers, students and parents are contributing to lift existing programs beyond the average, extending participants to new levels of excellence. In the arts, they are specialising in photography, brass, woodwind or stringed instruments, theatre, sculpture or some other talent. Outside the arts, there is an extended range of talents, opportunities and contributors providing a base for further specialisation.

Today, I want to address ways of building on the solid contribution being made by these teachers and students. I will outline a scheme which will provide them with encouragement and resources with which they will be able to extend their contribution to achieve long-term benefit for young individuals and society as a whole. When the government released its 'Towards the 90s' documents which proposed changes to education in the Territory, a major initiative was the introduction of school improvement plans in which school communities would set their own priorities and goals. It was disappointing to see the crush of political manoeuvring as various interest groups grappled to squeeze 'Towards the 90s' for a few political points in their favour. As a

consequence, work on school improvement plans, which were the centrepiece of 'Towards the 90s', was pushed to one side. It was reassuring when the idea of school improvement plans received widespread enthusiastic support in the community and it was pleasing to see the Council of Government School Organisations working to provide school councils with more information on the subject at the recent seminar in Katherine.

Today, I would like to point out that special opportunities and advantages will be created by school communities when they choose to implement a school improvement plan. Under the scheme, schools will be able to develop an area of speciality which, through consultation with the department, sustained commitment and ministerial approval, may be fixed into their school structure.

It is important to understand that I am not proposing that every school should adopt an area of speciality. Far from it. Some schools are deeply involved in programs designed to maximise the options for students through vertical timetables and other initiatives. Others are heavily immersed in the management of school resources for the maximum benefit through powers devolved under the school council regulations. It is important that, at least initially, we look to giving recognition to specialisation in key schools only. I refer to those in which existing programs are proving most successful. As these programs develop, guidelines and procedures will develop to allow others to become involved.

In schools where an area of speciality is established, it will be promoted in the wider community, resourced and staffed depending on the nature of the program and its stage of development. Teachers who have a special interest corresponding with the area of speciality adopted by a particular school will be urged to become involved. It is vital that, having taken on an interest, schools continue to develop their expertise for the benefit of their students. Measures to guard against any adverse impact caused by the occasional, inevitable loss of key staff will be necessary. Students and parents will be able to take these specialities into account when they consider their participation in education.

In my discussion today, I am highlighting the arts because I believe it is an area which will gain significantly through the introduction of such a process of specialisation. I believe the arts is an area which deserves special attention under the scheme. However, there is no reason why a school should not specialise in a sport, in Asian or Aboriginal languages, science or even mechanics. In Towards the 90s, the Territory government endorsed the formation of stronger industry links with schools and I would urge business groups to take a closer look at developments in this area. There will be areas in which mutual benefit can be gained from corporate involvement through sponsorship or other forms of assistance. An example that comes to mind here is at the Jabiru Area school where excellent links have been forged with the Ranger Uranium Mine. These provide students with access to areas of study in science that are unique and of tremendous benefit to students in a small community who do not always have access to the full range of courses available in Darwin or Alice Springs.

In the arts, the recent sponsorship link between the school production, 'The Beat', and the oil company, Santos, has complemented extensive community support for the annual project, especially that received from Rotary clubs. The Santos contribution has helped develop an even greater sense of professionalism among the performers. It has provided a much-needed boost in levels of funding, a greater range of equipment and resources and added responsibility in directing the production to a commercial budget.

The problem is that many informal schemes are driven by the enthusiasm of individual teachers, parents or students and, as quickly as they appear, they often fade away. I have no doubt that teachers, who go out of their way to foster a special interest in students, become frustrated when they encounter difficulties in finding sufficient resources to continue. That is where the school improvement plan comes in.

From the information provided in 'Towards the 90s', members would be aware that each school improvement plan will be updated regularly by the school council. In updating that plan, a council which has adopted the policy of specialisation will be able to direct the progress of the scheme in consultation with school staff, students and the Department of Education. I am not proposing that schools opting to specialise will gain access to a huge bucketful of money or resources overnight. Nor am I indicating that these schools will lose resources in other areas or that the existing levels of support outside the area of specialisation will be undermined. I am proposing the steady development of specialisation through a staged improvement in resources at an individual school. Progress will be governed by goals set and achieved through the school improvement plans endorsed by the school community, the department and the minister.

It goes without saying that, in the Territory or in any other part of Australia, a child's first opportunity for regular participation in the arts is likely to be at school. I believe that, in the Territory, we must work to make sure that, when our young people first experience the arts, whether it be in musical experimentation, through school visits by theatre groups, or classroom art or drama, the result should be as positive as possible. But, another important facet is the need to provide students with the prospect of artistic opportunity on the local scene, the need for students to be able to see opportunities for a career in art or for a lifelong involvement at the high-quality amateur or semi-professional level. The process of seeking a future on stage, on screen or in the studio can seem daunting enough to students in Australia's major population areas but, in the Territory, the possibility seems doubly difficult. Nevertheless, we cannot simply artificially create a culture base with high levels of artistic participation. That is why we will have to be very careful in the way we go about establishing areas of specialisation within schools.

It will be important that the schools with areas of specialisation be developed with a broader view in mind. The nature of specialisation adopted by an individual school must complement the other programs of this sort in schools serving the community. To achieve this, the system of specialisation will be coordinated by the Department of Education to achieve the best result. It will be necessary to develop this program as a partnership in which school communities cooperate closely with the department. Further coordination will be required to ensure that the opportunities for student involvement in the scheme are maximised. For example, in music, it is natural to assume that if 1 school specialises in brass and another in strings, the 2 should get together regularly to practise and take their skills further.

At this point, a recent event is worthy of note. I refer to the recent Territory tour conducted by the Tableland Youth Music Council from Far North Queensland. With sponsorship from 6 different commercial interests, the 41-member Atherton Tableland Area Band travelled to centres as far from their home as Darwin. The band was made up of students from 10 schools scattered throughout the Atherton Tableland and the quality of their presentation was extremely high. The tourists were guests at the Darwin Youth Music Camp this year and I believe that there are aspects of their Youth Music

Council which could be of significant benefit to schools operating within the new structure that I am proposing.

As we develop the scheme, joint participation must be a regular occurrence and, through the process of coordination, it should be extended to other groups in the community which share a complementing interest. To use the musical analogy again, it would be reasonable for schools to work with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra or for school musicians to work on the musical score for a production at the Araluen Arts Centre. Although centres of population in the Territory have a much smaller artistic infrastructure than the larger centres in the south, that infrastructure will grow with the Territory.

It is from community groups such as the Darwin City Band, the Alice Springs Art Foundation or the Darwin Chorale that this infrastructure will grow. By urging schools to develop specialisation in areas of the arts, we will provide a solid foundation for this growth. By linking work in schools to the projects of community groups, we will provide young talented Territorians with greater incentive and reward for their talent. We will also provide them with an improved perspective of opportunities for a career in the arts and greater wherewithal to pursue such a career.

In this regard, we took a great step forward recently with the establishment of the Northern Territory University. Although it is still in its early days, I believe it has great potential. I am looking forward to discussing the future of the arts in our higher education system with the University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Malcolm Nairn, at the earliest opportunity. I am sure that the university will be keen to exploit its unique location and environment to develop new artistic links with Asia and with traditional Aboriginal culture. I would hope that, as we develop these opportunities to complement the great deal of cross-cultural work already being undertaken in Territory primary and secondary schools, we will discover new potential in art forms not seen elsewhere in Australia. As a result, the range of opportunity will broaden significantly.

Meanwhile, we are all aware that the pressures of education systems are many and varied. In recent times, immense pressure has been generated as the community seeks greater accountability from the education system. That is not surprising. Educational standards are under attack from the media and public figures. Even the Prince of Wales was reported, on Australian radio and in the newspapers, complaining that his staff could not write the Queen's English. In Australia, there is a perception among some educators that, as ministers and bureaucrats respond to feelings in the community by seeking to go back to the basics in education, the arts is one important area which will be left behind. I disagree. In fact, in my view, the current changes are a challenge which we must meet through creativity.

Earlier, I stated my view that, in education, we cannot promote the arts by prescribing a small dose for everybody. It is also true that, in education, we cannot promote the arts by creating a bigger artistic bureaucracy. What we will need is community support, the backing of teachers, parents, students and some desirable involvement from industry to aim for gradual improvements through a long-term plan.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable minister for giving me a copy of his statement yesterday so that I was able to study it overnight and prepare a response. First of all, I would again like to place on record

our support for school improvement plans. I think that most schools worth their salt had plans in some sort of format before these began to be promoted in 'Towards the 90s'. However, if the need to develop them in a structured form leads to some sort of negotiating process between the government and the school, perhaps through a mutual commitment and the locking-in of resources, that is a considerable improvement on the situation in which items on wish lists are pursued with no hope of achieving funding.

Obviously, it is important in a community such as ours to develop links between community and the schools in relation to the arts. I am rather concerned, however, about the minister's view that support for the arts cannot be spread too thinly. I believe that there is a need for an arts component in every school curriculum. It may not have to be part of the core curriculum, but there certainly needs to be an opportunity for students to have some exposure to the arts. I certainly never had such exposure during my school life ...

Mr Collins: It shows.

Mr EDE: As the member for Sadadeen says, it probably shows. I have often envied people who are able to gain enjoyment from their appreciation of paintings, opera and other art forms which are completely inaccessible to me but which might not be so inaccessible if I had been exposed to those things earlier in life. All we had in the bush was poetry and reading. Whilst they are a bridge between the arts and other areas, they were all we had.

In responding to the minister's statement, I must raise the boring old question: where is the money coming from? There has been a history of cuts, changed funding arrangements and altered priorities. It is absolutely essential that we do not raise the expectations of students, have them commence programs in the expectation that they will continue for 4 or 5 years and then find that the programs are dropped because student numbers or teacher numbers are insufficient or resources are unavailable because the courses have gone out of fashion. I know that my colleague the member for MacDonnell has spoken at length on previous occasions about problems of this nature in relation to language programs. It is not fair to have students commence a program and then to have to abandon it suddenly because other students are not prepared to continue.

We already have teacher shortages in subjects such as maths, English and science. I worry about whether the department will be able to find the staff to provide the specialist instruction and assistance in these specialised arts programs which will differ from one school to another. I would like to know in that context whether there are plans to ensure that schools which opt for specialisation in the arts will have some sort of guarantee of teacher numbers and specialists in order to implement their programs. Will that be worked out in advance with the schools and will there be cast-iron guarantees or will schools be told that, because they opted for the arts, other subjects such as maths, English, science etc, will be affected?

I would also like to know just how this will affect comprehensive high schools in places such as Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and other rural centres. How will specialisation affect them, given that they are the only schools available to students in those centres? On what basis will they specialise when students have no alternative option? The same applies to primary schools in the rural areas. If they opt for a certain area of specialisation, is that the only option available for the total community? With the passage of time, as other students and parents become involved, the community may not agree

with the goals set by the school body - parents, teachers and students - which actually made the decision.

When he sums up in reply, I would like the minister to explain how this fits into the feeder area concept. It seems to me that the program is mainly directed at Darwin schools and, to a lesser extent, Alice Springs schools. I will give an example of what I mean. A child might live in Braitling, which is part of the Anzac Hill High School feeder area. That child might want to specialise in a branch of the arts which was only available at Alice Springs High School. Does this mean that the feeder area system will break down as people make decisions about the schools they wish to attend on the basis of the specialty subjects taught there? If that feeder area system breaks down, what effect will that have on the bus system, the 2 km rule and so on? I would like the minister to respond to those queries. I do not want to appear critical. I am glad that he had made this statement. I am very interested to see him taking on a matter such as this. Without being churlish, I must admit that I am surprised. I am now seeing another side of the honourable minister.

Mr Collins: You should hear him sing.

Mr EDE: Yes, I have heard that he sings.

Mr Speaker, I will be interested to hear his responses. There are some noble words in the statement. The minister also observed that he has 'no doubt that teachers who go out of their way to foster a special interest in students become frustrated when they encounter difficulties in finding sufficient resources to continue'. That is the absolute truth and it is crucial. Teachers experience very real frustration in such cases.

Frequently, they try to inculcate more than just the basics. They see a student who has genuine interest and talent and they work to develop the student's abilities only to be confronted with continual frustration because resources are lacking. Often, teachers know that the student cannot continue to progress within a given school or even if the student moves to another school. Teachers may themselves be moving on at the end of the year and be aware that there will be no one else to continue working with the student. Those sorts of problems have stifled many a young Caruso or, indeed, a young Einstein here and there.

At a time when young people are ready to flower and make huge strides in their skills and abilities, problems within the education system frequently stifle them. That saddens many teachers and, indeed, drives many teachers away from education. Teachers gain a large degree of satisfaction from looking at such students and watching them perform and develop. If they feel that they have fostered such development in students and are able to see the results of that in later years, it is often worth more to them than any amount of money. It is sad when you see people getting out of teaching because of that.

I thank the honourable minister for his statement. I will be interested to hear his answers on some of the questions that I have raised. Overall, I can do nothing but commend the statement.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

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

Noes 9

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

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Taxation (Administration) Bill (Serial 216) and Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 217) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage, and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 216) STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 217)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

These bills introduce amendments to the Stamp Duty legislation to implement the measures that I outlined in my budget speech. First, the rate of duty applying to conveyances will be increased. The current rate of conveyance duty for conveyances exceeding \$150 000 is 3.5% and for that for conveyances exceeding \$500 000 is 4%. These rates will be increased to 4% and 5% respectively.

Secondly, the present \$1000 ceiling on the amount of duty to be paid under item 16 covering motor vehicle certificates of registration is removed by the amendments. Duty will not be assessed on the full market value of all vehicles. The rate of duty on the transfer of marketable securities is, by this amending legislation, increased to 60% per \$100 which is the same rate as that imposed by other jurisdictions.

After reviewing changes in court fees in the states and as a consequence of recent amendments to the small claims legislation which expanded the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court, it was determined necessary to revise the duty to be paid on documents initiating actions in the various Territory courts. This duty is similar to the court fees charged in the states. The duty to be paid in the Small Claims Court is changed from a flat \$5 to a stepped scale related to the amount which is the subject of the action. For actions for amounts less than \$100, there will be no duty payable. However, for actions for more than \$99 but less than \$2000, the duty will be \$10. For those greater than \$1999 but less than \$3000, it will be \$20, with the maximum amount payable being \$40 for actions between \$3999 and \$5000. The rate of duty for documents initiating actions in other Territory courts is also varied to maintain relativity and to reflect similar charges in the states. The full details are spelled out in the amendment of the schedule to the Stamp Duty Act.

As has already been announced, certain stamp duties are to be abolished on the introduction of a financial institutions duty. These bills amend the stamp duty legislation by abolishing duty on credit card transactions, hire-purchase agreements and certain bills of exchange subject to and on the commencement of liability under the proposed financial institutions duty legislation.

Consequential amendments are to be made to the Taxation (Administration) Act to provide for the administration of the Financial Institutions Duty Act, and to reflect any administrative variations flowing from the abolition of the duties mentioned, and to pick up the changes in rates. The secrecy provisions of the act was strengthened to ensure confidentiality of information obtained from financial institutions. Amendments have also been made as a consequence of the incorporation of the Australian Stock Exchange Limited. In particular, the bills extend some definitions to ensure compatibility with the propose Financial Institutions Duty Act. Transitional arrangements contained in the legislation will help smooth the implementation of the changes.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadow a motion to suspend standing orders to pass these bills through all stages during these sittings. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 218)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to implement certain measures in the budget speech. It has been necessary to increase the licence fees for both petroleum and tobacco. However, these increases have been kept to a minimum and, in the case of petroleum, the Territory fee is still lower than its counterparts in the states.

The tobacco sellers' licence fee will rise to 40%. The petroleum sellers' licence fee will be 4¢ per litre, a rise of 0.5¢. At the same time, the level of payment made to those persons who use distillate for off-road purposes has been reviewed. From 1 September 1989, the payment will be 3¢ per litre

instead of the current amount of 3.5¢ per litre. This measure will help spread the revenue burden more equitably across the community.

The amendments will have immediate effect. However, because of the manner of assessment of fees under the act, a transitional period is included to enable licensees to make appropriate adjustments to their charging procedures. The regulations are amended by the bill to put in place certain arrangements to reduce the administrative costs to licensees and to enable the payment of the 3¢ rebate to persons who use diesel fuel for a purpose other than propelling a diesel-engined road vehicle.

The bill also amends the regulations, with effect from 26 July 1989 to coincide with the commencement of the previous amendment to this act, to provide licensees with an opportunity to enter into an arrangement with another person for that person to pay fees on their behalf. Where such an arrangement is made, that will be recognised by the commissioner as sufficient compliance by the licensee with the relevant requirements under the act. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr Speaker, I also foreshadow that I will move, during the course of these sittings, a motion to suspend standing orders to pass this bill through all stages at these sittings.

Debate adjourned.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS DUTY BILL
(Serial 219)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill introduces the levy on financial institutions which I announced in the budget speech. The Territory has been assessed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission as having a capacity to collect revenue from such a levy and this legislation will meet the commission's assessment of a reasonable revenue effort in this area. The duty is not unfamiliar to financial institutions as similar forms of duty exist in the Australian Capital Territory and all states but Queensland. In its basic form, the levy has been recognised by the commercial sector as a more equitable form of taxation than many of the existing stamp duties which are less neutral and less efficient.

To some extent, Territory residents undoubtedly have already been exposed to the duty through interstate dealings and because major financial institutions generally spread their costs across their entire Australian operations. I believe that the Northern Territory legislation will produce a more equitable result than that in most jurisdictions. In the form introduced, it will be possible to minimise the administrative costs of implementation and operation.

Financial institution duty is to some extent a substitute for some stamp duties. Recognising this and to avoid double duty which may occur in certain areas with the introduction of this new levy, the government has decided to abolish duty on credit card transactions, hire purchase arrangements and certain bills of exchange. These duties will be abolished as from 1 December 1989 at which time first liability will arise for financial institutions to pay the new levy.

In many states, the neutrality and equity of the duty has been eroded by the introduction of artificial constraints on the institutions and concessions to certain organisations. This causes avoidance of tax and increased administrative costs for both the Taxes Office and the financial institutions paying the tax. After careful consideration, it has been concluded that, by eliminating concessions and other distortionary factors, all those who ultimately pay the tax will benefit. Minimising the cost of administration and avoidance means that financial institutions' charges can be expected to be lower and the tax rate can also be lower than would otherwise be possible. In most instances, the exposure to financial institutions duty by organisations of a benevolent character will be minimal.

As I have pointed out, the Grants Commission has assessed the Territory as having a capacity similar to the states with a most common rate of duty in those jurisdictions being 0.03% or 3¢ on a \$100 deposit. However, in view of the minimisation of administrative and avoidance costs under the Territory Act, the Territory duty has been set at the rate of 0.025%. Perhaps the most important factors to note about this form of tax are that, unlike those stamp duties it replaces, its impact is spread over a broad cross-section of the community and it is a relatively efficient form of tax.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the specific clauses of the bill. It is proposed that the act will be commenced immediately it receives assent. However, while the commencement will enable the appropriate administrative arrangements to be put in place, there will be no liability to pay the tax until 1 December 1989. From that date, all receipts from relevant financial institutions will attract a duty of 0.025%. The December start date will give financial institutions time to put appropriate administrative arrangements in place. As the system is one of self-assessment, the duty is to be paid by way of a return, with the first return due to be lodged by 21 January 1990.

Clause 3 sets out the definitions of significant words and phrases contained in the bill. Of particular importance are the definitions of 'financial institutions', 'receipt' and 'provision of finance'.

Clause 4, by incorporating this act with the Taxation (Administration) Act, provides for the Commissioner of Taxes to administer the act. Certain provisions of the Taxation (Administration) Act under which the commissioner is appointed will apply to the operation of the financial institutions duty. These aspects will be spelt out later in advices to all relevant financial institutions. The duty will be assessed on all receipts of money in the Territory by relevant institutions. The bill makes it clear that money includes certain substitutes for money. However, when a cheque is cashed or a cheque is issued for cash, the financial institutions will not, in most circumstances, be regarded as having received money. Where money is received by a financial institution for transmission interstate, the receipt of that money will be dutiable in the Northern Territory. The government has followed the practice adopted by South Australia in this respect. Activity initiated in the Territory is regarded as establishing the proper nexus with the Territory for the application of duty. Significant amounts of revenue would otherwise be lost to the eastern states because the majority of the short-term money markets and institutions are located in or have their head offices in those states.

Certain technical receipts which would otherwise be dutiable, such as the correction of an entry error, or to an account as a consequence of a dishonoured cheque, or being a payment of certain pensions, will be non-dutiable. It has been the practice in other jurisdictions for a

concessional rate of duty to be applied to receipts arising out of certain short-term money market dealings. As with the states, the concessional rate of duty for these receipts will be 0.005%. However, this concessional rate will apply only where the relevant transaction generates deposits greater than \$50 000. As with similar provisions in state legislation, there is also a time constraint and the transactions are limited to those which are repaid in a period of no more than 185 days. The provisions for short-term money market dealings are contained in part III.

The bill recognises not only those who are full-time dealers in the short-term money market, but also those other organisations such as trading firms whose money market activity represents only a small part of their total business, but who nevertheless place considerable amounts of money on the market. These financial institutions which participate in the short-term money market, as in other jurisdictions, will be able to open special accounts. These accounts are limited in scope and can be used only for the short-term money dealing activity of those organisations.

Pastoral finance companies which are usually engaged in the supply of goods to pastoral areas, in view of their limited financial activity, are deemed not to be financial institutions. There will be, however, a discretion for the minister to declare institutions to be financial institutions for the purposes of the act, if that becomes necessary.

The act will require financial institutions to register with the Taxes Office. To ensure that financial institutions which do not register do not gain an advantage over those which comply with the law, the bill contains a number of anti-avoidance provisions. Persons who make payments to unregistered financial institutions will themselves be liable to pay the duty the institution would otherwise have had to pay. At the same time, the unregistered organisation will be liable to prosecution.

As under tax legislation, a taxpayer who is dissatisfied with a decision made by the commissioner may have that decision reviewed. These provisions are contained in the Taxation (Administration) Act which spells out the objections and appeals provisions which can be availed of by a taxpayer. Finally, the bill enables regulations to be made to ensure the effective operation of the legislation, and transitional provisions have been provided to help smooth the introduction of this duty. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

HUMAN TISSUE TRANSPLANT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 222)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the House concerns an urgent minor amendment to the Human Tissue Transplant Act which is necessary to ensure the continued participation of the Territory in national transplant programs. The act currently requires that, before organs can be removed from the body of a prospective donor who is on life support, a written certificate that all function of the donor's brain has ceased must be given by 2 medical practitioners. Both practitioners must have practised medicine for at least 5 years and 1 must be a specialist neurologist or neurosurgeon.

The requirement that 1 of the medical practitioners be a specialist neurologist or neurosurgeon is considered too restrictive as there are other specialists who possess adequate training and expertise to undertake the neurological tests necessary to determine whether all function of the brain has ceased. For example, the specialist anaesthetist in charge of the Intensive Care Unit at Royal Darwin Hospital would be one such specialist. Also, this requirement cannot be met in the Territory context as there are no specialist neurologists or neurosurgeons resident here.

Clause 2 of the bill amends section 21(1) of the Human Tissue Transplant Act so that specialist anaesthetists, general surgeons and physicians will be included in the categories of specialists required to certify death in these cases. Specialists in these categories are considered to have the level of training and expertise necessary. The other requirements in the act, that the medical practitioners must have at least 5 years practice experience and the practitioner who is to perform the surgery to remove the organs is not permitted to certify death of the donor, will remain unaltered.

Although the Human Tissue Transplant Act was enacted some years ago, the Territory only recently has been able to participate in national transplant programs. This is because the technology necessary to maintain the viability of organs such as kidneys during transport over the long distances from the Territory to southern capital cities where the transplant operations are carried out has only recently been developed. The amendment proposed in this bill is necessary to avoid detriment to the many Australians, including Territorians, who are waiting for suitable organs for transplant to become available. I refer particularly to those suffering from kidney disease who depend on dialysis for survival until donor kidneys are found.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadow that I propose to seek a suspension of standing orders during the course of these sittings to ensure the passage of this bill, and I am sure honourable members will give us their support for that because of its important humane functions.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 221)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to update the act, reflecting changing community needs since it was first introduced in 1979, and to improve its administration. First, the definition of 'Territory motor vehicle' in section 4 of the act is amended to allow such vehicles as overseas military transport and overseas tourist vehicles to pay a contribution to the fund without having the need to register. These particular vehicles retain the registration of their places of origin and are granted exemption by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles from having to re-register in the Territory. However, a contribution under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act is required in respect of such vehicles.

The next amendment deals with section 8 of the act which provides that a person may be treated as a resident of the Territory if, at the date of the accident, the person could show that, if not for the accident he or she would

have resided in the Territory for a period exceeding 6 months. This is to be amended to make it consistent with section 4 which sets the period needed to qualify as a resident of the Territory at 3 months.

The next area dealt with by the bill relates to section 12(2) which provides that the board may terminate or refuse a benefit if a claimant fails to attend a medical examination by a medical practitioner nominated by the board. The amendment has extended this section to provide that the board may terminate or refuse benefits where a claimant refuses to cooperate in a reasonable rehabilitation program and also clarifies that a payment which has been suspended because of non-compliance may be reinstated at the discretion of the board.

Finally, the amendment to this section allows the board to require medical reports from time to time in order to maintain a claim, rather than medical certificates. It also specifies that a duly signed medical authority - that is, an authority to release medical information - remains in force until revoked by the applicant or finalisation of the claim.

Section 13 of the act is amended to clarify the original intention that section 13 benefits are not payable to persons in receipt of the aged pension. Currently, females may opt to receive the aged pension at age 60 and, theoretically, can receive both benefits. It must be emphasised that the denial of section 13 benefits does not affect a person's right to receive other benefits under the act, such as medical and rehabilitation costs etc.

The next amendment relates to section 17 which provides compensation for loss of limb and residual disability. Currently, payments are made under a limited 'table of maims'. The schedule and percentages were originally determined from similar legislation used in the 1970s. However, it has been recognised that such a schedule does not compensate all types of injury; for example, brain damage and internal injuries. In recent times, considerable use is being made of the 'American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment Vol II (AMA Tables)'. These cover a much wider range of injuries and, within each injury category, allow a more accurate and more standardised evaluation to be undertaken. Similar tables are used under the Work Health Act and various other compensation legislation elsewhere in Australia. These graduated payments and minimum threshold are to be placed in the regulations to allow for ongoing evaluation and adjustment as necessary.

This bill also introduces a new section 18A which provides that a contribution may be made towards the cost of attendant care for seriously injured persons. This section was introduced to cater for persons suffering quadriplegia, paraplegia or serious head injuries, who have been encouraged to live as independently as possible in their own homes, having had special facilities and equipment installed. To date, these costs have been met from funds provided under section 18, but are limited to the specified amount. The new section has been introduced to make a contribution towards attendant care costs and is intended to supplement other sources of assistance available through family and voluntary organisations.

To qualify for benefits under the new section, the person needs to have suffered an impairment of at least 85%. The benefit will be limited to 20 hours per week at, initially, \$10 per hour. These figures are to be placed in the regulations for ease of review. The benefits will be payable, as necessary, up to the age of 65. The existing section 18 will remain to meet medical and rehabilitation expenses and short-term attendant care costs.

The amendment to section 19 is administrative and removes the figure of \$20 000 from the act and places it in the regulations. Likewise, the amendment to section 20 is administrative and repeals the definition of 'average income' which is not now needed following previous amendments to the act.

The bill also introduces a new section 5. This limits the amount that may be claimed for pain and suffering by non-residents of the Territory involved in accidents in the Territory to a figure no more than double that allowed under section 17. This is seen as necessary in protecting the scheme from an increased exposure to common law claims from non-residents. At the end of the 1988-89 financial year, a total of \$11.7m in claims was received by the scheme and \$4.27m was common law claims. Of this, \$2.4m was incurred by non-residents. It should be stressed that the limit will only affect large claims for non-economic loss, that is pain and suffering etc, and will not limit claims in such areas as past economic loss, future economic loss and medical expenses. Various states have already moved to limit pain and suffering payments as follows: South Australia has a maximum of \$60 000, New South Wales \$180 000 and Victoria \$200 000.

Various amendments have been made to section 14 of the act, mainly to update the section, bringing it in line with present day values and to make section 13 benefits more equitable for young persons. The first amendment alters reference to 'wage earners of the same sex' to now read 'wage earners', bringing this section into line with section 13 which was amended in 1986 to make no distinction between male and female entitlements. The second amendment simplifies administration of payment of amending references to 'year of life' to now read 'age'.

The third amendment allows young persons, who have dependants and who now receive benefits on a graduated scale, to receive full section 13 benefits instead. A further amendment allows the minimum age of entitlement to young persons to be reduced from 16 to 15. This is considered necessary as, under certain circumstances, such as apprenticeship, young persons may now leave school at age 15. Finally, under this section, full section 13 benefits are to be paid at age 21, as opposed to age 25, which is now regarded as inappropriate bearing in mind that a person may earn an adult wage from the age of 21.

The final amendment in this bill is to section 18(4) of the act and repeals section 18(4)(A), paragraphs (i) and (ii), which refer to eligible pensioners and disadvantaged persons under the now repealed Commonwealth legislation. This section was introduced in July 1981 to enable the TIO to pay hospital charges for such persons. However, the need to provide specifically for these classes of persons ceased in February 1984 with the introduction of Medicare and the situation reverted to that before July 1981, whereby no charges could be raised in Northern Territory hospitals with respect to motor accident victims.

I would like to announce that, in an addition to these amendments to the act, the government proposes to make some considerable increases to the prescribed amounts payable under the Motor Accident Compensation Benefit Regulations, in some cases up to 500%. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Justices (Subsequential Amendment) Bill (Serial 211) and the Police Administration (Subsequential Amendment) Bill (Serial 210): (a) being presented and read a first time together and a motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

JUSTICES (SUBSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT) BILL

(Serial 211)

POLICE ADMINISTRATION (SUBSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT) BILL

(Serial 210)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of these bills is to make quite clear the government's determination that police officers will have adequate powers to deal with domestic violence situations under the new legislation. Honourable members will recall that, in the February sittings, a series of amendments commonly referred to as the 'Domestic Violence Bills' were passed by this House. Two of those bills, the Police Administration Amendment Bill and the Justices Amendment Bill, contained specific powers authorising police to: (a) enter premises where they reasonably believed that a person had been injured or a restraint order breached; and (b) to remove and detain a person whilst seeking a restraint order where injury had occurred or was likely to occur. When this legislation was being formulated, it was always the government's intention that, in both circumstances, police would have a clear right of entry to gain access to the victim or offender and that they would be able to use reasonable force, if necessary, to do so. Whilst it was my understanding, and I dare say everyone else's at the time, that the bills reflected that position, recent advice from the Solicitor General indicates that that is not so.

Dealing firstly with the power of entry under section 126(2A) of the Police Administration Act, the Solicitor General has stated unequivocally that, in its present form, police do not have authority to use reasonable force to enter premises and that the section will need amendment to allow for this. Accordingly, the Police Administration (Subsequential Amendment) Bill simply seeks to rectify this deficiency.

If the government were to leave the section as it is, it would be ignoring the reality that, in the majority of instances, the power of entry and the use of reasonable force, however unpalatable it may be to some, go hand in glove. In other words, on most occasions when police need to enter premises, they will be admitted voluntarily, which is very much the position with our own police force today. However, when they need to resort to their powers of entry, reasonable force is inevitably required to overcome such problems as persons barring their way, doors being closed in their faces or people simply refusing to open the door when called upon. Further, the intent of the section is clearly to allow police to gain access to and help the victims of domestic violence. To deny them the ability to use reasonable force would fly in the face of the rationale behind giving them the power of entry in the

first place. It is for these reasons that the government has brought forward this amendment and I commend that bill to honourable members as common sense.

The Justices (Subsequential Amendment) Bill is founded on somewhat similar grounds. In this instance, section 100AD(1) of the Justices Act authorises police to remove and detain a person whilst seeking a restraint order from a magistrate. The power can only be used where police reasonably believe that the victim will be physically harmed or further injured if the offender is allowed to remain in the premises. The Solicitor General's advice in this instance is that, although the section does not give police a specific power to enter premises to remove and detain the offender, he is of the view that such a power of entry can be implied in the section. Nevertheless, he suggests that, to put the issue beyond doubt, it may be appropriate to legislate a specific right of entry for police when using their powers under the section. Again, in this instance, I consider that the bill put forward in response to the Solicitor General's advice makes sense.

Mr Speaker, I again foreshadow a motion for the suspension of standing orders to pass the legislation promptly. I do this somewhat sadly because I find suspensions for such purposes generally objectionable. I conduct the affairs of government primarily on the basis of avoiding such an action. However, in this case, we have legislation which underwent a very lengthy period of debate and extensive consultation right across the Territory. All sorts of groups were involved and it was somewhat controversial at times. However, the Assembly eventually passed the legislation with quite widespread support on the floor of the House 1 or 2 sittings ago. It has been a great disappointment to me that this matter has not come into force across the Territory. It is unique legislation and its implementation will be watched by other states who may well follow suit.

I foreshadow to honourable members that we will be seeking suspension of standing orders during these sittings to allow this almost technical matter to be clarified so that the legislation can be commenced in the Territory. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS IN MOTOR VEHICLES
AND OTHER GOODS BILL
(Serial 224)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, I have the pleasure today of introducing legislation eagerly awaited by consumers, motor vehicle dealers and financiers alike. The bill has 2 purposes. The first is to protect the consumer who has purchased a motor vehicle from subsequently having it taken away because the previous owner had outstanding financial commitments on it. The second is to provide an effective means to help financiers protect their interests. The legislation will also provide scope for other goods to be given similar protection over time. Two further bills, the Hire-Purchase Bill and the Instruments Bill, are expected to be introduced at the next Assembly sittings with minor related amendments to allow the implementation of the scheme.

This bill is based on the New South Wales Registration of Interest in Goods Act 1986. This is because of our intention to participate in the New South Wales Register of Encumbered Vehicles Scheme (REVS) along with the ACT rather than create and operate a separate Northern Territory scheme. The main differences between the New South Wales legislation and this bill are to cover minor differences between legal provisions, to provide for disputes involving the Northern Territory to be addressed locally, to provide for an agreement with New South Wales to operate under its scheme and to give scope for the Northern Territory to recognise schemes in other states.

We have chosen to join with the New South Wales scheme for some very practical reasons. Firstly, inquiries will automatically cover some 40% of the vehicles in Australia, as against 1% if it were a local scheme. Also, it will be considerably cheaper to operate than to set up and operate a separate Northern Territory scheme with its own data programs, account systems, staff and offices. Dealings within the NSW encumbrance office will normally be by telephone or computer facility and will not require a front counter service. The cost of an STD phone call to Sydney will be borne by the Northern Territory user and is cheap insurance against repossession of a vehicle once purchased.

It will be a full user-pays system operating on a commercial basis. This is in preference to burdening the taxpayer with hidden subsidies and unnecessary cost. Northern Territory participation in the NSW scheme, along with the ACT, will be an important step towards a full national system over time.

The new amendments will also remove the need for the Registrar-General to maintain a record of bills of sale for motor vehicles or, over time, other goods covered by the legislation. Currently, about 95% of the bills of sale on his records relate to motor vehicles. Further, the information as to whether a particular vehicle is encumbered will be in a much more accessible form than at present. It is currently recorded on a manual basis and it can be very difficult and time consuming to use. Checking the status of a particular vehicle under the current NSW scheme will only take the time of a phone call.

While I and my department have the responsibility for setting up the scheme within the Northern Territory, the ongoing responsibility will be with the Attorney-General through the Registrar-General, as is the case for other Northern Territory security registration laws. Matters affecting the Northern Territory that cannot be resolved by the New South Wales REVS office will be referred to the Registrar-General. Provision is made for any appeals against his decisions to be referred to the Local Court - that is, to a Northern Territory magistrate. I should add that NSW's experience to date, and that of other states, most of which have been operating for over 3 years, indicate that only a handful of disputes will require arbitration.

I will briefly outline the mechanism of the scheme for the benefit of members. Financiers or others wishing to protect an interest in a motor vehicle or other prescribed goods are required to register their interest. There will be a fee to register the interest. The potential purchasers are able to check with the register at no cost, unless a certificate is purchased, to see if any interest is recorded. If there is, they can advise the seller that they will not purchase the goods until the encumbrance is cleared. I would point out here that a vehicle could have more than one encumbrance, hence the potential purchaser should ensure that there are no encumbrances at all registered before he purchases the goods.

If the goods are not shown as encumbered, a certificate saying so is purchased and, provided the transaction is made within the specified time after the inquiry, the purchaser will, in law, have clear title with respect to any encumbrance from the NT, New South Wales or the ACT. The certificate is a statement from the REVS office showing that the goods were unencumbered at the time. A telephone inquiry of the register will be sufficient for anybody to ascertain whether or not a vehicle is encumbered, but this information is not guaranteed unless a certificate is purchased at the time of the inquiry.

It is the responsibility of the persons with an interest in the goods to have them recorded. If they fail to do so, they lose any further right to the goods if sold with money owing. They still retain the right, however, to sue the debtor, but cannot seek the return of the goods. Separately, the onus will be on the dealer, not the purchaser, to ensure the vehicle is unencumbered and to accept any liability if it is not. The Motor Traders Association members already promise this in their code of ethics and the legislation makes it practical to give this legal backing. It should certainly improve customer confidence in buying a car from a dealer.

A further feature of the REVS scheme is that, as well as recording encumbrances on vehicles in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and ACT, it also records all vehicles reported stolen throughout Australia. If there is an inquiry on a vehicle reported as stolen, the inquirer will be advised it has been reported stolen and asked for details that are then passed on to the police. I would point out, however, that the stolen vehicle advice is advisory only. It is only as good as the information available at that time. However, this service will be a further deterrent to those seeking to sell a stolen vehicle. In order to assist the registration process, an interest will be accepted for registration without inquiry as to stamp duty. Even though the interest will be fully protected under the scheme should stamp duty not be paid, it cannot be enforced in a court until stamp duty is paid.

Bills to amend the Hire-Purchase and Instruments Acts will remove the requirements to separately register bills of sale or hire-purchase agreements in relation to motor vehicles or other goods provided for under this scheme. The current bill has been prepared in consultation with the finance industry and motor vehicle dealers as well as with the Department of Health and Community Services on consumer aspects. Some minor amendments may still be needed, firstly, to take account of initial experience with changes New South Wales is making to its scheme and, secondly, to take account of the final details of the agreement to be signed with New South Wales.

Our planning is based on passage of this bill and related amendments to the Hire-Purchase Act and Instruments Act and finalisation of the agreement this year and commencement of the full use of the scheme in early 1990. Before that date, persons with an interest in motor vehicles will be advised to register their interest in motor vehicles so all existing interests are recorded before the public gains access. Special concession fees are being negotiated with NSW for the purpose to ensure the bill provides scope for flexibility in fee setting by instrument in the Government Gazette.

I believe this legislation addresses a real need in our community. It will provide better protection to consumers making large purchases and, in particular, to those purchasing motor vehicles, and it will do this in a way acceptable to those selling or financing the goods. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 164)

Continued from 17 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the bill before the Assembly is essentially supported by the opposition. I remind honourable members of the importance of this bill and its value, particularly for the business community in the Northern Territory. At one level, it is a simple increasing of amounts. Basically, the thrust of the bill is to increase the value of the jurisdiction in the lower courts. As we have mentioned in debates in this Assembly before, there has been a difficulty in this area that civil litigants have been forced into much more expensive litigation in the Supreme Court because of the relatively low jurisdictional limit in the lower courts. This bill will assist in that regard by increasing the limit in respect of property offences to a maximum of \$40 000 and, in the case of unlawful use offences involving motor vehicles, to a limit of \$20 000.

The opposition supports this proposal. We know that it is line with reforms elsewhere around the country. I understand, and I think that I have referred to it in debate in the Assembly before, that the jurisdictional limit in the lower courts in Victoria has been increased to \$20 000. That state is considering increasing it to \$40 000. I had the opportunity to read a report that in relation to the lower courts in that state. A number of reforms were considered in that context. I know that, because the state is more populous, it is much more difficult to ensure uniformity ...

Mr Manzie: It has a county court.

Mr BELL: As the Attorney-General interjects, there is a different court system in Victoria, with the addition of a county court level as well and therefore comparisons are not entirely easy to make.

Broadly speaking, the opposition supports the amendment and the capacity it will provide to many Territorians to be able to seek justice at a cheaper price.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this bill. Like a number of bills that we have had before this House in the past, this merely addresses the problems of inflation and relative values of property etc that the courts can deal with. Although section 121A of the Justices Act does give the magistrate the power to deal with indictable offences involving property, I think it should be clearly understood that in no way does this take away or detract from the right of the accused to be heard in the higher court.

As I said, the amendments deal mainly with general property and the limit is raised to \$40 000. The amendments also deal with unlawful use of motor vehicles, the limit there being raised to \$20 000-worth of damage or, if the the motor vehicle is written off, a total value of \$20 000. There is a further amendment which also deals with the unlawful use of motor vehicles but, where no damage has been sustained by the motor vehicle, there is no statutory limit put on the value of the vehicle. I believe that is a wise move because, in that instance, we are not dealing with any damage to property, but merely with illegal use of the property.

The last part of this bill deals with clerical error. It is heartening to see that, in other places, the possibility of clerical error is enshrined in statute and I am pleased that the lower courts are now able to correct any clerical error that may occur. With those few short words, Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am happy with the comments made in support of the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 182)
POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 183)

Continued from 17 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for these amendments. I note that the amendments make it an offence to aid an escapee from any form of legal confinement and create an offence of giving to a prisoner any item that would assist him or her to escape from lawful confinement.

Mr Manzie: The file in the cake provision!

Mr BELL: When I read these bills, I wondered about the current legislative means of preventing somebody putting a file in a cake and delivering it to a prisoner. I do not necessarily expect the Attorney-General to give me legal advice on his feet, but I indicate that the thought crossed my mind that escaping from legal confinement should already be an offence.

I also note that there are penalties of 5 years and 1 year respectively for escape from lawful custody and lawful detention. I have a question in that respect. I understand the distinction between lawful custody and lawful detention reasonably well. A person is in lawful custody if he has been arrested or has received a custodial sentence. Escape under those circumstances attracts the higher 5-year penalty than escape from lawful detention which may, in fact, mean simply that a motorist has been stopped by a policeman who wishes to check his licence or stopped at a breathalyser station. If somebody fled from a breathalyser station, he would be liable to 1 year in jail. That seems to be a fairly hefty penalty.

I do not expect the Attorney-General to exclaim in surprise that he had never thought of that, but I would like him to give examples at some stage of the class of offences that would attract a penalty of 1 year in prison. It seems to me that there could be some forms of lawful detention from which, in a fit of pique, somebody may escape. For example, a person may walk away from a police officer who has lawfully detained him, completely unaware that in so doing he is running the risk of a year's imprisonment. I bring that to the attention of the Attorney-General.

Section 310 of the Criminal Code is amended to allow multiple offences to be charged as a single offence. There are various classes of criminal acts to which that applies. The opposition supports that proposal.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bills. There are amendments to sections 152 and 160 of the Police Administration Act which relate to an officer deserting his or her post. Of course, knowing the Northern Territory Police Force as I do, I think that that possibility is very remote indeed. Nevertheless, the matter needs to be covered by legislation because of the very remote possibility that it may occur at some stage.

The Criminal Code is amended by altering section 111 relating to aiding escape from lawful custody, and section 112 which also relates to escape from lawful custody. What that is really saying is that aiding an escape and aiding the escapee are both offences. That is clarified in sections 111 and 112 of the Criminal Code. There is a further amendment to section 310 of the Criminal Code which relates to offences of thefts of property of any kind over a period of time being consolidated and dealt with as a single offence. One can imagine a situation where a person is stealing cattle. That person might steal a beast each day or a beast every couple of days. Another example might be where an employee is stealing from his or her employer and taking home items on a daily basis. This amendment provides for all of those offences to be consolidated into a single offence and prosecuted on a cumulative basis. The penalty is then appropriate to that cumulative offence.

In February, the minister announced a review of the Criminal Code. That review is under way. I am not sure when it will be completed but I am sure it will be completed as soon as possible, and we all look forward to that. I think that we can assume that these amendments are the first step to introducing a complete review of the Criminal Code. These amendments certainly do improve the efficiency of the criminal justice system, albeit that they are fairly minor amendments compared to the overall structure of the Criminal Code.

Some of the changes also clarify the scope of sections 152 and 160 of the Police Administration Act. That refers to escape from a prison, escape from a police station holding cell or absconding from a roadside breath-testing station which I am aware occurs from time to time. Perhaps the minister could clarify whether or not the situation is currently covered where a person might abscond while being taken to and from such locations. For example, when prisoners were taken from holding cells at the former Darwin Police Station in Mitchell Street across the road to the Supreme Court, I seem to recall that, on 1 or 2 occasions, a prisoner bolted. Could the minister clarify whether that situation is covered? I would assume that it is, but it is not specifically mentioned in these amendments.

There is also an amendment to tidy up a situation where there is an overlap of legislation relating to escape from custody provisions which currently exist in the Police Administration Act and the Criminal Code. There is little point in having the same provision in both of those. It is simply a duplication.

The legislation is quite straightforward. I noted that the opposition supports these amendments and, with those few words, I indicate my support for the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

I would like to respond to the comments of the member for Jingili and the member for MacDonnell. The file in the fruit cake situation is one which was previously covered under the provisions relating to aiding and abetting and assisting people to escape from lawful custody. The bill further clarifies the situation by distinguishing the offence of escaping from lawful custody from the offence of escaping from lawful detention. The first applies when a person is in custody because of arrest or conviction by a court. The second applies when a person is in custody for some lawful purpose such as undertaking a breath analysis by the roadside. Because we have distinguished between the offences, we need an aiding escape provision in relation to the second offence. That is why the provision has been extended.

A person who escapes from a situation of lawful detention, such as a breath analysis situation, will now be subject to a maximum penalty of imprisonment for 1 year. Under the terms of the current act, the escape from lawful custody provisions would apply in full in that situation and the maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment would apply. The creation of a new category of offence allows for a reduced maximum penalty. Obviously, escaping from detention for a breath test is a less serious offence than escaping after being arrested or escaping from a prison or a police cell. I believe that should satisfactorily answer the queries raised by the member for MacDonnell. I commend the bills.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 191)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a very important bill. As the Attorney-General stated in his second-reading speech, it came about largely because of a particular circumstance. At Yarralin, in the electorate of the member for Victoria River, an incorporated association was in danger of losing land and equipment which some unscrupulous advisers to the council had mortgaged. Although the Attorney-General did not refer to this at length, I think it deserves some consideration. The situation which arose at Yarralin is precisely the sort of circumstance which has encouraged Aboriginal people to have so much faith in the form of title over land which is granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. It is inalienable freehold title, which means that the land cannot be sold. The events which occurred at Yarralin simply could not occur on Aboriginal land held under the Land Rights Act. In this House, we often hear about the negative aspects of inalienable freehold title. Land held under that title cannot easily be borrowed against. It is very rare, however, for the House to hear of the actual purpose of such title.

It is most apposite that this legislation should come before the House at a time when we have been debating excisions policy so vociferously. Only last week, that debate focused on the negotiations between this government, the Commonwealth government and land councils. We heard about the attitude of the Cattlemen's Association and the question of the form of title was a central issue. In a situation where a property was used as security against a mortgage, Aboriginal people might find themselves unable to retain their land. People like the member for Sadadeen frequently ask: 'Why can't they deal with land in the same way as everybody else does?' Whilst I believe that attitudes

are changing in some Aboriginal communities and many Aboriginal people want to deal in land and to participate in the majority economy and whilst I think that it is part of the role of this House to enable that to occur, that land base must never be lost.

Many Aboriginal people require advice, as do many non-Aboriginal people, when they are dealing with complex issues of land tenure and fundraising against land. Sadly, they are able to be exploited by people who may pretend that they are acting in their best interests, but may not necessarily be doing so. I do not intend at present to address the wider issue of the credibility of expatriate employees in Aboriginal communities and how those communities need to protect themselves against expatriate employees who breach or abuse the trust that is placed in them.

I have stressed the importance of these particular amendments and I indicate that the opposition intends to support them. I believe that, in addition to the Yarralin case, they will be of importance in respect of the land tenure arrangements at Keep River National Park. I believe that the land-holding associations which will be responsible for the excised areas there will be incorporated under this legislation. This will provide a degree of inalienability over the land held by the people concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I notice that, while these sort of adjustments in Territory legislation for Territory freehold title do not represent a change of direction, they at least represent something of a modification of the government's previous position. I think that it is to be encouraged in the view which it has taken. I believe that this amendment should be supported and that it represents, if not a major reform, at least a step in the right direction.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, this must be some sort of milestone. Twice in the same day, I have found myself able to rise to my feet and agree with the member for MacDonnell. This bill more clearly defines how incorporated associations can deal or treat with prescribed property whilst creating a lower threshold above which property is classified as prescribed property. That threshold will become \$2000 under the terms of this bill. Like the member for MacDonnell, I want to make a few comments in relation to the Yarralin issue.

Some years ago, I was appalled to hear that the Aboriginal people at Yarralin had been allowed to get itself into a situation in which a certain financial institution was about to foreclose and put their home in jeopardy. Whether or not it was the fault of unscrupulous advisers, it was a classic case of a financial institution saying: 'Yippee! Here comes a mob of blackfellows. We will give them all the money they want. The government will bail them out in the end. It does not really matter'. The financial institution was secure in the expectation that the government would bail it out and I took some heart when the government did not do that. The bank had to sort out its own problem. I would be sorely disappointed if, in the course of time, we subsequently bailed the bank out.

As the member for MacDonnell said, this legislation provides security of tenure for Aboriginal people and for incorporated associations generally. Such associations could find themselves in similar difficulties without really being aware of the situation they were getting into. It is forward-thinking legislation and, although it may be slightly overdue, I think that, in the long run, it will be much-welcomed by a number of communities and associations in the Northern Territory. I hope that the lesson learned by the financial

institution in the Yarralin affair was a salutary one which has been noted by other financial institutions which deal with incorporated associations in the Northern Territory.

With those few words, and with pleasure at being able to support the Attorney-General and the opposition spokesman, I support the bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, most of the matters I intended to canvass have been canvassed by the previous speakers. Like the member for Karama, I find myself in agreement with comments made by the member for MacDonnell in respect of this matter.

I do not intend to discuss the Yarralin situation, but I would like to comment briefly on some of the remarks made about the way in which the debate on pastoral excisions proceeded last week. Like other members of the Constitutional Development Committee, I have visited many Aboriginal communities during the past few months. During the course of those visits, many topics have been raised. One of the recurring topics related to land and the attitudes which Aborigines are currently expressing in relation to land usage.

Whilst I agree with the member for MacDonnell that the land issue is central to Aboriginal lifestyle and attitude, a considerable change of opinion seems to be emerging at present in respect of the way in which that land can be protected. Whilst I also state that there are certainly some very entrenched ideals, current approaches range from the entrenched ideals of inalienable freehold title, as is currently granted to most areas, right down to the opposite end of the spectrum - Territory freehold with no encumbrances at all. I do not necessarily include the member for MacDonnell in this, but cynical remarks have been made about the Territory government's attitude towards full freehold Territory title in relation to Aboriginal land to the effect that, eventually, the land would probably be fully mortgaged, sold or dispersed in some way leaving Aborigines homeless again. That has never been my attitude and it is not the attitude of this government despite the fact that such opinions have been expressed by members' opposite when it has suited them to do so.

The reason why I raise that in this context is that this legislation is just another brick in the building of good faith between the Aboriginal communities and ourselves that this government has been actively engaged in encouraging over the last few years. It demonstrates our faith in trying to rectify wrongs where they have been identified. My reason for wanting to speak on this point tonight is to say that it is a shame that, last week, the federal government did not show that same sort of faith in our attempts to ensure that we steer a true course as we move towards full statehood. As supposed elder statesmen, I would expect members of the federal government to have been observing the things we have been doing over the last couple of years and assessing, in balance, the attitudes we have taken and the matters we have dealt with in respect of Aborigines and their land. Certainly, in my view, it behoved them to wait before leaping in, at least until such time as they felt that we had not done the things that we had said we would do, which have been reiterated in this Chamber recently by the Chief Minister and which certainly were supported by all government members in this House.

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to support this legislation, I will refer to Yarralin because the matter was raised by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Bell: It was not raised by me. It was raised by the minister in his second-reading speech.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I stand corrected. It was raised in the second-reading speech, and quite rightly so because Yarralin could be seen to be a test case for this legislation. I was present on the day when a former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, handed over that fairly large excision from Victoria River Downs to the people of Yarralin. Over the years since, I have been very close to the people of Yarralin. I have been able to have work done for them and I have done work personally to help a group who were disadvantaged at the time. There was very little in the way of facilities at Yarralin in 1984. In fact, about the only thing that existed at that time was the old Gordon Creek Homestead and a worn out windmill. However, there were transportable classrooms and a few small corrugated iron shanties. In those days, there was no power, a water supply that was poorly reticulated to a couple of points only and no roads or other facilities.

I would say to any member here that, if he or she wants to see what the Northern Territory government can do for Aboriginal people, Yarralin today is a fine example. There is full reticulation of power and work is under way currently to upgrade the water supply. The water supply has been upgraded 2 or 3 times over that period, but there is a major upgrading of the water reticulation at present. The school has been extended and a new health centre will be established there this year. Housing has been improved quite dramatically, and will continue to improve. There has been considerable development there.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned unscrupulous people who worked at Yarralin and put the community into a difficult position. I have no axe to grind for those 2 men who were living at that community. In fact, I was the first to blow the whistle on them because it was quite clear to me that they were up to no good. However, I do not hold those 2 people entirely accountable because other agencies were involved, in particular the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which had a duty to ensure that the people of Yarralin were looked after and protected. It did not fulfil that duty of care very well at all. In those days, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, through its outstation resource funding, was controlling Yarralin. It actually funded the outstation resource person and, in fact, Yarralin was the base for the Ngaringman Resource Centre.

In my view, the efforts of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs at the time were scandalous because it placed no emphasis on its duty of care for the people of Yarralin at that time. It allowed that situation to happen. The 2 people were very close to the community. Indeed, they were associated with 2 women from that community who were members of Doug Campbell's family. Doug is the senior traditional person from that area and he and his son, Billy, were in this House last night. I had quite a long discussion with him and they visited me again in my office this morning. They are having some difficulties at present in obtaining somebody to control the finances and the store in their community.

Yarralin could be seen to be a test case for those people who would dispute the right of the Northern Territory to offer land to Aboriginal people under Territory title. In fact, it is very much an argument based on philosophical viewpoints as to whether it should be land provided under inalienable Commonwealth freehold title or under Northern Territory freehold title. I am firmly of the view that excisions should be under Territory title, and I note that my views are shared by Senator Bob Collins who made it

quite clear the other night on television that Territory freehold title was the form that these excisions should be under, and that it was clearly a responsibility that should rest with the Northern Territory government to deliver that title.

Be that as it may, this legislation will provide the protection that Aboriginal people will perhaps require because of unscrupulous people or because of their own inexperience in managing financial affairs of finance and understanding the difficulties that an encumbrance on land could cause them in the future. This bill will give them protection and I commend it very strongly because it should settle once and for all any doubts that people have that Territory freehold title is adequate to cater for the needs of Aboriginal people on excisions.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly thank honourable members for their comments and, in particular, I would like to thank the member for MacDonnell for his comments in support of the legislation. Unfortunately, it is unusual to have the honourable member being supportive in relation to government moves in respect of Aboriginal interests. I certainly hope that it is a sign of ...

Mr Bell: A maturing attitude on our part!

Mr MANZIE: ... maturity on the part of the opposition in relation to what the government is doing. The member for MacDonnell was quite right when he said that this is important legislation when coupled with the amendments to the Real Property Act which will be proceeding during these sittings. It will ensure beyond any doubt that the integrity of Territory freehold is such that Aboriginal groups will have the ability to have land under Territory title which will not be at risk of being lost as the Yarralin example demonstrated could quite easily happen.

It also gives the ability for Aboriginal people who may wish to move at some future time from one area to another. If an entire community wishes to sell land for the purpose of moving to another site or to purchase a station or some other property, it will be able to do so if it can demonstrate that all of its members are in favour and it appears to pose no problems. It will allow the future development of Aboriginal people to occur without their being locked in forever and a day in terms of not being able to do anything with the land. Even though one would have to say that it is slightly paternalistic in one way, in other ways it is far more open than what the Commonwealth does. I thank honourable members for their support and I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Continued from 29 August 1989.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure this evening in rising to speak to the Appropriation Bill. Before addressing the

issues that come under the responsibility of my portfolio of education, I would like to touch on 2 initiatives in the budget which will be of major benefit to the electorate of Port Darwin, in particular the Central Business District. First, I refer to the \$4.9m that has been allocated to allow an entry from Tiger Brennan Drive into the Central Business District.

Honourable members would be aware that the construction of Tiger Brennan Drive some time ago had a major impact on traffic movements into the Central Business District, the only problem being that a bottleneck was created at the corner of Bennett Street. I am pleased to see that funding is provided in this budget to ease the peak hour traffic problems on Tiger Brennan Drive. There is much to do in the area which borders on Tiger Brennan Drive. I refer particularly to the tank farm which, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, will have to go. However, there are many millions of dollars tied up there. Nevertheless, the allocation in relation to this bottleneck is most welcome indeed.

The second matter is in relation to the announcement last week on the Darwin beautification program. \$1m has been allocated to commence that program. The work that has already been carried out along the Esplanade by the Darwin City Council in respect of Bicentennial Park is to be commended. It has had a major impact on the peninsula area and many people use that park, both locals and tourists. The beautification program definitely will add to the attractiveness of the CBD.

However, I would like to suggest that consideration should be given to rebuilding the old Lameroo sea baths to add further to the attractiveness of the Esplanade area. There are many people who would like to see a sea baths constructed and I think that it is appropriate that it be in that area. We have beautiful weather in the Northern Territory and in Darwin in particular. We have a beautiful harbour. The unfortunate aspect is that we have some bities as well. I think that many of the people who come the Territory, at this time of the year particularly, would like the opportunity of swimming in the sea. I believe that tourists as well as locals would utilise such a facility. During the development of this program, I urge people to support the establishment of a sea baths at Lameroo. I remind members that Lameroo baths served Darwin from the 1920s up to the 1950s. I believe that it is high time that the baths were reconstructed.

Moving to the area for which I have responsibility in the budget, I might say at the outset that I was concerned that the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, inferred during a debate in this House that the government intended to gag debate on the budget. I make it quite clear that there is no intention whatsoever of gagging debate on the budget. I invite members to ask questions in relation to the budget, particularly in my portfolio area, either during the course of the second-reading debate - and we all have 30 minutes to put forward our concerns initially - or by means of written questions. I will be only too happy to provide the answers. Further to that, if any member has concerns or questions about the education budget, if that member approaches me I will arrange for a full briefing so that the matters can be clarified. I make that offer at the start of my comments because it is important that members realise that there is ample opportunity to question ministers in relation to their portfolio responsibilities. I urge the member for Stuart to take up that offer. For him to suggest in this Assembly that he will not have time to ask questions in relation to the education portfolio is a complete nonsense, and he knows it.

Following the budget speech that was given by the Treasurer on the 22 August, the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and the Council of Government Schools Organisation issued separate statements on the education budget. Both of those organisation inferred that funding to government preschools, primary schools and secondary schools had been cut whereas funding to the non-government sector had risen. They did not bother to check why this has occurred. They did not look at the facts. They could have sought information or at least waited for the minister to give some answers to the questions which, obviously, the budget raises.

Could I start by providing an assurance that there will be no detrimental effect on education programs in public schools as a result of this budget because there will be no cuts in funding, despite the comments of the member for Stuart, the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and COGSO. If I did not know better, I would think that they had got together after the budget speech had been made and discussed the issue and its implications. Before making such comments, one would think that they would have the interest to contact the minister or his office to find out the reasons.

Mr Ede: Tell us.

Mr HARRIS: I am quite happy to inform the honourable member, Mr Speaker, and I will do so during the course of my speech.

I assure parents and members of the Assembly that there is no likelihood of increased class sizes or reduced access to education services arising from the budget. To infer that the budget represents cuts in funding to public schools when inflation is taken into account is not a true representation of the facts. Members should note that all salary costs in the budget are at July 1989 levels and that additional funds will be provided during the year to keep pace with any salary movements. I think honourable members would be aware of that. Salaries, which represent some 54% of the total budget, have an automatic inflationary factor already built in.

Let me also state, and the Chief Minister pointed this out in the budget speech, that the existing staff formulas will be maintained. Already there is talk of a proposed cut in teaching staff. That is a load of nonsense! There is no basis for that statement because there will be no change whatsoever to existing staffing formulas. We have no intention of decreasing approved special needs staff and the only fluctuations in teaching staff numbers will be those directly related to changes in student enrolments.

Let us move on to the non-government sector. There is no doubt that the figures indicate that more money has been provided to the non-government sector. That is quite clearly documented. But, there are reasons for that. Honourable members would be aware that Kormilda College, for example, now has independent school status and an additional \$700 000 has been included in this section of the budget to cover the normal grants entitlement to Kormilda. This must be seen against the decrease in funds of some \$1.6m in the secondary education sector of the budget which has been deleted due to the change in status of Kormilda. I think that honourable members would be aware that it has moved from the government sector to the non-government sector.

A sum of some \$600 000 has also been included in this section of the budget for assistance to mission schools. This should have been included in the preschool and primary education section of the budget and was inadvertently listed in the incorrect category of expenditure. I am sure that honourable members would be aware that the mission schools act as agents of

the Northern Territory government in relation to the provision of education to those areas. There is no doubt that the budget picture is distorted by these items as they have the effect of showing a greater increase in non-government school funding than has actually occurred.

The other important point that we need to note is that 1988-89 was the first time that program budgeting was introduced. As honourable members would be aware, program budgeting involves the allocation of funds to specific educational activities. As expenditure in 1987-88 was not specifically recorded against each of the educational activities, the allocations made in 1988-89 for each activity were estimates only. In some instances, the actual expenditure in 1988-89 differed significantly from the estimates made. Therefore, for the 1989-90 financial year, adjustments had to be made in order that we do not have too much money for one activity and too little for another. A decline in funding against an activity is therefore not necessarily a decline in expenditure, but simply an adjustment of estimated expenditure for this year on the basis of actual expenditure incurred last year. Such finetuning is expected to occur for another couple of years.

Mr Speaker, I thought those remarks should be made before I talk about the initiatives that have been introduced into the education budget this year. There are some major initiatives. I begin by referring to the introduction of a Master Teachers Program. It has been very interesting to note, in the last couple of days, the comments that have been made in relation to the Northern Territory Teaching Service and conditions of employment. I am sick to death of people knocking the service that we have on offer in the Northern Territory. If people continue to make those sorts of comments, all they are doing is harming our recruitment position. They really should be ashamed of themselves.

Let us have a look at the conditions that we have in the Northern Territory in comparison with some other places. If we talk about pupil-teacher ratios, there is no question that, in the Northern Territory, we outperform other states and territories by far. In the primary sector, we have a 15.02 student-teacher ratio. In the secondary area, it is 10.49. In the other states, ratios in the primary areas are 20.27, 17.23, 17.93, 18.60 and 18.96. We are far better off in terms of student-teacher ratios in the primary sector than anywhere else in Australia. In the secondary area, the ratios in the states are 12.95, 13.62, 11, 12.77 and 11.78. The ratio in the Northern Territory is 10.49. Let us put that on the record.

When we talk about the per capita grants to the Northern Territory and related school-based funding provisions, we are well ahead of anywhere else. We hear about salaries and people running away from the Northern Territory. I will not read out all the figures, but I will simply indicate where the Northern Territory stands in relation to the 7 other states or territories on 4 major areas. If we look at the maximum payable to secondary principals, we are at the top of the salary scale. If we look at the maximum payable to primary principals, we are second on the scale. If we look at the maximum payable to secondary and primary classroom teachers, we are second on the scale. If we look at the minimum payable to secondary and primary classroom teachers, we are third out of 8 on the scale. There is an industrial process that is followed. I become frustrated about it at times, but it is a process that has been developed over many years. Members can see from the figures that I have given that the base in the Territory is reasonable even though I acknowledge, and I have said this repeatedly, that the teachers are not rewarded in the manner that they should be for the work that they do. In relation to conditions on remote communities, it is very difficult to compare one area to another. But, I will say that we are comparable.

In the Australian Teacher of 22 April, Col Young, the Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, gave a completely wrong idea of what our conditions were all about. He was running down our system and telling people not to come to the Northern Territory because it is a terrible place. I wish he would go somewhere else because it is people like him who are destroying our recruitment prospects. Our department was very concerned about Col Young's comments, and so it should be. I issued a press release at the same time saying that it was a disgrace that he should criticise the conditions of service for Territory teachers when those conditions are among the best in Australia. He stands condemned for those comments.

I refer again to Col Young. He wrote a letter to me in which he said that the federation was not aware of any incentives that the Northern Territory was examining to attract teachers to the Northern Territory. On the other hand, we had the president of the federation, Mike Bradley, writing in the Arnhem Courier: 'The Teachers Federation is presently negotiating with the Department of Education on a package of incentives which are seen as a way of inducing teaching staff to come to the Northern Territory and be happy about staying for a long time'. Thus, we had the secretary of the federation saying that it was unaware of any incentives to attract teachers and the president saying that it the federation was in fact negotiating with the department.

In addition, we had the nonsense from the member for Stuart about staffing at the Darwin High School. I have commented on that, and I have condemned teachers who leave in mid-term. However, let me say that, if comments are continued to be made about poor conditions, when actually they are as good as if not better in many cases than those elsewhere, all that is doing is harming the recruitment position. Our teachers are very good and we are looking to support them. It is about time that the member for Stuart offered them some support as well.

The Master Teachers Program is a major initiative of the Northern Territory government. Some \$400 000 has been allocated for an expanded Master Teacher Program, the aim of which is to provide a new career structure for outstanding classroom teachers which will allow them to gain professional and career advancement while remaining in the classroom, rather than accepting administrative duties. The proposed new scheme is to be established as part of the award restructuring process and, overall, the scheme is subject to the ratification of the Industrial Relations Commission. Unfortunately, until we have ratification of the proposal, and I do not see any real problems in relation to that, further details will not be given, but it is generally based on 3 levels ...

Mr Ede: Did you allow for it in the budget?

Mr HARRIS: There is some \$400 000 in the budget. I have just told you that \$400 000 has been set aside for that particular program.

The other thing to remember is that that program is the first of its kind in Australia and I believe that other states will look at coming into line and introducing something similar.

Look at the conditions in other states in relation to relief teachers. I will refer to the Western Australian Education News: 'Western Australian Relief Teachers Wages Cut'. Their remuneration was comparable with that of the permanent teachers, but now that has been cut. 'Under the conditions of work agreement between the unions and the ministry, relief teachers would be paid a flat standard rate of \$86.96 per day'. In the Northern Territory, the

present rate is \$116.73 a day for relief teachers. Don't let people say that we are not well off in terms of salaries and conditions. We are up there with the best.

The computer education program has been provided with an additional \$33 000 to allow the purchase of updated equipment and comprehensive equipment maintenance. \$842 000 has been provided to enhance and upgrade the computer support system of the Department of Education. The department's information system is already well developed and it has proved its worth in improving staff productivity as well as providing essential information bases.

\$150 000 has been allocated to establish a new language centre in Alice Springs, as previously announced by the Chief Minister. The centre will service schools in Alice Springs offering Indonesian, Japanese and Aboriginal languages in addition to European languages. The centre will also provide courses in Indonesian and other Asian languages for public servants as part of our overall attempt to ensure that the Territory is best placed to take advantage of developing cultural and economic links with our near neighbours in Asia.

The government has allocated \$75 000 to continue the development of the Agricultural Centre at Taminmin High School. This centre is already operating and the additional funds will allow it to become an integral part of the school and to develop school level programs in agriculture which will provide a basis for students to move into post-school studies at institutions such as Katherine Rural College and the Northern Territory University.

Following the success of the Top End Mobile Life Education Centre, the government has provided \$70 000 to assist the staffing of the Life Education Units in Darwin and Alice Springs. The government also recognises the valuable work done in mission schools and has allocated a total of \$825 000 in minor new works and capital work grants to these schools. Of this amount, \$300 000 has been allocated for a new administration block at Santa Teresa and St Francis Xavier's College and \$250 000 for a new classroom block at St Francis Xavier's at Daly River.

An additional allocation of \$367 000 has been provided for vehicles at various existing and new outstations. Established ethnic schools will also receive government support this year with per capita grants totalling \$22 000. Northern Territory tertiary scholarships will be increased by a total of \$20 000 this year, the first increase since 1984, to allow for inflationary factors. These scholarships are offered to our top 10 matriculants and will provide \$6000 per annum to the top 2 students and \$4000 for the remaining 8 students.

Demand for evening classes for adults at Year 11 and 12 levels has been increasing and \$70 000 has been provided to allow the expansion of the evening class program at Casuarina Secondary College. We have become Australian leaders in the field of computer education, but one group of our students has been deprived a regular program in this area. I refer, of course, to the isolated students of the School of the Air, and the Secondary Correspondence School. We have allocated \$132 000 this year to commence programs for these students. To ensure that the existing computer education program continues at the present high standard, as mentioned earlier, we have provided an additional \$333 000 under the \$2-for-\$1 grant scheme, as the first stage of a major computer upgrading and replacement program in our schools.

The relevance of mathematics has become increasingly apparent in today's technological society. In order to support and implement the government's policy on striving for excellence, it is essential to initiate a mass in-service training program for teachers in the southern region, with a view to improving the numeracy of students. Funding of \$10 000 will provide for relief teachers and administrative costs such as travel and training materials.

Finally, we have allocated an additional \$11 000 for the provision of telephones and facsimile machines for remote schools to improve communications and enhance teaching by closer contact with curriculum advisory personnel. In many cases, these facilities will also provide valuable community services.

The government has continued to support the Northern Territory University, and it continues to be a disappointment to us that the federal government is not treating our university in the same way that it treats other Australian universities. We are providing funds that would normally be paid by the Commonwealth government and the Chief Minister has referred to that. In providing additional funds to the Northern Territory University, the government has emphasised 3 significant activities. An amount of \$250 000 has been provided for university research which is a key element in the structure of universities. Unlike its provision for other universities, the Commonwealth has not provided research funds for the Northern Territory University and the Northern Territory government has decided to fill this vacuum.

A major impact on the TAFE course content and structure is the restructuring of industrial awards, and an amount of \$165 000 has been allocated for curriculum development and staff training to cater for the multi-skilling required as a result of the award restructuring. The government has allocated \$250 000 to meet the training demands of growth industries in the Northern Territory and, in keeping with the Northern Territory government's economic development strategy, emphasis will be on training in the areas of tourism and hospitality, engineering, art, design and fashion, business management and community services. In addition to these items, the university is expanding its efforts in the law school to accommodate fourth year law subjects, and increasing resources devoted to the library to ensure that it meets the high standard required by the institution.

The government is also very much aware of the critical role of technical and further education in supporting the industrial and economic development of the Territory. A number of new initiatives have been approved for 1989-90 and, notable among them, are the following. \$265 000 has been made available to facilitate the participation of Northern Territory TAFE in new training developments which are flowing from award restructuring, particularly in the metal trades. \$174 000 is to be provided to the Northern Territory Open College to increase the provision of adult education services in a number of Aboriginal communities. I also mention the \$10.7m that has been allocated for the laboratory at the Royal Darwin Hospital for joint use with the Menzies School of Health Research. I am sure all members would be supportive of the Menzies School of Health Research and the tremendous work that it does.

The training of Aboriginal health workers has previously been conducted on an in-service basis within the Department of Health and Community Services. In recognition of the importance of health-worker training, both as a service and as a career for Aboriginal people, \$618 000 has been provided to allow its transfer to Batchelor College where it will have the status of a full tertiary course. I might say that it is very important that the federal government

should assist us in this regard. Those courses need appropriate funding and, with the move to Batchelor College, I hope that the federal government will take note of that.

Mr Speaker, time is short. Can I just reiterate that there is no reduction in formula staffing and there is no reduction in approved special needs staffing. The Northern Territory government, in handing down its 1989-90 budget, has again reaffirmed its strong commitment to providing the highest possible standard of education for Territorians.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the remarks of the Chief Minister and Treasurer and I do so with considerable pleasure. I believe the Treasurer has brought down a responsible budget, one which will ensure the growth of the Northern Territory while taking into account the financial constraints placed on us by the federal government.

Before I inform members of some of the very positive happenings in my portfolio, I would like to comment on a particularly disturbing practice of the Leader of the Opposition at budget time. I refer to his consistent attacks on the integrity of Northern Territory public servants. He has claimed that Northern Territory public servants have broken rules and they are heading down the path of Queensland corruption. On ABC radio on 2 August 1989, referring to public servants of the Northern Territory, he said: 'I think we have probably reached this stage in the Northern Territory ... the bending of rules rather than the breaking of rules'. He repeated those aspersions in a debate on the Fitzgerald Report last week.

Those attacks on the integrity of Northern Territory public servants are disgraceful. If the Leader of the Opposition believes that he can use public servants as a whipping boy in his fight against this government, he may have taken on more than he can handle. He obviously does not believe public servants are capable of doing their jobs. On ABC radio Territory Extra on 16 August 1988, just prior to the bringing down of last year's budget, he said: '... you go through the operations of public service departments with a fine tooth comb ... so that you bring in outside people and, together with people currently in the public service, you review their operations'. In 1987, one of the cost-saving measures put forward by the unions was for the government to reduce expenditure on outside consultants, which the government did. Nevertheless, the Opposition Leader argues that we should bring in more consultants.

The Leader of the Opposition also believes that the public service should be cut back dramatically. He has consistently called for cuts to funding for administration, which translates into cuts in job numbers. The Hansard shows that, in the Legislative Assembly on 10 June 1989, the Opposition Leader said: 'It may be found that there may be a possibility of saving some numbers in the public service'. In August 1988, in an interview on the 7.30 Report, he called for cuts in the Northern Territory Public Service of between \$30m and \$40m. In his response to the budget in the Legislative Assembly on 18 August 1988, he called on the Northern Territory government to cut public service spending by \$30m, which equates to 900 jobs for public servants.

He again attacked public servants after the Chief Minister and Treasurer brought down the budget last week. On the 7.30 Report on 22 August 1989, the Opposition Leader said: 'You can't tell me that it wasn't possible in a budget of \$1600m to shave off \$10m from the public service'. That is all public servants are to the opposition - an unnecessary expense in the budget.

However, the Leader of the Opposition obviously realised that he was on very shaky ground when he started talking about taking the axe to the public service. He later told us that he could not work out where the \$10m he would 'shave off' would come from. I can tell him right now. It would come from the pockets of 300 public servants - 300 Northern Territory families.

Mr Speaker, if I were a public servant in the Northern Territory, I would be asking the opposition the following questions. Do I only have a job because I know the right people? Am I inefficient? Am I not capable of doing my job? Am I involved in corruption? Those are the insinuations which the Leader of the Opposition has been systematically making about public servants for the past 2 years. There is one more question that I would put to the opposition I were a public servant: is my job going to be 'shaved off' if the Territory Labor Party gets into power?

Mr Speaker, as you are aware, the Department of Labour and Administrative Services is responsible for a range of services across the private and public sectors. The overall allocation for the department in 1989-90 financial year is \$67.303m. This allocation includes a number of important new initiatives, some of which I would like to expand on.

In the corporate management division, \$147 000 has been allocated to staff development. This government is committed to the ongoing development of employees in the public service. Our employees will be given opportunities to improve their skills and find many meaningful career paths within the Northern Territory Public Service. To this end, the government has recently commissioned a survey to determine the current allocation of resources in the staff development area. Once this information is available, the government will be in a position to determine its priorities in this important area. This allocation of funds is aimed at assisting departments with putting staff development initiatives in place.

Significant progress will also be made in the area of recruitment in 1989-90. \$100 000 will be spent building on the gains my department has already made through the implementation of the government's Master Media Agency arrangements and the introduction of a corporate approach to vacancy advertising. This campaign aims to attract professionals to vacancies which are traditionally hard to fill. The first step for this campaign in the Northern Territory is to ensure that locals get a head start in the recruitment process. Where people with the necessary skills are not available in the Northern Territory, this campaign aims to attract them here.

The success of this initiative has already been astounding. More than 500 people have registered an expression of interest in employment in the Northern Territory. Among these people are doctors, veterinarians, nurses, teachers, engineers and specialists in a number of other fields. These early indications show that the extra funds committed this year will be well spent. Many of these vacancies are difficult to fill all over Australia. This government, however, has provided an economic and social climate which is attractive enough to entice other Australians to our Territory. The Department of Labour and Administrative Services, in consultation with other government agencies, will also conduct a major recruitment campaign in Hong Kong in conjunction with the NT Expo to be staged in November. This campaign will be aimed at attracting senior, well-qualified and specialist employees who are in short supply throughout Australia.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to one of the most exciting responsibilities of the Department of Labour and Administrative Services - employment and training.

It is important to note some of the huge achievements that this division of my department has made, considering that the Opposition Leader has again called on this government to provide employment and training initiatives for young Territorians. It is a shame that he is so unaware of exactly what is happening in this area. In the past 12 months alone, this government has provided employment and training programs to 951 young school leavers. This figure does not include the vast number of apprenticeships supported by this government or our training and employment programs for the disabled and for Aborigines. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that this government strongly supports training and employment for young Territorians.

We live in an extremely competitive world. Young people leaving school today face greater challenges than ever before. One of those challenges is finding a job even though our children leave school probably better educated than any of us did. However, the best education in the world is sometimes not enough these days. Young people today need opportunities so that they can capitalise on their skills. I am pleased to say that this government's innovative school leaver program will continue in the next 12 months at a cost of \$1.29m.

Our commitment to employment and training does not end there. The Northern Territory private and public sectors presently employ some 1300 apprentices. That high number would be impossible to achieve without the support given by the Northern Territory government. The Employment and Training Division of my department assists in the training of these young people by subsidising the cost of sending apprentices to technical colleges for theoretical training. In this calendar year, the government will help almost 500 apprentices travel to colleges for training. This will cost the Northern Territory government in the vicinity of \$670 000, a small amount when one considers the benefits which will flow to the community as a result. Of course, those apprentices will only travel to those colleges when appropriate facilities are not available here in the Northern Territory.

I turn now to one of the new initiatives which this government supported last year - and I hope the members opposite are listening after the ruckus they made about this subject last week. I am, of course, speaking of the Aboriginal Development Program. The success of this program, even in its infancy, cannot be underestimated. This government is putting Aboriginal people into meaningful jobs in their own communities. I believe that the real success of this program lies with the Aboriginal people themselves. The Aboriginal Development Branch has a very clear charter in this regard. Its role is not to tell people what skills they need, but to ask Aboriginal people what skills they want and to follow that up with the machinery to turn their dreams into reality.

I ask only one thing from Aboriginal people who want to see employment and training programs established in their communities - commitment. Everyone sitting in this House knows that dollars alone are not the answer to unemployment problems in communities. All the money in the world can make no difference unless people are motivated. When people show me that they have a commitment to training programs for themselves and their kids, I can feel confident in offering this government's support.

38 projects have been funded by the Aboriginal Development Branch in the past 12 months at a cost of \$787 000. Many of these programs have been specifically designed to provide training so people can access mainstream employment. A recent example of just how successful these programs can be was the clerical skills course offered to Aboriginal people in Darwin recently.

More than 75% of the participants gained employment as a direct result of completing this course while the remainder look like gaining employment in the near future. A similar course is under way in Alice Springs and I am sure the results will be just as encouraging.

In the remote areas of the Northern Territory, such mainstream courses do not always work. Those communities benefit more from courses designed specifically for their needs. A perfect example exists at Hermannsburg where 10 people undertook training in plant operation. These people gained valuable experience in the operation of a variety of heavy earth-moving equipment and also in safety, maintenance and first aid. As part of the course, the trainees built an amphitheatre and access road. On completion of the course, they were able to gain their C class licences, first aid certificates and Mines and Energy plant operators' tickets. These people are now able to work on road building contracts for their community.

The Aboriginal Development Branch has worked closely with the Commonwealth to ensure that funds are spent wisely. It has also been able to coordinate training programs from different service providers within the Northern Territory private and public sectors. I am extremely pleased that this important branch of the Department of Labour and Administrative Services will continue to develop and strengthen in the coming 12 months. It is playing an important role in providing job skills to some of the most disadvantaged people in the Northern Territory and will continue to do so with a similar allocation of funds in the coming year.

I move now to another authority which falls within my range of responsibilities - the Government Printing Office. It is important to note that the Government Printing Office received no funds through the Northern Territory budget. It is required to fund its operations by charging for its services. The efficiency of the Government Printing Office is therefore extremely important. Over the past few years, the Government Printer has been able to make significant savings by increasing productivity within the organisation. In 1986-87, the Government Printing Office's annual costs were \$5.7m. In 1988-89, that figure was only \$5.1m, a savings of \$600 000 without taking inflation or other extra costs into account. The pleasing aspect of these savings is that the Government Printing Office has been able to operate profitably through increased productivity while reducing the cost of printing to Northern Territory government departments. Despite moves in many states to close government printers, our Northern Territory Government Printing Office appears to be going from strength to strength.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the Office of Local Government. I am pleased to note that about 90% of all funds provided to this office will again be directed to communities in the form of untied grants. No comparable organisation does that. The Office of Local Government will receive \$32.98m in the coming year. Salaries, administration and associated costs will take up only \$3.635m of this.

This government's commitment to the advancement of local government in the Northern Territory is evident when one considers the dollars put into our cities, towns and communities. The Commonwealth government provides \$6.399m to local government bodies in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory government provides \$10.654m in untied grants. In addition, we provide \$4.291m in special purpose grants to the local government industry. I think these figures make it abundantly clear just who is supporting Territory local government.

The government's program of providing establishment package funding for councils also will continue in 1989-90. Funds have been set aside for the establishment of new community government councils as well as the ongoing programs of funding for the Litchfield and Palmerston Councils. Also, this is the second year in which I have agreed for special assistance of \$100 000 to be given to the Tennant Creek Town Council to assist it in overcoming its financial difficulties. As well as this monetary assistance, officers from the Office of Local Government have worked closely with Tennant Creek Town Council officers to help in this regard, and they will continue to do so.

I would like to mention a number of important initiatives which will be taken this year by the Work Health Authority. The authority has received additional funding of \$57 000 to expand its awareness program in 1989-90. While the majority of this will be directed through the electronic media in the form of Safety Sam commercials, some funds will be directed to the non-English-speaking members of the community. Additional funds have also been provided for the establishment of a Work Health Education Training and Study Grants Scheme. This is an effective means of promoting the principles of work health and safety and is likely to involve workplaces, unions and individuals.

Those are just a few of the exciting initiatives happening in my portfolio. There are many more, despite the doom and gloom picture painted by the Leader of the Opposition. This government is taking important steps to provide a progressive public sector. It is supporting the training and employment of young people in both the private and public sectors. It is creating real training opportunities in isolated communities and supporting the efforts of the third tier of government.

Mr Speaker, I proudly stand behind the efforts of this government and support the budget statement made by the Chief Minister and Treasurer. However, before I sit down, I would like to refer to some of the things that are happening in my electorate. The areas of responsibility of other ministers have an impact on my electorate. I want to pay tribute to the efforts of other ministers in getting things done, as they usually do, around the Northern Territory.

One of the things that was announced by the Chief Minister was a new police station in Batchelor. The police station in Batchelor is a demountable building which has been there for some considerable time and the community is very keen to have a new police station. With the growth of Batchelor and the number of people now passing through there and the growth of the station from a 1-man to a 2-man station, a new police station is welcomed.

The Batchelor Area School, which dates back to the early days of Batchelor, is to be replaced with a new school. Construction of that school will commence this year and \$1.1m will be spent in the first year. There is also a big demand for an industrial subdivision in the town.

The growth of traffic through Litchfield National Park has caused many problems. The improvements to the road this year will benefit not only the people of Batchelor but also the people of Darwin and tourists.

I rose in the adjournment debate last night to speak about the underhanded way in which the federal government removes funding from Aboriginal people and puts it into other people's pockets. This government has a strong commitment to Aboriginal housing. The Minister for Lands and Housing indicated yesterday that funding for Aboriginal housing has increased this year and that is not

taking into account the TCHIP funds which have grown of their own accord as part of the agreement. As I pointed out last night, the federal government has broken its part of that agreement in taking funds from other areas of Aboriginal housing and putting them into TCHIP. That is quite opposed to what it has insisted that we should do.

The commitment to housing in small communities such as Batchelor, Adelaide River and Pine Creek is to be commended. It is never enough and there is certainly a big requirement for housing in those communities as well as in Timber Creek. The one place that is falling behind and continuing to fall behind is Batchelor. I have written to the Minister for Lands and Housing asking for greater support for housing in that town.

In respect of Gregory National Park, I travelled the Bullita Road and the Limestone Gorge Road. It is good to hear that work will be carried out on those roads this year because they are in a pretty bad state.

The work at Butterfly Gorge and Douglas Hot Springs gives a clear indication of the effort that this government is putting into infrastructure for tourists and people from Darwin who visit those very popular places. The work to be carried out this year on the Douglas-Daly Road is mainly rebuilding.

The people in the rural areas of my electorate are being brought new hope by the powerlines that are being extended right, left and centre through the area. I am very pleased to see the work currently under way to put an additional powerline from the new Manton substation to Batchelor. That is very important because we have had many problems with power supplies in that area.

The Minister for Education announced a new classroom for Daly River. That is much needed and will be welcomed by that community. There are many other developments in my electorate besides these. If members opposite did some homework on the budget papers, they would find such developments and more in their own electorates which will be of advantage to the people whom they represent. Of course, they will knock the budget and say that it is not meeting the real needs! Remember that the Leader of the Opposition has been saying for 2 years: 'Let's cut the public service. The public service is dishonest and there is corruption within it. Let's shave money off the public service'. This government is not doing that. This government is doing positive things. It is providing infrastructure and better facilities for the people of the Northern Territory. I strongly commend the Treasurer's budget.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Wanguri. I remind all honourable members that this is the honourable member's maiden speech and I ask that the normal courtesies be extended to him.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to stand before you as the newly-elected member for Wanguri. I would like to start with a comment on the budget and related issues. I wish to draw members' attention to a recent commentary on the Northern Territory budget by the Institute of Public Affairs. The IPA has expressed the same broad concerns expressed by the Leader of the Opposition in his budget reply last week. The concerns that Labor expressed in the budget reply were: that this budget has hit the taxpayer too hard, especially the average Territorian who lives at or below the median income; that this government has no concept of long-term planning; that this has left Territorians without a sense of direction, because they cannot plan for their futures in the Territory when the Territory government

has no plan for them - one cannot obtain even long-term projections for the Power and Water Authority; no energy is being devoted even to discussing improvements in public sector efficiencies; small business is being passed over in favour of big bang projects such as State Square; and this budget dangerously dips into the cash reserves and increases borrowings when every indication is that tough economic times will continue.

To quote the IPA: 'In drawing heavily on reserves to finance higher spending programs this year, the Northern Territory government is gambling on the easing of Commonwealth purse strings next year'. It goes on: 'This is a dangerous course to follow because, as the Treasurer acknowledged in his budget speech, they are one-off measures that will not be available next year'.

The IPA is saying that the taxpayer is being lined up for an even harder hit next year because, if this gamble fails, the government has no more chips to play. A further hit against the taxpayer next year, as the IPA rightly points out, threatens to further depress private sector growth. This is not a plan; it is a punt. The IPA is a conservative body which likes conservative economics and conservative governments, yet its analysis of the CLP budget agrees in every material respect with that of the Labor opposition.

I would now like to focus on my electorate of Wanguri. I would like to start by thanking all the people of Wanguri who supported me. I would also emphasise that now, as the elected member for Wanguri, my role is to represent all the electors in Wanguri, whatever their political persuasion. This is fundamental to my understanding of my role in the Assembly. For too long, the perception in the community has been that politics and politicians tend to align with specific interests and groups. Too often, the political process has not only reinforced divisions within the community, but has actively tried to create such divisions. It is my belief that the people of Wanguri and in fact the people of the Northern Territory, who are widely represented among the variety of electors in Wanguri, are saying that they want a political process that endeavours to unify the community rather than divide it.

The issues of concern for the people of Wanguri are at 2 levels. The first level is concerns that affect all Territorians. These include concerns about the increasing cost of living, concerns over changes to the world environment, such as the Greenhouse Effect, local environmental issues, and concerns about the future quality of life for their children and themselves.

The second level of concern for the people of Wanguri is with issues specific to the area. These were identified and raised by the people of Wanguri during the election campaign. These issues, together with issues related to the needs of constituents which are still to be raised, will be the major focus of my efforts as the member for Wanguri. The issues that were raised include concerns relating to the Royal Darwin Hospital precinct. During the by-election, I campaigned strongly on the need for a child-care facility at the Royal Darwin Hospital. This was on the basis of a survey that I had conducted to determine the actual needs of staff employed at the hospital. The results of my survey clearly demonstrated overwhelming support for a 7-day-a-week facility which provides extended hours of operation.

The Labor Party is committed to the establishment of a child-care facility at the hospital, as was evidenced in its hospital policy which was released during the campaign. The policy states that, under Labor, a facility will be established to open initially between the hours of 7 am and 10 pm and, thereafter, the need for 24-hour care offering a mix of long-term day care and

casual care will be assessed. As the member for Wanguri, I will continue to place pressure on this government to meet the child-care needs of staff, patients and visitors to the hospital.

The Royal Darwin Hospital is a vital element of my electorate and I will be taking a considerable amount of interest in its operation. I am keen to ensure that the hospital remains a repository of expertise and continues to provide services that establish it as a centre of excellence for the whole of northern Australia. To enable the hospital to operate effectively on this level, the department needs to allocate a sufficient level of resources. I was therefore disappointed to discover that, in the recent budget, the hospital suffered real cuts in the vicinity of \$3.8m. Obviously, this has serious implications for the expansion and upgrading of services and, if the reduction of operating theatre facilities is any indication of future progress along these lines, then I am sure I will have a lot of work to do in Wanguri as an MLA.

One area of concern that I have always had has been the lack of permanent specialist medical staff at the hospital. For too long, people have had to fly interstate to receive expert attention. I would like to see an effective arrangement entered into between the public and private hospitals to ensure that there are no gaps in the range of services provided. One area of speciality is that of neurology. I am aware that, as a result of the absence of this service, the Chief Minister has moved urgency on amendments to the Human Tissue Transplant Act to enable specialists, other than neurologists and neurosurgeons, to certify that all function of a donor's brain has ceased to enable organs to be removed for the purpose of a transplant. This situation is less than ideal and is of real concern. We cannot continue to make do when it comes to people's lives.

Mr Speaker, other issues that I would like to address include the enclosure and waterproofing of the Dripstone community facility. After waiting for 10 years, the changes to the Dripstone community facility have been placed on the forward design list, effectively delaying any action for at least another year. In conjunction with apparent cuts to education and their effect on schools in my electorate and throughout the Territory, this is also of concern to me.

There are concerns over the future of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. There are a number of possible threats to this area, including the effects of fire, possible development on the edge of the reserve and the impact of increased use by members of the public. These issues need to be clearly addressed.

Another area of concern is that of pedestrian safety within my electorate. A problem associated with the development is that priority is often given to vehicular traffic flow at the expense of pedestrian traffic. To emphasise this point, I cite 2 examples. The first is the school crossing on Trower Road in front of the Holy Spirit School. This crossing is very unsafe and it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs. The second is the installation of the roundabout at the intersection of Lee Point Road and Vanderlin Drive. While this development may have improved the traffic flow at this intersection, it has made pedestrian crossing in this area a very dangerous activity.

During the election campaign, concern over the future of Tracy Village Social Club was brought to my attention. The problem is related to the lease which is due to expire in early 1991. As the land is owned by the

Commonwealth, when I heard that the federal Minister for Administrative Services, Stewart West, was to be in Darwin, I took the opportunity to become involved in the organisation of a meeting between the Tracy Village Management Committee and the minister to discuss the problem. While the issue has not yet been resolved, the likely prognosis following this meeting is good.

Another issue is that of a Red Cross facility, The Fire Escape, a facility that has adapted over time to focus on the needs of youth in the area. One aspect of this was the change in its clientele towards younger members over time. A recent move to restrict access for these younger members needs to be resisted as it would leave these youngsters out on the streets with no alternative venue.

While discussing issues relevant to the electorate, credit has to be given to initiatives by the government. However, it has to be asked if and when these initiatives will be implemented. For example, the CLP campaign launch indicated that Neighbourhood Watch will be extended into Tiwi and Wanguri. We would like to know when this will occur.

Mr Speaker, on a lighter note, I feel I need to comment on a couple of issues, both relating to my professional background. The first is related to the Chief Minister's reported accusations in the NT News on polling day that I was a 'left-wing psychiatrist'. I object strongly to this. I am a psychologist, not a psychiatrist, although it might be useful in my new position to be able to certify individuals. As to being 'left-wing', he may have again confused his nomenclature as I admit that I am left-handed!

The second point is the feeling of similarity between my new position as MLA and earlier position as school counsellor. As MLA, the people of Wanguri at times will be seeking my support to try to resolve their concerns and problems just as students sought my support when I was a school counsellor. As well as working with students, I was often approached by fellow staff members for professional support and counselling. If required, I see no reason why I cannot offer this service to fellow members of this House. Government members can rest assured that I am bound by a professional code of ethics to maintain client confidentiality, and I am sure suitable fees can be arranged.

In summing up, I would like again to thank the people of Wanguri for their support and to emphasise the mood of the electorate which indicated overwhelmingly that it no longer supports the present government and signalled its demise at the next election. Finally, I would like my personal thanks to be recorded to the 300-plus people who helped in my campaign, and special thanks to Andrew Fyles and Graham Parker for their untiring support and work, and to my wife, Margot, and son, Jack, for tolerating the disruption to their lives over the duration of the campaign, and in preparation for future disruptions over many years.

Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

JURIES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 195)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate that this amendment is essentially supported by the opposition. It introduces some amendments to the process of jury selection. It will enable the Sheriff to choose jurors by random selection by computer and it will allow a splitting of the jury pool. We note the increased penalties for non-attendance and the increased penalties for the impersonation of a juror. Why anybody would want to impersonate a juror absolutely defies the imagination, but suffice it to say that, were anybody to do so, the increased penalty from \$100 to \$2000 will be earnestly desired by all members. Perhaps anybody who impersonated a juror might find himself qualifying for certification under the Mental Health Act. Be that as it may, the amendments to the Juries Act are supported by the opposition.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the Juries Amendment Bill has 3 distinct features. First, it empowers the Sheriff to split the jury pool. Secondly, it increases the penalties for some offences from \$100 to \$500 and for another particular offence to \$2000. It also makes some statute law revisions. The situation currently is that, when the Sheriff calls in a pool of potential jurors, it appears that he can select only 1 jury from that pool. Apparently, the remainder are discharged and another group has to be called in to establish a second jury. This bill amends the act to enable that same pool to be used for the empanelling of a second jury. I am not quite sure how many people are called when a jury is to be selected, but it must be about 50 or so and, of course, only 12 are selected and the rest are dismissed. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to enable the empanelment of 2 juries from that group. This amendment is effected by clauses 13 and 14 of this bill.

The bill also refers to an existing maximum penalty of \$100 for offences which were established as far back as 1963 in respect of sections 50, 51 and 56. That has been amended and a new level of \$500 now set. The penalty of \$2000 to which I referred earlier is for the offence of impersonating a juror. That is a very serious offence and, in my opinion, it fully warrants the severe penalty of \$2000, although I question whether or not we should be using amendments to legislation to set monetary values in acts. I know there are varying schools of thought about this, but perhaps it might be appropriate to handle such matters as adjustments to monetary levels for penalties, charges or whatever by way of regulation. However, that is a discussion for another day.

There are a number of statute law amendments to which I referred earlier. These relate to sections 11A, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 18A. These sections are repealed and replaced by a new section 15. It is quite sensible to collate all the provisions from those sections to which I referred into one new section. Those provisions relate to excusing jurors from serving.

Sections 52 and 53 are also repealed to remove the possibility of a trial of summary offences before the Supreme Court. It appears that such offences will be more appropriately dealt with before the Management's Court. That is a very commendable amendment. With those few words, I support the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee stage without debate.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 193)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the bill before the House clarifies the power of the Registrar-General to give directions to others in the land Titles Office who perform the functions of the Registrar-General and it provides a statute law revision of the act in a schedule to the bill. The opposition has given due consideration to the amending bill and is happy to support 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.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 190)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are 2 Real Property Amendment Bills before the House at the moment. I am interested to know the policy framework for this bill. I have studied the minister's second-reading speech and I accept its logic. I accept the desirability of changes to land use policies, bearing in mind yesterday's hot-throated debate on the Chief Minister's statement on the environment. Perhaps 'hot-throated' is not quite the appropriate phrase, given that there was a considerable degree of bipartisanship in that debate. In the context of changing community attitudes, changing policies in relation to land use, the growing acceptance of the need to protect Aboriginal sacred sites and heritage sites, I can see that it is desirable to register more information on titles than might have been thought necessary 25 or 30 years ago. In those broad conceptual terms, the opposition supports the declared intention of the amendment.

I would be interested, however, to hear more about the application of the amendment. I would like the Attorney-General to tell me whether he sees the bill as addressing specific problems or whether the government is simply providing the Titles Office with a tool which may be useful in some hypothetical future circumstance. I note the reference in the honourable minister's second-reading speech to examples of characteristics that might be deemed to be desirable for inclusion in the Land Titles register. These range from the propensity to be flooded to what he delightfully terms 'man-made affections' such as the land having been used as a bombing range or a rubbish tip. You will recall, Mr Speaker, the difficulties which occurred on the property called Prague in the electorate of the member for Victoria River. Considerable difficulties have been experienced by the owners of that property because it was formerly used as a bombing range. I presume that those difficulties might have been averted if, prior to purchasing it, the current owner had been aware of the property's history.

My own experience of some difficulties in relation to zoning requirements has also led me to appreciate the sorts of matters which are of concern to people. Obviously, in the process of conveyancing a property, a solicitor will check certain things. He will be unable to check certain other things. I imagine that there are additional circumstances which have been drawn to the

attention of the Attorney-General and which have led to the framing of this bill.

Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill on that basis. In so doing, we note the administrative arrangements that are included in proposed sections 191A, 191B, 191C and 191D.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to support the bill. I think it is essential that the Registrar of Titles be able to register some form of caveat or notation when parcels of land have particular features that would be of interest to prospective purchasers. Titles should be able to carry some warning in relation to such features. I had some years of experience in dealing with land matters and was frequently frustrated because of the number of places which had to be visited in an effort to ascertain whether a particular parcel of land could be used for particular purposes.

In his second-reading speech, the minister referred to a register which would be separate from the Lands Titles Register for the purpose of registering known restrictions, both statutory and non-statutory. I would hope that, before such a register is put in place, there will be suitable debate about its implications. One of the better aspects of the Torrens land title system is that it gives the landowner some comfort, and it gives a prospective purchaser some comfort, that all the known and enforceable legal liens, caveats or other restrictions on the land can be recorded on a single document held in one place. The ability to peruse the hard copy of the title and to ensure that there are no unknown restrictions, caveats or liens gives comfort to landowners in general. That situation should not lightly be changed. The full implications need to be addressed.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, I indicate my support for the bill. I am sure that the Attorney-General appreciates that. He has intimated to me in the past how pleased he is when I rise to support him in such crucial debates. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will have to begin my reply by thanking the member for Karama for his contribution. I appreciate the worthwhile comments which he makes from his extensive knowledge of land matters. His store of wisdom is certainly a rare commodity in the Territory today and I think it is appropriate that I express my appreciation.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell raised several questions. In response, I indicate that the bill provides for a new part to the act which will allow notification, by the relevant Northern Territory or Commonwealth minister, of restrictions which affect land. There are 2 kinds of restrictions. The first are dealt with in proposed section 191A. They are those of a physical nature. They can only be notified on the grant of title or the sale of land by the Crown, in which case the owner takes the title subject to the notification of the restrictions. Restrictions after this time will only be registered against the title if the landowner agrees. That provision is drawn widely so as to include land of the Commonwealth.

Restrictions also arise by virtue of legislation, irrespective of whether or not the landowner agrees or is even aware of them. We had a perfect example today when we passed a bill which related to the restrictions on Territory freehold title to Aboriginal groups. Those restrictions apply to the sale of the land and protect potential buyers. The ability to register those restrictions on the title are an advantage both to the landowner and to financial institutions which might otherwise extend mortgages in relation to titles without the knowledge that those titles have restrictions on them.

We therefore have provision for both voluntary notification and notifications of restrictions which are of the legislative type. Another provision in the bill protects the Crown against liability for anything that is either done or not done in relation to the bill. I certainly commend the bill to honourable members. It relates to the Associations Incorporation Amendment Bill which we passed earlier. In concluding, I thank honourable members for the support they have shown.

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.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that, with your concurrence, I propose sending tonight, on behalf of all members and Territorians, a message of congratulations to Allan Border and his team as a result of their most successful tour of England during which they have regained the Ashes. That is the first time that that has been done in England since 1934.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I certainly support your motion to send congratulations from the people of the Northern Territory to Allan Border and the Australian cricket team. If it had not been for the vital part played by the English weather, the result could well have been 6-0. It was certainly a magnificent effort and it restored a great deal of national pride to all cricket lovers.

This morning, in answer to a question from the member for Stuart, the Minister for Education said that he felt it was a slight to the teachers concerned to suggest that there would be anything untoward in their having been involved in setting the exam as well as being the class teachers of students who were going to sit for the exam. I look at it from an entirely different point of view. As a teacher of a class undergoing examination, I would not want to be in the position of knowing what specific questions were to be put to my students. I think that I would be compromised. In fact, I would most probably disadvantage my students because I would want to do the right thing and not come too close to questions which would appear in the paper. The other aspect is that other teachers not involved in setting the exam would be in a position to claim that I had an advantage because of my knowledge of the contents of the exam paper. I do not think it is a fair proposition. Far from slighting those teachers involved, I think it puts them in a very invidious position. Certainly, it is one that I would not wish to be involved in as a professional teacher. I do not believe it is fair to anybody involved.

The minister said that he had a contingency plan to appoint, if necessary, an examiner or examiners who were not involved in teaching Year 10 and preferably not people working in schools where students are to sit the exams. Of course, they would need to be able to do the job. The vital thing is that the examination be conducted in a manner in which absolutely no reflection can be made on anyone involved. I would urge the minister to consider setting up an examining body that is totally external to the schools involved.

A couple of weeks ago, I received in the post a new book on Territory parks from the Minister for Conservation. It is a delightful book. I believe that honourable members who have not received a copy will receive one in due course. The publication of the book does a great deal of credit to the Conservation Commission and the minister. I know that people around the country will obtain clear information from it. Certainly, it covers many places that I have seen, particularly in the southern region, but it also covers areas in the Top End which I have not seen. I enjoyed looking through the book. I am sure that it will be a big seller. It would certainly make an excellent gift which will also promote the Territory. I thank the minister for the copy. I believe it will promote the Territory and encourage people to visit. Even people who live in the Territory will be encouraged to visit attractions that they have not visited so far.

The other matter I would like to raise tonight is deposit legislation. There is growing support for it in the community, even from people out bush. I believe the cattlemen have presented a paper to the government urging it seriously to consider such legislation as an excellent way to help clean up the Territory. When the matter of deposit legislation was raised in this House around 1980-81, the response from the manufacturers of containers was to provide a few thousand dollars in prizes for people who collected the most kilograms or tonnes of containers. In the main, that affects the major centres. However, one does not need to look hard to see bottles and cans strewn along the highways and out bush. These detract from the beauty of the Territory. I am well aware that there is an initial cost to the manufacturers with deposit legislation and that they object to that. If those containers are cleaned up, it is at the expense of the taxpayers or ratepayers. If a can or bottle is worth 10¢, people will think twice about throwing it away. If they do throw it away, other people will be prepared to collect it.

I urge the government to have a look at this matter again. Deposit legislation is working very well in South Australia. You do not find cans or bottles littering the parks or roads there. If a person is too lazy to return cans or bottles, someone else will. The person who then loses out is the one who bought the can or bottle in the first place. There is much to recommend this type of legislation which, in a sense, punishes those who create the litter. No doubt, there are 2 sides to the story, but I think the time has come for this Assembly to look at this proposal again and make the Territory a tidier place.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a subject that is of great concern to me and also of concern to the member for Sadadeen. I refer to the flood mitigation dam for Alice Springs.

Our concerns about this matter, which directly concerns a number of my constituents who live on the banks of the Todd River, are worth reiterating. As well as the possibility of loss of life whenever there is a serious flood, there is the problem of damage to homes, particularly some homes on the golf course side of the Todd River. One family there has a house that I would value at \$150 000. They have poured their life savings into that home and probably have a hefty mortgage. Every time a medium-sized flood comes, the lady is in a state of trauma in fear that water might come into this home. During the last medium-sized flood, the water was lapping within 4 in of their front door. Another nearby home is inundated by even a small or medium-sized flood. On the other side of the Todd River, down by South Terrace, at least 3 homes are inundated during floods and a number of other buildings and business houses suffer considerable damage every time there is a medium-sized flood.

That is why I am concerned about the lack of flood mitigation for the Todd River. When I was first elected almost 12 months ago, it was one of the first issues which I raised with the Minister for Mines and Energy. He responded by writing what I would call a 'put-off' letter to the effect that a number of things were being done in relation to flood mitigation. Whilst all these individually are quite nice, they do not go to the root of the problem.

I will just mention some of the things referred to in the minister's letter. He said that there is flood-proofing of buildings, that flood insurance is available to people and that public information and education is available. He said that there is flood forecasting - I presume that that is so that people can move out of the way - and that there are levees. Of course, we had the infamous sand extraction, which occurred at about the time of my election when I believe the government was trying to buy votes. Whilst this was fine, I do not think that, at that stage, anything was really being done about flood mitigation for Alice Springs.

A few months later, we heard that the government was discussing the matter in relation to a women's sacred site that was a cause for concern. I made it known to the minister that I felt that the Aboriginal ladies distrusted the government in respect of the sacred site. He advised me that he felt that I was out of touch in relation to what was occurring concerning the flood mitigation dam in Alice Springs. I accepted his invitation and went to a demonstration by the Power and Water Authority which was most impressive. It was there that I learned that, with the mitigation dam, the particular sacred site was under water for only 1 extra day. I thought that the Aboriginal people would agree to the dam. There seems to be a hidden agenda or a missing item here relation to why matters have not progressed.

Some 2 sittings ago, the minister reported that he was reconsidering a number of options. I know that he attended a meeting in Alice Springs of a number of businessmen and there were suggestions floated that he was now investigating the possibility of a new site. All in all, I was most heartened to note that \$800 000 is allocated in this year's budget for design work on the flood mitigation dam and, in the capital works estimate, there is \$15m which is consistent with what the government has said to date. I am most concerned that there seems to be inaction and I appeal to the minister to turn his urgent attention to flood mitigation for Alice Springs. I think it warrants that, given the possibility of loss of life and the enormous damage that occurs when we have heavy flooding in the Alice Springs area.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, some 18 months ago, in your time as Chief Minister, the Minister for Education ventured into the foreign affairs area and paid a heavy price. He has done it again. Today, he ventured again into the foreign affairs area and blundered significantly.

In the Northern Territory, we have worked very hard for a number of years to build closer relationships with Indonesia at all sorts of levels, particularly in the education field. In 1973, a teacher from Darwin High School made the trip to Bali which commenced the program of teacher and student exchange. In 1974, I led the second trip to Bali. Since then, there has been regular contact with both teachers and students undertaking exchanges and paying visits to each other's communities. No one can doubt that that is probably the most effective way of building inter-country and inter-cultural relationships.

Today, we saw the Minister for Education sabotage a trip that has been planned since the beginning of this year. This trip to Kupang by Sanderson

High School students is part of the ongoing cultural exchange program that has been in place for the last 15 or 16 years. I rise tonight to express my condemnation of the honourable minister's playing politics with students at Sanderson High School and their parents. All this year, those students have been expecting to undertake a cultural exchange visit to Indonesia at the end of September.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me give you the background. Sanderson High School has a long-running program of student and teacher exchanges to Indonesia. Last year, a similar excursion was undertaken at about the same time. The excursion is taken at this time because it coincides with the 1-week school break. For years, the Department of Education has encouraged schools to take cultural excursions like this in the school break and, wherever possible, the schools have tried to do so. Sanderson High School has been at the forefront. It has arranged a number of excursions to Indonesia and they have all been at about this time of the year, taking advantage of the school holidays.

These are cultural exchanges in the real sense of the term. They are not junkets, as a member of the honourable minister's staff described them to one parent. They are a serious and proper cultural exchange. The students from Sanderson High School are language students who will be billeted at an agricultural college and will have regular, ongoing contact with Indonesian students of all ages whilst they are there. What better way is there for developing this program of contact between Indonesia and Australia, and what damage will be done to that program by this unilateral decision of the minister to force students to pull out at this late stage?

I accept that the honourable minister has had a rough time from various schools, including Sanderson High School, on the question of Year 10 examinations. However, to say that this excursion, which has been planned since the beginning of the year, is an attempt by the school to sabotage the Year 10 examinations is drawing a very long bow indeed.

A member: Revenge.

Mr SMITH: I will not say that. It is drawing a very long bow indeed.

Parents have fully supported the school and the students in this cultural exchange. When the matter became difficult in the last couple of weeks, parents suggested to the department that the sensible solution would be to have the 1 exam that would be missed - and I understand it is the maths exam - taken over by the teacher in charge and for the 7 students involved to sit for it whilst in Indonesia. But, no! That is too hard. The other option, and one that was suggested by the member for Stuart, is that the students could sit for a supplementary examination when they return. Quite clearly, quite a few people will be sitting for supplementary examinations as a result of illness or for various other reasons. However, the offer was made by the parents that those 7 kids could sit for the exam whilst they are in Indonesia so that they would not miss out on this valuable cultural exchange.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the honourable minister to tell me why that is not possible. I would like the honourable minister to tell me, the parents and those young adults why, after they have raised the money and in some cases even paid their fares, he will deny the students permission for the visit even though a perfectly acceptable arrangement can be put in place for them to sit for their examination whilst in Indonesia. It seems to me that the honourable minister is being vindictive in the extreme on this matter, particularly when exemptions have already been granted to other individuals

for various reasons. I would like the honourable minister to explain how other individuals, with various reasons for missing the examination, can obtain exemptions, whilst these students from Sanderson High School cannot.

The broader point is this. In the quite extensive debates that we had on the Year 10 examination earlier this year, the point was made very strongly by the honourable minister that the Year 10 examination would not in any way limit the school curriculum. I put it to the honourable minister that this particular action taken by him does limit the school curriculum. It limits part of the school curriculum that has been in place for 2 or 3 years, and prevents students at Sanderson High School from having a cultural and educational exchange with students in Indonesia which will be of great value to them in their language studies and will also be of great value to us as a community which wishes to develop closer relationships with our nearest neighbours. For the life of me, I cannot understand why, so late in the development of this program, the honourable minister pulls the pin, particularly as this is the first year, and obviously a transitional year where things may go wrong, of the Year 10 external examinations program.

Mr Reed: You will do everything you can to ensure that.

Mr SMITH: That ...

Mr Perron: They knew the dates 6 months ago.

Mr Ede: They have been doing it for years.

Mr SMITH: Okay, let me take that up. They knew 6 months ago and therefore, at that stage, they were supposed to call off the cultural exchange program which they consider very important. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Perron: They had the option of picking the dates themselves recently.

Mr SMITH: They had the option of picking the dates themselves recently. How easy do you think it is to go to a third world country to make arrangements for a program and make arrangements for kids to be billeted? Do you think you can do it off the top of your head? It is not as if they are going to Bali to stay in a 5-star hotel. These things take quite an amount of time and effort to organise.

Mr Perron: When were you last there?

Mr SMITH: I have not had the opportunity to be there as recently as you, but I bet - no, I will not get into that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the point is that considerable time and effort has gone into developing this exchange. That time and effort has been put in by Sanderson High School and, equally importantly, it has been put in by Indonesian people. Nevertheless, for reasons that I do not understand, the honourable minister is saying that the Year 10 students cannot go. He is going to come back today and say that he has changed his mind and the trip can partially go ahead because the Year 8 students can go.

Mr Harris: It has been approved.

Mr SMITH: But not the Year 10 students.

Mr Harris: No way.

Mr SMITH: Not the Year 10 students.

In a sense, I am pleased because it makes our job in the northern suburbs that much easier, and I am certain it will be one more nail in the coffin of the Country Liberal Party in respect of northern suburbs seats. However, that is not the point.

I would like an explanation from the honourable minister of why he has taken this action. I can see an argument for the minister saying, at the beginning of next year, that no approvals will be given for trips that clash with the Year 10 examinations. That, however, is quite different from denying approval 6 weeks before a party is due to depart. That is just not on. If the honourable minister does not change his mind on this matter, he deserves the opprobrium that he will receive in the northern suburbs.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had not intended to speak in this debate tonight, but obviously the Leader of the Opposition is not in touch with what really is happening in relation to Sanderson High School and this excursion. Could I make it clear from the outset that the school knew full well that the examinations would be held at the end of September. Every school was notified of that fact. Nevertheless, this school still went ahead and made arrangements for this overseas excursion, which included Year 10 students, during a period which covered the vital 3 days of the examinations. Recently, the school was notified of a series of dates which could have been chosen for the trip. It was not a matter of organising, making arrangements and so forth. The school could have organised the trip so that it did not clash with the examination dates.

Mr Smith: That is not true. Who was going to organise it? You?

Mr HARRIS: It was already organised. The school was given dates when the excursion could have taken place.

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no question about the value of excursions and exchanges to Indonesia. The CLP government, through the Department of Education, has been very supportive of those programs in recent years. Indeed, we are seen as the leaders in that field.

Mr Smith: Not any more. Not after this effort.

Mr HARRIS: We are developing our Indonesian language curriculum and the Leader of the Opposition is being absolutely stupid in this regard. If he is saying to parents that they can let their kids go overseas even though they have examinations which are very important for their JSSC results and their futures, and even though the school knew that those examinations were to be held, he should be condemned. He is approving of parents sending their children away during this vital period even though the school could have changed the date so that the students could have all gone together at the appropriate time.

Mr Smith: You would not change the date and you know that.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition keeps saying that I could not have changed the date.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr HARRIS: Can I make it quite clear that it is not my intention to change the date. It had nothing to do with me as minister or with this government. It was entirely up to the school to make those decisions.

Mr Smith: That is very true. The school and the parents.

Mr HARRIS: It was entirely up to the school and the parents.

Mr Smith: So why are you interfering?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have been very patient with the Leader of the Opposition. He will have a chance to debate this subject and I would appreciate it if he would let the minister make his speech without interruption.

Mr HARRIS: It is good to see the Leader of the Opposition learning.

When some parents received the letter in relation to this matter, they realised that the excursion would be during the period of the examinations. They were concerned and they contacted the department. Things were really hush hush out at the school. Nobody wanted to tell anyone about this excursion that was to take place.

Mr Collins: They wanted to drop it at the last minute.

Mr HARRIS: That is exactly right. Mr Deputy Speaker, I have made it very clear in this Assembly that I do not like having to do what I have done. All I can do is withhold approval. The parents can still take the children. There is no question about that. However, the children will not be able to sit for the examination which comprises 30% of the overall assessment in Year 10. The parents know that.

All I am saying is that the school knew that the examinations were to be held at the end of September. There is no question about that. The school knew. It was told in March of this year that the examinations were to be held at the end of September. There is no question about that. Nevertheless, it proceeded to include Year 10 students on that particular excursion. Mr Deputy Speaker, as I have mentioned, I have approved the travel of the Year 8 students. I have asked the travel documents to be resubmitted because there may need to be an adjustment as far as teachers accompanying the students are concerned.

The Leader of the Opposition did himself no credit this evening by arguing that I had been irresponsible as minister, that I should allow the students to go and that I should allow examination papers to go out of Australia so that the students could sit for the exam in Indonesia. If we were to start that sort of nonsense, we would have students and examination papers going all over the place. It is absolute nonsense and the Leader of the Opposition knows it.

I am sorry that this has happened, but I make it very clear that it is not my fault or the fault of the Northern Territory government. It is clearly the fault of the school which knew full well back in March that the examinations were to be held at the end of September. It continued to proceed with the arrangements for the trip. The school could even have changed the dates until a few weeks ago. It was given alternative dates which would not clash with the examination dates of 26, 27 and 28 September. The excursion could have commenced after the examinations had been completed. The school could have arranged that. But no, it chose 27 September, right in the middle of the examination period.

It is disappointing that this has occurred. I know that Sanderson High School was opposed to the examinations because of the agitation of some people. Many other schools are in favour of the Year 10 assessment package. That is a fact. I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the submission of Sanderson High School was given full assessment and appraisal. Following that, the decision was taken in relation to the external examinations. Nevertheless, people continue to raise the issue. We have been through the exercise. The Northern Territory Teachers Federation and COGSO are also aware of the government's decision. They were aware at the beginning of the year that we would introduce external examinations at the end of the year, and that those examinations would account for 30% of the assessment in English and mathematics.

It is disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to accuse this government of doing something wrong. I put it to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the school knew the facts. It knew that the examinations would be held at the end of September. It should have made that public and it should have informed the parents of exactly what was happening. It knew and it did not act appropriately. It stands condemned for that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 2 matters which I wish to address in tonight's adjournment debate. The first relates to an unfortunate happening in the rural area. The people concerned hope that it does not happen again, both from their own point of view and that of the people being cared for in the institution concerned. I intended to ask the Minister for Health and Community Services a question this morning but I did not have the opportunity. My question would have been as follows. In view of the repeated break-outs of juvenile offenders from Malak House and the undesirable social outcome this occasions in the community, can the minister assure me that further break-outs from Girraween House - although this does not involve juvenile offenders - will not occur? A recent incident involving an inmate caused some concern to certain members of the rural community and, no doubt, to the inmate himself.

Girraween House is operated by Somerville Homes under the auspices of the Department of Health and Community Services. Prior to the construction of this facility in the rural area, the department lodged an extremely misleading development application. After repeated prodding, it issued a clearer development application specifying exactly who would live in the facility. After reading the description of the facility in the first application, the local community thought that it was to house juvenile offenders. There was considerable opposition to that idea. After repeated questioning and prodding, the revised development application stated that the people who were to live in Girraween House were people in their teens and early 20s who were physically disabled. Of course, nobody could have any objection to something like that.

The incident that I am concerned about relates to the safety of one of the people from this home who was found roaming on a nearby block. No harm was done although some concern was expressed by the people who found him. Some harm could have come to this young man, however, because he was very close to a horse paddock. He could have entered that paddock and suffered some bodily harm from the horses. I hope that this sort of thing does not happen again. The people who found this young man were a little worried, but the young man's behaviour did not give them any cause for concern for their own safety. They were concerned for his safety. If this home is to continue looking after these young people, greater care will need to be exercised in their supervision. People who have physical disabilities need to be under supervision to prevent the possibility of injury to themselves.

The second matter that I wish to raise is something which the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries could well examine. I refer to the need for diversification in primary production. We have heard at some length about the deprivations which BTEC has occasioned to the cattle and buffalo industries. We have been told of shoot-outs and of properties which have been destocked, leaving them with reduced herd numbers and reduced incomes for some years until herd numbers can be bred up again.

About 8 years ago, there was an extremely severe drought in western Queensland and many sheep farmers in that area faced ruin. At that time, a new development occurred. I think it started mainly with the station owners' wives because the men were so busy trying to keep their diminishing flocks alive. The women began to take an interest in the Angora goat industry. That industry has now progressed to such an extent that it is quite a healthy and extensive diversification of pastoral interests in the area. I am not necessarily saying that all cattle properties should diversify into Angora goats or the mohair industry. However, I believe that the minister and his senior officers could well look to encouraging a diversification program in our rural industries. In order to do this, there would need to be research into possible products, climatic conditions and marketing conditions in the Territory, interstate and overseas. I believe that, if an intensive study were undertaken, a surprising number of opportunities would emerge. People would be surprised at the number of things which can be successfully grown, managed, husbanded, farmed and exported in the Northern Territory to increase our solid rural industry development.

For too long, we have focused on cattle alone. Whilst I am not denigrating the cattle industry at all, some properties are also interested, albeit in a small way, in grazing a small number of sheep on their properties. As a matter of fact, I accepted an invitation at the Tennant Creek Show to visit a property in that area in November, together with the President of the Litchfield Shire. At that time, shearing will be taking place. This particular station could be moving into a very profitable diversification or sideline, if you like. There are so many other interests that could be developed and so many other projects that could be undertaken which would make this idea well worth investigation. The pig-meat industry in the Northern Territory could be investigated. The sheep-meat industry could also be investigated and the processing of hides could result from that. We have this new, you-beaut tannery coming into production shortly in the Top End. Once the capabilities of that are explained and promoted, it will process not only eels, fish and crocodiles, but many other products from primary industry.

I can see possibilities for a turkey-meat industry. I do not say these would occur on all stations. It would have to be horses for courses. I believe that a variety of activities could be considered. I have thought only briefly about animal husbandry projects, but I believe equally that some form of intensive agriculture, albeit in a small way, could possibly be undertaken quite profitably.

That brings me to another subject that I want to touch on briefly. I believe a discrepancy exists in the grain industry in the Top End. There are those of us in the Top End who are the end users of different grains that are grown here. Because we have made the Northern Territory our home and we believe in the future of the Northern Territory, we like to support the Northern Territory grain industry. However, I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is becoming more and more difficult. I patronise one of the biggest produce merchants in the Top End, if not the Northern Territory, NT Stockfeeds, which is in our rural area. Believe it or not,

whilst there is plenty of this produce in Katherine, the manager of that stockfeed company cannot get it here. I am talking about rice, maize, peanuts and mung beans. They cannot bring it up. I needed to buy some maize 3 weeks ago and I am still waiting for it. I was a little annoyed that it was not in stock until I was told the real reason for that. I rang the person concerned in Katherine, whose name I was given, and his answer was: 'We are sorry to hear about that, but we are just snowed under'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that, in the interests of trying to support local industry, a little more energy could have been extended to actually supplying end users. If the Northern Territory grain industry and grain growers hope to continue on a profitable basis, they must supply their local markets. NT Stockfeeds used to get the bulk of its grains and processed animal feeds from interstate. When the Northern Territory feed came on line, all of those contracts were cancelled and the owner-manager, like many of us, thought that it would be in his and everybody's interests to support local industry. However, he has been having a dickens of a job doing it.

I cannot understand what is wrong. We have people who want to use Northern Territory produce and people who are producing that produce. The nigger in the woodpile seems to be the middle man who does not seem to have his act in gear and is not delivering the produce quickly enough from the grower to the end user. It is a serious situation, and it will not improve until some people see the reason for their being in Katherine which is to process all this produce as it comes into storage and send it out to those people who wish to buy it. I have not contacted the honourable minister officially on this. I have spoken to senior members in his department, but I will be pursuing the matter next week, and I hope that somehow or other the situation can be rectified in the very near future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, before I go into the substance of the matter I intend to speak about tonight, I would like to recap a little on the situation surrounding Sanderson High School and the unfortunate rejection by the honourable minister of the plea from the Leader of the Opposition for something to be done for the Year 10 students who wish to travel to Indonesia on a cultural exchange visit.

I do not want to intensify the debate any further, but simply to indicate that there is a solution which I would like the honourable minister to consider before he gets himself further into a corner on this matter. It will not produce any problems educationally and it will allow people to participate in the cultural exchange visit and to sit for the examinations. Certainly, I do not support the examinations but, given that the minister is in government, he has the right and the power to put them in place. On any given day, some 5% to 10% of students are absent from schools in the Northern Territory. Some 5% are probably absent for reasons of ill-health and another 5% are absent for other very good reasons. The examination system will have to cater for those students in some way and it is obvious that that will be done by means of supplementary examinations. The honourable minister mentioned this today. He made a very strange statement which I checked in Hansard before I spoke. He said that they would sit for the examination later on. Obviously, that is a slip of the tongue because anything like that would be patently ridiculous. It is obvious that a similar examination assessed to have an equal level of difficulty will be set as a supplementary examination. The students would probably sit for it in the week or so after the school holidays.

The solution is for the minister to allow the 7 students to make the trip and to sit for the supplementary exam when they return. It is important for the school that the students make the trip with the Year 8 students because they have a more advanced knowledge of Indonesian. It is also important for the success of the visit to have students of various ages. I plead with the honourable minister not to take it out on the kids. It may be that he has a fixation with regard to Sanderson High School. Perhaps he has had some row with the teachers or feels that they have been too successful in their opposition to his external examination proposals. These students have worked hard all year for this trip, have raised the necessary funds and have set their hearts on pursuing Indonesian as a subject. I plead with the minister to allow them to make the trip and to take the supplementary exam on their return. That should be the end of the problem.

Mr Speaker, that leads into the subject that I wish to raise tonight. It is an unfortunate fact that it seems to have become fashionable for conservative forces to roundly attack teachers at any opportunity. It is not only in the Northern Territory either. This government ...

Mr Perron: They ask for it.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister says that they ask for it.

It is unfortunate that the government takes that attitude to teachers, because they have a very important job in relation to our children. Along with their federation, they have ...

Mr Perron: Why do they leave in mid-year and leave the kids in the lurch as has happened at Darwin High? What sort of responsibility is that?

Mr EDE: If the Chief Minister will calm down for a little while, I will tell him some of the stories that he apparently does not hear from his Minister for Education. I will give some examples of where teachers in the Northern Territory have gone far and beyond the bounds of what any teachers would do anywhere else in Australia. Unfortunately, the result has been that they and their federation have copped attack after attack.

I spoke this morning about the teacher shortages at Darwin High School. I think it is significant that Band 2 teachers there are taking on a double teaching load. They are doing their own job, but they are taking on the teaching load of Band 1 teachers. That does not mean that they are able to drop the amount of organisational work they need to do to ensure that there are teachers to cover other classes. They take on all that additional work as well as undertaking the same teaching load as a Band 1 teacher. Of course, that extra work must be done in their own time and the problem is exacerbated by a lack of qualified teachers. When you have unqualified teachers, it means that the qualified teachers have to coach them so that they do the best job possible. There are also part-time teachers who work during the second part of the day in order to prepare the students adequately for the important Year 12 examination.

I was talking to the member for MacDonnell about this the other night, and I am quite sure that he would be able to give a fairly substantial contribution at some stage on what would occur if you had had a situation of this nature when he was teaching in schools down south. If you had a situation where only 20% of the maths teachers were qualified, that would be grounds for an immediate walk-out. Qualified teachers would have refused to work with unqualified staff. They would have walked out until the department

obtained qualified staff. That is the way it operates down south. The teachers in the Territory are put upon time and time again. They continue to struggle with the additional workload because of the unqualified teachers in their midst. They do this over and over again, but they do not receive any thanks or kudos from this government. Every time they turn around, they are kicked in the teeth.

It is not only at the Darwin High School. One only has to look at the situation that exists in Nhulunbuy where they have had shortages for months and months. Staff have been covering vacancies because they have been told things will get better. They are left to carry the load and that will continue throughout the year. The same situation applies at Tennant Creek High School and Anzac Hill High School. It happens all the time in the bush schools. There are no emergency relief teachers out bush. If someone is taken ill or has to go into town, everyone else has to try to take on those extra classes.

Mr Perron: What do you expect us to do? Send teachers out there to sit on their backsides waiting for emergency relief opportunities at Yuendumu?

Mr EDE: Unfortunately, given the level of illness and stress and the terms and conditions out there, an emergency relief teacher would probably be working full time at Yuendumu.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what the government has done is dangle various promises which amount to nothing. There is a Master Teachers Scheme booklet which is circulating but it does not mention anything about salaries. The minister finally said something tonight about \$400 000 being allocated in the budget. I cannot see how that will have any impact on the Master Teacher Scheme unless he is talking about bringing it in right at the end of the financial year.

People know that the government opposed the national wage case and fought for only a 3% increase. They know, for example, that the working party that was looking at incentives for teachers reported its recommendations to the secretary weeks ago and still nothing has resulted from that report. Those are the things the teachers know about. They are continually becoming frustrated because they know that they are working far harder and are even contributing their spare time.

At Darwin High School, there is a Band 2 teacher who asked to be demoted back to Band 1 because he could not stand the continual frustration. He said that he still had to do a full Band 1 workload and, on top of that, he had to juggle classes and continually make excuses for the system to parents. Is it any wonder he wanted to resign his Band 2 status and go back to Band 1? That is an indictment on the system. In any other system, those teachers would be taking industrial action to try to force the government into action, to try to bring it to its senses and get it to put in resources, teachers and incentive schemes. They are not taking industrial action because they are willing to give up their family lives and devote themselves to the education system. Do they receive any thanks? What did they get from the honourable minister tonight? He is giving them heaps all the time. They are professional people who put considerable store on developing their students' minds and seeing the results of that development.

Mr Harris: There are teachers and there are teachers, and you know it. Come on!

Mr EDE: I am talking about the broad mass of teachers in the Northern Territory.

Mr Harris: And I am too. They are good. I am glad you qualified that.

Mr EDE: The honourable minister should get behind me in this and give teachers a bit of support. He should get up every now and then and be more supportive of them. He should say: 'You are doing a great job. We know you do not have the best in terms and conditions but you have my backing. When I make a promise that I will get the incentive scheme together, by golly you will have it'. Instead of that, every time they turn around, they cop it. They cop it from the employer groups, they copped it from the Chief Minister tonight and they cop it from the minister. They are just a punching bag for conservative politicians and their also-rans.

Everybody rubbishes teachers in relation to literacy and mathematics standards. The minister knows the answers. He has the staff who understand the present situation and how it compares with the past. I am not going to explain it all in this debate because the minister has the answers. However, he will not stand up and tell people the reason why x% attained a certain level of mathematics and are leaving at Year 10 as against the percentage who left at Year 10, 20 years ago. He will not talk about the various percentiles and explain it in a way that the business community can understand.

He will not back the education system and the teachers. He will not do that because it is politically necessary for people on his side to bash teachers and to give them a good shellacking every time there is a bit of a blue on. It may give some sort of warm inner glow to the people on the other side, but it does no good for those honest, hard-working teachers out there and, in the final analysis, it does no good for our education system and no good for our kids.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise in this adjournment to pay tribute to 2 Tennant Creek identities, Meg Blyth and Fritz Ruger, who died earlier this year in April. While I did not have the pleasure of knowing these people personally, both were remarkable Territorians who will be missed by the community.

Margaret Ellen Blyth, known as Meg, was born in Darwin in 1897 and died just short of her 92nd birthday. During her long life, she was one of those rare individuals who bring joy to the lives of nearly all the people whom they meet. Meg married Alex Blyth in South Australia and, following Alex's death, she moved to Tennant Creek in 1958 to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Thelma and Paddy Ford. An accomplished, self-taught pianist, she entertained countless tourists and locals alike with her lively music at hotels, the Wauchope Well Roadhouse and the Memorial Club. Meg Blyth came from a family of 9 children. Although she had only 1 child herself, she is succeeded by 4 generations.

Fritz Ruger, who died at the age of 75, was one of the Territory's genuine characters. A miner for most of his life, he was so good at finding gold that it was said that he could smell the stuff. Fritz was born in Germany and worked for some years on a merchant ship until around 1934. Then, he jumped ship in Brisbane to avoid the German army and the impending war. He became an underground miner at Mt Isa where he met and married Henrietta, known as Hetty, who was a nurse. In 1936, back before the days of the Barkly Highway, Fritz and a friend made their way via stations and waterholes to Tennant Creek. Hetty joined him soon after when he had built a lean-to and they had 7 children before Hetty died of cancer when only 42.

Fritz worked in many mines around Tennant Creek and later around Pine Creek, first as a foreman and for many years as an underground supervisor. Later in life, he worked as a storeman in Katherine before retiring in Tennant Creek where his 6 surviving children are living at present. Like many Australians from Germany, Fritz Ruger spent the war years in an internment camp. His mining leases in the main street of Tennant Creek were confiscated and his children had to bear the brunt of being called Nazis. Fortunately, he lived long enough to see one of his sons Paul become the present Mayor of Tennant Creek.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to speak in honour of 2 prominent Borroloola men, Leo Finlay and Don Williams. Both died recently and will be sadly missed. A deeply religious man, Leo Finlay had been ill for some time and died in Mt Isa Hospital at a relatively early age. For many years, he worked on cattle stations in the Barkly and Gulf regions and, during the last 2 decades, he played an important role in Aboriginal affairs both locally and nationally. His great drive kept him at the forefront. Leo Finlay was an executive member of the Northern Land Council for a number of years. The large attendance at his funeral was a clear indication of the high regard in which he was held.

Don Williams died during a hunting trip to Kangaroo Island in the McArthur River. He occupied senior positions in Borroloola and was highly respected and influential in traditional Aboriginal affairs.

I also pay tribute to another outstanding Territorian, Babe Damaso, whose recent death has broken a link with the Territory's past. His father was a Filipino sailor and pearl diver who came to the Territory in 1898 and married an Aboriginal woman from the Yanula Tribe. It is a matter of history that this marriage resulted in one of the Territory's best-known families.

Babe Damaso was born in 1910 on a pearling lugger and he spent his early years in the Borroloola region. He will be remembered for many things. He was a great fisherman. He won the Territory amateur bantamweight boxing title in 1929. He was a keen player and follower of football and a life member of the Darwin Football Club.

Mr Speaker, perhaps most of all, Babe Damaso will be remembered for his work for the advancement of Aboriginal Territorians. He was Secretary of the Aboriginal Half-caste Progress Association and played a prominent role in the fight for full citizenship rights. He also became the Territory's first Aboriginal welfare officer. His contribution was recognised at the highest level in 1977 when he was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for his services to Aboriginal people.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would just like to respond tonight to some comments made by the Minister for Tourism this morning during question time. I would like to make it clear to the minister in the plainest possible terms that, if he believes I have given documents that relate to his portfolio to the ABC, he has got it very badly wrong again. It is simply not the case. It is part of the continuing paranoia. If members of the government have a problem or find themselves in a little trouble, they blame Tuxworth. They seem to feel that Tuxworth is a good guy to stick it on. The minister should feel welcome to do that but he should not expect me to cop it.

The minister took another step this morning in answering the points which I raised yesterday. He attacked the former employee of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, Mr Cafe, apparently acting on the premise that, if you denigrate and destroy the character of the individual, the argument becomes

irrelevant. I would like to follow that proposition through for a moment because the minister's attack on Mr Cafe this morning can only be described as totally wimpish. If this former inspector for the commission in Alice Springs was so bad, one has to ask how he ever got on the payroll. If all the things the minister said about him this morning were true, how does he explain the employment of such an individual in a responsible role relating to the casino? Either the government was not doing its job in relation to the casino or there is no substance to the minister's remarks about Mr Cafe.

The minister was pretty quick to say that Mr Cafe was incompetent. If that is the case, what was ever done in terms of public service administration to counsel Mr Cafe and to give him guidance or instruction? That is a pretty common procedure in the public service to help people who are considered incompetent. If it did not happen, one must ask why. Did Mr Cafe break the security regulations?. What was done about it? If nothing was done, why wasn't something done? Those are reasonable questions. If, as the minister said, Mr Cafe acted improperly in terms of his public service duties, it is reasonable to ask why he was not charged or disciplined in some way. As I understand it, in relation to Mr Cafe, there is no record of these things ever being done. If he acted illegally, as the minister inferred this morning, why was he not investigated and perhaps charged or prosecuted? Surely that would be the sensible thing to do if he had behaved in the manner described by the minister. If the minister has all this information about Mr Cafe, let him table the relevant papers and reports and do a real number on him.

Mr Reed: Are you going to table the letter you got from Mr Cafe?

Mr TUXWORTH: I did that last night, dopey.

Mr Speaker, I ask the minister to produce the reports and papers which substantiate what he has to say and which support his character assassination of Mr Cafe. If Mr Cafe is as bad as the minister suggests, why doesn't he appoint an investigator who would be able to verify all of the things which the minister has said about Mr Cafe? Such an initiative would put everything to rest very quickly but the government will not do that. It will not appoint an investigator and I will tell you why, Mr Speaker. It will not do so because such a step might set in train inquiries which it might not be able to stop.

This morning, the minister described Mr Cafe's visits to his office as drop-in visits in which Mr Cafe talked about all sorts of things. He remembered many of those things, but he had a great deal of difficulty remembering the discussions that Mr Cafe alleges he had about the casino and its administration. The minister went on to say that he had made a mistake about the number of cheques, about the amounts they represented and about who signed reports. That was a pretty curious admission when one takes into account the fact that he was pretty well prepared when he made his statement the other day. It is very hard to imagine that anybody could swallow a line like that.

The minister went on to say this morning that the casino manager was permitted to continue the operation of his licence because Mr Cafe made a mistake and cashed a cheque when he should not have. Yesterday, we were talking about the possibility of the manager having allowed as many as 5 cheques to be cashed when they should not have been cashed - not just one. Let us assume for a moment that Mr Cafe did what the minister said he did. What about the other times when the cheques should not have been cashed? Why was it, Mr Speaker, that the manager of the casino was not disciplined and why was his licence not attended to?

The minister also made great play this morning about the fact that no winning cheques were issued in November. That does not mean that people did not win big money in November. It means that they did not take their winnings in the form of a cheque. It does not mean that people did not win money and it is quite over the pole for the minister to put that proposition.

The minister said this morning that Mr Cafe was not persecuted by the senior management of the inspectorate and that his problem was that he was incompetent. Mr Speaker, let us assume for a moment that the minister's proposition is correct. I put it to you that that is not what would have driven Mr Cafe out of the service. Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members, I will put it to you that Mr Cafe might just have been a good straight guy trying to do a job.

Mr Coulter: He might have been.

Mr TUXWORTH: Right. Maybe his persistence was a little inconvenient for some people around him.

I will put some questions to the minister and he might like to consider them and respond to them. Over a period of weeks, the casino inspectorate has conducted a series of internal investigations and, indeed, we have had a police investigation about all sorts of things. We would expect at some stage that the police report will be tabled. Given that, it is reasonable to ask whether Mr Cafe is to be investigated, questioned or interviewed in relation to these reports. It would seem fairly ridiculous to conduct the sort of inquiries that the minister is talking about without going back and interviewing the person who is allegedly causing all the problems. If the government wants to stitch him up, if he is such a bad egg, why not have him interviewed? Mr Cafe has not been interviewed, and one is forced to ask the reason for that. It would be perfectly reasonable at this stage for him to be interviewed.

The second question that I raise for the benefit of the minister is this, and he can consider it tomorrow: has anyone ever inquired into why the casino was prepared to give irregular credit, extended credit and continuing credit, and why has that credit not been repaid? Further, what special credentials does a Territorian need in order to visit a casino, write cheques which bounce and have credit of up to \$20 000 on tick for as much as 11 months without any call being made for the money? What is the drum, Mr Speaker? How do the rest of the Territory's citizens become able to obtain that sort of facility from the casino? We have been given no answer to that and there has to be an answer. It is not reasonable to expect the rest of the community to believe that one person or a few people can have that sort of facility available to them whilst it is not available to the rest of the community. If one person received that treatment, who else gets it? How does one get it? What does a person have to do to obtain that sort of facility?

Mr Coulter: Would you like it?

Mr Reed: It would not be a business deal.

Mr TUXWORTH: I would simply say to honourable members that, even if you do have a facility that gives you tick, there has got to be a point at which you have to repay.

Why has there been no inquiry into the points that have been raised? We are never going to sort out the facts of the matter by playing 20 questions in

this Chamber and taking part in the odd debate, but an independent inquiry with somebody going through the various matters from top to bottom could quite ably report to this parliament on whether the matters raised are true, whether they have any substance, whether any problems have been corrected and whether they were a matter for concern in the first place.

There is one final point that I would like to raise. In the minister's statement this morning - and I believe I am correct when I say this and, if I am wrong, I am quite happy for him to point it out - he said that the level of debt at one point was \$20 000 which was paid on 25 May with a cheque of \$17 000 and \$3000 cash. That cheque was dishonoured on 25 May and subsequently honoured with \$2000 cash and a \$15 000 cheque. The question is: was the cheque for \$15 000 dated 19 May, which was about a week before the other one bounced? If that is the case, what is the reason? Why would somebody pay with a cheque for \$17 000 on one date, and then have another cheque already in the system for \$15 000 dated a week before?

Mr Reed: If your man is so smart, why doesn't he ...

Mr Coulter: How does he remember all this detail?

Mr TUXWORTH: It is not 'all this detail', it is simply 1 cheque. If honourable members think it is a reasonable proposition and not a matter of great importance, that is a matter for the government. However, there are still a number of questions to be settled ...

Mr Coulter: Whether you or Mr Cafe gave the material to the ABC, that is what has to be answered?

Mr TUXWORTH: ... and I say to honourable members that an inquiry is the only way of obtaining answers.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to commence by corroborating the comments made by the member for Stuart, the Labor spokesman for education, about the qualifications of teachers, particularly of secondary teachers, in the Territory system. I do not want to speak at any great length about it. I simply want to say that I noticed in the Question Paper the answer given in relation to the number of mathematics teachers who are qualified and the number who are not. I want to place on the record in this Assembly my deep concern for the Territory system of education, particularly secondary education, when there is obviously such a high proportion of unqualified teachers. There is an unacceptable proportion of unqualified teachers teaching in our secondary schools. If those figures apply to mathematics, I wonder what applies to the other subjects in the secondary curriculum? I believe that the minister should be making a full and comprehensive statement to this Assembly about the relative qualifications of people working at different levels in the state secondary system. I will say no more about that this evening. I simply want to place on record my deep concern about it.

Before some member of the government stands up to point out that my kids are not involved in the secondary system of education in the Northern Territory', I will simply say that I am not quite sure that the minister himself will raise that as an argument but some of his colleagues may. My own 3 children have had some time in secondary schools in the Northern Territory and their experience has been very mixed. I do not have the time to expand on that but, by golly, it does not improve my confidence in the secondary school system when I see such answers being provided to a question on notice.

A further education matter I wanted to raise at the behest of my colleague, the Labor spokesman on education, pertains to a visit by the Minister for Education and the federal minister, Mr John Dawkins, to open the Mutitjulu School in my electorate. Last week, a question was asked about this visit and the minister made a couple of factually untrue statements which need to be drawn to his attention. During question time last Wednesday, in relation to the aborted opening of the school at the Mutitjulu community, the minister stated that this was entirely at the behest of the member of the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon. I want to draw the minister's attention to his very own correspondence, which gives the lie to this blatantly political assertion. We know that the CLP candidate is not a front runner for the next House of Representatives election and I am sure that, out of a sense of loyalty, the minister has to do his foul best to bag the Labor member, but at least he should not do so at the expense of truth.

Last Wednesday, the minister said: 'Unfortunately, through the intervention of Warren Snowdon that opening was not able to take place'. He went on to say: 'I am disappointed because I do not know what Warren Snowdon is worried about. Is he worried that the Commonwealth government may get on with the Territory government?' He continued: 'I hope that the honourable member for the Territory, Warren Snowdon, does not try to intervene once again and have a community reach a stage where it requests ministers not to go into the community'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the facts are somewhat different. I have here 3 documents. The first is an extract of minutes from the community council meeting held on 2 August at which the council came to a decision that, unfortunately, many people would not be present in the community during the weekend of the Yuendumu Sports. The Yuendumu Sports draw people from Aboriginal communities for hundreds of miles around, and the Mutitjulu community is no exception. The community said that it did not want to offend the Northern Territory minister or the Commonwealth minister, but they would not be there for the scheduled opening of the school. There is a minute to that effect from the community.

That was followed by a letter to the member for the Northern Territory from the Chairman of the Mutitjulu Community Council, Trigger Derek, a man well known to me for many years. Trigger wrote to the member for the Northern Territory saying: 'At a meeting of the Mutitjulu Council on 2 August, a resolution was passed to call off the proposed visit of the Education Minister, Mr Dawkins, to Mutitjulu as there will be very few community members present at that time due to the Yuendumu Sports Carnival'.

In case there is any doubt that the minister did not know about this, let me point out that the minister wrote to Trigger in the following terms: 'Dear Trigger, thank you for your letter dated 2 August which I received by facsimile. I have spoken with the federal minister for Employment Education and Training, Mr John Dawkins, and, as a result, our itinerary will be amended in accordance with the wishes of your community. I am sorry that the proposed opening of the Mutitjulu School cannot proceed as scheduled'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table these documents.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: The point is that the Minister for Education owes Mr Snowdon an apology and I hope that it will be forthcoming. I do not expect any sort of churlish response.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a further matter that I want to refer to is much more pleasant. I seek leave to table an invitation from the South Australian Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Kym Mayes. I will read it for the benefit of honourable members. He says: 'I challenge all mature-age athletes in the Northern Territory to take part in the Second Australian Masters Games in South Australia in October 1989'. It is signed by the minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the invitation.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have very much enjoyed the 2 Masters Games that have been held in the Territory. I think that they have been one of the government's successful initiatives and, on other occasions, I have commended the government in that regard. However, I am a little concerned at the churlish response to the invitation that has been received from the South Australians. I think it is their intention to conduct the Masters Games on the alternate year. When I received this invitation, I made a public announcement of the fact and there appeared a not entirely flattering photograph of myself with Peter Howie, Jenny Kennedy, Noel Harris, Minister Kym Mayes and Bernie Dermody who have all been involved with the Masters Games in Alice Springs. Actually, seeing the photograph of myself in my Masters Games singlet, I was reminded that I will have to recommence my 5BX and jog a little bit further than I have been jogging of late. However, be that as it may, I was concerned after I had officially received this invitation from the minister to find that the sittings clashed with the games.

Mr Firmin: Tell me the dates.

Mr BELL: In response to the interjection from the member for Ludmilla, the dates are 14-22 October 1989. My understanding is that the Assembly will be setting on the 10, 11 and 12 October and then on 17, 18 and 19 October.

Mr Firmin: Would it help if I can get it moved back a week?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I pick up that interjection from the member for Ludmilla. I think there is a possibility that we have a deal. If he can move the sittings back a week, there is a distinct possibility that those of us who have been strong supporters of the Centralian Masters Games would be able to reciprocate for our counterparts in South Australia. I believe that that is a positive proposal. I am not suggesting that members of the Assembly do other than organise their holidays to fit in with it. I know the member for Ludmilla is a keen participant. Unfortunately, they are not here, but I am aware also that the member for Nightcliff and the member for Leanyer have been active participants. I have been known to wield the hockey stick, if not in anger, at least with a degree of aggression that befits my 41 years and some people have been so kind as to suggest that it has been with some effect.

The member for Casuarina has been a keen participant in the rugby competition and I believe that the Masters Games is of great benefit, not only for the people who participate, but because it creates a positive community attitude that people of all ages can participate in and enjoy sports. For me, it is not so much a matter of personal indulgence, as some have been so unkind as to suggest, but at least as importantly, it is a matter of giving a lead to the rest of the community, not only to other mature-age athletes and would-be competitors, but also to younger people to show them that, even as we highly value egregious achievement, so do we highly value participation in sport. I look forward to the support of all members of the Assembly in the continuing

participation of mature-age athletes in Masters Games, not just in the Northern Territory but wherever they may be held.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the member for Arafura for the remainder of the sittings due to ill-health.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Gurig National Park Plan of Management Amendments

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to table amendments to the Gurig National Park Plan of Management and to make some brief comments in relation to them. The Gurig National Park Plan of Management came into effect in October 1987 following its passage through this Assembly. The existing plan provides mainly for income derived from the park to be distributed equitably among the clan groups of traditional owners. While the existing financial arrangements have been generally satisfactory, they do not contain a mechanism through which income derived from the park and its facilities can be used for development and or maintenance of the park itself.

It has long been the intention of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary Board, and the Aboriginal people themselves, that at least some of the income should be applied in this way. The present Plan of Management is too restrictive in this regard and it is proposed that it be amended. The proposed amendment allows the board the discretion of applying such funds. For the benefit of honourable members, I would like briefly to outline the process which the amendments have had to go through before being tabled.

The Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary Board resolved at its 28th meeting held in December last year to amend the plan in respect of the treatment of income derived from the park. In accordance with the requirements of section 27(5) of the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Act, the Northern Land Council at its 48th full council meeting approved the proposed amendments for submission to the Minister for Conservation. The Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary Board, through its chairman, then submitted the amendments to me for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

The Gurig National Park is one of the true success stories of the Northern Territory. Its operation is testimony to the fact that a satisfactory compromise can be reached between the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal Territorians and those of other Territorians, as represented by this government. The government fully supports the decision of the board to make funds, which would otherwise have been dispersed, available for development and maintenance of the resource which generates those funds. Mr Speaker, I table the amendments.

TABLED PAPER

Report of Commissioner of Consumer Affairs 1987-88

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table a Report of the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs for 1987-88. I move that the Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act 1977, authorise the publication of the Report of the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs for 1987-88, and that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Remuneration Tribunal Report and
Determination No 1 of 1989

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Report of the Remuneration Tribunal and Determination No 1 of 1989 which comprise one document.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 30 December 1988, the Remuneration Tribunal was requested to inquire into the remuneration, allowances and other entitlements to be paid to members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, members of Executive Council and ministers of the Northern Territory. On behalf of His Honour the Administrator, I have tabled the report and Determination No 1 of 1989 relating to the remuneration, allowances and other entitlements of ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly.

The determination establishes a level for the basic salary for members which is appropriate given the levels of parliamentary salaries throughout Australia. It finally resolves the long-standing issue of establishing an equitable base under the wage-fixing principles. This determination will increase the basic salary for members from \$45 136 to \$52 000 per annum. The decision takes into account the National Wage Case Decision of 12 August 1988 and a number of other relevant factors and is comparable to the increases paid to state and federal parliamentarians.

It should be noted that this means that members' salaries will still not have moved further than general community movements under the National Wage Guidelines since the salaries of members of the Legislative Assembly were last evaluated in 1981.

The special expenses of office allowance payable to office holders of the Assembly have been adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index. The tribunal has increased rates payable as travelling allowance to members to reflect increases in accommodation costs, and provision is now made for members to recoup actual expenses associated with travel where members' costs exceed the prescribed rate.

The determination also clarifies the position in relation to the entitlement of a member's spouse or a nominee, where the member is converting an interstate travel entitlement to overseas travel under clause 4.2 of the determination. The determination establishes entitlements for members who are qualified pilots with regard to the use of chartered aircraft.

With these increases, the basic salary of a member of this Assembly will be \$3029 below the basic salary for members of federal parliament. Submissions put to the tribunal by both political parties suggested that the tribunal should consider establishing a clear relationship or nexus between the basic salary of a Northern Territory member and that of a federal member. The tribunal made no determination or recommendation in that respect, but it did indicate that legislative action would be required by the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to establish such an arrangement.

The tribunal expressed the view that it would be more appropriate for the Legislative Assembly to formalise any relationship between the salaries of Northern Territory and federal members. This procedure has already been established in both the Victorian and Queensland parliaments. It has the distinct advantage of ensuring that parliamentary salaries maintain a comparability and have movements determined by movements in the federal

parliament. The Commonwealth government has the predominant responsibility for economic policy in Australia and it is the major influencing force on wage policy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government accepts that a nexus between the basic salary levels of Territory and federal members would be a sensible and appropriate arrangement. We believe that a nexus should be established which maintains the salary differential which will exist when this determination has come into effect; that is, that the basic salary for a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly should be \$3000 below the basic salary paid to a federal member of parliament. I point out in this context that my information is that the 2 states which I mentioned as having taken that course of action, Victoria and Queensland, have set their members' salaries at \$500 below those of members of the federal parliament.

The government will move to introduce such legislative amendments as are necessary to establish this arrangement. I would expect the process to be complete before the next tribunal consideration of this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the paper be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1989

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly disapprove so much of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1989 tabled this day as would permit the following salaries and additional salaries contained in sections 1.1 and 1.3 of that determination respectively to exceed the following amounts:

1.1 basic salary of member	\$47 010
1.3 additional salary	
Chief Minister	\$47 672
Deputy Chief Minister	\$32 900
Speaker	\$23 938
Minister	\$23 938
Leader of the Opposition	\$23 938
Chairman of Committees	\$9400
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	\$9400
Government Whip	\$4700
Opposition Whip	\$4700

Mr Deputy Speaker, I start by saying that, on this side of the House, we have decided that this is a conscience vote. It does not in any way affect government policy. It is a matter for the conscience of individual members, and we invite members of the government and the crossbenches to also exercise a conscience vote on this matter rather than be bound by any party decision.

The Remuneration Tribunal has done this House an enormous disservice. The tribunal has prepared a report which, I think we would all agree, places us in the hot seat. It has prepared recommendations which go beyond the national wage guidelines and it has done so without presenting arguments. The report is an appalling piece of work. It presents no justification whatsoever, probably because no justification exists, for its recommendations on increasing the basic allowance.

It is a poorly argued report. For example, it does not even mention the Labor Party recommendation in relation to the basic salary of members. It does not discuss, either positively or negatively, that recommendation in any way whatsoever. Paragraph 7 of the report says that the tribunal 'has had regard to the wage principles and decisions as laid down in the various National Wage Case decisions'. It does not say how those decisions have impacted on the decision. It does not have regard to those decisions. The report does not justify, in any way whatsoever, the actions taken by the tribunal in terms of those very basic principles and decisions. I make the point now, and my colleagues and I will continue to make it throughout this whole exercise, that it is those very wage principles laid down in National Wage Case decisions that have for the past few years determined the wages and conditions of people in Australia. The only 2 exceptions seem to be the pilots and members of this Assembly.

In recommending increases outside National Wage Case guidelines, the report presents no justification in terms of structural efficiencies or increased productivity of parliamentary members although, with some thought, it is possible to do that. We will not only go outside the National Wage Case guidelines but, if we accept this report from the Remuneration Tribunal, we will smash them. Let me be very clear about this. The Remuneration Tribunal made particular reference to the 1988 National Wage Case guidelines. Those guidelines entailed a 2-part increase, a 3% increase and a \$10 increase. Our amendment is based on the acceptance of that 2-part increase.

It could be argued that, although it was not aware of the 1989 guidelines which allow for two 3% increases during the next 12 months, the Remuneration Tribunal could have included those increases. I accept that that could be argued but, even if it was the case, the rise in members' salaries would only be somewhere between 10% and 11% instead of the 15.2% which the tribunal, without justification, has put forward in this case. If the National Wage Case guidelines were used, the maximum increase would be 10% to 11% by the end of next year. The determination of the Remuneration Tribunal, however, would give 15.2% to Northern Territory parliamentarians now! I am not prepared to accept that that is rational thinking. What would it do to us in terms of relativities? It would put us ahead of New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. I would like to hear members opposite justify how we can be ahead of New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

Mr Perron: By how much?

Mr SMITH: In the case of Tasmania, the difference is \$9000 - \$43 000 in Tasmania against \$52 000 in the Northern Territory. In the case of New South Wales, the difference is \$4000 - \$48 052.

We then come to the recommendation that ties our salaries to those of federal backbenchers. This is a classic case of double dipping. First, the Remuneration Tribunal recommends an allowance that allows for the 3% plus 3% under the 1989 guidelines and more, and next it recommends that our salaries be tied to future federal backbench increases. Let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, about the plans for federal backbench increases. The increases are being implemented in 3 stages. The first increase has already been received and the next is due on 1 January next year - 5 months away. The additional amount proposed is \$6000, which will take the salary of a federal backbencher from \$55 000 to \$61 000 in 5 months time. If the Remuneration Tribunal's determination is accepted, our salaries will go from \$45 000 to \$59 000 in 5 months, which is more than a 30% increase. That is even more

outrageous than the demands which the pilots are placing on the Australian community at present. The double dipping exercise which members opposite seem prepared to accept means that, in a 5-month period, we will receive a 30%-plus increase in our salaries. I am not prepared to cop that. It is simply not on and I would like honourable members opposite to try to justify it.

It is our job in these tight economic times - and they have been very tight for 3 or 4 years - to lead by example. This is not the type of example that is needed. The community standard is very clear. It has been laid down by various National Wage Case decisions. In 1988, there was a 2-tier increase, 3% plus \$10. In 1989, it is again a 2-tier increase, 3% plus another 3%, tied in with structural efficiency and work value changes.

It is quite difficult for members of parliament to talk about structural efficiency and work value changes. But, this side of the House at least tried. It is a sad but minor criticism of the Remuneration Tribunal that it did not relate its proposed salary increases to any concept of structural efficiency or work value. It is our job to set an example to the rest of the community. The government has been very keen to use its employees as a means of setting an example to the rest of the community. It has a proud record of opposing every wage increase since self-government except for the last one where it recommended a 3% increase.

Mr McCarthy: That is a fallacy.

Mr SMITH: It is not.

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

Mr SMITH: Public servants are very familiar with this government's attitude to pay increases for them. Perhaps they might have a bit more confidence in the government if it imposed the same financial restraints on itself.

After having again basically opposed any wage increase in the last National Wage Case, the government hit Territory people in its budget. We have a situation in which Housing Commission rents will rise \$8 a week. Bus fares, water charges, motor vehicle registration and driver's licence fees have all been increased. During the next 12 months, the average Territorian will lose the equivalent of a week's salary. At the same time, Territory politicians are giving themselves an extra \$7000. The average Territorian cannot be expected to support that. It has no rational basis and this House will be condemned if it proceeds with this motion. There seem to be 2 laws in the industrial arena, one for the community in general and another for pilots and conservative politicians in the Northern Territory. That is simply not good enough.

Let me set out the Labor Party's position so that it is clear and cannot be misinterpreted. Our position is based on acceptance of the 3% and \$10 increase in accordance with the 1988 National Wage Case guidelines. Our amendment confirms that. In addition, having accepted that - and I hope the Chief Minister listens to this - we are then prepared to tie ourselves in to federal increases during the next 2 to 3 years. We believe that it is appropriate, with a base of \$47 000, to tie ourselves into the federal government increases and to take an increase on 1 January 1990. Under that arrangement, there will be no double dipping. We will not receive everything that has been offered to everybody else so far, as well as taking the federal

government's extra \$6000. Let us not forget that the federal government politicians have not had the advantage of taking the 3% plus 3%, which these figures indicate we would have.

Mr Perron: What about \$30 000 for stamps? Non-taxable.

Mr SMITH: How is that relevant?

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, now that the Chief Minister is listening, let me put my personal position. Remember that we are exercising a conscience vote on this matter. I believe that it is appropriate to take a 3% plus \$10 increase now, in accordance with the 1988 wage guidelines as well as to tie our salaries into increases in federal backbenchers' salaries. That means that, if the salary of federal backbenchers increases from \$55 000 to \$61 000 on 1 January, I am prepared to accept that we should move up by a similar amount and keep our existing relativity. I think that is fair and appropriate.

What is not fair and appropriate is for this government to accept a Remuneration Tribunal report that is well outside the guidelines, that gives politicians in the Northern Territory a greater increase than anybody else and then allows politicians the prospect of double dipping by having another crack when the federal government moves in 5 months time. The end result of that - and this is the bottom line - would be an increase of over 30% in 5 months. I again point out that that is more than the pilots are holding Australia to ransom for at the moment.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I feel like standing here and giving a slow clap. What a dramatic performance of nonsense! The Leader of the Opposition adopts a holier than thou attitude and carries on about the Remuneration Tribunal report as if he believes what he is saying. He lays some claim to having some background in industrial relations but he has proceeded today to demonstrate gross ignorance.

Let us first of all turn to the ALP submission to the Remuneration Tribunal of 20 April 1989, tabled in the last sittings of the Assembly. It says: 'Consideration should also be given to establishing a benchmark for backbenchers' salaries against those of other politicians. The parliamentary Labor Party recommends that the tribunal investigate this matter with a view to establishing an appropriate benchmark against the salary of a federal backbencher. Now the Leader of the Opposition comes in here and says: 'No. Don't investigate it. Don't establish an appropriate benchmark'. He now says that we should simply take the last national wage increase and declare that to the backbench. That is his new position. The opposition has adopted that hypocritical position in the last 24 hours since it had its nose bloodied in the debate on the pilots' dispute yesterday.

Mr Smith: Bloodied by whom?

Mr HATTON: Let us be honest. Members opposite changed their attitude and that is why they did so.

The Leader of the Opposition says that the Remuneration Tribunal determination is outside the guidelines and does not take into account the

ALP submission. He says that the principles of wage fixing guidelines throughout Australia for the last 6 or 7 years have set the wages of people throughout Australia, except those of Northern Territory politicians. The fact is that a substantial number of national wage increases since 1981 have not yet been passed on to Northern Territory politicians. I remind honourable members of the heated debate in this House in 1985 on the 1984 Report of the Remuneration Tribunal. I remind honourable members of debates which occurred in this House in 1986 and 1987 when, on a number of occasions, honourable members rejected increases, not on the grounds that they were not justified but in the light of prevailing economic conditions.

The Leader of the Opposition chuckles away in his ignorance. Determination No 1 of the 1981 Report of the Remuneration Tribunal was the last time the tribunal considered what salaries should be paid to Northern Territory politicians.

Mr Smith: The only time.

Mr HATTON: That is not true. Go back to 1977 and 1979.

Mr Smith: It is the only time since then. It certainly did not do it this time.

Mr HATTON: The determination of that 1981 tribunal said on page 3:

The basic salary fixed within this determination reflects fair comparability with interstate counterparts for the work undertaken by politicians, the higher cost disability attraction structure of Territory remuneration, the general level of salaries within the Northern Territory community, and the need for remuneration not to be a disincentive to the capable to participate in the parliamentary process.

The salary set in 1981 was \$33 000 per annum. For the advice of honourable members, the salary of a federal MP at the time was \$33 100 per annum, \$100 per year more than a Northern Territory politician. I might also advise honourable members that the salary, coincidentally, was at approximately the rate paid to an E4 in the Northern Territory public service.

The current salary for a Northern Territory MLA is \$45 136 per annum. The salary for a federal member of parliament is \$55 000 per annum. The level of salary for an E4 in the public service is, I think, in the order of \$54 000 or \$55 000 per annum. The salary of a Northern Territory MLA is slightly below the salary payable to an E3 in the public service at the moment. If we assume that federal parliamentarians and Northern Territory public servants have received only what they are entitled to under the national wage fixing principles, then it follows that Northern Territory MLAs have not done so.

In fact, a submission presented to the tribunal by the CLP indicates that, simply to maintain relativity with the national wage increases that every Australian has already received, salaries of Northern Territory MLAs should have increased by 18.7%. The federal parliament received an 11.7% adjustment in 2 stages in 1984. We subsequently refused that because our tribunal tried to do it in 1 stage rather than in 2 stages as the Commonwealth tribunal had done.

I can identify the increases exactly. I am talking about the 4% maximum tier and the 3% that the honourable members opposite have referred to, plus

the \$10 per week. Because we have not taken those increases, our backbench salaries are \$45 000 instead of \$54 000 today. The tribunal, in making its assessment of a very comprehensive submission that deals with national wage fixing guidelines and principles and the historical circumstances of the establishment of wages, determined to set a salary some \$2000 below the amount which would have applied had the 1981 evaluation been updated by all National Wage Decisions - and no other increases - since that time.

The Leader of the Opposition argues that this decision is outside the national wage fixing guidelines. That is wrong again! Firstly, I refer honourable members to the correspondence from the President of the Industrial Relations Commission to the federal Remuneration Tribunal with respect to the adjustment of salaries recommended by the federal tribunal. The President of the Industrial Relations Commission stated that the federal tribunal's proposal was not in contravention of the national wage fixing guidelines. I advise honourable members that I took the precaution of checking with the Industrial Relations Commission to find out what the proposals were, and whether they were in contravention of the national wage fixing guidelines. I can confirm that they were not. I might say that the arguments which support that case are set out in the CLP submission, because we took the trouble to find out what the wage fixing guidelines were.

Honourable members must recognise that the guidelines have a continuous history since 1983 when the first of the new wage fixing principles were established. The principles developed since that time comprise a continuum. Their fundamental premise is that there should be an equitable base, and that increases should build on that base. The principles attempt to do away with the anomalies, inequities and ongoing difficulties of the doctrine of comparative wage justice. Over an extended period, the commission has recognised the importance of establishing that base and has been prepared to allow genuine cases to be dealt with under the principles. Even the wage fixing guidelines that came down early this month recognised that. I referred to that matter in debate yesterday.

It is quite clear that it is open to the tribunal, under the general wage fixing principles, to proceed to establish an equitable base for salaries of MLAs in the Northern Territory. I remind honourable members that the tribunal sought to do that in October 1984 and that this House, acting on the basis of political considerations, decided not to adopt the tribunal's recommendation, which would have made our salaries greater than those of federal MPs. That was the argument. Now we are arguing about how close our salaries should be to those of federal MPs and we are not breaching any national wage guidelines. There is clear evidence that we are not. I am not going to read all these pages of evidence and history.

Mr Ede: But you have to go through a process under those.

Mr HATTON: I am sorry but the member for Stuart is wrong again. In fact, the Industrial Relations Commission made it very clear that it was a matter for the tribunal and that we do not, in fact, go through those processes provided that we follow the principles that are established. My argument is that we have followed those principles, and the core element is the establishment of what is known as an equitable base. It has been referred to in every wage decision since 1983, and appropriate procedures are in place to allow for it.

Mr Ede: The other day you argued against cross-industry comparisons.

Mr HATTON: I did not. I did not argue against that. In fact, the pilots developed their equitable base in 1983. Northern Territory MLAs have not yet established an equitable base which is fully in accord with the wage fixing principles. That is the essence of what this debate is about, Mr Speaker: should Territory MLAs receive the same level of salary movements as other people throughout Australia?

Attacking the salaries of politicians is an easy game to play and that is what the Leader of the Opposition is playing with his cheap politics on this issue. Everybody says: 'Gosh, politicians are getting a lot of money. They are fair game'. If you attack a salary increase for politicians, you get good press. We all know that. That has been the case for as long as I have been a member of this House. The argument has always been the same. In 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 it was argued that we should give a lead to the community by showing restraint. The argument was based on the principle that, if we held back, the rest of the community would follow us.

Having done that, and having seen the community decide to take salary increases rather than follow that lead, should politicians be denied the same wage justice as applies to everybody else in Australia? Should they be forever penalised for trying to give a lead or should they, in retrospect, be entitled to be brought back into line with the rest of the country? That is the problem the opposition has to deal with because that is the reality of what this determination does. In fact, it could be argued that the increases in salaries do not go far enough but I am not going to argue that although I know that the tribunal received a submission along those lines. The CLP put forward a very comprehensive document, dealing with all aspects of the matter and arguing quite strenuously for a larger increase.

I might say that much of the CLP submission was based on decisions of the federal Remuneration Tribunal. That was because the federal tribunal had taken the unusual step of hiring a highly respected national consulting firm, Cullen Egan Dell, to carry out a comprehensive job evaluation of the work of a politician. It carried out a full work value analysis and compared the salaries of MPs with the salaries of people in the public and private sectors, right across the board. Eventually, it recommended that the salary of a backbench MLA should be equivalent to that of an E5, or thereabouts, which is in the vicinity of \$60 000. People can argue that that is outrageous and I am not arguing for that case. I am simply saying that a firm of consultants, which specialises in this field and has an international reputation, has said that that is an appropriate amount. Of course, that excludes all the fringe benefits which people in the private sector receive, including cars, expenditure allowances, annual trips, holidays and so forth.

All of the details were provided in the CLP submission to the tribunal. There is no doubt that the tribunal had all the information which it needed in order to make a considered decision, whether or not it has chosen to comprehensively outline the reasons for that decision. There is no doubt that the information was taken into account. I might say that the determination is not inconsistent with the ALP submission. It has established a benchmark, which is what the opposition asked for. It sets a relativity between the salaries of office-bearers and backbenchers, although not quite at the high percentages recommended by the opposition. It does, however, set them on a percentage basis.

Mr Ede: It sets them on the same basis as you lot.

Mr HATTON: I am sorry. It sets them lower than the CLP recommended. If the member for Stuart checks, he will find that the ALP recommended that the Deputy Chief Minister receive a 75% margin. The determination sets a 70% margin. In respect of his own position, the margin is 20%. The margins for party whips and chairmen of committees are slightly lower than the recommended figures. The Leader of the Opposition is on the same margin as a minister - 50%.

The process has been correct. It will be good to remove the salaries of politicians from the political arena and let somebody else deal with the arguments. Every time politicians have to deal with this issue, they face the prospect of some cheapjack politician or smart alec trying to score a few cheap political points. I am not going to apologise for this, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ede: Will you agree to a conscience vote?

Mr HATTON: I am happy to have a conscience vote and I am going to vote in favour of the determination. I am happy to stand up and say that. The arguments are just so incontrovertible if people bother to do their homework. Remember that, in 1981, the last time the Remuneration Tribunal set a salary for politicians on the basis of an evaluation of the job, it set the level at \$33 000, which was within \$100 of the salary of a federal MP and about the same salary as that of an E4 in the Northern Territory Public Service. The recommendation now before the House sets a benchmark and establishes the equitable base that the wage fixing principles have been asking us to set since 1983. It sets that level at \$3000 below the salary of a federal MP. Thus, relative to that of a federal MP, the salary of a Northern Territory MLA will have declined in the last 8 years. That is what it means.

Unless the opposition is saying that the federal Remuneration Tribunal, the President of the Industrial Relations Commission and the federal parliament have been acting contrary to the wage fixing principles for the last 8 years - which I am sure it will not say - it will have to accept the fact that the increases recommended by the Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal are within the wage fixing guidelines because they flow from the establishment of an equitable base as set down in the national wage fixing principles.

Mr Smith: Go down to the Mall today and argue that.

Mr HATTON: There he goes. He tells me to go out into the community.

If honourable members are prepared to give me an extension of time, I will argue, chapter and verse, the case for this determination being within the national wage fixing guidelines. I am sure that members do not want a 30-minute lecture on the national wage fixing guidelines. In fact, it would probably only confuse them. They have never bothered to study the guidelines. If they had, they would not have made the incredibly inane comments they made this morning.

The Report of the Remuneration Tribunal sets out a proper foundation for an equitable base in terms of politicians' salaries in the Northern Territory. That base will bring MLAs' salaries into line with pre-existing relative positions and will finally resolve the long-standing problem which has been recognised by both our tribunal and the federal tribunal. Every time a tribunal report hits the table, we hear the same sort of nonsensical arguments which the Leader of the Opposition has raised on this occasion: 'We cannot take the increase. Let us gain a few political points by not taking the

increase'. I admit that I have done that myself. I have refused increases and, in fact, have taken a reduction in salary on a few occasions. But, when does one stop doing that? When does one recognise that people have a right to a reasonable salary, even MLAs? The determination would set an equitable base. Politicians would no longer be in the position of having to make direct decisions about their salaries or having to go through a process of tortuous political humbug in an attempt to obtain what they are justly entitled to under the national wage guidelines. It has often been argued in the community that, if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. In other words, if you do not pay a reasonable remuneration to members of the Legislative Assembly, you will not attract people into the Assembly.

Mr Ede: Is that why we are here?

Mr HATTON: No. People who have to take salary cuts of 50% to 70% will not be attracted to stand for election to the Assembly.

The recommended salary level is still less than that of an E4 in the public service and is still substantially less than that of a federal MP. As the Chief Minister has said, procedures will be put in place so that this parliament will not have to continue to go through this rather undignified process with cheapjack politicians on the opposition benches seeking to grab a few headlines after having their noses bloodied in other debates. I hope they take a real conscience vote and not a Clayton's conscience vote. I know that at least 3 members opposite fully support the recommendations of the tribunal. I wonder whether it will be a real conscience vote or just another political stunt.

Mr Ede: Name them if you want to. Let us see how they vote.

Mr HATTON: We will see how they vote. We know who they are. You know who they are.

The opposition can rest comfortably in the knowledge that its motion will be defeated. Members opposite know that their salaries will be adjusted according to the determination of the tribunal and that they will receive reasonable remuneration for what is undoubtedly a very hard and time-consuming task.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I want to make my position on this matter very clear. I support the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition. I think it is essential that we look on ourselves as wage followers and restraint leaders, not wage leaders. It is not for us to establish new ground in wage determinations. Let us take what the rest of the community has been asked to accept as it has tightened its belt in pursuit of economic growth. Let us use that figure as our base and then provide a linkage to the federal parliament. By doing that, we will be in a far better position not to have this debate every year.

I believe that it is appropriate for members to exercise a conscience vote in this debate. It is not as if we are debating a Cabinet decision which members opposite feel obliged to endorse because of their party allegiance. It is not something on which the government will stand or fall. If the government is defeated on this matter, it will not be the same as being defeated on a motion of no confidence or something of that nature. It is a matter which reflects personally on every member of this House and, as such, it should not be a matter for party discipline or for party positions.

Members should be able to consider the matter individually. They should look at their own beliefs, they should consider the situation of people in their electorates and the restraint which the community has exercised, and they should examine their hearts to see whether they can really justify something which, in the end, will effectively give them a 30% salary increase by January next. I fail to see how any member can go along with the proposals contained in the report and the extension of those proposals which has been supported by the Chief Minister. That, however, is a matter for individual members. I hope that they will make their decisions freely, without being pressured by their colleagues or party whips.

The member for Nightcliff made comparisons with the public service. One position taken by the Remuneration Tribunal with which I most certainly agree is that our salaries should not be linked to any level within the public service. Were that to occur, a cosy relationship could build up between the executive and the legislature. Everybody involved with the Westminster system is always worried about the executive government taking over from the legislature. If we were to make links between the salaries of politicians and those of particular ranks in the public service, as the member for Nightcliff suggests, it is not hard to imagine the cosy relationship that could develop. An E4 or E5 could turn around ...

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: I do not care whether it is lower, higher or whatever. There should be no linkage. Equivalency should not come into it. It would be wrong to have a situation in which public service salaries increase because MPs' salaries increase, or vice versa. That smacks of being much too cosy a relationship. It could get to the stage of the public service and the politicians organising themselves so that it is in the interests of one group for the other to win a pay rise. Mr Speaker, that is simply not on.

The member for Nightcliff also spoke about the need for a link between our salaries and those of federal members. He said:

One has to look at industrial relations in the light of its own history: a tradesman working in one factory will look at what he used to get compared to a tradesman in another factory or compared to how much the tradesman's assistant is receiving. A clerk working in one place will look at someone else working somewhere else. They call it comparative wage justice, but this relativities concept is embedded in Australia. It has to be broken if we are to obtain real efficiency in industry. However, it is still embedded in the mind of the worker and the trade union official at the grassroots level. I do not say that is the case in the upper levels, but it certainly is at the grassroots level.

Obviously, the upper levels apply to the salaries of members of this House, which the member for Nightcliff used to develop his argument. His basic message is that it is all right to have comparative wage justice at the upper levels, and for our salaries to be linked to those of federal MPs, but it is not all right on the factory floor and in the lower levels generally.

Mr Hatton: They have had these increases.

Mr Smith: The 3% plus 3%. They have not.

Mr Hatton: They have.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, they have had the \$10 and the 3%. That is what we have argued for in our submission. In past years, members on this side of the House have maintained this position with conviction. In the past, we have been able to convince members opposite that they should act with restraint and equity. We hope that they will choose to act in that way on this occasion.

The member for Nightcliff may be able to argue his position with firmness and conviction. However, I find myself wondering how he reconciles it with the comments he made yesterday. I am asking all members to approach this as a conscience vote. This is a vitally important matter which we must look at individually. We must look at the justice of what is proposed both in personal terms and in terms of our constituents. I ask honourable members to exercise a conscience vote on this matter and to consider its ramifications in the electorate. Once again, let us be wage followers and restraint leaders, not wage leaders.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I have just listened to the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart. The opposition is merely engaged in political point-scoring. It is involved in a classical exercise in political gamesmanship. Members opposite are grandstanding for the media and all their mates in the Labor Party. That is what this is all about.

If one can believe the whispers which have been heard in the corridors during the last week or so, the reality is that the majority of members opposite support this report. That is what they were saying. Today, we have seen the Leader of the Opposition spouting holier than thou arguments and saying: 'We are going to take a conscience vote on this. The members of my party can vote as they will'. Just a few minutes before lunch, however, after saying that, he said: 'I will be knocking on the door of anybody who votes in favour of this'. He will not have to do that. He has already done it in the party room. His colleagues have been threatened that, if they dare to cross the floor to vote in favour of this motion, he will be paying them a visit. The fact is that members opposite will vote against accepting the recommendations of the Remuneration Tribunal because they are shaking at the knees. They would not be game to vote in favour of them, regardless of how much they would like to do so and regardless of their positive whispers out in the corridors.

It would not matter what level of remuneration was recommended in the report. Even if the report had recommended exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has argued for today, I guarantee that members opposite would stand up and say: 'That is too much. We cannot accept it, because of this and that. We have to accept a lower figure'. The arguments put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart are a sham. They are indulging in political point-scoring which has nothing to do with sound argument or logic.

As the member for Nightcliff pointed out, members opposite are posturing for the media and for their mates in the Labor Party. At the end of the day, however, when the tribunal's determination is implemented, they will put out their hands with the rest of the members of this parliament. They will do that. They will not be donating any excess to charity. They will put out their hands, believing that they have won the political battle. I hope that my comments have exposed that little sham.

Mr Speaker, I heard the opposition put forward the same arguments when I first became a member of this House in 1985. In February 1985, the House debated the 1984 determination of the tribunal. The House accepted the determination but was then confronted with the antics of the then Leader of the Opposition, now Senator Bob Collins, jumping up and down trying to discredit members of the government. He made such a noise that, eventually, we backed off and accepted 50% of the increase. That is when we made our first mistake in relation to our salary levels. That is where we started to slip behind the rest of the community. The same thing happened again in 1987 when a subsequent report came down. Following that, members of this House accepted a salary freeze for 12 months. I understand that the member for Nightcliff, who was Chief Minister at the time, took a \$5000 salary cut and that all ministers took a \$3000 cut in order to show their good faith.

Mr Hatton: And I made an extra donation to preschools in my electorate.

Mr SETTER: The member for Nightcliff also made an extra donation to preschools in his electorate. Those gestures were made in good faith by members of this government in order to show restraint and in order to confirm their bona fides in the matter of remuneration for members of this House.

We have shown restraint. Over the last 4 or 5 years, we have shown restraint while the rest of the community, relatively speaking, through the CPI increases or whatever, has passed us. There is never a right time to consider salary increases for politicians. It is a totally no-win situation. We all know that. Even the member for Stuart confirmed this when he indicated earlier that matters of salary should not be considered in this House. Obviously, it is appropriate that another group deal with the matter and that is what occurs when the Remuneration Tribunal, quite independently ...

Mr Dondas: It looks at the magistrates too.

Mr SETTER: That is right. The salaries of magistrates and Supreme Court judges are determined by the same tribunal. It independently assesses the submissions it receives and all the arguments relating to relativities, including those relating to the salaries of other politicians. It reports to this House in good faith. I think it is incumbent on us to accept its recommendations in good faith and not to indulge in political posturing.

We all know that the commissioner was a highly-respected public servant who served the Northern Territory for many years. He continues to be highly respected and there is no way in the world that he would bring down a report that was not fair and equitable - 'equitable' being the key word. Let us have a look at some of the things that the commissioner said because it is very important that we note some of his comments, particularly in relation to the spurious arguments put forward by members of the opposition. Paragraph 14 on page 4 says: 'A further matter raised in the submissions from both parties is that the tribunal should consider establishing a relationship between a Northern Territory member's basic salary and that of a federal member'.

Mr Hatton: In addition to the National Wage Case principles and decisions.

Mr SETTER: Yes, just a moment.

In paragraph 19 on page 6, the commissioner says: 'In considering any future relationship between Northern Territory members' and federal members' basic salaries, it is also appropriate that an equitable base for Northern

Territory members be now determined'. On the same page, paragraph 21 says: 'The salary for 1989 has been determined having regard to National Wage Case principles and decisions and the results of the Commonwealth inquiry'. So there it is.

There is no doubt that the commissioner has considered all the issues which the Leader of the Opposition claims that he has not considered. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition's criticisms of the report were absolutely appalling and totally disrespectful to the commissioner. They inferred discredit to the commissioner. He said: 'The tribunal has done this House an enormous disservice'. If I were the commissioner and I read those comments in Hansard, I would not be very happy. He called the report 'an appalling piece of work'. Mr Speaker, I ask you, having read the report, could it be considered an appalling piece of work? I do not think so. I think it is a very good report. It is a very fair and reasonable report. The Leader of the Opposition called it 'a poorly argued submission'. Mr Speaker, let me talk about poorly argued submissions ...

Mr Hatton: It is a decision, not a submission.

Mr SETTER: That is right. Of course it is. But let me take up the issue of poorly argued submissions. The Leader of the Opposition's submission to the Remuneration Tribunal, if I can call it that, consisted of 2 pages. If anything was appalling, that was. I would like to ask the remainder of the members sitting on the opposition benches ...

Mr Hatton: The lonely member opposite.

Mr SETTER: Yes. I would like to ask whether he was aware of what was in the Leader of the Opposition's submission. I put it to him that he was not. I put it to him that the Leader of the Opposition raced off a quick letter to the commissioner without even consulting his colleagues. I would like the honourable member to stand up and deny that. If ever there was a poorly considered and poorly argued submission, it was the Labor Party submission to the Remuneration Tribunal.

Let us see what the Leader of the Opposition said in his submission: 'Accordingly, it urges the tribunal to follow the principles outlined in the National Wage Case of August 1988'. The text of the report shows that that is what was done. 'In accordance with these principles', the submission continued, 'the parliamentary Labor Party submits that the 3% and \$10 increases agreed to last year should be passed on to members of the parliament simultaneously from 1 July this year'. That is fine. We have no problem with that. The submission continued: 'Consideration should also be given to establishing a benchmark for backbenchers' salaries against those of other politicians. The parliamentary Labor Party recommends that the tribunal investigate this matter with a view to establishing an appropriate benchmark against the salary of a federal backbencher'. There is a contradiction in terms there, Mr Speaker. On the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition argues for 3% plus \$10, but then he goes on to add that 'consideration should also be given to establishing a benchmark for backbenchers' salaries'. There is a contradiction in terms. He wants 2 bob each way.

Mr Leo: No, he does not.

Mr SETTER: Of course he does. He wants 2 bob each way. In other words, he does not really understand what he is saying in his submission.

On the other hand, the Country Liberal Party made a very comprehensive submission, and I would like to pay tribute to the member for Nightcliff who was responsible for putting together the major part of that submission. With his industrial relations background, he is probably better equipped than anybody else in this Chamber to do that.

Mr Hatton: After consultation with the Arbitration Commission.

Mr SETTER: That is right. He also consulted with his colleagues and carried out an enormous amount of research. The Country Liberal Party's submission consisted of no less than 84 pages. That compares with a mere 2 pages from the Labor Party. Just 2 pages! That is absolutely pathetic. How can the Leader of the Opposition stand up in this Chamber and play to the press gallery, trying to tell everybody what a good politician he is and how much restraint he has shown? It is absolute nonsense, Mr Speaker!

The Leader of the Opposition argued quite strongly this morning that the report did not take into consideration the national wage fixing guidelines. That is also a nonsense. In paragraph 7 of his report on page 3, the commissioner is at pains to point out: 'The tribunal in making the determination arising from this review has had regard to the wage principles and decisions as laid down in the various National Wage Case decisions, including that of 12 August 1988'. The Leader of the Opposition does not know what he is talking about. He is simply posturing.

I might mention that it is very pleasing to see that the report establishes an equitable base. That enables us to proceed from here on a firm foundation.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about a 30% increase in 5 months. He belaboured that point, trying to imply that the commissioner is recommending a 30% increase. That is not the case. The increase recommended by the commissioner is there in black and white, in dollar terms. However, he also recommended that there be a nexus, and I refer again to paragraph 14 on page 4: 'A further matter raised in the submissions by both parties is that the tribunal should consider establishing a relationship between a Northern Territory member's basic salary and that of a federal member'. In his statement, the Chief Minister foreshadowed that legislation will be brought forward on a future date to establish that nexus, which is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition recommended in his submission of 18 April 1989. What is he on about? Either he is totally confused or he is attempting to spread misinformation.

Let us have a look at the current level of Northern Territory politicians' salary levels. We heard earlier today that the salaries of federal backbenchers are set at \$55 000. We further heard that both the Queensland and Victorian backbench salaries are set at \$54 500. The salary level that has been recommended for us is around \$52 000. Those in the other states are in that ballpark region.

While we are talking about wage structure and the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, it is interesting to consider what is occurring in Canberra's fledgling House of Assembly which, according to the Bulletin of 29 August, is very sensitive about pay rises. At this very moment, it is seeking a 25% boost in members' basic salaries, which would take them from \$40 000 to \$50 000. Its submission is before the Remuneration Tribunal in Canberra right now. Members of that House have only been elected for 3 months and they want a 25% pay increase. It is a Labor Party parliament.

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, members should realise that, in considering the acceptance or otherwise of the determination, we are not only dealing with our own salaries and conditions but the salaries and conditions of the positions we hold. There will no doubt be people who will say that the increase is too great. That is as predictable as tomorrow's sunrise.

In a sense, market forces apply. We do not hold these seats forever. We have to go to election and the next election could occur at any time in the next 18 months. If the salaries and conditions in this determination are accepted, more people may stand for parliament. Many people today, particularly those in business, say: 'I would not mind getting into politics but why would I swap the money I can make in business with what I would get in parliament?' I am sure all members have heard people say such things. By raising our conditions and our salaries, we will increase the competition for the positions. There will be better competition, one would hope, within parties at preselection time. More independents may throw their hats into the ring, thus giving the electors a wider range of choice.

We should remember that we are not only talking about ourselves but looking into the future. We may be well and truly increasing the competition for the seats which we have the privilege of holding at this stage. I do not see that as a bad thing. I think the electors of Sadadeen deserve a wide range of good candidates to choose from. They will have the final say whether I like it or not. I do not see it as totally unhealthy that there is a reasonable increase proposed.

I recall one other such determination when the member for Barkly was Chief Minister. I was the poor Government Whip. The determination came up for discussion. Unbeknowns to me, the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition had decided that they did not want much acrimony over it so each of them would make a short speech and that would be the end of it. Muggins here, not knowing about this agreement between the 2 sides, jumped to his feet. I was told to sit down. I must have exerted a somewhat independent streak because I was not going to be stopped. As the Government Whip, I had the job of putting the views of the CLP to Mr Norm Campbell, who constituted the tribunal. I wanted to put on the record the point Mr Campbell had made. He said that we had been continually reducing the determinations and, as a result, our salaries had fallen behind in terms of the position on the public service scale to which they had originally been related. Anyone who cares to research the Hansard record will see that I made that point.

I do not know whether I am totally convinced in relation to relativities. As I said yesterday when speaking about the pilots' dispute, I believe that market forces will determine matters in the best possible way. They will ensure that the best people get the jobs. One day, we will see the full application of market forces in Australia. That has not yet occurred because it has not been given a chance. Why do we have such terrible productivity rates? People in private industry or the public service receive the same amount whether they work hard or not. A free market arrangement will reward people who get off their backsides and make an effort. They will get the opportunity to improve their situations. Those who do not will be pushed down the line because their contracts will not be renewed. Such as situation would brighten this country up no end.

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: It would apply to me as much as it would apply to you.

Mr Speaker, we should all realise this salient point. We are doing more than just voting for ourselves. We are voting on conditions and salaries for the position of MLA in the Northern Territory. There is an element of competition because our jobs are on the line in a way in which few other jobs in this country are on the line, more is the pity.

I believe that we are not getting the best out of our work force. Too many people are happy to sit down and do as little as possible. When I was in the Chair yesterday, somebody said that members on the opposite side of the House did not understand the purpose of the worker. I do not want to be too cynical but it struck me that the purpose of the worker is to get paid as much as he possibly can for doing as little as possible. That really is the situation. If people believe that the same applies to politicians and if we expose ourselves to stronger competition at the next election, that will be great.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will not belabour the House after the last 2 contributions we have been obliged to endure. For the sake of the record, however, I will read out a letter which I, and every other member of this House, received from Mr Finger. It says:

The Remuneration Tribunal has been requested by the Chief Minister to inquire into the remuneration allowances and other entitlements of members of the Executive Council, ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly under section 9(1) of the Remuneration Tribunal Act.

In conducting the review, the tribunal will take into account the principles established by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in the National Wage Case of August 1988. A copy of the current National Wage Case principles is attached for your information.

The last such review was completed in May 1988 and a copy of the tribunal's resultant report and determination No 1 of 1988 is also attached. You are invited to submit any views or comments you wish the tribunal to take into account in the review. Submissions should be in writing and forwarded to the tribunal by 21 April 1989, addressed to the Secretary, Remuneration Tribunal, GPO Box 3146, Darwin, NT 0801.

Should you wish to make an oral submission or discuss the review with Remuneration Tribunal, please contact the secretary on 986735.

Your sincerely,
M. Finger
Member

Mr Speaker, the salient statement in that letter is the sentence at the start of the second paragraph: 'In conducting the review, the tribunal will take into account the principles established by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in the National Wage Case of August 1988'. What that statement clearly indicated to me, as it would indicate to any reasonable person, was that the tribunal was prepared to entertain submissions based on the prevailing circumstances and the guidelines handed down by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1988. One must remember that, when the commission hands down guidelines, as it has done just recently, not every

wage and salary earner in this country automatically receives a flow-on. Indeed, it will be almost 12 months before the recent 3% and 3% restructuring decisions benefit numerous employees. I expect that the first cab off the rank will probably be the metal workers because of award negotiations which have occurred in their industry. I will bet my bottom dollar that most people will not receive any benefit from the decision within 12 months.

In the letter which I have just read out, Mr Finger was in effect saying: 'This is your opportunity to apply in May 1989 for what was allowed by the commission in May 1988'. That was clearly the intention and, on that basis, the opposition made its submission for the 3% and \$10. The Remuneration Tribunal, however, made a determination which is quite outside those terms. Whilst the tribunal asked for other views and comments, the opposition continues to hold the view that it would be far more convenient if, at this time, the 3% and \$10 adjustment was made. That would take the base salary level to something in the vicinity of \$47 000. That could be expressed as a percentage of federal members' salaries and the percentage could subsequently be maintained.

That was the basis of our submission but the tribunal's determination goes well beyond it. It goes well beyond the terms of wage restraint which is something we have been preaching. Any reasonable person who read the relevant paragraph of Mr Finger's letter will see that the determination of the tribunal goes well beyond what was proposed. I defy any member of this House to say otherwise. Despite what the pilots are now doing, the community by and large has continued to accept wage restraint. If we accept the tribunal's determination, we will be telling the community that, whilst it is good enough for ordinary workers to accept wage restraint, we are not prepared to accept it.

On 2 previous occasions in this House, the consciences of members opposite have obliged them to accept less than what the tribunal determined they should have. I recall the Chief Minister of the day, the member for Nightcliff, agreeing that he had asked employees in the Northern Territory to accept a lower standard of living and that it was therefore equitable that members of this House should also be obliged to accept a lower standard of living. That stance was quite reasonable and appropriate.

On another occasion, we had the ridiculous situation of the tribunal actually ignoring the claims of members and granting a larger amount than any member of this House had even asked for. Of course, we quite correctly said that it was not appropriate to grant more than any member had asked for. On this occasion, I accept that there may some members of this House who have asked for more than what the letter suggested was appropriate. Individual names are not important. In that sense, I appreciate that the tribunal may have produced a determination which falls within the ambit of the claim. I accept that, Mr Speaker.

Clearly, we cannot allow ourselves to accept more than what we are asking the community to accept. If any member opposite can explain to me how the determination of the tribunal relates, in any way, to the second paragraph of the letter from Mr Finger, how it in any way resembles 3% and \$10 per week, I will be prepared to accept that. As the Leader of the Opposition suggested, I could even entertain the notion that perhaps we should kick ourselves forward 12 months and add another 6% - the 3% and 3% applicable under the present commission guidelines. That would be 9% plus \$10 per week and I can at least entertain an argument for that. I cannot, however, entertain the prospect of accepting the tribunal's determination. I cannot tell my

constituents, a large number of whom are wage and salary earners, that the present hard times are good for the country but that an exception should be made in the case of Northern Territory politicians. I cannot walk around with a straight face saying: 'The hard times are for you fellows, not for me'. That is simply not a rational approach.

I ask members opposite to consider seriously the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I have certainly heard their arguments, which are the same ones they always use in this situation. They say: 'Members of the opposition will knock the increase. They will go out and score some cheap political points but they will cop the money'. Then, of course, the cockatoos come in from the bush and say: 'Well, why don't you give it to charity?' That is absolute nonsense. We have the task of setting the salaries for all members of this House. That is what this is all about. If we cannot do that reasonably and responsibly, how in hell can we expect anybody else in the community to exercise a modicum of restraint?

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, a tribunal has been established for some time to consider appropriate levels of remuneration for members. Honourable members and political parties are able to make submissions, as are outside individuals. It is interesting that at least one outside organisation, a union, made a submission to the tribunal on this occasion. That is fine. My information is that, in at least one of the states, nobody apart from members of parliament and political parties is permitted to make submissions to the Remuneration Tribunal. I think that is probably a little unfair. We established a tribunal to make the decision for us. It submits its findings to the Administrator and they become effective automatically unless members take the course of action proposed by the Leader of the Opposition in this instance and specifically reject the tribunal's findings.

It may seem a small matter that the tribunal's findings automatically come into operation unless otherwise specifically rejected. It is, however, a very important one. The arrangement was put in place by the parliament some years ago and, obviously, that was done very deliberately. Being very mindful of our public image as politicians, we would no doubt like to distance ourselves from processes such as the setting of salary levels because they are enormously sensitive. The community sees us as simply voting for a level of remuneration as we see fit. The perception is that we determine how much money we should receive, that we have a bit of a bunfight in the House, and then pass a motion so that the increase takes effect. That is how it is seen in the community even though it is not as simple as that. I guess we have to wear the fact that the community perception is that we simply vote ourselves more money.

I do not think that any increase in the salary of politicians is really accepted by people in the community who receive, say, \$45 000 per annum or less. People on those sorts of salaries think that people on salaries ranging from \$60 000 to \$100 000 are being paid too much. They cannot envisage any justification for those people receiving increases, whether they be 2%, 4%, 12% or whatever. I can accept that people who are struggling to make ends meet find it very hard to understand why a person on \$60 000 a year should get a single cent extra. Why should they? If they have that sort of income, they ought to be living high.

A point made by the member for Nightcliff is very relevant in this context. He said that, some years ago, the base salary of members of this House was very similar to that of members of the House of Representatives, and

also very close to that of an E4 in the public service. Acceptance of the tribunal's recommendation in this case will set the base salary of members of this House at a level \$3000 below that of members of the House of Representatives and \$2000 below that of public servants at E4 level. During the past few years, the increases of Northern Territory public servants have obviously been greater than ours because their salaries are now significantly greater than ours. How is it that, whilst they have not broken the rules, it is being argued that we are breaking the rules? Quite clearly, we have been slipping behind.

An E4 in the public service receives \$53 936 at the top of the range. There are 103 people at that level in the Northern Territory Public Service and there are about 280 people at that level and above. Many E4s work very diligently and I am very proud to have them in the Northern Territory Public Service. However, when I compare their role and responsibilities with those of members of this parliament, I am certainly convinced that members are worth what an E4 is worth. I would like to know whether members opposite have a contrary view. I am judging work levels, levels of responsibility and hours put in. I would think that \$52 000, in this day and age, is not a great deal of money.

The point made by the member for Sadadeen should also be borne in mind. Whilst we sit here staring at our own navels, contemplating whether we are going to be generous with ourselves or not, the ramifications of the decision go beyond our own bank accounts. The level of remuneration does have a bearing on the level of interest in becoming members of parliament. One of the great problems in this country is the fact that people of expertise and quality are not attracted to stand as members of parliament. I think that, right across the country, too few members of parliament really have nous. When I occasionally raise this subject people, they simply ask why anyone would be attracted to becoming a member of parliament if the price for that was a very substantial reduction in income.

Whilst some members opposite would say that being a member of parliament is not supposed to be simply a method of increasing one's financial standing, income levels certainly have a bearing on things. Do we expect people to have such a desire to serve the community that we would expect them to be satisfied with something like \$25 000 a year? If so, why don't we pay politicians average weekly earnings? If we did that, we would know that the people attracted to parliament were truly dedicated. We would be giving them enough to survive on but saying that politics is basically a labour of love. I suppose those who would be attracted in that situation would be those who were truly dedicated and those who were comfortably off and could afford to live without the salary. Perhaps some people would be attracted in the belief that, if they went to unusual lengths, they could make some money on the side. We need to recognise that we are not simply talking about our own bank accounts. We are talking about the sorts of people whom we would like to see attracted to become members of parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude by pointing to the nonsense which the Leader of the Opposition is perpetrating with his ploy of arguing for a conscience vote on this matter. The ALP rightly takes a stand on all sorts of politically sensitive issues and I am sure the community and supporters of the ALP look to it as a party which is prepared to state its principles and stand up for them. Why then are members opposite trying to do a dodge on this issue? Why are they not prepared to say that the ALP takes a particular position? For some reason, the Leader of the Opposition wants to turn this issue into a conscience vote.

Mr Leo: It is up to individual members.

Mr PERRON: Every vote in this House is a matter for individual members, but political parties play a big role in parliaments these days. If you stood on your principles, you would have to adhere to the ALP's federal policies. If your argument is right and \$47 000 is the maximum amount which would be appropriate under the National Wage Case guidelines, how could you have any other policy in this House? Your policy would simply have to be one of accepting the 3% plus \$10. Why open the matter to a conscience vote?

If members opposite feel that it would be absolutely unconscionable to accept an increase at the level recommended by the tribunal, instead of depositing the additional amounts in their bank accounts, they could make a great deal of electoral mileage by saying: 'We could not fight the government because it has the numbers in the parliament. We voted against the government and we are men of true conscience. We will not accept the outrageous levels of remuneration recommended by the tribunal. We will ensure that our bank accounts pay a regular amount to the Salvation Army or some other charitable organisation'. Of course, members opposite sit there smirking at my suggestion.

Members opposite talk about unconscionable levels of remuneration and they talk about conscience votes but the fact is that they know that the determination of the Remuneration Tribunal will be upheld in this House. They knew that before they entered this Chamber today and they will be quite happy to walk away and tell their bank managers: 'Don't worry, mate, the dollars are coming through. We simply put on a bit of a grandstand act in the parliament. We wanted to tell the people that the government was terrible and had forced the salary increase down our throats. We wanted people to think that the government had made us open bank accounts big enough to accept the money. We wanted them to think that we had to accept in spite of not wanting to'. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a farce.

Mr Ede: Put it to a conscience vote.

Mr PERRON: If members opposite really have a conscience about this matter, they will vote for the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. When it is lost, as they know it will be, they will then stand up publicly and show that they really have some principles. They will do that by forgoing the \$5000 per annum that they speak of. I look forward to seeing just how high a level of principle they will exhibit.

Members interjecting.

Mr PERRON: We will see how bad your conscience really is.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in this debate, I am struck by the hypocrisy of the ALP members. I believe every labourer is worth his hire. Even the Bible tells us that.

Mr Ede: How many labourers are you worth?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am worth a few labourers and I am worth a few Laborites too.

If a parliamentarian's salary is on an equivalent level to that of an E4 public servant, I think I am the equal of any E4 public servant. In fact, I think that I might be a bit better than some E4 public servants.

A member: \$2000 below is this recommendation.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have had a lot to do with public servants over the years and I think I am worth as much as they are worth in the scheme of things.

Several members of the opposition have spoken about a conscience vote, implying that a conscience vote will be a vote for the case that they have put, which is not necessarily so.

Mr Smith: You have a conscience vote all the time.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Not all the time. Most of the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it seems that the opposition's idea of a conscience vote is a conscience vote with your arm locked in a half-nelson.

Members interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Enough of this levity. This is a serious subject.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not like people trying to make me feel guilty about accepting a rise in salary. I believe that I work for my salary. Other members have not expressed that view before, but I think I work for it. It is not a princely salary, but it is a very acceptable salary. There are many people, especially in the public service, who make more than we do. I believe that I work for my salary.

When people make remarks to me, half in jest, I reply to them. I get a bit sick and tired of people making derogatory remarks about how hard parliamentarians work and making remarks directed at parliamentarians' honesty and their level of activity or laziness. When I look around this House, I see that most honourable members are ordinary people who work to earn their salaries. I was annoyed today when I heard a member of the opposition assuming the mantle of those people who make derogatory remarks about parliamentarians. Mr Deputy Speaker, either you believe in your job or you do not. If you do not believe that you are doing a good job, you get out and you let somebody else do it.

Mr Hatton: You are arrogant.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, I do not think arrogance comes into it.

Mr Hatton: I think it does.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you do not believe in your job, if you do not believe you are doing a reasonable amount of work and giving value for money, you should not be doing it. Whilst I appreciate that people on lower incomes than ours would like to be like parliamentarians because they would like to receive our salaries, anybody can stand for election. It is up to the public to decide whom it wants as its parliamentarians. We do not make the decision. It is the people in the community who make the decisions. If we are not doing the right things, one way or another, we will not be in office after the next election. We will be out. The will of the people determines whether we are in or out of office.

In all conscience - and I am using the word now - one cannot argue that the proposed salary increase is unacceptable and then take the increase when

it is agreed to, as I assume it will be because of the numbers in this House. To do that would be a contradiction in terms. Members have a choice. They can say that they do not want the increase and can then refuse to take it. They can say nothing. Finally, they can say that they are worth the money and take the increase. Parliamentarians voting themselves pay rises are never popular but some of us work for our pay.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, one thing is certain: there is never a good time to increase the salary of politicians. The other thing that we can be sure about is that some times are worse than others. I will be the first to say that, as far as I am concerned, members of this House are due for a salary increase, and we would all like a nice one. What we are talking ...

A member: You are getting ready to sit on the fence.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am not going to sit on the fence, Mr Deputy Speaker, and if the honourable member is patient, he will hear the full story.

The real issue is timing. It has to be said that the present is not the best time in the world for the Territory parliament to be granting itself a salary increase of the amount proposed by the tribunal. I say that because these are not normal times. In buoyant times, it is much more reasonable to vote oneself a raise and much more acceptable to the public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during the last 2 or 3 years, the wage-earners of this country have been under a great deal of pressure. They have had to deal with increases in the cost of living. They have had their 3% or 5% or 6% salary increases but matters have reached the state, particularly in our Territory community, where many of them cannot pay their bills and cannot sustain their lifestyle and standard of living. The government accepted that when the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services recently welcomed the national wage increase saying: 'Yes, much as it will hurt the Territory coffers, people are bleeding. They need some respite and financial relief'.

We need to be pragmatic about this and to accept that, if the Territory parliament is prepared to vote itself the type of increase that is proposed by the tribunal, we will undoubtedly open the door for the unions to walk right in behind us. We would be naive to think that that will not be the case. That is what the airlines strike is all about. If the pilots pull off the 30%, every other wage-earner in the country will be walking through the doors behind them, and the national economy will collapse as a result. Everybody knows that, and that is why the federal government is going to the wall on the dispute. The government knows that it will be finished if the pilots win and the pilots know that they will be finished if they lose.

I say to honourable members that it is time we paused and thought about what is happening around us in the community and among the people whom we serve and represent. I am talking about those people who cannot pay their bills. Do not tell me that there are not many of them, Mr Deputy Speaker. One has only to look at the numbers in respect of Housing Commission mortgage defaults and non-payment of rents, electricity charges and water charges. It is useless for the government to pretend that that is not happening because, as elected members, we all constantly find ourselves making representations on behalf of people who cannot pay their bills and need some help. There are thousands of people in that situation, not just the odd person here and there.

It is not the fault of the government or this Assembly, but some people are closing the doors of their businesses as a result of the airlines strike

and some of them will never open again. They are paying off staff who have worked for them for many years and they are standing down staff whom they would dearly love to keep on their payrolls. Other businesses which are not involved in the airlines dispute or the tourist industry, but service it indirectly in some way, are also confronted with the possibility of standing down staff because they cannot keep going. Many thousands of people in the Territory community are watching us today, and many of those will be affected in the next 6 to 9 months, simply because their businesses cannot survive. If the airlines strike were to finish tomorrow, hundreds of people would still go to the wall. That is because they have gone past the point at which they would have time to get back on their feet.

I would like to think that the people in the categories I have just mentioned number a couple of hundred or a even a thousand. Regrettably, there are tens of thousands of them. Honourable members would know, from walking around their own electorates and mixing with the community, that there is hardly a Territorian whose business and financial position has not been adversely affected by the pilots' dispute. Many of them are beside themselves with anxiety about what they are going to do if it does not finish.

In the middle of all of this, the honourable minister announced this morning that government funds are to be used to prop up the Sheraton. That is all right. We cannot get out of that. However, no one is propping up all the little fellows who have their entire life savings and work on the line. They will go to the wall. Meanwhile, we will be seen to be beating our breasts about our pay rise, arguing that the referee came down favourably on our side and that we are going to take what he recommended. In terms of the community's perception and the trauma that many people are going through as a result of the pilots' strike, the timing of this salary increase is not very appropriate. I am not saying that we are not worth it, that the amount is unreasonable or that we should not take it. I am just saying that, in terms of what other Territorians are going through at the moment and will go through for the next 6 to 10 months, what we are doing will be seen to be very unreasonable and greedy, and just a big grab by a bunch of selfish people who are looking after themselves. I do not think that this House deserves to be perceived in that way. Most people in here work very hard for the people whom they represent.

What concerns me is that the dislocation I spoke about a moment ago will not end quickly. The financial trauma which many people are suffering will continue for some time and, while they are out there doing it the hard way, our salaries continue to be paid. We do not have to worry about when the pilots' strike finishes, what will happen after it finishes or whether people will ever come back to Darwin. Our salaries will be paid. We are talking about whether our basic salary is \$43 000, \$47 000 or \$52 000 per annum. Listening to the debate this morning, it was clear that we are looking at an increase of between \$12 000 and \$13 000 over a period of 5 months. That is as much as half the workers in the public service take home in their pay. Right? No one in the community will regard that as reasonable. No one. All I am saying is that we will do the House and ourselves a great and unnecessary disservice if we accept the determination of the tribunal.

We have a couple of options. We can disallow the determination. We can talk about it further. We can consider the reduced figures put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. We can use a technique which the Commonwealth has used and say: 'Let us start on 1 January. We accept the determination but, given the very difficult circumstances affecting our community, we will postpone any increase until 1 January or some other time'. That brings us to

the question of a formula which might be reasonable to ourselves as well as fair to the community. I believe that that matter could be discussed by the leaders of the parties in another place and perhaps addressed more seriously. However, the acceptance of the determination as it has been put will bring this House into great disrepute.

I want to raise a couple of other points, one of which was touched on by the Chief Minister. I think it is a very relevant point and it concerns the method of determining MPs' salaries. In my view, the current approach is back to front. We set a salary, using a system that we think is fair and reasonable, and then we recruit to the House by way of election. Although today is not really the day to talk about it because the tribunal's report clouds the debate, perhaps we should consider a proposition of aiming to recruit people of a certain standard from the community into the parliament and then set the salaries at a level which will attract those people. That would seem to me to be a much more constructive way of solving this problem.

Several honourable members have talked about free market forces, but that is a dreadful misnomer to use in a debate of this nature. The free market forces that apply to us would be demonstrated by the amount of money that we could earn if we walked out of here. We sit in here and decide for ourselves whether we are worth this or that amount of dollars and to say that, in doing that, we are applying free market forces is a bucket of piddle. That is all there is to it.

I take the point made by honourable members earlier. It is very difficult to compare members of this Assembly with bank managers, public servants at E4 level or members of other professions, and to give ourselves salaries which relate to other types of work. That is not a reasonable proposition for us to adopt. I heard the member for Koolpinyah comparing herself with an E4. There is no way that we can just sit in here and compare ourselves with members of other professions. Today is not the day to make that comparison or to justify what we do.

I will conclude by reminding the House of the circumstances which the rest of the Territory community is in. I put it to honourable members that those circumstances are dire. There are people whose whole life's work is on the line and who are likely to go to the wall in the next couple of months.

Mr Perron: You have been saying that for 2 years.

Mr TUXWORTH: If you are not hearing it, you are not walking the streets. You should try doing that. If that did not come through in the message from the Wanguri by-election, I do not know what did.

Mr Perron: What message did you get in Wanguri?

Mr TUXWORTH: That people thought we were associated with you. That is what we got.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if we accept the tribunal's determination, we will incur the wrath and contempt of the community and that will probably be justified in the community's eyes. If we are prepared to temper our expectations in terms of what the community is going through and in terms of what we think is a reasonable thing, I think a fair amount of satisfaction would be derived from all sides.

I am not totally satisfied with the Leader of the Opposition's proposition and I would be happy to consider any sort of suggestions about how we could defer the implementation of this determination. To accept it in its present form, however, would be totally unreasonable and, in my opinion, insupportable.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Barkly for putting the debate back on a reasonable basis and placing it in the broad community context. This debate is about the broad community context, both the broad Northern Territory context and the broad Australian context. It is unfortunate that honourable members opposite do not realise that they cannot take decisions in here and not accept that those decisions have a broader community impact. That is what they are doing. They think that they can sit in here and make a decision which will give them a 30% salary increase over the next 5 months without any community reaction.

The member for Barkly very eloquently pointed out that there are people in the community who, through no fault of their own, are hurting. They are hurting because another group of greedy people wants a 30% salary increase. If we pass this motion, we will be saying: 'Sorry, folks, we have taken our 30%. The pilots could not get it as easily as we can but we are taking ours anyway. You just keep on hurting because we have lots of sympathy for you. We feel really sympathetic towards you and we are going to do everything we can to help you'. Of course, there is very little that we can do to help those people. Imagine the impact of that attitude in the broad community of the Northern Territory, Mr Deputy Speaker. Some people do not know whether they will be in business next week or not. There are people who do not know whether they will have a job next week or not and, if we accept the determination, we will be saying: 'That is all right. You are in good hands. You have a sensible, responsible government and we have just given ourselves a 3% salary rise to prove that to you'.

The broader Australian context is that, for the last 5 years at least, wages have been squeezed. Let me say that this has occurred with the assistance and the cooperation of the union movement. It has not been done over its dead body. It has been done with its assistance and cooperation because the union movement realises that it has a responsibility to the Australian community to keep the lid on wages and to help us get our economy back on the rails. That is why everyone has spoken so strongly about the pilots' dispute. A renegade union is attempting to break down an accord which has received broad community support and broad union support. If that accord is to continue working, it needs broad support from the politicians of this country. Unfortunately, it is not getting that broad support in this House.

Mr Perron: Federal politicians.

Mr SMITH: I will come to them in a moment.

Instead, members on the government benches and 2 independent members are prepared to say: 'Stuff you, Jack! We're all right. We will accept the umpire's decision even if it breaks all the rules, even though there are people in our own electorates who do not know whether they will have jobs next week and even though we will be giving a signal to the union movement, particularly in the Northern Territory, that we think that the wage guidelines can be broken'. Members of the federal parliament were in a similarly difficult position when the report of their Remuneration Tribunal was presented. That tribunal recommended massive pay increases for politicians.

However, they accepted the political reality and entered into a staged process for implementing the determination.

Mr Perron: They didn't reject it.

Mr SMITH: They did reject the report. They came up with a staged process. They talked to people about it. They talked to the union movement about and reached agreement within the broad wage guidelines so that it did not contravene them. That is the difference in the approach adopted by the federal government which is aware of its broad responsibilities to the Australian community in terms of keeping the lid on wages.

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: It does not occur to you people that you have a similar responsibility to keep the lid on wages and to show an example to the rest of the Northern Territory community.

The particularly galling aspect of this matter is that, in its budget, the government has just knocked a week's salary off the average income earner on the basis that people have to pay an increased share to keep the Northern Territory economy going. At the same time, government members of parliament want to give themselves a 30% pay increase. People will soon get the message that that is part of the reason why the economy is blowing out. That message will not be very acceptable in the community.

The member for Stuart is right: the government will not get away with this. We will ultimately win this argument because members opposite will soon begin to cop the flak in their electorate offices. I have already had phone calls from people expressing their disgust at what is being proposed and saying that they would change their votes if the Labor Party or individual members of the Labor Party voted to support this incredible increase. I take note of that as a legitimate message from constituents and I predict that every one of us will hear more and more of that in the week to come.

Let me finish by saying that this will by no means be the end of this matter. I am committed to pursuing it, to ensuring that common sense prevails, to ensuring that the people of the Northern Territory have responsible politicians who can make responsible decisions in relation to their own salaries. We will continue to pursue this matter through the October sittings and, if necessary, through the November sittings. Mark my words, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the end, we will win.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8

Mr Bailey
Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Floreani
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tuxworth

Noes 16

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale.

Motion negatived.

STATEMENT
Import Substitution Study

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I have recently received a comprehensive and important report which examines the considerable potential for new manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory. Honourable members will recall that, late last year, the Chief Minister tabled the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy, a document which established the government's future directions in terms of maximising economic growth and development throughout the Territory.

A significant feature of those directions was a proposal to fund a research project to investigate the extent of imports of manufactured goods and to assess potential opportunities for business development aligned with replacing those imports with local product. In February this year, the international consulting firm, Touche Ross Services, in conjunction with a local firm, Australian Research Associates, was commissioned by the government to conduct an extensive import substitution review. The review team was selected after an in-depth evaluation of expressions of interest received in response to a national advertising campaign.

The final report was submitted to me on 13 July this year. Touche Ross Services conducted a comprehensive survey of existing Territory manufacturing enterprises, carried out an extensive evaluation of Territory imports and reviewed more than 100 potential import replacement opportunities. In the final analysis, the report recommends positive action on 35 realistic opportunities for import replacement. Of the 35 definite prospects identified, 23 have the potential to be taken up through existing local capabilities whilst 12 are seen to have no current local capability and will require the inducement of new investment. I should make it clear, Mr Speaker, that any temptation to dismiss this study as just another government report should be resisted strongly. It documents very real opportunities for new Territory business which, of course, means a healthier local economy and more jobs for Territorians.

The Touche Ross study has exceeded all our expectations. It has identified prospects and opportunities that were not previously known. I am confident that substantial new business activity and expanded manufacturing activity will result in the Territory. The study shows that, in the 12 months from July 1987 to June 1988, about \$100 000m-worth of manufactured goods and processed foods were imported by the Territory from interstate and overseas sources. Within the \$100 000m import total, many millions of dollars of potential new business opportunities for import replacement have been identified, and it is the government's enthusiastic intention to ensure that those opportunities are taken up to the Territory's obvious benefit.

The Department of Industries and Development is already assisting local manufacturers to take advantage of the Touche Ross study and this assistance will increase as the business community becomes more aware of the report's

findings. The department is working closely with business and organisations to circulate information about the Touche Ross study, and it is calling for interest from enterprising Territorians who may not be part of this established network. The task from the department's point of view is obviously more than just the dissemination of information. Interested proponents can receive valuable assistance to ensure realisation of commercially sound development proposals.

A range of incentive packages is also available to assist viable business propositions with the flexibility to tailor such incentive packages on a case by case basis. In other words, the government's role in this important exercise is more than just the commissioning of the study. We intend to make sure it works. We will be offering maximum assistance to those in the private sector who want to have a go at these new opportunities.

I should point out that Touche Ross Services has made special mention of the excellent cooperation it received from the private sector during the import substitution assignment. It is also encouraging that the preliminary discussions between the Department of Industries and Development and the Confederation of Industry and Commerce, the Small Business Association, the Master Builders Association, the Manufacturers Council and the Exporters Council has indicated widespread support for the study and the results achieved. These industry associations have given firm undertakings to be actively involved in making Territory business aware of the import replacement possibilities that have been identified.

The Touche Ross Services study has been an extremely important initiative to develop business growth in the Northern Territory. It is now essential that the government and Territory business work closely together to ensure the successful development of these outstanding new opportunities. There is too much at stake to do otherwise.

Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table the Touche Ross Services study into Import Substitution and I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, Big Bang Barry just cannot help himself, can he? It is unfortunate that, on the very day that the honourable minister has released this report - and I am the first to say that it adopts a sensible approach - he has a full-page advertisement in the newspaper talking about billions of dollars of opportunities to Territory business. We have heard that too often from the honourable minister opposite. People's expectations have been falsely raised too many times by the honourable minister opposite.

What we have here is a thorough survey. At least, I think it is a thorough survey. My office asked for a copy of the papers at least a month ago and was not accorded the courtesy of being sent one. We have a thorough study into an area of import substitution. That is good and I have no problems with it. However, I believe that we need to be a little bit leery about how far we can get with import substitution. It is significant that the World Bank, after being bitten a few times, now refuses to fund import substitution schemes in countries where they operate.

Mr Firmin: We are not asking the World Bank.

Mr SMITH: Of course not, but the World Bank is a world-renowned institution.

Mr Firmin: Are we a third world country now?

Mr SMITH: You are going to break the silence of 6 days and start interjecting, are you? That is fine. For the record, we have just heard from the member for Ludmilla. People have probably not heard him previously in these sittings but he now intends to interject regularly. Every time he interjects, I will ensure that it goes on the record so that his constituents will know that he is still alive.

Mr Speaker, the World Bank has expertise in these matters and it has discovered that import substitution is a very difficult process. I mention the World Bank in order to put the matter in context. We do not have an opportunity to make billions of dollars for Territory business. If we are lucky, we can identify some small market niches which can be filled by Northern Territory businesses, and that is good.

The problem is that, in his usual style, the honourable minister is blowing the matter up into something which it is not. He creates false expectations when expectations need to be more sober and more realistic. Unfortunately, that is the problem with the whole approach of the Minister for Industries and Development. One of the problems is the minister's own department. Morale is shockingly low, people are moving in and out at a rate of knots and there is no sense of purpose or direction. Instead of making billion dollar statements in the NT News, the honourable minister may do better by looking closely at the direction of his own department and putting some sense into its activities. Perhaps he might encourage his department to start looking after the needs of small business people instead of cutting back on support for them, as it has done in the recent budget.

Mr Coulter: You have got that wrong.

Mr SMITH: I have not got it wrong. That is absolute nonsense. At least, it is not as bad as the 35% cut in the horticultural program.

Mr Speaker, the big bang theory advocated by the minister just does not work. He does his own credibility and the credibility of the government no good at all by making billion-dollar statements in the newspaper when what we have - if it is handled properly by his government and his department, and there has to be some doubts about their capacity to do that ...

Mr Firmin: He is putting us on notice again.

Mr SMITH: For the record, the member for Ludmilla has just spoken again. That is the third time. He is still alive. His constituents will be pleased to know that.

Mr Speaker, what we have is a realistic opportunity, if handled correctly, to create some extra activity in the Northern Territory economic scene. However, I despair that such an opportunity will ever come to fruition in a department administered by the Deputy Chief Minister because of his inability to come down from the clouds and start working at the grassroots, which is where things have to begin if anything is to happen.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT
Prostitution in the Northern Territory

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement about prostitution in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I announced in this House in February that there was to be a comprehensive review of the Northern Territory's criminal justice system. I foreshadowed that laws governing prostitution would be included in that review's terms of reference. Since that announcement was made, however, the report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry has been released and the laws governing prostitution in the Territory have been the subject of public comment. I therefore consider it proper to raise this matter as a separate issue for debate in this House. In doing so, I intend to outline the primary questions to be considered by the government in dealing with this issue, and to address in general terms the areas in which the government proposes to take action.

However, I would like to make it quite clear that my intention today is not to present honourable members with a fait accompli. The questions to be resolved regarding this issue are varied and frequently contentious and I place honourable members on notice that the government is genuinely seeking their contributions and suggestions before finalising legislative changes. I strongly believe that, for the good of the community, we should strive to make this debate as constructive and as free from acrimony as possible.

The range of ways in which prostitution is conducted and regulated throughout Australia, and indeed the world, is enormous. The question which faces this House is to determine the most appropriate system for the Northern Territory. For the purposes of this debate, it is useful to consider prostitution through discussion of a number of separate topics. These are: regulation of the escort service industry, living off immoral earnings, procuring, health and brothels. Before turning to the details of those topics, I would like to acquaint honourable members with the present situation regarding prostitution in the Northern Territory.

Prostitution itself is not a crime. Instead, the main offences are soliciting, procuring, living off immoral earnings and running a brothel. In general terms, I believe the community agrees that this should remain the case. However, I accept that, in consideration of these highly subjective and emotive issues, the actual effect of the laws must properly reflect the current needs and values of the community. If the laws do not reflect these needs and values, they should be amended.

I turn firstly to the topic of appropriate regulation of the escort service industry. It is public knowledge that the great majority of prostitutes working in the Territory are engaged in the escort service industry, known generally as escort agencies. It is also public knowledge that the Northern Territory police have come to an arrangement with the escort agencies in order to monitor the industry and to ensure that problems such as abuse and or trafficking of drugs, organised crime and involvement of under-age girls do not occur.

This arrangement operates in the following manner. First, before the operator of an escort agency agrees to act on behalf of a woman, that woman is required to attend the Berrimah Police Centre or any appropriate police station in the area. At the police station, she is interviewed by 2 members of the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence. During the interview, the police inform her of the laws relating to prostitution in the Territory. The

interview itself is recorded in its entirety and towards its conclusion the woman is photographed. The photographs give the police a positive record of the woman's identity, regardless of the number of names she may use. A check of the woman's criminal record is also conducted. If any serious convictions are revealed, particularly drug-related convictions, sufficient information is referred to the operator to convince him or her of the woman's unsuitability. The operator ordinarily then declines to act for her.

The advice I have received leaves me in no doubt that this arrangement is generally satisfactory to both the police and the owners of the escort agencies. It gives the police a means of ensuring that people involved with drugs or other serious criminal matters do not become involved in escort agencies in the Territory. The escort agencies are equally anxious not to engage women who are involved with drugs or other serious criminal activities. The operators are well aware that these women are bad for business and the community.

However, while both the police and the industry agree that such a system of regulation is both satisfactory and necessary, there is a major problem with the present arrangement. While I am sure that all honourable members would agree that it is right and proper for the police to monitor persons working in the escort industry, at present they are without any legislative backing to do so. They lack the power to require women to attend the police station or to be photographed or to release details of their criminal history. They also lack the power to act, on the basis of information they discover, to prevent a woman working for an escort agency. The present ability of the police to carry out such measures stems purely from cooperation of the operators of the escort agencies themselves.

While I applaud the responsible attitude shown by the operators to date, the lack of legislative support for the present system is clearly unsatisfactory. This government accepts that appropriate powers must be provided for the police to monitor escort agencies. Should any honourable member disagree with that principle, I strongly advise him to read the report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. The report demonstrates very clearly that, when individuals or organisations cannot or do not have to publicly account for their actions, they are inevitably exposed to the possibility of corruption.

The government accepts that the primary rule for keeping corruption or allegations of corruption out of the police force is to ensure that its activities can be carried out by the book, not by cooperation or other arrangements. In making that comment, I would like to make it quite clear that there is no suggestion that any member of the police force has failed to act with anything but the utmost propriety under the current arrangement. I can inform honourable members now that, in the interest of protecting both the police force and the community, the government is committed to putting in place the necessary laws to ensure that a Queensland-type situation does not develop in the Northern Territory.

I turn now to consider what I understand to be the viewpoint of those who work in the industry. Prostitution is not a criminal offence in the Territory. It could be argued therefore that women intending to work for an escort agency should not be treated like criminals or intending criminals and that a woman should not be forced to attend a police station where her photograph is taken and a record is made of the fact that she has been or will be working as a prostitute. No woman should be branded with that tag for life. Mr Speaker, I acknowledge these comments. I strongly believe that every chance possible should be given to those involved in prostitution to get

out of it. I do not accept that drugs are a serious problem in relation to prostitution in the Territory, but it is imperative that the authorities continue their vigilance to ensure that this remains the case.

While I accept that prostitutes are not criminals and should not be treated as such, I cannot accept that complete anonymity should be granted to them. To put it bluntly, our community is entitled to be as free as possible from corruption, crime, drugs and disease. This government is charged with the responsibility of doing everything possible to ensure that this standard is maintained. In recognition of this principle, not only those who work as prostitutes but every member of our community is subject to constant checks and recording of his or her activities. A classic example of these intrusions into daily life is the screening of our luggage and persons for weapons or explosives before boarding aeroplanes.

I cannot accept that the community would not suffer if women were able to work in such a crime-prone industry as prostitution without appropriate monitoring of their identities or suitability. It seems clear to me that police require sufficient powers to know who is working in the industry, what their criminal background is and to be able to prevent them working, at least on an acknowledged basis, if need be. On the question of confidentiality, a system is already in place to ensure that access to records of those working as prostitutes is restricted, including within the police force, and I suggest that system should be formalised.

I accept also that there may be some arguments against police photographing prostitutes. Quite understandably, a woman working for an escort agency may often use a false name or sometimes 2 or more names if working with a number of agencies. She may go by another name again in her own social circle outside work. I believe strongly that the police must have a method of verifying the identity of each woman, regardless of the number of names she may use. This is why police presently photograph each woman intending to work for escort agencies. It provides a physical and constant record of who the person is, despite what identity she may assume. The photograph is also invaluable if the police need to trace a woman who unaccountably goes missing.

I have heard arguments that prostitutes should be treated similarly to others in the community - that is, simply having to sign authorisations to release their criminal records without having to be photographed. I will be considering these arguments but, regardless of what method is implemented, I will not compromise the principle that, in the interests of the community, the police must be sure of the identity of those working in the industry.

I now turn to the question of the extent to which escort agencies should be regulated. The government must decide whether a formal system for registration of agencies should be implemented. Prostitution is known, through experience and observation, to be an industry which naturally attracts crime. Indeed, it is a prime candidate for organised crime. I believe that, at present, the escort service industry in Darwin and other Territory centres is relatively free of serious crime. I take this opportunity to reinforce my point that this situation is largely the result of the responsible attitude taken by our police force and the escort agencies. Nonetheless, it must be clearly recognised that our good fortune to date is no justification for walking away from the issue at hand. The overwhelming drug problems of the world demonstrate clearly that prevention is far better than cure. We cannot afford to let prostitution get out of hand.

Development of crime in the Territory escort service industry must be noticed and addressed promptly. The details of what restrictions and obligations should be placed on escort services are matters yet to be determined. However, I confirm today that the government proposes to introduce a system under which escort agencies are required to be registered in order to operate in the Northern Territory. For far too long, we have relied on the small size of our community to monitor the operations of the escort agencies and to notice when criminal or unacceptable activities are conducted by them. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. Sooner or later, prostitution will occur in unacceptable ways unless an appropriate legislative system is in place.

At this point, I would like to clarify my personal attitude to the situation. I realise that, in committing the government to a system of regulating the escort service industry, I may be criticised for condoning prostitution in some way. Let me make it perfectly clear, Mr Speaker, that I most emphatically do not condone prostitution. As a former police officer and now as the first law officer of the Northern Territory, the suggestion that this facet of our society should be encouraged or expanded is personally repugnant to me. I do not accept in any way that prostitution, be it officially a crime or not, has anything to add to the community standards which I am pledged to support. However, Mr Speaker, I cannot ignore reality. The Fitzgerald Inquiry has made very clear the implications for our community if we do not acknowledge that the present situation is not satisfactory and take steps to overcome the difficulties faced by our law enforcement officers.

I would like to make it clear that the government does not intend to introduce a highly complex system which will result in a regulatory nightmare for police to deal with. Our aim must be to minimise police dealings with prostitutes but, at the same time, to maximise the clarity of that contact. I firmly believe that the Northern Territory Police Force is the best in Australia. I know from personal experience that our police officers achieve the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. It is in the interest of our community to ensure that these standards are not compromised or seen to be capable of being compromised.

The other side of the coin is that prostitution is simply a sad industry. Those who work in it are often under-educated and underprivileged and their lives are frequently a story of neglect, abuse and loneliness. As a society, I believe we should be looking for ways of lifting these people out of prostitution and protecting them from violence and intimidation, not leaving them to their plight.

Paradoxically, the first step in achieving this must be to acknowledge the existence of the industry. To deny that is to leave a sore to fester and to leave the potential for crime, assault and disease to grow unnoticed and unchecked. As the elected representatives of the people of the Northern Territory, we must recognise that prostitution exists here and put into place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that it does not become a threat to the framework of our society. The primary issues facing this government are those of appropriate regulation of the industry and monitoring of the people who work in it. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this statement, a number of associated questions should be touched on in the context of this debate and I would like to discuss them briefly now.

I turn firstly to the offence of 'living off immoral earnings', which is contained in section 57 of the Summary Offences Act. Section 57(1)(h) states: 'Any person who knowingly lives wholly or in part on the earnings of the

prostitution of another shall be guilty of an offence'. It has been suggested that this section is too broad in its application. For example, it would apply not only to the operators of escort agencies and any persons who are employed to protect women or enforce payment by clients - or pimps, as they are commonly known - but also to husbands, boyfriends and possibly children with whom a prostitute may willingly and intentionally share her earnings. In most cases, particularly the latter groups, there is nothing inherently wrong with this sharing of the earnings. Certainly, the family or friends of a prostitute are rarely guilty of any social evil.

The offence is designed to provide recourse when things go wrong, such as when the agency operator tries to extract an unreasonable share of a woman's earnings, knowing that she is powerless to do anything but accept the terms of their relationship, or when a pimp begins to exploit his position of strength and authority over a woman, seeking not only payment but also sexual favours. It is therefore apparent that the crux of the offence is not a person's use of money earned from the prostitution of another to meet their living expenses, but the exploitation of prostitutes for financial gain. The economic factors which cause women to become prostitutes are wide-ranging but, at the very least, the law should protect them from a situation in which they are forced to hand over their earnings to others who are exploiting their misfortune. That is what the offence of 'living off immoral earnings' truly aims to fight.

It can be argued that this situation does not necessitate review of section 57 of the Summary Offences Act, on the grounds that a responsible police force will assess the facts of each case and exercise its discretion in terms of whether or not to prosecute a person living off the earnings of prostitution. The Territory government does not accept this argument. The Fitzgerald Report shows that this approach of leaving decisions to police discretion is a first step down the road to corruption. This government will not fall into that trap. It is not good enough to have a law which is arbitrarily enforced against some but not against others. It would only be a matter of time before an attempt was made to bribe police not to prosecute in one situation or to prosecute in another. It would also leave a defendant in a position of being able to show the court that the offence for which he or she was charged was occurring elsewhere in the community without hindrance. 'Why me?', the defendant would ask. Police discrimination, if not actual corruption, would be alleged, and the law would indeed look an ass.

The Territory government's position is that, if something is an offence, all occurrences of that offence should be dealt with in accordance with the law. I therefore advise honourable members that section 57(1)(h) of the Summary Offences Act is to be amended to more accurately reflect the true criminality of the behaviour it is supposed to prevent. The issues of duress and exploitation involved in such offences may in themselves be questions of degree, but that will be a matter for the courts to decide. The section itself must address the true ills of living off the earnings of prostitution, not leave its proper application solely to police discretion.

I turn now to the offence of procuring. This issue, at least, is very simple. Whether you accept prostitution as part of our society or not, it cannot be denied that it is a sad industry and a blight on our community. Procuring is perhaps the worst aspect of that industry. It represents the efforts of those involved in the industry, who live off it and stand by it, to drag others into their way of life. Section 136 of the Criminal Code presently makes procuring a crime which is punishable by up to 3 years in jail. The government will not be changing this section. Indeed, it is our position that people suspected of this offence should be pursued to the limit.

I turn to the question of health. I have received submissions from a broad range of interest groups on this topic. Suggestions range from introducing a policy of compulsory and regular health checks on all prostitutes, through to a policy that prostitutes should not be singled out, but be made fully aware of the issues so that they will then carry out safe sexual practices in the same way as all other sexually active members of society.

There appears to be consensus that prostitutes, as a matter of common sense, should have regular health checks. I have been advised that most prostitutes take this issue very seriously and act appropriately. However, as with most areas of our society, there are always a few who do not accept their responsibilities. It has therefore been suggested that health checks should be compulsory to ensure that the irresponsible few do not flout the system and also to ensure that the services necessary to provide such health checks are available to prostitutes. This issue of compulsory health checks gains greater credence when considered in the context of the debate regarding AIDS and how to prevent it from spreading. It is argued that, even though there is a 'window period' during which the AIDS virus can have been contracted and not yet be detectable, it is better to ensure that it is discovered as soon as possible rather than left undetected to be spread further.

The arguments put forward against compulsory health checks are equally numerous. Firstly, as I mentioned, the time difference between the contracting of a disease and the time when it can be detected medically means there can be no guarantee that a woman is clear of such diseases. Secondly, it is suggested that there is a danger that a formal system of health checks would create a belief among clients that a liaison with a prostitute was safe. Honourable members would appreciate that there could never be any legitimate guarantee from medical authorities, escort agencies or prostitutes themselves that prostitutes were clear of sexually-transmitted diseases or AIDS. Nonetheless, if members of the community were to accept such a system as proof that there was no danger of contracting a sexually-transmitted disease from prostitutes - and there will always be some who leap to such conclusions - a number of difficulties would arise. Firstly, it might be the cause of anger, if not legal action, by a client who claimed to have become infected by a woman who was recorded by the health authorities as not being infected. Secondly, it might increase the difficulty which some women have in requiring their clients to wear condoms, when confronted with the argument: 'Why should I? Your health check says that you are safe'. Of course, the problem for the women in this situation is that they are endeavouring to ensure that they are not infected by their clients.

The question of whether health checks should be made compulsory, assuming that such a system could be effectively enforced, or whether they should be voluntary but with an intensive backup program of education and health, is indeed difficult. What is clear, however, is that the prevention and control of AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases is not a matter which should be supported with mere rhetoric. Any decisions for the regulation of prostitution must contain initiatives which work positively towards addressing this issue. The spread of AIDS does not concern prostitutes alone; it affects our entire community.

I turn now to the question of brothels. The Territory's only legislation in this area is the Suppression of Brothels Act 1907 which remains on the statute books by virtue of the application to the Territory of some old South Australian laws. This act makes it an offence for any person to keep or manage a brothel or be in receipt of moneys earned in a brothel. Honourable

members should be aware that the main reason brothels are not tolerated is not because they are places where sexual services are provided for payment. As I mentioned at the beginning of this statement, prostitution itself has never been illegal in the Territory. The simple fact is that, elsewhere, brothels all too often become a social and public nuisance. This is quite apart from any moral offence which may be created by the brothel's operations. Their blatantly offensive and uninvited advertising, even if by means of the so-called red lights, the frequency of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and even the general noise and activity which brothels cause at unreasonable hours, may all combine to create an unwarranted nuisance for those living nearby.

This government will not accept the introduction of red-light districts and or brothels publicly touting for business in the Northern Territory. I foreshadow that changes to legislation relating to brothels will concentrate on prohibiting these nuisance activities rather than the fact that, in the privacy of a closed building, sexual services may be provided for payment.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You are forgetting about Beryl's, aren't you?

Mr MANZIE: Berrimah Beryl?

This will ensure that police have adequate powers to prevent any such activity from causing public offence.

The questions to be considered in relation to prostitution are many and varied and, again, frequently contentious. It is obvious that the present situation in the Territory should not be allowed to continue. Changes must be made in order to protect both our police force and the community as a whole. We must ensure that we have a publicly accountable system which prevents organised crime from creeping into the Territory, particularly in relation to abuse and trafficking in drugs, and which allows authorities to prevent the spread of AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases.

I have attempted to outline in general terms the problems as I see them, and the probable actions to be taken by the government. However, I accept that this is an issue which must be debated openly and at length, and I look forward to hearing honourable members' contributions and suggestions. In concluding, Mr Speaker, I would like to outline a number of ground rules which will be adopted by the government in framing legislation as a result of consideration of the issues that I have raised for debate today.

Firstly, it will be a crime punishable with imprisonment to employ a person as a prostitute, knowing that person to be under the age of 18 years. Secondly, any laws or regulations governing prostitution will be applicable to both females and males, despite my use of the female gender during this statement. Thirdly, the question of discrimination will be addressed, but efforts will be made to prevent men from working in escort services where women are also working. Those with any contact with prostitution will tell you that, when men become involved in prostitution-related activities, the conduct of those businesses becomes unsavoury for all concerned. Fourthly, soliciting for the purpose of prostitution shall remain an offence and, fifthly, procuring for the purpose of prostitution shall remain an offence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not propose to sum up at length. The issue here is coming to terms with prostitution as it occurs in the Territory and trying to strike a proper balance between regard for the needs, individual rights and freedoms of those who work in the industry, and the community's entitlement to

a society which is as free from crime and disease as possible. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate that I intend only to make some very brief preparatory comments on what is obviously a series of complex issues. I will be seeking the government's indulgence to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Prostitution has been thrown into the public spotlight by the Fitzgerald Inquiry and this Assembly must give due consideration to the questions raised and how they affect the Northern Territory. I note the Attorney-General's concerns about wanting to ensure that the police are not able to be accused of manipulating an informal system of control over prostitutes.

I have a basic personal view that I want to place on record immediately. I basically believe, along with the Attorney-General, that prostitution is a sad industry. Several years ago, before escort agencies were advertising in Alice Springs, I received representations from the neighbours of a house that was being used for prostitution. After I had expressed my concern about the matter in various forums, I received representations from the women themselves. This occurred several years ago and I do not recall all the details of the conversation. However, I recall expressing my basic feeling at the time, which was simply: 'I wish you could find another job'. They were decent young women. I would certainly be deeply upset if any of my nearest and dearest were forced into circumstances in which they had to prostitute themselves. At one level, prostitution is just a sex industry. On the other hand, our social values are such that we would be most unhappy and deeply depressed at the prospect of our nearest and dearest being involved. As the Attorney-General mentioned in his statement, many of the women who are involved in prostitution come from neglected home backgrounds and have been the subject of abuse as children. To use the Attorney-General's phrase, it is a sad industry.

The other aspect of prostitution is that it is an ancient trade. The etymology of the word 'prostitution' gives no indication of its modern meaning. The modern meaning of 'prostitution' is to sell at a low price something which is regarded as of high value in a loving relationship. 'Prostitution' comes from 2 Latin words: 'pro' meaning 'in place of' and 'statuere' meaning 'to stand'. Thus it stands in place of a real loving relationship. When one thinks about that etymology, one understands that, sad as it may be, it is an ancient trade.

I could make comments along these lines for a great deal of time. However, I advise the Attorney-General that the opposition will be studying the proposals and the statement. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later stage.

Leave denied.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would allow me to continue my remarks at a later hour and that the present debate continue forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to the statement made by the Attorney-General, I find that the matters covered are complex and deserving of our considered opinion. It seems that the

Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland has made many governments around Australia think twice about certain procedures and activities in their states. In this case, although it was what I would call a knee-jerk reaction ...

Mr Dondas: It was not a knee-jerk reaction at all.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I have said at other times in the House, there are occasions in the ...

Mr Dondas interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Casuarina will cease this continual interjection.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, having lived in the Northern Territory for some years, I know that in community crime and activities such as prostitution, we have a relatively clean bill of health compared to other states. That is in no small part due to the sensible procedures adopted by the Northern Territory Police Force. I know that it has acted on what one could call an ad hoc basis over the years but, nevertheless, the police force must be given the credit for the clean state of the practice of prostitution in the Northern Territory.

I agree with the member for MacDonnell's definition of 'prostitution'. It is to sell one's talents cheaply. However, we all know what the word means in common usage. Looking at it very generally, we probably all sell our bodies in one way or another. Some of us sell our brains, some of us sell our good looks and other people engage in prostitution, male or female. I believe that it is a necessary evil and it has to be considered sensibly rather than trying to adopt a prohibitionist attitude. I agree with the Attorney-General that it is usually women who engage in prostitution although some men do so. Some women, unfortunately, are forced into prostitution because of an unhappy childhood or adolescence or generally unhappy life circumstances. There are also women who go into the prostitution game with their eyes open. They know what the down side is and what the up side is and they go into it with open eyes. I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not mean to make a pun like that. There are women who go into prostitution with their eyes open, knowing the dangers. I believe that these women go into the business strictly for the financial rewards.

I agree with the Attorney-General that one of the things that we must avoid at all costs is people living off the earnings of prostitution. They must be penalised heavily. What a woman does with her own life and her own body is her business entirely. It is not the business of some pimp or standover merchant who tries to muscle in on the act and get something from her work. The Attorney-General canvassed the subject quite extensively and spoke about the families of prostitutes getting money from prostitution. I believe that common sense has to prevail in this context and that such circumstances do not constitute living off the earnings of prostitution.

We acknowledge that prostitution occurs through the activities of escort agencies in our community and that the record of police involvement in unofficial monitoring shows that it can occur in an orderly and well-managed way. I do not believe that it would be in accordance with community standards if prostitution were to be banned in our community.

The subject of brothels is a very tricky one. It can be argued that, if police intervention is necessary, it is easy to locate the source of

interruption of community life. On the other hand, it is also very easy for organised crime and drugs to operate from a brothel. When subjects like this come up, I cannot help remembering my early years in Western Australia. There was a very well-known street called Roe Street. I do not know whether any other member comes from Western Australia and remembers it. Roe Street is still there but I do not know whether it is still the centre of the red-light district. In my naivete and innocence, I could never understand the logic of having the red-light district so close to the state police headquarters at the corner of Roe Street and Barrack Street. But, of course, with hindsight ...

Mr Dondas: Roe Street and Beaufort Street.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You are quite right - Roe Street and Beaufort Street. Barrack Street finished at the bridge. Of course, with hindsight and sophistication I can see now that that was the best place for the red-light district to be. I think the honourable Attorney-General knows of a very well-known establishment in the Top End called Beryl's which definitely supplied a need in the community in past years. I am fairly ambivalent on the subject of brothels and I would be guided in my vote on the issue by well-reasoned argument.

I am pleased that the Attorney-General has brought this subject out into the open. It is only by discussing such subjects fully and frankly that reasoned opinions can be formed. If these things are hidden away in the closet, undesirable practices tend to develop.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Territory Parks and Wildlife Act

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That in accordance with section 13(2) of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, this Assembly advises the Administrator to revoke the declaration as a park of all that parcel of land in Keep River National Park being part of Northern Territory Portion 3541 containing an area of 44.6 ha more or less commencing at a point 180° for 5224.34 m from the northeastern corner of Keep River National Park; thence bounded by lines 180° for 1153.31 m, 293° 25' for 678.42 m, 77° 35' for 140.79 m, 37° 34' for 133.26 m, 358° 30' for 429.29 m, 357° 6' 30" for 261.3 m, and 82° 34' 30" for 431.92 m to the point of commencement, and originally declared as a park by an instrument dated 15 April 1981 and appearing at page 3 of Gazette No G17 dated 1 May 1981.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this partial revocation is to provide a living area for Aboriginal people in the Keep River locality. For some time, there have been negotiations in relation to selection of suitable sites for living areas for Keep River Aboriginal people. Eventually, 2 sites were selected. One, known as Bucket Springs, is on the southern boundary of the Spirit Hills pastoral lease but within the land set aside for extensions to Keep River National Park. The other, at Little Police Hole, is partially within the park and partially within the proposed extensions. This particular living area is approximately 116 ha in size, of which nearly 45 ha is within the declared park. As Keep River is a park declared under the Territory's Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, the resolution of the Assembly is required to revoke that declaration either wholly or in part.

Should the Assembly pass this resolution, action will be taken to redefine the park boundary to exclude this area and the way will be clear to issue freehold title to the Aboriginal people involved. As I mentioned earlier, the area of land to be removed from the park is just under 45 ha. This represents about one six-hundredth of the total park area of 26 200 ha. Its removal will in no way detract from the park values but it will most certainly be of clear benefit to the Aboriginal people who will gain secure title to their living area.

In concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, I point out that this is yet another example of the willingness of this government to talk with and cooperate with Aboriginal people to improve their living conditions and meet their aspirations with respect to ownership of land. I commend the motion to honourable members.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the action of the honourable minister, as there has been a pressing need to set aside some land for living areas at both Bucket Springs and Little Police Hole. It is good to see that the government has acted in good faith in response to extensive negotiations with the Northern Land Council and with the people out at Keep River National Park. It heralds a positive approach to future excisions. There are, however, 2 problems with the Conservation Commission that the opposition would like the government to consider very seriously and I ask the honourable minister to take these into account.

The Conservation Commission wishes to establish camping grounds next to the living areas and, in particular, near sacred sites in each of these areas. I am led to believe that the NLC and traditional owners have proposed that a buffer zone be established to provide privacy and I certainly would like to support this action. I am also led to believe that the Conservation Commission will seek to restrict the traditional right of the Aboriginal people in the Keep River National Park to hunt in the park area. I believe that there is a need for some flexibility on this matter and I ask the minister to take that on board. I seek the support of the government in addressing both of these issues with the Conservation Commission.

The opposition supports the government's proposal with the proviso that the concerns in relation to the Conservation Commission are taken up. Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the motion.

Motion agreed to.

TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 223)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a minor amendment to the Traffic Act aimed at remedying a very complex problem. When the current Traffic Act was being formulated, consideration was given to the effect of disqualification of the driver. Legal opinion was strongly of the view that the provision in the previous act banned a person from driving a motor vehicle anywhere in the Northern Territory although the general public perception, and some legal opinion, was that it applied only to public streets and places - that is, only in places where a licence would be required to drive. In an attempt to make

the legal situation clear, the new legislation specifically stated that it was an offence to drive anywhere in the Territory while disqualified.

I should point out that it is the scope of the words 'open to or used by the public' as used in the definitions of 'public place' and 'public street' which complicate the legal situation. Most traffic law throughout the world uses these or similar expressions because the general intention is that standard rules should apply for driver behaviour, vehicle standards and insurance in situations where there is a pattern of vehicle use. Volumes of law have been written on the precise meaning of the words, with probably at least as many opinions as there are lawyers. Courts take the view that every case is different and determine each case on the facts disclosed for the particular event at issue.

The simple solution was seen to be to ban disqualified drivers from driving anywhere. As an offence of driving while disqualified can be more serious than one of driving while unlicensed, the broad scope of disqualification to apply to driving anywhere removes the possibility of persons inadvertently driving illegally, as it makes any driving illegal. This has, however, now raised concerns in the community that the provision is too harsh in its ultimate effect. The government has had a better opportunity now of considering the trade-offs between ensuring that the legislation is clearly understood versus consequential inequities caused by the provision.

If strictly applied, the existing legislation prevents a disqualified farmer from ploughing his paddock while his 14-year-old son is permitted to do so. A disqualified employee is prevented from operating a fork-lift in a factory while another employee who has never held a driver's licence can do so. A disqualified mechanic is prevented from moving a motor vehicle in a garage and, for that matter, a private citizen is prevented from driving his own cars in his own backyard. A disqualified speedway driver is prevented from driving on an enclosed speedway while a 15-year-old without a licence is free to do so.

The government has decided to adopt the situation which prevails in most of the states - that is, the disqualification applies only to public streets and places. This should make the above activities legal unless the areas come within the definitions of 'public street' and 'public place'. It would also allow a range of other driving activities on private property that does not constitute a public street or place. While there may still be areas whose status could only be ruled on by a court, the legal situation would place the onus on the prosecution to prove that a given area was a public street or public place.

Driving while disqualified will cease to be an issue with respect to workers' compensation for an employee who has an accident while driving in the course of his employment, provided that it does not occur on a public street or place. Where it is related to driving on a public street or place, it will be a matter of establishing whether the employee had engaged in serious or wilful misconduct. In any case, the individual circumstances would be taken into account by the insurer.

One would expect people to make it their business to gain a better appreciation of which parts of a private property are public streets or places, and to treat those areas with more respect. Also, it would be expected that employers and property owners would do more to reduce the likelihood of disqualified persons driving unwittingly on sections of their land that are now known to be public streets or places. They would also be

more cautious about allowing public access in areas where they would want to allow unlicensed persons to drive. Any remaining problems resulting from the amendment will be best addressed through national forums aimed at a consistent national solution rather than the Northern Territory seeking a local solution.

I emphasise that the government is not softening its attitude to drink-driving. Offenders will still lose their licence for at least the minimum periods prescribed. If they then drive on a public street or public place, they will be liable to a penalty of up to 12 months imprisonment, with the actual penalty being for the courts to determine based on the circumstances of the case. However, the intention is that citizens should not be prevented from performing functions in their places of work or in their private lives in which there would normally be no requirement for holding a licence. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 6 bills, the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 216), the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 217), the Business Franchise Amendment Bill (Serial 218), the Human Tissue Transplant Amendment Bill (Serial 222), the Justices (Subsequential Amendment) Bill (Serial 211) and the Police Administration (Sequential Amendment) Bill (Serial 210) passing through all stages at this sitting.

Motion agreed to.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROBATE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 189)

Continued from 24 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I note that this amendment repeals the obligation of trustee companies to file accounts in every case and it amends the requirements concerning administration bonds. It also repeals the scale of costs for probate actions. I indicate that the opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL (Serial 185)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 216)
STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 217)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not too often that stamp duty amendments create much controversy in this House but, of course, the stamp duty amendments in this legislation were the basis of quite major debates in these sittings. I certainly do not want to reactivate those debates right now.

Mr Manzie: Very wise of you.

Mr SMITH: But I will if I am provoked, let me tell you!

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

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, taken together, these 2 bills implement the government's proposed changes to taxing arrangements as set out in the budget speech. The Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill basically provides amendments to accommodate the new Financial Institutions Duty Bill which will be debated at a later stage. It abolishes duties in the following areas: other duties on exchange and promissory notes, credit card transactions, hire-purchase agreements including business returns and other hire-purchase agreements.

The Stamp Duty Amendment Bill increases conveyancing duty rates, as we all know by now. It increases motor vehicle registration duty rates under certain circumstances, and doubles the duty on transfer of marketable securities as well as again doubling the stamp duty payable on court documents.

These are money bills and it is the government's prerogative to bring them forward as part of its budget. Even if an opposition wished to do so, it would be very unusual for it to move an amendment. If it did so and the amendment was passed, the government would be obliged to resign. I am not going to spring that on the House at this late hour on the last day of these sittings. However, I want to make again the point which has been made in previous debates, that this opposition supports the principle that taxes such as those covered by this bill should take effect from the time the budget is brought down, rather than their introduction being deferred for several weeks. Having said that, the opposition has no objection to these bills.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 218)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill is similar to the previous one in that it arises from changes announced in the budget. We have more serious concerns about this bill because of the decision to increase petrol sales licence fees from 3.5¢ per litre to 4¢ per litre. We have outlined those concerns from time to time. They are based on the fact that taxes on petrol are among the most inflationary taxes which can be applied. This is because of their flow-on effect into a large range of prices which have to be increased to cover higher costs resulting from increased petrol charges. We have made that point on a number of occasions and we certainly do not like to see that tax being increased. Once again, however, it is part of the government's budgetary package.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

HUMAN TISSUE TRANSPLANT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 222)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister has communicated with the opposition in respect of the Human Tissue Transplant Amendment Bill and has advised us of the circumstances that require this amendment to be passed under urgency. As indicated, the opposition is happy to comply in that regard. We note from communication with the Chief Minister and from the second-reading speech that this bill will allow the Territory to participate more fully in the Human Tissue Transplant Program by allowing specialists other than neurologists and neurosurgeons to declare potential donors to be brain dead. The opposition supports this amendment.

The opposition is aware that there are many people for whom this legislation is vitally important. I know a number of people who have undergone or are likely to undergo kidney transplants, and the enhancement of life that these transplants are able to provide is something which should, I believe, be supported by members of this Assembly.

Whilst on the subject of nephrology, I would like to pay tribute to Dr David Pugsley who, although he lives in Adelaide and works in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and possibly elsewhere, spends a great deal of time and effort caring for people in the Northern Territory. I know that he was concerned that this particular amendment should pass through the Assembly and that, of course, was an encouragement to the opposition.

With those few comments, I indicate once again that the opposition is happy to support this amendment.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to support this bill, my only regret is that the bill is necessary. I believe the drafting of the initial legislation was sloppy in the extreme and I think that

was due in no small part to the medical advice that the honourable minister received at the time. Surely somebody must have known the difference between a medical specialist and a neurologist or a neurosurgeon and known the number of times a neurosurgeon was available or not available to certify death so that transplants could take place. On many occasions, we have to pass amendments because insufficient thought was given to the original legislation.

Having said that, I must say that I am in favour of the human transplant scheme. I believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is the ultimate in recycling. I am sure that the grief of relatives of people who die, perhaps before reaching their 3 score years and 10, would be eased by knowing that other people's lives could be enhanced through the donation of organs. I think I am correct in assuming that, because we did not have adequate legislation, there has been a terrific waste in the Northern Territory and many people went without corneas, kidneys and other organs that could have been transplanted from persons declared clinically dead. Legislation governing the transplanting of human tissue from a cadaver to a live body fits indirectly, if not directly, with community standards in relation to the conservation of all natural resources. The legislation is also to be highly commended from that point of view and I support it.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

JUSTICES (SUBSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT) BILL
(Serial 211)
POLICE ADMINISTRATION (SUBSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT) BILL
(Serial 210)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for these 2 bills. The opposition is happy to support the government's determination to implement its domestic violence package and to clarify the ability of police to use force to enter premises where they reasonably believe that it is necessary to do so. I do not have the exact phraseology from the Police Administration Act, but I do recall the previous debate on this subject. This legislation will remove the concern expressed by the police about their ability to act in situations of domestic violence. I indicate our support for the amendments.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 10 October 1989 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1989-90
(Serial 215)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, this time last year, as the newly-appointed minister responsible for a newly-created department, I outlined my vision for the future direction of primary industry and fisheries in the Northern Territory. I am pleased to report that those new directions and initiatives I spoke of last year are now well and truly in place.

The primary industry sector has continued to grow and its contribution to the overall Territory economy should not be underestimated. Since self-government, the value of primary production in the Northern Territory has soared from less than \$38m to an estimated \$175m in 1988-89. The department's budget is divided by activity with an overall allocation this year of \$43.721m, a decrease of some \$2.41m on last year's amount. The decrease is due largely to the reduced requirement for outlays on BTEC and the one-off assistance schemes for buffalo producers and horticulturists. The Primary Industry and Fisheries Department is structured with 5 operational divisions supported by a Corporate Management Division, and I shall address the activities of each division in turn.

I turn first to the Animal Industry Division. BTEC expenditure again comprises the largest single component of the department's budget with an allocation of \$13.791m which is nevertheless a reduction of some \$3m over last year. The BTEC program is targeted to the national objective of completion by 1992. While BTEC has had a somewhat painful impact on pastoralists in the short term, we can now begin to look forward to an industry boasting clean herds and a whole new direction in stock control and management. It has resulted in a total reversal of the traditional practices that have been part of the Territory pastoral industry for decades.

Under the terms of the BTEC strategic plan, the Northern Territory government has proposed a number of specific priorities which are being implemented and which will be fully in place by 1992, a target we are still confident we can meet. Recent achievements under the BTEC plan include the January agreement by the Australian Agricultural Council to expand the TB impending free area and the July declaration of the Northern Territory, along with the rest of Australia, as being brucellosis free.

Two sets of targets have been established for the coming year. The first relates to uncontrolled stock. Destocking will intensify later this year in all areas where uncontrolled stock remain. It is hoped that 95% of uncontrolled stock will be brought under control, removed or, as a last alternative, destroyed by the end of 1989. A Territory survey to reassess the populations of uncontrolled cattle and buffalo will be undertaken in conjunction with the Conservation Commission and the data compared with 1985 survey results to provide us with a detailed picture of the current population status. Secondly, it is our aim by June 1990 to increase the impending free area to take in 36% of the Territory herd, a 14% increase on current levels, to expand the provisionally free area by 11%, to take in 35% of the herd and to significantly reduce the eradication area.

As the program winds up, the focus in animal health will need to change to cope with the new demands placed on the government as a consequence of the cleaner herds and better stock control and management. These aims will largely be pursued by the Veterinary Technical Services Branch and will address an important group of industry needs in the post-BTEC area. Planning is proceeding in the broad priority of animal health programs designed to: increase profitability of livestock enterprises; provide disease investigation and diagnostic advisory services; and maintain quarantine barriers against exotic animal disease and maintain preparedness to respond in the event of an exotic disease outbreak.

In last year's budget speech, I emphasised particularly the need for government advisory programs. I am pleased to announce that, in February, my department began a trial advisory service in the Alice Springs area. This service was based on a whole-farm approach involving officers from a range of disciplines pooling information and providing advice. This was done through an advisory officer whose task was to maintain constant communication with a case load of pastoralists. The trial results have been so encouraging that we will continue to upgrade the emphasis on advisory services based on these results. The strategy will be to implement such services on a Territory-wide basis as the effort in BTEC diminishes. The emphasis on this trial is to provide advice at an individual property level. \$200 000 has been allocated to continue this initiative this year.

The department, in conjunction with the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation, constantly monitors the development and potential in markets both overseas and within the nation. The Territory is fostering a growing live cattle export trade. The number of live cattle shipped through the Port of Darwin accounted for almost 30% of the national live cattle exports last year, and it is expected that this will increase this year. A further 10% of live exports were from Territory cattle shipped through the Port of Wyndham. I am pleased to say that prospects in the live cattle export trade look even better than in previous years and early figures suggest the potential to substantially increase the volume of cattle exported through Darwin.

The Prime Minister's recent statement on the environment has no doubt focused greater attention than ever before on the environment. I must stress, however, that our attentions have been focused on this area for some time with a significant emphasis on our rangeland monitoring program. This program will be continued and further upgraded this year with increased funds provided for its implementation in the Tennant Creek region. Some of this work will be done in conjunction with the Conservation Commission whose focus will naturally emphasise conservation while my department's focus will be on productivity and sustainability of the resource.

The main elements of the program will be: to continue an inventory of rangeland resources to allow better understanding of the productivity of pastoral rangelands; to continue to monitor rangeland responses to season, management practices and other factors; to derive relationships between management practices, seasons and the value of rangeland as a grazing resource; and, ultimately, to provide advice to pastoralists and government agencies on the utilisation and conservation of Territory rangelands.

There has been substantial private and government investment in the buffalo industry during 1989, both because of the impact of BTEC and the government's Buffalo Development Scheme. A total of 12 producers have now taken up assistance under this scheme and the department is monitoring its implementation and providing advice at an individual property level. It is

anticipated that, in a relatively short time, this scheme will significantly increase the number of buffalo breeders behind wire in the Territory. Apart from BTEC, priorities for the buffalo industry in the coming year will focus on improved productivity, better targeting of our own advisory services and market development. As a consequence, feed lot trials will continue to examine the economics of finishing buffalo, and in fact cattle, by this method. The Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation is providing significant support funding in this area, provisionally to the tune of \$121 500.

This year, the department has increased its funding for the goat industry which has significant potential in the areas of live exports and meat products.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It has been recognised at last.

Mr REED: That is right. It did not take all that long, Noel.

The department will concentrate again on maintaining a research herd to define disease, parasite and nutritional constraints and the optimum means of overcoming these. It will also disseminate information both on the research results and on the current situation and potential for local and export markets. I am sure that the member for Koolpinyah will let us know how that program goes.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I will.

Mr REED: As far as I am aware, the camel industry has not received attention in a budget speech in the past. The demand for the export of camels interstate and overseas continues and there is now also a demand for camel meat for the local and interstate restaurant trade. Attention this year will focus on trying to better define the size of this industry and its advisory service needs in the coming year.

Mr Speaker, the total annual allocation for the Animal Industry Division, excluding BTEC, will be \$4.919m.

I turn now to plant industry. \$5.809m has been allocated this year to support the Territory's plant industries. One of the Territory's greatest success stories has been the horticulture industry which has seen a phenomenal increase in value of production since self-government. The gross value of Territory horticulture production in 1977-78 was \$500 000 but, this year, it is estimated to top \$16m. My department is developing new options to facilitate further growth through identifying new markets for Territory horticultural products.

The Leader of the Opposition and, to his shame, the Deputy Opposition Leader and shadow spokesman for primary industry and fisheries have suggested this week that there has been a 35% cut in funding for horticulture this year. This is typical of the ill-informed and misleading comment that we have come to expect from members opposite. Both honourable members have conveniently overlooked the fact that, although there will be a cut in expenditure this year compared with last year's total expenditure on horticulture, the sum of \$1m was specially allocated last year to finance the one-off horticultural assistance loan scheme. In real terms, the horticultural sector has seen a funding increase of nearly \$300 000 over last year's budget allocation.

Mr Ede: What about research?

Mr REED: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart and shadow spokesman for primary industry and fisheries continues to display his lack of knowledge of the primary industry sector in the Northern Territory.

The central Australian table grape industry is now well established and the government is supporting this industry with a major research activity program at its new Ti Tree research facility. The industry's success is demonstrated by the inroads that grapes grown in central Australia have made into southern markets, including Sydney.

My department will also provide ongoing staff resources to assist the melon industry which now accounts for more than \$5m in value of production and which is considered to be in something of a consolidation phase this year.

The value of mango production has doubled from \$1.6m in 1987 to \$3.5m in 1988. It is expected that there will be a further significant increase this year as most orchards come into the production phase. The resources of my department will be directed to improving productivity and marketing the Territory mango.

There are a number of other crops which will attract considerable government resources over the next few years. These include dates in Alice Springs, asparagus and other exotic vegetables in Katherine and cut flowers - in particular heliconia and orchids - in Darwin. A departmental importation of date offshoots will be started over the next 2 years and this will be supported by the private industry importation of additional material. Research continues in the Arid Zone Research Institute and work on identifying suitable growing sites will continue this year in conjunction with the water resources division of the Power and Water Authority. Planning is well advanced for a post-entry quarantine facility to be set up in Katherine to hold date offshoots imported from the USA.

Honourable members will be aware of the Wildman River pilot project established over the past 5 years to prove the viability of cashew nut production in the Territory. This project was established by CSR 20th Century Foods (later taken over by Nabisco Commodities Ltd) in conjunction with the Territory government and CSIRO. The current world market for cashews is worth more than \$500m annually and, understandably, Nabisco is not the only company showing interest in our potential. A number of other groups have come forward in recent months. Research on cashews includes varietal and environmental controls established at the Coastal Plains and Douglas Daly Research Farms and at Katherine, as well as at Wildman River. My department will be working closely with private enterprise in further research on this exciting project.

A number of research projects, jointly funded by the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth and private enterprise, will continue to investigate insect and termite control, nut processing and product marketing. Proposals for new projects in cashew processing and market research in collaboration with private industry and the Commonwealth are being considered. There is now substantial private enterprise interest being shown in cashew production and the prospects are bright indeed for a new major industry based on cashews.

A process of adjustment is under way in the field crop industry, resulting from difficulties which accumulated during the pioneering of new crops and new areas and a run of adverse seasons. A number of producers have left the industry and some have been replaced by potential new producers. The

department will maintain its active extension program to assist these producers and those continuing in the industry. In total, \$1.66m is allocated this year to support the Territory's cropping industry. Both existing and new producers are placing greater emphasis on diversification, including increased integration of pastures and beef production with grain crop production. A new farming system research project to integrate cattle, pasture, sorghum and peanut production on blain soils in the Douglas Daly district will commence in 1989-90 as a joint project of the Crops and Animal Production Branches.

The government will continue its strong support for a crops research and development program covering 6 crops and 4 areas of agronomic research, those being nutrition, weeds, agricultural engineering and farming systems. Individual projects are providing encouraging results for improving the efficiency of crop production. During 1989-90, it is planned to integrate these individual areas of research and to test production packages at a scale closer to commercial practices. The aim of the research and development program is to improve producer viability by increasing the reliability and level of production and management flexibility, by emphasis on crops with sound market prospects and high returns, and by reducing input costs. As well as continuing support for crops required by local stockfeed and intensive animal industries, the department will emphasise the development of crops with sound prospects on external markets.

Australia imports some \$20 worth of sesame per annum and initial research on commercial production in the Territory indicates that this seed is well adapted to being grown in the Territory. During the 1989-90 period, the department will produce uniform, pure seed of the yori and pachequino varieties for commercial farmers, thereby reducing management difficulties being experienced with current mixed lines.

Mung beans are another crop with considerable potential in the Northern Territory, but existing varieties suffer from limited yielding ability and resistance to weathering. Joint research with CSIRO will continue in 1989-90 with a view to the release and commercial use of improved varieties. 393 t of mung beans worth \$138 000 were produced in the Territory last year.

After a period of relatively low activity, interest in commercial pasture seed production is increasing markedly, partly in response to the improved beef outlook. During 1989-90, the department will continue research and development work on some 9 pasture species and continue to provide seed certification services for the developing seeds industry.

In May this year, I gave details of a major research effort which aimed at attracting commercial investment in the pulp paper industry in the Northern Territory based on locally grown kenaf and perhaps other non-woody fibres. The government will spend \$740 000 on this project during the current financial year. Most of this funding will be spent on a series of consultancies which will include additional pulping and paper-making tests on Northern Territory fibre crops. These will include studies on pulp quality, deterioration under storage, and chopping, pelletising and other pre-mill treatments. They will also include pulp bleaching technology, establishment of demonstration crops on a large scale on commercial farming properties, studies on crop environment and continued work on siting of a mill with refinements to the in-house economic models developed in 1988-89.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the activities of the Fisheries Division. The division will receive a total of \$4.398m this year with the \$1.05m administration and operations component up 19% on last year's allocation. The

commercial and recreational fishing industries will continue to receive strong support from the government. The value of commercial fish landings in the Territory in 1988 totalled \$33.5m. Unfortunately, this was a decrease in both landings and value, of 1264 t and \$11.2m respectively, on the 1987 figures. This was due to a decrease in prawn landings resulting from a combination of factors. There was an overall decrease in prawn landings from the northern prawn fishery. An increased percentage of the catch taken was landed through ports other than in the Territory and a number of vessels retained their catch on board at the end of the season in the hope that prawn prices would increase early in 1989.

Barramundi, mud crab, shark and mackerel landings remained steady. Landings and values of reef and other mixed species showed encouraging increases by comparison to those in 1987. This resulted mainly from increased landings by the Seanorth joint venture coupled with increased participation by new Territory fishermen specifically targeting reef fish suitable for sale on fresh ice. Notwithstanding the problems of this season, prawns remain the major component of the landings in terms of value, contributing \$27.63m in 1988.

Following consultation with both industry and state and territory governments, new Commonwealth foreign fishing guidelines, which give greater emphasis to the achievement of real benefits to Australia and the Northern Territory, were approved by the Australian Fisheries Council in Perth in July of this year. The agreements with the Commonwealth, under which the Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, Japanese and Seanorth Pty Ltd joint venture fishing company operate, are due for renegotiation at the end of the year.

In April 1988, agreement was reached with the Commonwealth under the offshore constitutional settlement, on new jurisdictional arrangements to apply with respect to 6 fisheries in northern Australian waters. Some of these arrangements permit the Territory to have a greater influence on fisheries development than has been the case in the past. From a fisheries management and development perspective, this has resulted in a rearrangement of the Fisheries Division priorities in several areas.

The Northern Territory pearl industry, managed under the Northern Territory law by a joint authority, consisting of the Territory and Commonwealth fisheries ministers, began operating in mid-1988. The industry is managed under a Northern Territory Pearl Industry Development Plan agreed to by the joint authority. Six pearl culture licences have been issued and an advisory committee to the joint authority has been established.

In 1988-89, development work started on the utilisation of the known demersal and pelagic fin fish resources in waters beyond the coastal fringe. In support of this industry-government initiative, development work in this area will be continued in 1989-90. Specific attention will be directed to improving gear development, product handling, quality assurance, market intelligence, promotion and transport. These programs relate mainly to the post-harvest phase and indicate the importance placed on achieving the greatest possible added value from the catch.

The Fisheries Division of my department anticipates that a minimum of 6 Northern Territory trap and line vessels will be operating full-time in the offshore reef fishery by June 1990. Most of the catch taken is expected to be marketed fresh in Australia's seaboard capitals. The potential for export market development, however, will not be ignored.

Fisheries management underpins all facets of fisheries activity. In recognition of the changing industry needs, a new Fisheries Act was passed and proclaimed in December 1988. The regulations accompanying this act are presently being revised. It is anticipated these will be in place by 1 January 1990. The structure of the Fisheries Act requires that all declared fisheries be now managed under formal plans of management.

Draft management plans are in advanced stage of preparation for both the barramundi and mud crab fisheries. Their preparation follows detailed consultation with commercial and recreational fishermen, the general public and other relevant government departments. It is anticipated that both management plans will be in place before the start of the 1990 licensing year on 1 January 1990.

Some \$770 000 of the total fisheries allocation is comprised of operational expenditure for essential research programs. These programs are designed to monitor the status of Northern Territory commercial and recreational fisheries for management purposes and to support related development projects. There will be a continued major research effort on barramundi stock assessment and further understanding of the biology of the species. This is essential from both the commercial and recreational industry management perspectives.

In support of both new fisheries and recreational fisheries development, the Fisheries Division's research efforts in 1989-90 will be expanded into new areas. Pelagic and demersal fish stock assessment will be undertaken to facilitate development and management plans in these areas. Artificial reefs and fish aggregating devices established for recreational purposes will be regularly monitored to assess their value in enhancing the recreational fishing potential. Other facets of the essential support research proposal for 1989-90 include the evaluation of new commercial fishing techniques and preliminary studies on the biology and growth of mud crabs from the point of view of both commercial and recreational uses.

In support of the currently implemented Pearl Industry Development Plan, research will start on the biology and distribution of the pearl shell resources adjacent to the Northern Territory. As well as the funding provided for fisheries research in this budget, the Fisheries Division anticipates receiving substantial funding from Commonwealth sources, in particular for prawn research. Considerable additional funding is provided in this year's budget to support the recreational fishing industry. In 1988, a Recreational Fishery Development Plan was approved by the government which recognised the contribution recreational fishing is making to the Territory's economy. Its goal is to optimise both the social and economic benefits of recreational fishing to the Territory. \$320 000 has been allocated to implement projects under this plan.

Continued emphasis will be given to opening up access to potential recreational fishing areas and the preparation of information for this purpose. Discussions will continue in relation to access to Aboriginal land and pastoral properties. Attention will also be directed to the development of opportunities for light game fishing in coastal waters, educational programs and assistance with the development of organisations and clubs concerned with recreational fishing. Ongoing consideration will be given to the need for the setting up of specific managed areas for recreational fishing.

Enhancement of recreational fishing opportunities will continue to receive priority. In 1988, an artificial reef was created by sinking the hull of the Marchart 3 on Fenton Patches just outside Darwin Harbour. This artificial reef is now well-established and will be complemented by a second artificial reef, comprising large steel pontoons, in close proximity in 1989-90. The second structure will be positioned in such a manner as to provide a trolling alley for recreational fishermen.

In 1988-89, the government demonstrated its ongoing commitment to aquaculture development by establishing a pilot barramundi hatchery at the old Stokes Hill Power Station at a cost of \$430 000. Barramundi fingerlings produced by the hatchery from the 1988-89 breeding season have been retained for trial grow-out studies. Results to date demonstrate that such fingerlings can be grown to a market size of 400 g in 6 or 7 months. Barramundi breeding research in 1989-90 will concentrate on expanding the breeding season to enable fingerling production throughout the year to complement established market requirements.

A small-scale project to investigate the hatchery technology of the giant clam has also been started at the Stokes Hill facility. This work follows on from that already undertaken by the James Cook University in north Queensland. Other potential species for aquaculture research include oysters, brine shrimp, the freshwater crayfish, redclaw and penaeid prawns and will continue to be evaluated as the opportunities arise. This year, a further \$335 000 has been allocated in the budget for aquaculture.

I turn now to industry support. As well as providing technical and advisory services to industry, my department carries out several other important functions. Under an agency arrangement with the Commonwealth, the department is responsible for the Territory's agricultural quarantine services. By establishing a fully-integrated plant and animal quarantine service in 1979, the department set in place a model that is now being followed by the states. The Agricultural Quarantine Service is in the process of negotiating the incorporation of the general quarantine functions currently under the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry and Energy. This is consistent with the Commonwealth's intention to establish integrated quarantine services in all states and territories. It is expected that this action will be completed by 1 December 1989.

A major quarantine initiative, started in 1988-89, is the upgrading of surveillance and monitoring for exotic pests and diseases in northern Australia. The Northern Territory, Western Australian and Queensland quarantine services are developing plans, under the umbrella of the North Australian Quarantine Strategy, to achieve this objective. It will involve accumulation of information on the incidence and distribution of feral and domesticated animals and regular monitoring for targeted exotic pests and diseases. Both will focus on assessing the risk of entry and establishment of exotic organisms. Funding will be the responsibility of the Commonwealth, with the operations being conducted by my department.

Quarantine officers are often regarded as policemen by the public and industry. A concerted effort has been made to change this perception. To this end, quarantine officers have been instrumental in the pro-active role of opening up markets for horticultural products in states that traditionally were reluctant to accept Territory produce without post-harvest treatment. For example, South Australia will now accept Territory cucumbers and jackfruit without fruit fly disinfestation treatment. Disinfestation research carried out by the Entomology Section on five-corner fruit has resulted in South

Australian markets accepting this product after it has been dipped in a larvicide for fruit fly control. This role of the Agricultural Quarantine Service, together with the regulatory role, will continue during 1989-90.

My department also provides an economic advisory service to industry and to government on the economic outlook of various rural and fishery industries. Specific advice on the economics and market opportunities for various commodities will also be given. In a similar way, my department will continue to provide advice to the government on rural land usage and environmental impact assessment.

This year, my department will reassess its existing research and development policies. The aim is to put in place a new policy that will take into account recent developments in coordinating research into rural industries on a national basis, mechanisms for obtaining external funding for Territory rural and fisheries research, improved mechanisms for assessing the priorities for NT-based research and departmental development and advisory services. This exercise will ensure that the department's research programs continue to reflect the requirement of the industries that we service.

In keeping with this review and bearing in mind increased competition for limited research funds, it has been decided to close the Tortilla Flats Research Station by the end of this year. Tortilla Flats staff have concentrated on research into rice and have been very successful, with a number of varieties suitable for Top End production being identified and rice seed being provided to producers growing annual crops. I would add that there is sufficient rice seed in hand this year to provide growers with seed for the coming year. The research effort has amassed an enormous amount of information which is more than sufficient to provide rice producers with whatever details they might require to meet market demands. Despite this and the fact that there is a market demand for around 1000 t per annum, less than 100 t of rice was grown in the Territory last year, much of it at Tortilla Flats itself. In view of an apparent lack of interest in rice production, the department can no longer justify keeping the Tortilla Flats Research Station open. However, the opportunity still exists for trials on rice, other crops and improved pastures currently being tested at Tortilla to proceed on private properties with the government's research assistance if required. To complement this policy and to guarantee the scientific validity of research being conducted by my department, an officer within the Industry Support Division has ...

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time.

Leave granted.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, an officer within the Industry Support Division has been designated to provide advice on the statistical design of research protocols. This function will also improve the publication of research results so that the department's research effort will be readily available and recognised by the wider scientific community. A total of \$3.982m was allocated in the budget to support these activities and to run the department's research farms.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to assistance for primary industry. Following a recent administrative reorganisation, the Department of Primary Industry and

Fisheries has now assumed responsibility for the primary industry assistance function. This was a commendable move. This budget provides for a number of schemes to render financial assistance to rural industry. The Primary Industry Assistance Division has been set up in my department to coordinate the administration of these schemes which cover the broad spectrum of agricultural and pastoral industries.

\$400 000 is allocated for the continued payment of a fertiliser trade subsidy to horticulturists and crop producers. I am pleased to be able to announce that I have set the subsidy for 1988-89 at \$95 per tonne, the same rate as last year. During 1990, the government will fully review its input into both the horticulture and cropping industries in the Territory to ensure that the support provided continues to be appropriate, given changing circumstances.

An amount of \$1.1m is provided for drought relief subsidy. These are primarily for assisting pastoralists to restock properties affected by recent drought. A further \$140 000 is provided for the Drought Relief Loan Scheme which makes carry-on finance available to primary producers suffering from the effects of drought. The drought relief policy is presently undergoing a full-scale review following the Commonwealth's decision to remove drought assistance measures from the National Disasters Relief arrangements. I would like to assure Territory primary producers, however, that the Territory government will continue to provide drought relief for those in need. It will of course be necessary for the Territory to review its drought policy as a result of the Commonwealth decision to deny drought relief assistance to primary producers.

Mr Speaker, \$1m is provided for primary industry support and, among other things, will help farmers to acquire the working capital necessary to plant crops in the coming season. The assistance will be geared to a new scheme which will encourage efficient growers to sow crops of the varieties required by local end-users. This will greatly benefit Territory consumers, particularly in respect of eggs, poultry and pig meat, and the stockfeed industry. This is in line with the industry's request for a bounty-type scheme. I will shortly be announcing the full details of the schemes to apply for the 1989-90 season. The allocation will also be used to provide necessary support to the horticulture sector and other plant industries.

The budget provides \$945 000 for the Rural Adjustment Scheme. This includes a component to meet existing commitments against assistance approved in past years, plus an element of the new funds to meet applications in the current year. A number of the new initiatives are available, such as provision of assistance to cover the cost of training to improve farm skills. Also of note are improved measures to help operators wanting to re-establish out of the rural industry.

The Territory's primary industry sector has come a long way over the past decade, but there is still much to be done by both my department and by producers if we are to see continued growth in the production and in the development of a series of prosperous and efficient industries based on agriculture and fishing in the Northern Territory. I commend the activities of the officers of my department and I applaud the resourcefulness, tenacity and skill of the Territory's primary producers. Together, we shall play a major role in continuing towards the new economic prosperity for the Territory.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Discharge of Items from Notice Paper

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the following Orders of the Day Government Business be discharged from the Notice Paper: No 20 relating to the report on AIDS 'A Time To Care A Time To Act'; No 21 relating to the ministerial statement on the school leavers employment program; No 23 relating to the Treasurer's annual financial statement for 1987-88; No 24 relating to the ministerial statement on the industrial relations system upon statehood and the report on the subject by Sir John Moore; No 25 relating to the ministerial statement on self-government; No 27 relating to the ministerial statement on the Northern Territory government housing package; No 28 relating to the ministerial statement on the Northern Territory University; and No 29 relating to the ministerial statement on human resources management.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Noting Statement on School Specialisation in the Arts

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I welcome the minister's paper and the rationalisation it proposes in these times when money is tight. I am pleased to note that he has been able to find some funds to support school improvement plans and arts programs which will specialise in particular areas. I suppose it is rather similar to the very welcome budget announcement that languages would be concentrated in one area in Alice Springs because individual schools do not have enough students interested in languages to make instruction economically viable. A separate centre has been established, and I know that initiative is welcomed by students, few though they may be in number, who are interested in language study.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to quite a few people in Alice Springs who have contributed to arts and cultural activities in the town, both with encouragement from the Department of Education and of their own volition. Arts activity has grown to the extent that a very large number of people, young and old, are involved. My knowledge relates particularly to music, singing and the like, and the number of people in Alice Springs who are involved in various groups, from very tiny children through to adults, is amazing. The adjudicators of the eisteddfods that have been held in Alice Springs over the last 3 years have generally been people from Sydney who are very prominent in the music world, and they have always expressed their amazement that a town of 25 000 people could produce so many talented people in the music and singing field. This does not apply only to the town of Alice Springs itself. The School of the Air has a regular program which my wife has been running for many years. As a music adviser to the Department of Education, she is involved in the program which teaches recorder through the School of the Air every Friday.

Last Saturday evening, I visited a music camp which was being held at the Ti Tree School. Some 80 students from Alice Springs schools, a goodly number of parents and teachers, and a few interstate instructors were in attendance. The music camp was held on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and everyone went home on Sunday. Those who attended had a great time. I snuck in at the back and listened to the concert which was held as part of the camp. Several original skits were performed by the students, some of whom were quite young. There was a great deal of talent in evidence and a good time was had by all.

I can assure the minister that Alice Springs has come a very long way in the field of music and singing. Looking around the room at the music camp, I was interested to note how many of those present had come from station properties to board at St Phillips or to attend other schools in Alice Springs. Where there is a will, there is a way. Many parents who live in the bush are acutely aware that their children can miss out on various aspects of the arts, and those people make very commendable efforts to give their children the opportunity to participate in a wide range of curriculum activities. Getting their children to tuition sessions costs those parents a great deal of time and money but they make the effort willingly and their children reap the rewards. Quite a few of those children attended the music camp at Ti Tree.

Various groups in the music scene are undertaking some interesting initiatives. It costs a lot of money, of course, to take a group interstate or to Darwin to compete in the Darwin Eisteddfod, as has occurred many times over the years, and the talent of some of the groups is really praiseworthy. In fact, some 3 or 4 months ago, a group of flute students aged from 13 to 15 went to the Telegraph Station to entertain some people associated with Sheraton Hotels. These were managers and marketing staff from all over the world who were on a tour of the area and, as an audience, they gave the highest praise to the flute group. They said that the performance really added something special to the evening. Since then, Sheraton has paid quite a reasonable amount to that group to perform at various functions. The group has raised a quite a good sum of money which will be pooled by the various music groups in the town to enable students to go interstate.

Sometimes I feel as though I may be something of a 'music widower' because of the involvement of my wife. She loves her work. She reckons she has the best job in the world and jokes that she would do it even if she did not get paid. Although I hasten to advise the minister that I am not saying that she does not appreciate her salary, that is her attitude. She certainly enjoys her job.

There are many people in Alice Springs who have done tremendous work, and I would like to pay particular tribute to Mrs Carolynne Parker of Ross Park Primary School. Unfortunately, Carolynne is leaving to go to Tasmania where her husband is moving with his job. Carolynne Parker is a lady with a great deal of vitality, motherliness and skill and she has taken on the Ross Park Junior Singers. These really are tiny kids. I think they come from grades 1 to 3. They are well presented with their Ross Park red T-shirts, blue shorts and skirts. She has taught those children to sing in a manner which is really marvellous to hear. They have real talent. The beauty is that this has been going on for several years now and, as they get older and move on, they are retaining their love of singing and joining other choirs and musical groups around the town, making a contribution and enjoying it. Of course, all this makes the eisteddfods outstanding events. It is great to see some of the young competitors displaying such talent. It is really top stuff.

Monica Christian is another lady in the town who has been running choirs for a long time. I do not think she obtains any remuneration from it except the sheer pleasure of getting the children to put on a good act. Perhaps I should not mention too many people by name, because I am sure to forget some. Some I know by sight although I have not caught up with their names. Another is Jim Lawrie from Alice Springs High School, who is a real character. He comperes the eisteddfods and was comperer at the Ti Tree concert last Saturday night. He received a fair ribbing for his cheek but he enjoyed that and the students enjoy Jim as well.

Another interesting aspect of the concert was the number of Aboriginal parents and students who attended. As you know, Mr Speaker, most students of the Ti Tree school are Aborigines, with a sprinkling of European Australians. Last Saturday, quite a number of Aboriginal parents and their children attended the concert and their enjoyment was very evident in their response to the various items.

I felt it was worth putting on record my appreciation, and the appreciation of the people of Alice Springs, for the town's musicians. They do a great job. They really add to the town and they are a cultural asset. I commend the minister on the fact that, with limited resources at his disposal, he has endeavoured to encourage schools to implement improvement programs and to specialise in certain areas of the arts. Where several schools have only a few students interested in specialist subjects, they can be brought together in one place to receive tuition which will enable the best use to be made of available funds.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I thank those honourable members who have spoken in response to the statement. I was hoping to have some more input from members about their particular constituents and areas. I understand, from the ongoing debate on education matters, that most honourable members support the need for school improvement plans and I am very pleased to hear that. I think it is about time that we referred to some of the positive aspects of education. I am very pleased to hear from the member for Sadadeen in relation to the activities that he has been involved with and witnessed. Far too often, we hear only about the negative aspects of education and I am very pleased that the member has given such praise to many people.

The member for Sadadeen also mentioned the language centre in Alice Springs. It was really established as a matter of necessity because, with the limited resources available, it was proving impossible to provide language tuition to Alice Springs students within their own schools. The centre is a responsible solution to that difficulty and it will now provide Alice Springs children with the opportunity to study languages. Of course, there are other advantages of establishing centres and specialised programs in schools, and I refer here to the opportunity to bring together teachers with similar interests. Far too often teachers lose interest and become frustrated. They need contact with other teachers who share similar interests and that is another advantage of the specialisation program.

The member for Stuart raised some issues and I would like to touch on them briefly. He expressed the concern that not every school would be able to take on specialisation programs. That is accepted. He also implied that some schools may be disadvantaged as a result. I do not really believe that will be the case at all. We will be looking to ensure that all schools have a basic program in certain areas such as music or singing but the real thrust is to provide maximum opportunity for students with a gift or talent to pursue that gift or talent. This is something that we have been missing out on in the Territory.

We have many talented young people. The member for Sadadeen mentioned some of them and it is very important that we give them the opportunity to pursue their talents in the Territory. We do not want them to move away from the Territory because they have no opportunity to pursue their talents here. We must cater for them from primary school right up to university standard. That aim needs to be pursued with vigour although, of course, some schools will not be able to offer a specialised program.

The member for Stuart also asked where the money was coming from. A lot of the money that goes into specialised programs in schools comes from organisations in the community, business and parents. They often contribute considerable sums to assist schools in providing instruments and so forth. One of the advantages of a school specialisation program is that the schools will be able to ensure that funds spent in a given year will not be wasted in subsequent years because of a lack of continuity. The advantages would be very significant in the purchase of things like musical instruments.

Another opportunity relates to school improvement plans. The further devolution of powers to school councils means that schools will be able to be involved in selection of principals so that such appointments reflect the ethos of individual schools. They will be able to look at the employment of teachers who have an interest in the school's specialty area. It is important that we have teachers who have an area of interest apart from their main teaching subject. We need to utilise the talents of such teachers, to ensure that they are not frustrated, and to enable them to pursue their special interests with vigour.

There was also mention of possible effects on the comprehensive schools. Could I just indicate that, following the split into senior and junior high schools, Darwin High was to specialise in areas such as the arts, electronics and music. The reason for that was to ensure that the very expensive equipment needed could be purchased and students could progress to a level of excellence. If schools attempt to cover too great a range of areas, the money available for equipment purchase is spread too thinly.

At Tennant Creek High, we are looking at developing agricultural studies, particularly as they relate to the pastoral industry. Taminmin High School is already seen as a school which specialises in agriculture. The school is able to pursue that direction.

It is an appropriate time for this debate. This week is Education Week. I was fortunate to be able to open Education Week at Casuarina Square and I would urge members who have not been out there to go and have a look. We have had Education Week every year since 1985 but this is the first time we have had demonstration classes, which are part of the display at Casuarina. I was fortunate enough to be present when Nakara Primary School, which has a wonderful music program, was performing for the people at Casuarina Square. One of the highlights of the week will be The Beat, which is the feature event in terms of children's participation in the music scene. I urge all members to attend if they are able.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I will say again that we have many talented people in the Northern Territory. They should have the opportunity to pursue their talents and I believe that, through these specialisation programs that we are looking to establish, they will be able to do so.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker I move that the House do now adjourn.

During question time this morning, the Leader of the Opposition raised the question of Kormilda College Year 10 students being exempted from having to sit for the examinations at the end of September. At the outset, could I just

say that, as the minister, I am not involved in the exemption process. I was not aware of all of the applications for dispensation for students which have been made to the Board of Studies. The responsibility for making those decisions rests with the Northern Territory Board of Studies. Honourable members would be aware that the Board of Studies was established under the Education Act and is responsible for the conduct, setting and marking of examinations. That board was set up as an independent body and it was to look after those particular areas. The Secretary of the Department of Education cannot direct the board on those matters and that is how it should be.

Whilst, as minister, I have the power to become involved, it is a reserve power which would not normally be used. I emphasise that point. If I were to use the power, Mr Deputy Speaker, you can imagine what would happen. The Board of Studies was set up initially to ensure that there was no political interference and so that the bureaucracy would not be able to interfere with the very important tasks of the board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, having said that, I advise that Kormilda College had applied to the board for dispensation because of prior arrangements. The school had scheduled its calendar for the year in such a way that it differed from the arrangements made in the government school system. Its holidays, for example, did not coincide with holidays in government schools. Kormilda College followed the correct procedure by applying to the Board of Studies and the board agreed to make alternative arrangements for the 19 Year 10 students attending Kormilda College this year. The board indicated that those students would be able to sit for their examination on October 11 and 12. That was the board's decision.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to become involved in or to interfere with that process. Arrangements were being put in place to allow the Kormilda College students to sit their examinations at that time. As a result of the changed situation - and I emphasise the words 'changed situation' - I have had discussions with the Chairman of the Board of Studies, Dr Harry Payne. He has agreed to the following proposal.

Members would recall that, during question time earlier this week, I mentioned the fact that back-up papers would be available in case of a breakdown in security resulting in examination papers being leaked. It is proposed that there be 2 alternative papers in parallel form. One paper will be used by students throughout the Northern Territory and the second paper will be made available to Kormilda College students. I advise that the 7 Year 10 students from Sanderson High School will be able to sit the same examination on October 11 and 12. It is regrettable that we had to reach this stage but I am now satisfied that the arrangement agreed to by the Chairman of the Board of Studies is in the best interests of the students. That information has been passed on to Sanderson High School this afternoon.

I would like to compare the course of action taken by Kormilda College with the course of action taken by Sanderson High School in organising its Indonesian excursion. Sanderson High School made its arrangements after it knew the examination dates. It made no approach to the Board of Studies for dispensation for the 7 Year 10 students whom it knew would not be in Darwin during the course of the examination period. If the Sanderson High School administration had in fact acted responsibly and approached the Northern Territory Board of Studies, I believe that this situation would not have arisen. It is unfortunate that no such approach was made and, as a result, students became the meat in the sandwich. It is a despicable situation and indicates clearly that there are problems with the administration of Sanderson High School.

I would like to inform honourable members that I am directing the Secretary of the Department of Education to pursue the matter and to find out exactly why this situation occurred. I accept that things go wrong at times. I did not want to in any way disadvantage the young people who had their hopes set on taking part in that excursion. However, I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I was not going to allow the situation to occur as a result of what I consider to be poor administration. The people at Sanderson could have scheduled that excursion for a different time to allow the students to have their examinations at the right time of the year. They did not do so and I believe that is despicable.

I would also like to refer to a decision handed down in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission by Commissioner McKenzie. The hearing related to the Northern Territory Teaching Service Award and it was between the Teaching Service Commissioner and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. During the hearing, Mr Kelly for the Northern Territory asked the commission to find a dispute pursuant to section 101 of the act and to issue an order in the following terms:

The Teaching Service Commissioner for the Northern Territory seeks an order that all employees obey all lawful directions of the employer particularly in respect to the end of year examinations for Year 10 students.

Mr Young, supported by Mr Crossin, submitted that the matter should not be heard by the commission because the dispute was of a professional and not an industrial nature. Mr Young then went on at length about the alleged shortcomings of the proposed external examinations for Year 10 students. During the hearing the commissioner stated:

Well, I can assure you, Mr Young, this commission does not set itself up as an arbitrator of the values or not of internal or external exams. What is before this commission is the potential for officers or employees - we will call them what you like - to refuse work as directed by a lawful person. Now that is basically the notification that is before this commission, not on the value or otherwise of external examinations. You need far greater debate than what we are looking at here.

Commissioner McKenzie also quoted from a union letter which said:

Further, the branch advises that, as a consequence of the Department of Education disregarding parent and teacher recommendations on assessment, the Northern Territory Teachers Federation members will not participate in setting up or administering of the end of year examinations in Maths and English at Year 10.

The commissioner commented:

Now that is what the industrial dispute is about: a stated intention to refuse a direction, not so much as to whether external examinations have been properly validated. Whether they have been set up properly - I agree, that is a professional argument. The industrial argument that is before me is the potential for dispute, should and when direction be issued for teachers to carry them out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will read part of the last section from the commissioner's decision:

Given that it is common ground that the secretary has the power to issue directions to teaching staff, both officers and employees, it remains only to decide whether the requirement to participate in the preparation, conducting and marking of the Year 10 assessment is harsh, unfair or unreasonable. Without going into the adequacy or otherwise of the type of external assessments that are proposed, I have decided that such a direction by the secretary would be one open to such an employer to make and would not, in any sense, be harsh, unfair or unreasonable.

The fact that a direction goes against the personal and professional views of individuals or organisations does not make it unreasonable if it is within the expertise, training and experience of the individual to carry it out. Until recent years, it was common practice across the nation for members of the teaching fraternity to participate in the preparation, conducting and marking of external examinations and I am sure that today's teachers are no less capable. There can be no doubt, in my view, that the assessment of students is a critical link in the education chain and to say that requiring teachers to participate in that activity was unfair, unjust or unreasonable, is nothing short of nonsense.

Mr Young mentioned that, should the decision go against the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, some members could become bloody-minded towards some of the extracurricular duties they now carry out such as participating in school camps, eisteddfods, parent/teacher meetings etc. If this was to happen, I would not only be most disappointed but would also consider it to be most unprofessional.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I close on that point this evening because, when we are talking about the education system and the good teachers that we have within it, it is very important that we all work together. Once decisions have been taken by the government of the day - and it does not matter which political persuasion that government is - that policy direction must be pursued and the teachers are to carry out that direction. I am very pleased to note the decision that was handed down today.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to comment on 2 matters which have been raised during these sittings. One of them related to the Nhulunbuy wharf and associated facilities. The member for Nhulunbuy asked a question concerning access to those facilities which are managed and operated by Perkins Shipping. I must have had a bit of an instinct when I gave my answer because I qualified it in so far as I was not exactly clear of the legal position. I would like to outline the exact position for honourable members, particularly the member for Nhulunbuy.

The wharf itself is actually owned and was built by the Northern Territory government on land held by Perkins under a 40-year lease. The Perkins lease was signed by Galarwuy Yunupingu on behalf of the traditional owners, the Gumatj clan. The lease provides for a levy to be paid to the clan by Perkins for any cargo entering over the land and requires the clan to approve any variance in charges from the scale of fees set down by the Darwin Port Authority. I mentioned previously that, in fact, access must be provided to fishing vessels and government vessels.

Perkins operates the wharf as a public facility in accordance with the agreement signed in 1984. As I understand it, there is limited access to the

wharf by larger vessels and the cargoes of some vessels are loaded on to a barge before being taken ashore. Whether that is a result of a technical requirement or otherwise, I am uncertain. Certainly, I understand that the actual wharfage charges paid by facility users must be cleared with the traditional owners. That is a technical requirement and I am not sure whether it is being adhered to.

The agreement requires that the wharf be operated by Perkins but remain the property of the Northern Territory government. Perkins must operate the wharf as a public wharf for at least 6 days a week. Perkins is to provide all the usual public facilities - for example, fuel and fresh water. Reasonable berthing is to be provided for fishing vessels at the rates applicable in the Port of Darwin. Perkins is to maintain the wharf and keep it in good order at all times during its economic life, which is estimated to be approximately 25 years. Perkins has the right to charge and retain fees for use of the public wharf and, certainly, for work which it carries out, whether manually or with equipment, as well as for storage. Those charges apply to vessels other than those owned by the Northern Territory government. The right to levy charges could be removed in the event of non-compliance with the terms of agreement.

As I mentioned earlier to the member for Nhulunbuy, we would expect that all outstanding disputes can be resolved amicably. It certainly is not in anybody's interest to have barge operators seek alternative arrangements elsewhere in the Gove area when quite appropriate facilities already exist. However, one needs to say that Perkins Shipping is entitled to a commercial return.

The member for Stuart raised the matter of the Lajamanu to Rabbit Flat road. He highlighted the problem which has occurred as a result of large trucks currently using the track. The trucks used the track because of the floods in the Alice Springs area and it was quite badly cut up as a result. Petrol tankers and other large vehicles were also using the road to get supplies through to the mines in the Tanami area. The section from Supplejack down to the Tanami Road is in pretty good nick but the top part is nothing more than a flat-bladed track which has certainly deteriorated very badly. The Department of Transport and Works has identified the need which exists as a result of increasing usage levels and has allocated some \$250 000 for work on the Lajamanu to Supplejack section of the road. That work will be carried out during this current financial year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise one other minor matter. It was hoped to provide a partly-completed model of the new Parliament House and precincts for members to view at these sittings. There is still some small amount of work to be done. The model is quite large and it is intended that the architects will provide it for members to view at the next sittings.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I attempted to place on record this morning a question directed to the Attorney-General and I would like to raise it in tonight's adjournment debate because it is a very serious matter. I would like the Attorney-General to deal with it as soon as he can. This morning, I asked the Attorney-General how many people have been issued compensation certificates in accordance with the Crimes Compensation Act. I also asked whether he could advise how many claims have been paid in accordance with the sum stated on certificates and how many claims have been paid not in accordance with the sum stated on certificates. Before I was interrupted, I was also going to ask the Attorney-General what policy or criteria he uses in approving or reducing the payments to eligible claimants.

In his answer this morning, the Attorney-General brushed the matter aside as if it were trivial and of so little importance that he could not be bothered dealing with it at the time or even during the course of the day. He asked me to put the question on notice. I am going to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, because it is a very important issue. I would like to explain why.

I have received representations from at least 4 people who have been given judgments by the court under the Crimes Compensation Act. Those people have had to enter into a form of bureaucratic war, and indeed litigation, in order to receive from the government the amount of compensation awarded to them by certificates of the court. The circumstances vary. In some cases, the people claim that the government made them an offer and told them that, if they would accept 50% of the award amount, it would write them a cheque. In one case, the person concerned refused to do that and instead sued the government. The government settled on the courthouse steps. In another case, the government settled on courthouse steps and then proceeded to fight about the costs. When litigation commenced in relation to the costs, the government forked out the money for the costs.

I would like to refer to a particular circumstance which gives a very clear indication of the sort of thing that is happening. This matter was between Darryl James Evans and the Attorney-General. Mr Evans had been knifed in the neck by a close member of his family. As a result of the court action, he was awarded by certificate an amount of \$4000, which was the maximum the court could award at that time. The certificate went to the Attorney-General and he decided that he was not going to pay it. He told the plaintiff that, in order to get the money, he should start a civil proceeding against the person who stabbed him. Judgment in the matter was made. Writs were executed and returned. Because the person responsible for the crime had nothing, the plaintiff was unable to get any satisfaction in terms of his \$4000. At this stage, the plaintiff went back to the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General said that he was not satisfied the plaintiff had tried hard enough. I am not sure what else he could have done but the Attorney-General was not satisfied. The plaintiff then decided to proceed against the Attorney-General to get the \$4000, which he did in the course of time.

The costs of the litigation which led to the execution of the writs against the person who committed the crime and the litigation against the government came to about \$2600. This matter has been continuing since April this year and, at this stage, the Attorney-General has not found it in himself to fork out the money for the legal costs which have been forced on the plaintiff.

I asked the question of the Attorney-General this morning because I understand that there are quite a few of these cases. This is not an isolated incident. I have mentioned a couple of others and I will be providing documentation to the House. I certainly have a great deal of difficulty with the proposition that an award by the court, granted by certificate by a judge or magistrate, is then treated as an ambit claim by the Attorney-General who decides whether some other figure should be paid. I do not believe that is what the Crimes Compensation Act is all about. It is not a Dutch auction. It is a very serious piece of legislation that was enacted by this House in order to give some justice to people who are treated pretty badly as a result of circumstances outside their control. We now have a situation in which the Attorney-General has set himself up as some sort of independent arbiter about what people ought to receive. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is not good enough.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table documents pertaining to this matter.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I think it is time for this whole matter to be reviewed and for the cases outstanding before the Attorney-General to be addressed and disposed of. The Attorney-General may hold the view that he cannot simply write cheques for any amount of money that the courts want to award but the reality is that these compensation awards are being made to people who have very little and the amounts are generally very important to them. It is subsistence money and a small contribution to the compensation that they are likely to receive anyway. For that to become a point of arbitration to be argued and reduced if the Crown has the muscle to outlast the individual in a legal proceeding is, I believe, well outside the intention of the legislation. I would like the Attorney-General to look at the question I asked him this morning. I ask him to respond to the question in writing, in the terms in which it was asked, so that we can see how many other people are affected and what will be done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I now make a plea to the Attorney-General to use his good offices at least to settle the matter of the case that I have just tabled. Could he also see that other people in similar circumstances are not given the run-around for reasons that they should not have to put up with.

I would also point out that, whilst the amounts of money may seem to be large, the Attorney-General was quite happy during the course of the day to vote himself a salary increase of \$6000 to \$8000 or possibly more. People in the community who are desperate to get some funds from this sort of compensation to keep themselves going have to embark on legal battles which last for months and cost thousands of dollars. It is time the matter was looked at. I ask the Attorney-General to do that as soon as he can and to get rid of those outstanding cases that are a matter of great concern to the people who are disadvantaged and to the legal profession whose files are cluttered with matters which should not be there.

On another note, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to compliment the Minister for Education for some action that he took in my electorate. The minister is battling, and will continue to battle, the difficult problem of providing staff to remote area schools. When I say 'remote area schools', I include schools in Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt and Tennant Creek. Some time ago, the Department of Education started music courses for students at the Tennant Creek High School. I remember attending the first music night at the end of the year. I listened very patiently to each item and it was quite obvious that the children were in their first year and having a lot of difficulty. Three years later, the level of proficiency of Tennant Creek children in the art of music is really outstanding. That has come about only through the contribution of officers of the Department of Education and the commitment that they have made.

Recently, Tennant Creek lost the services of a young lady who had had a tremendous impact on children's musical education in primary and secondary schools. She had to move to another part of Australia and that left us without a teacher. I raised the matter with the minister. It was a problem for him but, to his credit, he was able to find somebody to fill the bill and the good work that has been going on for 2 or 3 years will now continue. At some stage during this year, we will see, for the first time, a Tennant Creek school band performing publicly at community functions. I think that is

terrific and I would like the minister to know that I am grateful for his actions in this regard.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I rise to pay tribute to one of Northern Territory's truly great sons, the late Mr Noel Ross. Noel, a highly respected employee of the Primary Industry and Fisheries Department, was tragically killed in a helicopter crash while on a stock count in Arnhem land on 2 July. He is remembered by those who knew him as a good family man, a dedicated worker and a charming, humorous and loyal friend with great enthusiasm for life.

Noel Ross was a Territorian born and bred and spent his whole life here. He was born in Alice Springs on 19 December 1940 and was a direct descendant of the explorer John Ross, who initiated the route of the overland telegraph line from Port Augusta to Darwin in 1870-71. Another of his forebears, George Hayes, ran the original Elkedra Station and Neutral Junction Station near Barrow Creek, where he bred Indian remount horses.

Noel was educated in Alice Springs and married Estelle Gibson on 9 January 1960. The couple had 6 children. He worked as a stockman and boss drover before joining the government in 1963 as a member of a survey team in the Lands and Survey Branch in Alice Springs. He quickly became a valuable member of that team and was well liked by all with whom he was involved. He eventually became the foreman of the survey depot.

Noel transferred to the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch in 1967 as a stock inspector responsible for the Alice Springs and Barkly districts. His enthusiasm and personality quickly earned him the respect of district pastoralists. He later transferred north to become a stock inspector for the Darwin district, which extended as far south as Pine Creek. Here again, he impressed local pastoralists with his knowledge of the cattle industry and was called on regularly to offer advice on animal health and husbandry matters. An indication of Noel's ability lies in the fact that this district, which he serviced alone, is now broken into 6 separate districts serviced by 6 separate stock inspectors. Off the job, he took particular delight in breaking in the new veterinary officers. Much to Noel's amusement, this breaking in would usually result in the new vets being violently ill and swearing themselves off alcohol for life.

The Ross family name became synonymous with sporting achievement throughout the Territory. Noel Ross's greatest sporting loves were boxing and Australian Rules football and he dedicated a great deal of his time and energy to both. He boxed for many years in Alice Springs and later in Darwin and had considerable success. He also travelled to Sydney where he trained under highly respected boxing trainers. As well as pulling on the gloves, Noel was a highly respected referee in the Territory. Noel was an ex-committee member and solid supporter of the St Mary's Football Club and a long-time member of the Pioneers Football Club in Alice Springs. He had a keen interest in Rugby League, was an avid Brothers supporter, and had 2 sons playing with the club.

Noel Ross is sadly missed by people in all walks of life who had the pleasure of knowing him. On behalf of members of the Legislative Assembly, staff of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and Territorians in general who knew him, I extend deepest sympathies to Noel's wife Estelle and his family.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, at the same time, I extend condolences to the wife and daughters of another well respected Territorian, Kevin Dawson, who died in the same helicopter crash in Arnhem land on 2 July. Mr Speaker, 2 good men have had their lives cut short under tragic circumstances and they will be sadly missed by many Territorians.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this evening, the Minister for Education gave a few details about the forthcoming examinations for students in Year 10. He mentioned that a second and parallel paper, what we might have called a supplementary in years gone by, is to be used in the case of students who have dispensation to sit late for the examination, including the Sanderson students who are making an excursion to Indonesia. Something which occurred to me and which I would like the minister to inform me about is whether students will write their names on the examination papers or whether a numbering system will be used. I certainly much prefer that numbers be used. I think that is preferable from the teachers' point of view when they are marking the papers.

As a teacher, I much preferred marking numbered papers so that I was unaware of whose work I was marking. Numbered papers were used in South Australia, where I did some marking of mathematics papers during the Christmas holidays. In those days, examinations were scheduled close to the end of the year and teachers generally did the marking. A great deal of care was taken to ensure that teachers did not mark papers from the schools in which they taught or nearby schools in order to protect the anonymity of students and to ensure that marking would be completely fair. After marking the answers, all of the markers would get together to discuss the papers, the answers and the various little oddities that arose. One would then apply the results of that discussion to 500-odd papers one had been allocated.

I hope that student numbers will be used, particularly as our system is pretty small. The number of students actually participating will not be high. I suppose that it is a bit like voting. One of the strong points of our system is that we have a secret ballot. A constituent may come into a member's office and say: 'I voted for you last time and, if you do not do this, that and the other for me, then I will not vote for you next time'. My stock answer to that is that I cannot even prove that I voted for myself. That is the way it should be. I do not know who voted for me and who did not but, regardless of that, I have a duty to serve each and every elector in my electorate. Every member has that duty. Some electors may not come to a member because of his or her political views but I make myself available and I am ready to serve anyone. I am sure that other members feel the same way and I believe that the same principle should prevail in the examination system.

I think the minister was absent last night when I asked if he had let it be known that certain teachers who are actually teaching Year 10 have been involved in setting the examination papers. He felt that any suggestion that teachers might slip details to their students was a slight on the teachers. My point last night was that teachers should never be put in a position which left them susceptible to that sort of criticism, which could come from anybody, including parents or teachers who were not involved in setting the papers. Some people might say: 'Some of those teachers set the papers and therefore they knew what areas to coach the kids in. The kids whom they taught have done brilliantly but my kid's teacher was not so good'. It should be possible to have the papers set by people who are not teaching Year 10 students, preferably by people who are not associated with the school. That should not be too difficult. I ask the minister to take that on board. It may well be that he has read yesterday's Hansard and is aware of the point I made. I hope he will consider it very seriously.

I support the stand of the minister on the issues that the member for Stuart very correctly raised. He had concerns that the exams would not be seen to be fair and genuine. Then, of course, he turned around and became the bleeding heart for the Sanderson students. I do not blame the students but I certainly think the school's administration was less than cooperative. I certainly support the minister's comments and hope that he does not resile from them. The people concerned knew what the situation was and they could and should have done the right thing by taking the matter seriously.

The member for Stuart cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that he takes the examinations seriously and then start unearthing anomalies and crying the bleeding heart. He is playing politics and not looking after the true welfare of the students and the system.

The other matter that I wish to raise tonight relates to headphones and cyclists and even ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They are a menace.

Mr COLLINS: As the member for Koolpinyah has just commented, headphones are a menace to people who cycle whilst wearing them. Several weeks ago, had I not been watching what I was doing, I could have collected a cyclist who was delivering pamphlets into letterboxes. This cyclist cut across the street in front of my car, with headphones firmly in place. The cyclist did not look and could not hear. If my attention had been distracted, I would have knocked that person off the bike and, no doubt, I would be in a great deal of trouble. There are so many cyclists nowadays but how often do you see one give a hand signal or a clear indication that he is intends to turn or stop? They do not ride in a sensible manner and they really need to be brought to heel.

I raised the matter of these headphones, radios and so forth at the Road Safety Council meeting in Alice Springs a few months ago. The answer I received was that nothing could be done about it. I was told that, if the practice of wearing headphones was curtailed by legislation, legislation would be required against car radios. Sometimes I use the radio in my car, but not many people play their car radios so loudly that they are not aware of other sounds. When using headphones, people are just not with it. They are totally distracted and outside influences cease to affect them.

A constituent came to my office and, in passing, told me she had been driving one day and saw a student riding a bike out from one of the local secondary schools, can of Coke in hand, head down, and headphones over the ears. The lady sounded her horn as the cyclist came across her path and had actually stopped her car when the child, still oblivious, ran into the bumper bar, got a terrible shock and fell off the bike. The lady got out of her car to help the student. Coke went everywhere. The student abused her roundly for her troubles, in words which would not be acceptable on the ABC. Eventually this student decided that she could still ride her bike and headed for home.

The lady's son knew the girl and the lady knew the parents. Therefore, she rang the girl's father, told him what had happened and asked if the child was all right, in case there was any damage that had not been immediately noticeable, such as concussion. Certainly, she did all the right things. Then, would you believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, a letter from a lawyer came out of the blue a couple of weeks later, threatening to take her to court. She contacted the lawyer and the upshot was that they phoned father and had a chat to him. That was where the matter ended as far as I am aware.

Headphones are very dangerous to cyclists. By wearing them, they deprive themselves of the use of their own senses and leave themselves at the mercy of motorists. Accidents occur when 2 people are distracted at the same time. The same situation often occurs in respect of joggers. Some of them seem to fall into a trance when they are jogging. When they are crossing a road, they only look up at the last moment. I have seen some of those and other members may have too.

I believe that these matters come within the ambit of the Minister for Transport and Works and I would ask him to argue the point that I have made to the Road Safety Council. Something should be done. When there is the potential for loss of life, the small amount of pleasure which people gain from listening to headphones whilst riding does not add up to much. It is only a matter of time before a fatal accident occurs and we should consider, at a minimum, trying to raise community awareness of the dangers involved in this practice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these headphones are something of a bane in my life. I have a son who is now in Year 12 and he does not seem to be able to study without his headphones on. You can walk up to him and touch him and he just about jumps out of his skin, but he assures me that that is the only way that he can study. I have great difficulty in accepting that. We all appreciate that it is the parents' problem but it is a concern.

We must consider taking some steps to control the use of headphones by people riding bicycles and, if the minister does not take action, I may attempt to introduce a private member's bill. I do not suppose that will get very far, but one never knows. In the first instance, I leave the matter in the minister's hands. If he will assure me that something is being done, then I will leave it. If not, I will introduce a private member's bill because I think it is important.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to add my condolences to those which have been offered to the families of Noel Ross and Kevin Dawson. I first met Noel Ross many years ago when he was working as a stock inspector in an area in which I have spent a lot of time over the years - around the Daly River. I knew Noel as a thorough gentleman. In fact, he was one of nature's gentleman. He was a very good family man. He and Estelle and the family were extremely close. I know that members of Noel's family will feel his loss for as long as they live because they are very close. I offer my very sincere condolences to them.

The Dawson family lives next door to me in Batchelor. There is not even a fence between our houses, just an area of garden. Kevin was a big, quiet man who was very sincere and very straight. He was a very experienced helicopter pilot. He and Glenys have been very good friends to us during the years we have lived in Batchelor. It is a very difficult time for the family. Glenys is left with 2 daughters, Heidi and Stephanie. I know that Kevin's death has been a big loss to the family and he will be sadly missed. The family will also be missed very much when Glenys and the children leave Batchelor.

I would also like to offer my condolences to the families of Leo Finlay from Borroloola and Babe Damaso of Darwin, as did the Chief Minister last night. Neither of those persons was well known to me, but I am very much aware of their records and very much aware of the esteem in which they were held by the many people who knew them and in the areas where they worked and lived over the years. I offer my very sincere condolences to their families.

Recently, I had the pleasure of being able to attend the 76th Session of the International Labour Organisation Conference in Geneva. Before going on to talk about ...

Mr Bell: Did you tell them that you were from the conservative side of politics?

Mr McCARTHY: There were many people from the conservative side of politics there. Before I go on, I would like to briefly explain a little of the background of the ILO. The ILO celebrated its 70th anniversary this year. It was established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, along with the League of Nations. The ILO survived the demise of the League of Nations and went on to become the first specialised agency of the United Nations. Originally comprising 45 countries, including Australia, it now has a membership of 151 nations.

The ILO is unique within the United Nations in that it is not simply a government to government organisation, but rather has a tripartite structure of government, employer and worker delegates. All delegates have the same rights and may express themselves freely and vote as they see fit. What this means is that governments can get rolled in the ILO. This makes for some interesting dialogue in committee sessions and in the corridors of the Palace D'Internationale.

The ILO is constituted of 3 main bodies. These are the annual International Labour Organisation Conference, the governing body of the International Labour Office and International Labour Office itself. The conference is the supreme parliament of the organisation and has the essential functions of adoption of minimum international standards in the form of conventions, providing a forum for discussion in, and exploration of, pressing social and labour issues, and providing a forum for the development of guidelines for general policy and future activities of the ILO. The governing body is the executive arm of the International Labour Organisation. It, too, is tripartite in its composition, with the representatives being elected for 3 terms of office. The governing body is charged with establishing the agenda for the annual conference, directing the activities of the International Labour Office and determining the overall direction of ILO activities. The International Labour Office is the permanent secretariat of the organisation. The office prepares essential background material for ILO conferences, recruits technical experts and oversees the ILO's field work throughout the world and publishes a broad range of specialist publications.

The principal thrust of all this international infrastructure and, indeed, the very reason for the ILO, is to improve the working conditions and the general welfare of working people throughout the world. In so doing, 344 conventions and recommendations have been adopted by International Labour Organisation Conferences since 1919. Of the 168 conventions, Australia has ratified 46.

To give the honourable members an idea of the range of issues the ILO concerns itself with, the agenda for the 76th session of the conference consisted of: a partial revision of the 1957 convention on indigenous and tribal populations, night work, safety in the use of chemicals at work and the declaration concerning action against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia.

I think I also need to inform honourable members how a Northern Territory minister came to be at the ILO Conference. Because Australia is a federation, an exhaustive examination of all relevant federal and state law is undertaken

before any ILO convention is formally ratified by Australia. If any of these laws are at odds with the convention in question, moves are made to amend the law. Consequently, state governments have a significant input into the ratification process. It was therefore thought appropriate that the federal minister responsible for labour matters invite state counterparts, on a rotational basis, to attend the conference with the annual Australian delegation so that they could gain a better understanding of the ILO's purpose and operations. I accepted my invitation from Mr Peter Morris, the federal Minister for Industrial Relations, making this the first time since self-government that a Northern Territory minister has attended the ILO. It was indeed an eye-opener in terms of how international diplomacy and the ILO itself operates.

There is money in international conferences, Mr Deputy Speaker. Geneva is the base for 9 United Nations agencies, including the ILO, and the whole business is worth a staggering \$750m per annum to the Swiss economy. For the ILO conference alone, some 3500 delegates descend on Geneva each June for about 3 weeks. It occurred to me while I was there that it would be very good indeed for the Territory if we could have such a captive conference market right here.

It has been said that the ILO is an expensive exercise in diplomatic relations, and there is no doubt about that. It also said that it is of minimal use to developed nations because its conventions are aimed at elevating standards in developing nations. There is some truth in that but, in fact, it goes way beyond simply those functions and it is not all bad.

While I was there, I had the opportunity to hold private discussions with the directors of both the Industrial Relations and the Occupational Health and Safety Divisions of the International Labour Office. Mr Alan Gladstone, the Industrial Relations Director, certainly was across international developments in that field. He was even up to date on developments in industrial relations in Australia which, as honourable members may be aware, has a system which is unique in the world. Mr George Klich, who heads the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the ILO, gave a very useful briefing on some of the lessons learned from major chemical accidents in Europe and elsewhere, including the disasters at Bhopal, Chernobyl, Three-Mile Island and Seveso. I think we all know where Bhopal and Chernobyl are. Seveso was the site of a major dioxin spill in northern Italy.

My general impression of the International Labour Organisation is that it is a worthwhile organisation performing an important role in international labour relations. It is worthy of the support of Australia as a member nation, and the states and territories of the Commonwealth.

En route to Geneva, I took the opportunity to visit the Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation in Ireland. Honourable members will know that this was the first trade zone in the world and, indeed, Shannon Airport was the first airport in the world to have a duty-free outlet. From small beginnings in the late 1940s, the Shannon zone has gone from strength to strength. It now boasts 100 companies with a village established nearby to house employees. The Shannon Free Airport Development Authority has promoted its advantages in a number of ways, not the least of which is its geography. Shannon is located on the western fringe of Europe and therefore is the closest point to the United States. Because of this, Shannon has been promoted as a 2-way funnel for the full or part manufacture of goods from Europe for on-selling in the markets of the USA and South America and vice versa. Our own Trade Development Zone, of course, is in an even better

position. It is much closer geographically to its markets in southern Australia and, more importantly to South-east Asia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I was talking to the officials of the Shannon corporation, I asked them whether they had ever had any failures. All they had been telling me about were the good news stories. They hid their heads in their hands for a while and said: 'Failures. Did we have failures? We had 15 years of them'. Mr Deputy Speaker, we are fortunate that our Trade Development Zone is up and running as quickly and as vibrantly as it is.

Shannon Airport remains a high traffic flow airport which, with the advent of jet passenger aircraft in the 1950s, was in danger of becoming redundant. The Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation, which controls the zone, has now been charged by the government of Ireland with industrial development within the 3 adjacent counties of Galway, Limerick and Clare. The corporation has identified zones of interest within these counties, where it is concentrating its development effort. The corporation has also developed strong links with the Limerick University and its on-campus Plassey Technological Park. The technological park is in its early stages of development but has attracted a large investment from the Wang Company, which has developed a large state of the art computer component manufacturing facility.

It was evident to me that the Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation has had a dramatic influence on the industrialisation and general development of a significant area of western Ireland, which previously had a basic rural economy. Given that the corporation has been in operation for almost 40 years, the Northern Territory can be quite proud, in my view, of the rate of development of our own Trade Development Zone in the few short years it has been in operation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, also on route to Geneva, I was able to pay courtesy calls on the British Minister for Employment, Rt Hon John Cope, and the Secretary of the Department of Labour in the Irish government, Mr Michael Reegan. I am indebted to both those gentlemen for their informative remarks about advances in vocational training, industrial relations and general labour market issues in their respective countries.

While I am on my feet, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to Red Nose Day, which is 8 September. It is no laughing matter and therefore why the red nose? Mr Deputy Speaker, if you would like to go out and look at my car after we leave this place this evening, you will see that it is currently wearing a big red nose. Red Nose Day raises money for research into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Red noses are presently being sold in the mall. They can be purchased to be worn personally or placed on cars. Whilst not all of us would want to walk around wearing a red nose, the cause is a very worthy one. Every year in Australia, approximately 600 babies, most of whom are between 1 day and 1 year old, die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The cause of death is not known at this stage and research is extremely important. Car noses cost \$3 and personal noses cost \$1.50. I would encourage everyone to buy a red nose and either wear it themselves or put it on their car. It will contribute to research into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, which is a very worthy cause.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have spoken before about deficiencies in the section of the Department of Health and Community Services which deals with adoption. I have recently been approached by a lady who is absolutely at her wit's end. She and her husband have been waiting to

adopt a child for 2 years and they still cannot do so. She believes that this is in no small part due to deficiencies and slackness in the approach of the relevant section of the Department of Health and Community Services. These people have established themselves as loving parents in the time they have been waiting. There is no doubt about that. There is, however, something which they cannot understand and it is making them very frustrated with everything. These people are typical of a number of loving couples who wish to adopt babies. I have previously spoken about this matter in connection with 2 of my constituents who eventually adopted a baby interstate because they were not prepared to wait for the time required here.

The lady who approached me told me that she and her husband have been waiting for 2 years. In that 2 years, they have been interviewed time and time and time again by a total of 5 interviewers from the Department of Community Services to establish their bona fides, to see if they are fit and proper people, to check where the adopted child will be brought up and so forth. She believes that it is past a joke. If it were not so serious, it would be funny. It is very sad. It is also a sad reflection on our society when, on the one hand, the government says it has a policy directed against cruelty to children - and that is a policy with which I wholeheartedly agree - whilst on the other hand, there are so many children in the Northern Territory who are in dire need of loving and caring homes. Because of deficiencies in our laws, those children are not available for adoption but only for fostering.

I will give an example of one of the unusual approaches taken by welfare officers in interviews. This lady told me that, during the assessment period, her mother died. Because she was extremely close to her mother, she experienced a great deal of grief after her mother's death. The interviewer at that time - one of the 5 - seemed to think it was rather unusual that she was grieving in such a way and tried to talk her out of it with trendy sophisticated talk and by giving her books. All the poor woman wanted was to be left alone to sort things out for herself. Somehow or other, her method of grieving over her mother's death was linked to her unsuitability to be the parent of an adopted child.

The sad aspect of the situation, from a worldwide perspective, is that a number of countries - and they were usually third-world countries - which used to make children available for adoption by childless couples in other countries, are now closing their doors. This lady had approached 3 countries in the course of 2 years but was unsuccessful because of hitches with Northern Territory public servants and, in a small way, with the Department of Immigration, which is not as helpful as it could be. Countries like Sri Lanka, Korea and the Philippines are gradually closing their doors as far as adoption is concerned. Three or four years ago, it was relatively easy to adopt a baby from one of those countries, as it was from other countries with large populations living in great poverty. It is now very difficult to adopt babies from those countries.

Although this couple are still young enough to have children of their own, they are not getting any younger. I think they are gradually approaching their late 30s or early 40s. If things go on much longer, they will soon be beyond the permissible age for adoption of children. The government must put its money where its mouth is. It cannot say on the one hand that it has an active policy which aims to right the wrongs inflicted on young children whilst, on the other hand, it does not consider the children's welfare in a loving and caring home.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I listened with interest this week when the Minister for Lands and Housing suggested that heritage legislation would be enacted in the Northern Territory. There may be an item in Alice Springs which has escaped him and I would like to bring it to his attention. I will read from an article in the Centralian Advocate which concerns a \$9m building to be built in Hartley Street:

A \$9m building to house federal government departments will be built in Hartley Street next year. Federal Administrative Services Minister, Stuart West, said funding had been approved for a new Commonwealth centre in Alice Springs. Mr West said \$1.01m would be earmarked for the project in the 1989-90 budget and construction would start in April next year. Construction was expected to take 1 year and the building would cost \$9.15m. The 2-storey building will be built on Lot 5183 Hartley Street, the premises of Norforce in Alice Springs.

I raise this matter because, behind the Norforce building, there is a small structure which was used by D.D. Smith as a home for his family, as well as an office, when he commenced as the first resident engineer in Alice Springs. I would call it a shed, but it was their home. Whilst it may not have much architectural merit, it certainly has historical value. It was built in the late 1920s, probably in 1929-30, and there are a number of photographs of it. There is also a D.D. Smith Park, named to commemorate the services which D.D. Smith provided in central Australia. I think that the building is worthy of note and, whilst I do not necessarily believe that it must be protected, some consideration should be given to retaining it or, at the very least, giving some form of acknowledgement that it was of historical value. Perhaps it could be blended in with the total project.

People may not know who D.D. Smith was. In those days, the Commonwealth Department of Works was the only government department in Alice Springs and D.D. Smith was its head. He was the man in charge of government in central Australia. His wife Margaret arrived in 1928-29 and they had 5 children. The Smith family is very well-known in central Australia. The children, including Ben Smith and D.D. Smith Jnr, were born in central Australia.

I think that the building is an important piece of heritage. I am not suggesting for a moment that we retain the actual building although it would be lovely if that could be done. Certainly, some form of consideration should be given to that building before it is demolished. Turner House and Marrons were demolished in Alice Springs. I raise the matter in the adjournment in the hope that the minister will pick up the issue and have it investigated from the point of view of historical value and heritage. We do not have many old buildings left in Alice Springs and I certainly think this matter is worthy of consideration by the minister.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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