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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly
Second Session

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly
Second Session

Speaker	Roger Michael Steele
Chief Minister and Treasurer	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
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Minister for Community Development and Minister for Correctional Services	Barry Francis Coulter
Minister for Health and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs	Raymond Allan Hanrahan

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PART I

DEBATES

Tuesday 20 August 1985

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Ministry and Statehood

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, this Chamber has for some decades now been the launching pad for demands of the Northern Territory people for a better go - demands indeed for their right to be treated as Australians. It is therefore fitting in the forum of this Legislative Assembly before the people of the Northern Territory that I launch formally our bid to become the seventh state of this nation, to rejoin in our own right the Australian federation, to become a member of the family of states which is Australia.

Mr Speaker, we seek quite simply to make this nation a whole nation as obviously was intended by the fathers of the Australian Constitution and we seek the help of all Australians in this endeavour. It might be asked why I launch this bid at this time. Quite simply, the people of the Northern Territory are now claiming their rights as citizens of Australia. It is my firm belief that, after experiencing 7 years of self-government, following 7 decades of Commonwealth colonialism, Territorians see statehood as their entitlement.

Mr Speaker, the call for statehood has been echoed in other states. Interest in the Territory's constitutional development is real wherever you travel in this country. The government has listened to these calls. In taking this decision, the government has had to satisfy itself that statehood is in the interests of the Territory people. We have decided that it is no longer good enough, if it ever was, for an Australian citizen to lose many of his ordinary rights simply because he crossed a line on a map called a state-territory border.

Mr Speaker, it is not good enough that a citizen of South Australia can demand action of his state government in respect of Flinders Chase National Park, but a Territorian is powerless in respect of Uluru or Kakadu National Parks. It is not good enough that the citizens of that state can demand of their state government the proper management and use of all land within the state boundaries while the citizens of the Northern Territory have that right cut precisely in half. Nor is it acceptable for us to witness the opening of a mine in South Australia simply because a state controls a mineral called uranium while Territorians watch stagnation of their own mining industry because the Territory does not have the same degree of control. It is not good enough that Territory taxpayers see the Victorian state government and the people of that state benefit from offshore gas revenues while they know that they do not share the same right in respect of an identical resource off the Northern Territory coast. It is not acceptable for Territorians to be second-class Australians. This inequity must come to an end.

Further, Mr Speaker, we must end the economic uncertainty which began with the 1985 federal mini-budget and was reinforced by the subsequent Premiers Conference. It does not matter whether the Memorandum of Understanding is described as being 'torn up', 'substantially abrogated' or 'partially in place'. The fact is that we can no longer rely on the memorandum as the cornerstone of self-government. That being the case, it has to be replaced by

another understanding, and the only understanding strong enough to be acceptable to Territorians is that fundamental understanding which flows from having a proper constitutional foundation, and equality between the states of this nation.

In announcing our formal bid for statehood, it is important indeed that I restate this government's position on land rights. Since it first formed a government in the Northern Territory, the Country Liberal Party has consistently held as a policy the right of Aboriginal people to traditional ownership of land, and that commitment stands. Our advent to statehood must not been seen by Aboriginal people as a threat to that principle. Indeed, by our resumption of control of that most important area, much of the regrettable tension and division which has been caused by land rights originating from an act made in another place and administered from places remote from our borders should be overcome. We will be entering into serious and genuine negotiations with the various land councils and Aboriginal communities as an integral part of our consultative process.

Given our decision to press for statehood, I am determined to take on this vast and vital project with the utmost dedication and vigour. My government will now put in place the resources and strategies which will give the bid for statehood the status it deserves. My colleagues and I have had a great deal of time, thought and discussion as to the best method of undertaking this project. Before putting to you the methodology the Territory government will adopt, there is one thing I want to make quite clear: the ultimate responsibility for constitutional development and the constitutional well-being of a country, a state or a territory must always lie with its head of government, be that person Prime Minister, Premier or Chief Minister. That responsibility is unreservedly accepted by me. But no head of government would be vain enough to believe that he or she alone can even remotely do justice to such a task. In any event, this Assembly must have the paramount oversight of the people's interest that must be involved deeply in the exercise.

Mr Speaker, I propose later in the sittings to move for the creation of a select committee of this Assembly on constitutional development. As you and all honourable members will be aware, it will be the most important select committee ever brought together in this place. It is obvious to me that, from a government viewpoint, I am also going to need the very best of advice from a purpose-dedicated committee of officers and advisers. This committee of necessity will have within it members of the public service and others who are not elected members. Coordination of the whole effort will be necessary. The select committee of this Assembly and the advisory committee must be spliced by a common thread because they share common goals.

Mr Speaker, how then are we to give the advisory committee the status it must have and, at the same time, provide the link to the select committee? I have been assisted in coming to a decision by a letter which I received on 13 August from a colleague. I will quote from it in part:

> 'You advised Cabinet recently of your intention to set up a special committee to oversee our constitutional progression to statehood. There was considerable discussion of who should be the chairman of such a committee and the matter was left open for further discussion even though I had indicated my interest in assuming chairmanship of that committee. We all have our interests in politics and I would regard it as a great achievement in my political career if I could be involved personally in overseeing our advent to statehood.

My perception of the situation is this. The task is probably greater than any of us realise and should not be administered politically on a part-time basis and nor should the responsibility be left to public servants. Such an undertaking in my view is a responsibility of an elected representative. The development of our statehood agreement is going to involve heavy consultation and negotiation with professional, legal and financial experts, industry and community groups, the 6 states and the Commonwealth. Although many of the matters to be discussed are of a technical nature, they will all require political overview and confirmation.

There is no doubt that the responsibility of constitutional development must rest with you as Chief Minister. There is also no doubt in my mind that the Chief Minister, with his existing responsibilities, cannot assume another full-time job and do justice to it, nor can any minister merely tack it on to his existing workload. As I have said, I am very keen to assume the chairmanship of the constitutional development committee and I would like to propose to you the following course of action for your consideration.

I believe you should create a special ministry, answerable directly to you, with responsibility for constitutional development without portfolio or Cabinet responsibilities. The events of the last 3 weeks at the Constitutional Convention and again at our own annual conference in Katherine have convinced me beyond all doubt that we must move quickly but with great and careful deliberation to put the case for statehood to the Territory's people and seek their views thereon. I trust this letter will cause you to give my initial offer serious consideration'.

Mr Speaker, given that we are all somewhat transparent when it comes to our areas of particular interest in politics, it is not difficult to guess that the letter was written by the present Minister for Health, Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon Jim Robertson. I have decided to accept the minister's offer with a few variations. Additionally, I will propose that the same member be chairman of a select committee, for the reasons I have already given. The honourable member for Araluen will become the Territory's Special Minister for Constitutional Development. This task will be an onerous one and therefore I have accepted the honourable member's view that he should not carry out portfolio responsibilities. However, I have not accepted his view that he should not have Cabinet responsibilities. Jim Robertson is a capable and an experienced minister and Cabinet needs his skills. I want him in Cabinet, and he has agreed to this arrangement.

I can advise honourable members that His Honour the Acting Administrator, Mr Justice Muirhead, accepted this proposal along with my advice to appoint the honourable member for Flynn, Ray Hanrahan, to be the Minister for Health and Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. Immediately following this morning's sittings, the Executive Council will meet to approve the revised administrative arrangements order and, following that, the honourable member for Flynn will be sworn in as a minister.

The task of the new Special Minister for Constitutional Development will be to ensure that Territorians have ample opportunity to grasp the many complex and varied issues associated with our move to statehood. Along with the members of the select committee, he will meet with Territory groups and

communities to provide them with all the information they need to form their own opinions on these issues. In due course, we will bring delegates from these groups and communities to a conference so that we may receive the widest possible cross-section of advice and support from the people of the Territory. Meanwhile, the minister and I will be calling on the Prime Minister and each of the state Premiers to advise of our intentions and, hopefully, to gain their support. With their approval, the minister will then carry out detailed negotiations with state and Commonwealth ministers and officials. It will also be the minister's duty to travel the length and breadth of this country taking up every opportunity to put our case. Of all the ingredients for success in this endeavour, the support of the Australian people is paramount.

Mr Speaker, in addition to canvassing the issues involved with the Territory and the Australian public, we will need to develop a draft state constitution. As members would be aware, most Australian state constitutions were drafted in the 1860s. They related to the realities of the day: small clusters of coastal settlements which, by and large, depended economically on flocks of sheep and the odd gold rush. They were making the transition from British colonies to emergent new states with the degree of sovereignty which reflected the situation before federation. Whilst we must be guided by the wisdom of the past, our constitution must be relevant to today.

Redevelopment of the draft constitution will be one of the main tasks of the select committee. The coordination of that development by the select committee and the technical work being done by my advisory committee will be best served by a common ministerial chairman. All honourable members know my position on the fundamental elements of our entering statehood; that is, we must end up with the same rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the other states. I will be keeping the Assembly properly informed on all of these matters.

Mr Speaker, until recent years, the one-sixth of this continent that is the Northern Territory has lain idle, contributing little to the development of the Australian nation. It is now time for us to prepare for the assumption of statehood so that, once and for all, the uncertainty of our status before the Commonwealth is removed so that the people of the Northern Territory can assume the same rights of self-determination as are accorded Australians living in the states, and so that the Northern Territory can at last become a full contributing partner in the federation of Australian states.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, one would have hoped, on a subject as important as this, that it would have been possible to have given this debate what, irrespective of the personalities involved, is essential in my view for the successful prosecution of this argument for statehood for the Northern Territory: bipartisan support. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that the reality is that the relative numbers of opposition and government members in a Legislative Assembly are irrelevant to this debate on a national and state level. I do not think you have to be too smart to work that out.

The one thing that will kill this debate is the lack of bipartisan support. When I received my copy of this important speech at 8 am this morning, I was hoping that we would be able to rise in the Assembly this morning to give this speech, rather than the question of statehood, bipartisan support. Unfortunately, the only thing in this speech that makes any sense at all is the letter from the member for Araluen. The rest is 13 pages of

absolute political bilge, dressed up to look statesmanlike. The language is ridiculous. It is a most unfortunate launch for statehood if that is what it is. If this is a launch for statehood, I trust that next month's launch of the space shuttle to supply our modern technology will be a better launch than this one otherwise we will be in a lot of trouble.

The speech does not stand up even to the scant examination I have been able to give it. It contains factual inaccuracies and of the sort of high-flown, political rhetoric that has become a feature of Territory life. I was disappointed to see that in a speech of this nature. It is clear why. Later in this debate, I will say something about the appointment of the special minister because that meets with my approval. It is clear that the initiative for this entire matter stems from the letter from the honourable minister. There is no question about that. All of the detail contained in the proposal is in that letter. I would point out that that letter is 7 days old. That is where this high-flown debate has come from.

I will point out a couple of interesting features. The Chief Minister would have us believe that a move towards statehood has been one of his preoccupations and the central thrust of his government right from day one. It can be demonstrated easily that that is palpable nonsense.

We have on public record the blueprint for the Tuxworth government - the blueprint that outlined the priorities for the new government. The Chief Minister sought correctly to have the Assembly prorogued after he became Chief Minister in order to launch his government and to determine the goals of his government for the rest of its term in the same way that any other government under the Westminster system would do. There was an address to the Assembly by the head of our system of government, the Administrator of the Northern Territory. I defy anybody to find a solitary mention of statehood anywhere in the Chief Minister's blueprint for the rest of his term of office. There was not a mention. In fact, the major thrust of the Chief Minister's blueprint has not been heard about since it was launched by the Administrator. I point out how old this blueprint is. At the end of February, 5 months ago, the Chief Minister mapped out what was foremost in his mind for the rest of his parliamentary term as Chief Minister and statehood did not get a run. In fact, he said the central issue of his government would be youth unemployment. I am glad he mentioned it in the Administrator's speech because we have not heard one thing about it since.

Let us put to rest the arrant and provable nonsense contained in this statement that statehood is the matter of the moment and was always of major concern to him as Chief Minister. The fact is that the initiative came from the member for Araluen and I commend him for it. This great initiative to which we are supposed to give all this weight this morning is 7 days old. The date is on the letter.

To give the Chief Minister his due, he took the opportunity not only to map out his government's course - in which statehood never got a run - but also issued a very detailed document called 'The Ian Tuxworth Ministry' which outlined all the priorities for his government. Once again, I defy anybody to indicate where statehood is mentioned in this document. When was the first time that statehood was highlighted? That is a matter of public record too. It was highlighted in a speech which I gave as parliamentary leader of the Labor Party at the May 1985 conference of the ALP. The fact that the Labor Party set the parameters on statehood was acknowledged even by the press and that is not something we accomplish every day. People are entitled to treat

this 13 pages of bilge as exactly that. It is as thoughtful a proposal as the complete revision of our financial system, the so-called economic supermarket, that was announced with the same kind of huff and puff 4 weeks ago. We were promised breathtakingly in the NT News that we would read all the details a week later, but we have not heard of it since.

The trouble with the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory is typified in the way in which he has done his business as Chief Minister: he consistently opens his mouth before he puts his brain into gear. This is another classic piece of evidence of that. As somebody who supports the inevitable assumption of statehood for the Northern Territory and as somebody who has very firm views indeed about the political dangers involved in this argument - which were revealed not only at the Adelaide constitutional convention at which I was a delegate but also at the Brisbane convention - I am concerned indeed about the current trivial manner in which this debate is being launched in the Legislative Assembly. One would have thought that the Chief Minister would have recognised the bipartisan difficulties in this. I will be asking for an extension of time to speak on this important issue this morning and to tell a few stories from the Brisbane convention that indicate this will not be a problem with the Labor Party or the Liberal Party but a problem with every party, state and federal, in terms of negotiation. One would have thought that, on such a major initiative, the Chief Minister would want to have encouraged genuine bipartisan support.

For the opposition to have been given the statement at 8 am this morning and then told that a debate would be brought on before question time and for me to be expected to give a considered response does the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory no credit whatsoever. I apologise to the Assembly for having had to speak during the Chief Minister's address because I would have liked to have remained silent. I had no choice in the matter because no one else knows anything about it. I had to ignore a telephone call from the Chief Minister this morning because I was flat out trying to plough through this. We did not even receive a copy of the statement in the Assembly this morning. I had to rise during the address and ask the Speaker if he would ensure that some copies were circulated. We are expected to contribute to this debate and my colleagues are trying to plough through it right now. I suggest that the smartest thing they could do would be to have this debate adjourned and at least give us a scant 24 hours notice before we put any hallmark of approval or anything else on it.

I want to go on the record as saying that, if the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory is even half serious about obtaining any level of bipartisan support for his blueprint for statehood, he has got off to a very sorry start indeed. I will nail it down a little more. In his statement, the Chief Minister said rightly that the select committee on statehood will be the most important committee ever appointed by the Legislative Assembly. I agree with him wholeheartedly. He made it the central point of his speech. I rang his office this morning and I said to his senior ministerial adviser: 'You appreciate that, because the establishment of the select committee is the central piece of the ongoing debate, I cannot debate this matter in the Assembly this morning when there is no detail given at all about the formation of the select committee, apart from the fact that there will be one and it will be chaired by the member for Araluen'. I do not object to that but we have no details on how it will be put together. I indicate once again that any dispassionate reading of the facts will bear out that so-called statesmanlike, major thrust of government was initiated by the letter from the member for Araluen. That is how much thought the Chief Minister for the

Northern Territory has given to it over the last 7 days. I could not even obtain details of that select committee this morning. I had a brief conversation with the Chief Minister - half a minute's worth. I dare say this debate will flush out the resident weirdos on the government's backbench, so you will get your turn.

Mr D.W. Collins: Yes, I would like that.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I had a brief conversation with the Chief Minister who told me that he is concerned about the numbers on the committee. He is concerned about whether it should be 3-2 or 4-3 because of his concern for a quorum. I do not know how this select committee will be constituted so I cannot say what the opposition's views will be on it. I have not had the benefit of the Chief Minister's advice because he has not thought about it himself yet. This statement on statehood has about as much status as his financial supermarket that he announced 4 weeks ago. It had an attractive lack of detail. The one thing I do know from the 1-minute conversation that I had with him this morning is that the government will have a majority on the committee.

As I said before, I was a delegate to the Adelaide Constitutional Convention and to the Brisbane Constitutional Convention. There is one thing that you will not have any disagreement on with any delegate who attended the Adelaide convention. Indeed, much was made of it at the Brisbane convention. That convention was destroyed utterly and because the Tasmanian and Queensland delegations, under the leadership of their respective Premiers, Mr Gray and Mr Bjelke-Petersen, indicated that they would send unequal delegations to that convention on which their governments had a majority. In other words, it was impossible for a genuine state view to be put because the oppositions were outvoted on the state delegation on every single issue. They were the only 2 delegations in the history of constitutional conventions in this country that had the absolute political naivety to approach it in that way. The former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, who was my co-delegate, would agree with me that it succeeded in making a total farce out of the entire Adelaide convention. It was a shambles because, every time the Tasmanian and Queensland delegations voted on any single issue involving the constitution, they were howled down by every other member of the constitutional convention. That was because they had loaded their representation with a government majority.

I say this without equivocation. In logic, how can anyone expect that the opposition in the Northern Territory will be interested in participating at committee level in developing a program of statehood? That is all that I am talking about. We all know the government makes the decisions; that is how the constitutional conventions work. How are we expected, at committee level, to be enthusiastic about bipartisan support when it is so structured that we will be defeated on any motion that comes before it? As honourable members of this Assembly would know, in order to get any meaningful constitutional change in this country - and that includes statehood for the Northern Territory because that is a major constitutional change - it will need bipartisan support. The easiest way to test it genuinely is to have equal numbers of opposition and government members on the committee. That is how the constitutional convention works. If it is to have bipartisan support, that is the first hurdle it must leap. Then, if it does not succeed, you look at something else. We have enough trouble at the constitutional convention when positions agreed at committee level come before the plenary session. Certainly, it would be a waste of a plenary session's time even to think that the constitutional

convention committee should be weighted with government majorities. The whole system would break down in a week because the respective oppositions, whoever they are - and I point out that, in 4 states, they are Liberal oppositions - would quite rightly walk out of the first meeting. They would say: 'If you are going to railroad this through, and put the imprimatur of the committee on it because you have a majority, you will do it without us'.

The honourable member for Araluen knows that that is nothing more than the cold, hard, unvarnished truth. It indicates again the depth of real ignorance of the Chief Minister about the basic kindergarten principles of achieving constitutional change. If the Chief Minister does not think that achieving statehood for the Northern Territory would be a major constitutional change, I suggest he think again. If he wants to ensure that this initiative has the opposition of a significant number of states, then I suggest he put the select committee together on the terms he has suggested: with an inbuilt government majority.

As I said before, you do not have to be too smart to work it out. The numbers in this Assembly on this issue are irrelevant in terms of forming this committee or in coming to any conclusions. The decisions that will need to be made will be made by other people in other places. Their political colour will be unknown. I do not know what the makeup of the state governments will be by the time this rolls around. There could be a majority of Liberal governments or of Labor governments. That will be irrelevant as will be the nature of the Commonwealth government at the time.

All I can say is that, if you want to sink it before it starts, put the committee together on the terms that the Chief Minister suggested - with a government majority. This is such a kindergarten point that I am astounded that the Chief Minister would even suggest it. If he wants to achieve statehood by simply having the numbers in the committee so that whatever determination the committee reaches is simply decided by a majority, then why bother with a committee at all? It is nonsense. Why not simply draft a constitution in that party room opposite or in the executive building, introduce it in the Legislative Assembly and have it passed by a majority of votes? We will have a great time doing that and its influence will not extend past our borders. I am astounded that such a kindergarten approach could be adopted so early in the piece. I will not be part of any committee to develop statehood for the Northern Territory, which is purportedly a bipartisan committee, on which the government has a majority. As I say, it will guarantee some structured opposition from places that need to support us elsewhere.

Mr Speaker, as far as the speech itself is concerned, there is some palpable political nonsense in it which needs to be addressed. On page 3, the Chief Minister predictably mentioned uranium and he had a very big run indeed - it is mentioned twice - on land rights. I will come to that in a minute. Have a look at the paragraph on uranium:

> 'Nor is it acceptable for us to witness the opening of a mine in South Australia simply because the state controls a mineral called uranium while Territorians watch stagnation of their own mining industry because the Territory does not'.

The Chief Minister, who is famous for trying to sell us the town hall clock, would have us believe that statehood for the Northern Territory will bring about a resolution of the problem of the uranium mines in the Northern

Territory. No one in the Labor party in this country has been more forthright than myself in his antagonism to the illogicality of the federal government's current position. The Chief Minister obviously has forgotten about Honeymoon. The Chief Minister is not interested in facts or truth; he is interested simply in political nonsense and rams it down the throats of Territorians under the guise of statehood. This statement is supposed to be taken seriously yet it has been dressed up in statesmanlike, flowery language and it is full of rubbish. He says South Australia is able to have uranium mines because it is a state and we are in our present position because we are not a state. That is rubbish, and he knows it. South Australia was forced by the federal government's policies to close down its first operational and viable uranium mine. The first decision the South Australian government took on uranium was not to allow Honeymoon to proceed because the federal government's policy on uranium specified the 3 mines that will be allowed to operate: Nabarlek, Ranger and Roxby Downs. We will not achieve a level of statehood greater than South Australia has already yet it could not proceed with the uranium mines it wanted because the federal government said no.

If the Chief Minister wants to con us into believing that he can attract private enterprise and banks that will finance Jabiluka and Koongarra while the export controls are held by the federal government, then he really will be a con man of some repute. I would like to hear his response on export controls. Is he seriously suggesting that, along with our push for statehood, we suggest that export controls be removed from the federal government over uranium? Is he seriously suggesting that any party in this country of any political complexion will ever allow state governments to have unfettered export control over uranium which is a strategic mineral in the same way they export coal or wheat or anything else? Of course it will not and that has nothing to do with party politics. It has to do with reality and that is something which is gravely missing from this speech. There is an air of unreality about the whole of this speech. I say to the Chief Minister that it is wrong of him to attempt to con Territorians in that way in this major speech of the government to launch statehood.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to the Leader of the Opposition so that he may continue his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I got to that piece of nonsense on page 3 and there are 13 pages of this. The Chief Minister knows full well that the achievement of statehood for the Northern Territory will not make the slightest iota of difference to the state of our uranium industry and it is wrong of him to suggest that it will. He knows that the matter is firmly in the hands of the federal government of whatever political persuasion it happens to be. Our uranium industry will be determined by the policies dictated by that federal government.

He says in page 3 of his speech: 'It is not acceptable for Territorians to be second-class Australians'. I agree. I was astounded this morning to hear - and it is not in the speech because it was another throwaway line from the Chief Minister in his press release - that we will achieve statehood in 2 to 5 years. I have said before - and it is a fact shown by the public

record - that the Chief Minister changes his position on statehood every 24 hours, and has done so ever since I launched this debate in May this year at the Labor Party conference. It is impossible to follow him! For the first time, this morning, we heard that it will be 2 to 5 years. Can I tell the Chief Minister that, if we achieve statehood in 2 to 5 years, that will guarantee that we become second-class Australians. That is obvious to the federal member even if the Chief Minister cannot see it.

Mr Howard's reaction was entirely predictable. Of course Mr Howard would say that we cannot have 12 senators, and so will every other state and federal politician one talks to. That is why it is important that we must ask for 12. If we do not get 12, we will achieve a constitutional precedent in this country by establishing a second-class state. The honourable member for Araluen knows that and so do I. We were faced with a formula prepared by our state and federal colleagues - by a bipartisan committee chaired by a Tasmanian, the Hon Doug Lowe - that meant that we would have had to achieve a population 5 times greater than that of Tasmania in order to enjoy the same representation. Are we to say that, because Mr Howard said we cannot have 12, that vindicates the Chief Minister's position? It does not do anything of the sort! It is entirely predictable. That is what everyone will say. The bipartisan Constitutional Convention committee chaired by a Tasmanian came up with the conclusion that we would have to achieve a level of population in the Northern Territory greater than every other state except New South Wales and Victoria before we could enjoy the same level of political clout they currently have. As I said at the convention, it was very much a case of 'I'm all right, Doug'. It is okay sitting down in Tasmania with 12 senators and a population of 430 000 to blithely come up with a formula that says that we must have a population of 2.5 million plus before we can have the same representation as they have. That is why there is a great danger of our becoming second-class citizens, which is what the Northern Territory Chief Minister's formula and timetable will achieve.

He says that inequity must come to an end and that the economic uncertainty that began with the federal mini-budget will be solved with the coming of statehood. What palpable nonsense! If you suggest to any state premier that he go along to a Premiers Conference without any fears at the back of his head that he will be faced with some degree of economic uncertainty, I think he would laugh you out of the room.

The Chief Minister talked about the various positions that have been adopted on the Memorandum of Understanding and said that, whether you say it has been torn up or is partially in place, is irrelevant. I assume that would suit him because of the nonsensical position he has taken on it as opposed to the position adopted by our current member in the House of Representatives. It is easy to write that off and say that it is now irrelevant to the debate.

Then we come to the question of land rights which is interesting. I have said previously that there is one thing that will guarantee that this initiative will be strangled at birth, and that is to proceed with this proposal along the lines of the Chief Minister's suggestion of a government majority on this committee. Another thing that will strangle this at birth is land rights. We can huff and puff all we like about national parks and probably make a good case but, if we in the Northern Territory attempt to make 25% of our population, our Aborigines, the political football on which this debate rests, we will guarantee statehood will never be achieved in the Northern Territory.

I am definitely going to have my name changed by deed poll. The honourable member for Sadadeen is shaking his head. I would suggest that, if that is his position on it, he should divorce himself from this debate because I will tell you, Mr Speaker, that, if anyone wants any proof of it, he ought to open his eyes, read the newspapers, watch TV and talk to some federal politicians from both sides of the Assembly. I am glad the Chief Minister acknowledged that in the 3 pages where he talked about 'consultations', 'massive tasks' etc. If we want a guarantee that our desire for statehood is strangled at birth, we will make Aboriginal people the political target of whether we achieve it or not, and we will hang up this debate on the question of land rights. That will guarantee that it will never be achieved because we will not obtain the necessary level of support, state and federal.

Mr Coulter: We will be masters of our own destiny for a change instead of worrying about everybody else.

Mr B. COLLINS: We will flush a few more of the weirdos out too before this debate is finished. I say that it will take a little better than the Mickey Mouse Cabinet that this government has, this kindergarten Cabinet...

Mr Coulter: Your contribution is not that hot.

Mr B. COLLINS: This kindergarten Cabinet has another pre-schooler in it today. It will require a better Cabinet than this one, although I must say that, in terms of his knowledge of the issues, I have some faith in the person who will head the committee.

I say again that the parameters of this debate are laid out in the letter which is the only part of this document that makes any sense. If that is to be the attitude of Cabinet ministers of this government, you will be defeated before you start, and you will deserve to be. I suggest the backbenchers opposite read the Chief Minister's speech.

Mr Leo: They probably do not have a copy.

Mr B. COLLINS: We did not get one and I am sure they do not have one either. He did not tell them about the public service debate so why should he tell them about this?

As far as the question of land rights is concerned, it will be a very full issue indeed and one on which there will be a very high level of national interest. I suggest you talk to the Democrats about that, as I did at the Constitutional Convention. That will give you some evidence that there will be a great deal of international attention paid to land rights, and not from the ratbag lobby either.

The Chief Minister spent 3 pages of his speech talking about the position I am suggesting he adopt and agreeing that it will be a very difficult thing. Let us separate 2 issues that are becoming the buzz words these days. Let us discuss national parks, but let us be very careful about this question of land rights. The Chief Minister talked about CLP policies always supporting land rights - and they do. The written policies of the CLP are almost indistinguishable from the policies of the ALP! It is interesting to hear the views of CLP supporters on CLP policies and land rights because, when you point out to them the fact that the written policies of the 2 parties in the Territory are very similar, they tell you: 'Yes, but the difference is that we know the ALP is fair dinkum about its policy, and we know the CLP is not'.

The CLP supporters know that is true because they have evidence for it, and so have the Aboriginal people.

Earlier this year, our Chief Minister spoke at a national forum - and received great publicity in a national newspaper - about how he sees the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory, a quarter of our population. I took him to task publicly for it at the time. He was quite happy to say at this national forum that the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory contribute nothing. They were written off this year, on Thursday 20 June, by the Chief Minister. The quote is there beside some other quotes about federal ministers with boils on their arses which no one will lance. That is part of his cheap rhetoric. The Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory was written off. 'They contribute nothing to the Northern Territory', said the Chief Minister.

A month later, I attended a tourism seminar which he opened at Kakadu and I heard him say at the opening of his speech that the future economic success of our national parks, particularly Kakadu, depended utterly on our exploiting the Aboriginal significance of the park internationally and 'selling it as the greatest repository of Aboriginal rock art in the world'. The Chief Minister said that was the key to the economic success of what will be one of our great future money spinners. Nevertheless, a month before, when he was down south, he wrote off the Aboriginal people as contributing nothing to the Northern Territory! That is the kind of pie-eyed hypocrisy that will be rejected by those people, and rightly so.

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

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to this paper for obvious reasons. After we go to His Honour the Administrator with the new arrangements, we will be looking forward very much to the task ahead of us. Indeed, I will be looking for precisely what the Leader of the Opposition spent some time talking about. Regrettably, the opposition spent some time arguing in a way which I wish it had not. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, the Territory community and the Australian people all want to achieve bipartisan support. Indeed, as the Leader of the Opposition said, it is so necessary. Mr Speaker, while he may feel a little peeved at having received a copy of the speech at 8 am, I found the antics of the opposition rather surprising. During the course of the Chief Minister's speech, notwithstanding that the opposition claimed to have very little time to study it, there seemed to be plenty of time for cackling and laughing by the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy. Incidentally, as always, they were aided and abetted by the member for MacDonnell. Quite obviously, if they could crack jokes and make light of this very serious matter, then they did not really need the time to consider it.

Mr Speaker, the point that the Leader of the Opposition began with was that further constitutional development for the Northern Territory is something which the government has recently invented. He came up with the rather absurd proposition that really it was triggered off for the Chief Minister by a letter from myself. May I assure the Assembly and the public that the Chief Minister has been involved very actively in this area for quite some time, as indeed has been his predecessor, the Hon Paul Everingham.

The Leader of the Opposition alluded to the various Constitutional Conventions which he attended. Of course, I attended the last convention with him. I would love to put on the public record of this Legislative Assembly

how grateful I was for the bipartisan assistance on behalf of the Northern Territory which I received as his deputy, which of course was the irony of it. Nonetheless, we worked together as a team in the interests of the Northern Territory to defeat that most absurd formula which was put forward for consideration by the convention. There is a need to touch further on that absurd formula. The Leader of the Opposition has done that adequately. What he did not say was that, in fact, the greatest threat came from the Liberal side of the fence. The Liberal spokesman for that particular motion was persuaded as to the absurdity of his motion so he promptly gave it to an ALP delegate who moved it on his behalf. It was a battle whereby the Leader of the Opposition fended off the assault from the Liberal Party. In that exercise, the National Party was very supportive of the Territory's position.

The Leader of the Opposition was quite correct when he said that, in order for this to be successful, as much bipartisan cooperation as possible is required. Given the system on which parliaments operate and the party system on which governments are formed - those realities which the Leader of the Opposition seems to have conveniently dismissed - I too want as much bipartisan support as possible. Nonetheless, historically, within our system of government, there is always a majority and a minority in respect of any jurisdiction. It is quite fallacious for the Leader of the Opposition to say that, in respect of a matter like this, one must have equality in a committee of the Assembly. Indeed, I know of no precedent for such an arrangement. I am quite sure that, at a later date, if I am wrong, the Leader of the Opposition will correct me.

Mr B. Collins: There is no precedent for the formation of a new state. How can there be a precedent?

Mr ROBERTSON: There is plenty of precedent for the formation of a new state. How does he think Alaska and Hawaii joined the federation of the United States of America?

Mr B. Collins: In this country.

Mr ROBERTSON: There are plenty of precedents upon which one can draw. Let me go back in time a little to when the first moves toward constitutional development occurred in the Northern Territory. A document was delivered to me this morning which relates to a select committee which was established 28 years ago. It was comprised of members from the official membership of this Chamber and the elected membership. The chairman was Mr Ron Withnall, then Crown Solicitor. That would have had an imbalance in itself between the official members and the elected members simply because at that time there were more official members than there were elected members. The Leader of the Opposition seems to think we wish to gloss over that. As a result, this select committee report, which was the first of its kind, was tabled on 4 November 1957. It made recommendations to the then Commonwealth government. In it, no doubt, there was dissension.

Mr Speaker, the most important joint parliamentary committee which the Commonwealth has ever established was what we have called loosely the JPC - the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Northern Territory which was to inquire into constitutional development for the Northern Territory. That was a joint committee comprised of a majority of the Australian Labor Party, Mr Whitlam and a minority of the Liberal and National Parties. It was a select committee of both houses of parliament, designed and set up for the very purpose of examining means by which the Northern Territory would gain a greater say in its own affairs.

Mr Speaker, if he says that, because one has a majority of government and a minority of opposition on a select committee, it is automatically doomed to failure, the honourable member has forgotten his history. If that was automatically a failure, Mr Speaker, you would not be sitting there with your wig on and with the trappings of office. We would not have the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. We most certainly would not have the Mace or the Dispatch Boxes which were provided by the same Commonwealth which set up that select committee with a majority of government and a minority of opposition members. It led to the move towards self-government which subsequently occurred successfully.

Given that I know of no precedent for any parliament to set up a select committee of that parliament with equality of numbers, the objective, with goodwill within the structure of that select committee, must be to arrive at the closest possible agreement between the parties on it. After all, when the Standing Orders Committee was established, of which you are the chairman, Mr Speaker, the object was to arrive at total agreement on the rules that would govern, if possible, the conduct of this Assembly. As good fortune had it, we achieved that. Had we not done so, the logical and normal procedure available to the minority would be to file a minority report. That is the way it works. I was dreadfully disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition in dismissing the idea of participating if he cannot have equality on the ground.

Mr Speaker, as you and the Leader of the Opposition would be well aware, select committees of legislatures do not work that way. However, the reason why there was no detail as to the select committee in the speech before us today was because, after the procedural mechanisms had been gone through when I became responsible for this particular area through the Chief Minister, I wanted to talk to the Leader of the Opposition about precisely those mechanics. We can do it 1 of 2 ways, and we are damned if we do and we are damned if we do not. Had the Chief Minister spelt out in his speech the hard and fast terms of reference and the structure of the committee, we would have been accused of slamming this down the opposition's throat. If we reserve the position - as we have chosen to do to allow consultation on that very subject - we are damned for that as well. The Leader of the Opposition sought to dismiss the speech as inaccurate and he did so very conveniently and cutely. He used the example of uranium mining.

Mr B. Collins: Give me another hour and I will cover the rest.

Mr ROBERTSON: I have no doubt it would be as specious as what he has put forward already. He said that South Australia had Honeymoon denied it.

Mr B. Collins: Closed down. That is right.

Mr ROBERTSON: I put it to the Leader of the Opposition that, had Honeymoon been situated in Western Australia, would the Commonwealth have dared to do the same? The reality was politics, Mr Speaker, and it was simply this. The fact is that there were 2 ...

Mr B. Collins: Yeelirrie was not allowed to open in Western Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: Will the minister resume his seat. Honourable members, I have been very patient with interjections this morning. I would be very grateful if the Leader of the Opposition and others who are interjecting would refrain from so doing.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, the fact is that the Hawke government had to find a reason for not allowing the mine to go ahead here because of arrangements which it may have had in place elsewhere. It simply could not deny Koongarra a start and allow within South Australia, a Labor state, the commencement of 2 mines. That is the reality behind it.

I have no bag to carry for the Liberal or National Parties after what they have done to us in other matters. The fact is that, because we are a territory and totally subject in all things to the overriding plenary power of the Commonwealth, it is so easy for the federal government to pick on the Northern Territory. If we were a partner in the federation of this country as a state, it would make such gymnastics much more difficult to achieve. When you start to discriminate between the states of a nation, it is not just the state that you are particularly discriminating against which is upset. A shock wave will go through the whole federation at the thought that they might be next. It is the family of states which make up a federation that provides a mutual, inbuilt protection. That is why we ought to be seeking to move towards statehood as quickly and as reasonably as we can on terms and conditions which are applicable and suitable to the Northern Territory public and, of course, which must marry in with what is acceptable to the balance of this nation.

Mr Speaker, have no doubt that there are states within this Commonwealth right now which see what is happening to us as creating a precedent in the minds of the federal government in its experimentations socially and in relation to welfare and resources. They can foresee that, if it is allowed to continue, it will be translated ultimately in terms of the states. The sooner we become a state and can have each of the states who are similarly threatened on our side, the matters that the Leader of the Opposition raised such as Honeymoon will have absolutely no relevance to the argument. We will be in the same position as the states and will have the states supporting our argument for the development of this nation. We will no longer be set aside as a mere territory for the Commonwealth to play with at its will.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the potential stumbling block of land rights. I suppose that, if one is going to see resistance from some sectors beyond the Territory's borders, it could well be in relation to that issue. It is for that very reason that the Chief Minister made particular reference in his statement to the need to consult with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are no different from any other citizens within our system. We are all inherently conservative and I do not mean politically conservative. It is the nature of man not to go along happily with change until he thoroughly understands all the implications. Quite rightly, the task will be to consult with Aboriginal people around the Territory and with people who have an interest in Aboriginal people within the Territory and outside of its borders and demonstrate our bona fides as to their development and well-being. Consultation and the removal of any fear or threat will enable those people to accept the move.

People are naturally conservative; there is a resistance to change. In my view, when the Chief Minister speaks of 2 to 5 years, what he is really saying is that that is a minimum period and God knows how long it will take beyond that to achieve it. It will be a carefully worked out process but only when people in the Territory, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, are comfortable with this move will we obtain the support of Australians generally which is so vital to our success in this endeavour.

Mr Speaker, I will leave it there. I dare say that, over the months to come, a great deal more will be said on this subject. Certainly, it will be my intention in working with the Chief Minister in this most important area to keep the Assembly informed. I appeal to the Leader of the Opposition to temper his view on the composition or role of the select committee. At least until we can sit down and talk about it, I ask him to keep an open mind on the subject. If the opposition wants to behave like a dog in a manger or an ostrich and not take an active role through the proper forum of this Legislative Assembly, then so be it but so be it with a great deal of regret indeed. My wish is to work as closely as we can with all elements of the Territory community and that includes people whom we loosely call political opponents. In its move towards statehood, the Territory public needs a minimum of opponents and a maximum of friends.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, like the Leader of the Opposition, I wish to state quite clearly that it is the view of the opposition that statehood is inevitable and desirable for the Northern Territory. Obviously, it is the logical next important step in our constitutional development. I too have to state my concern at the poor start that the Chief Minister has made in seeking bipartisan support for this very important and logical next step. We have the situation where the opposition has not had the opportunity to consider the paper we have before us fully. However, more importantly, from the reading of it that we have been able to make, it appears that the government has sold itself short and has not put to the Assembly and to the people of the Northern Territory a clear statement on what it wants to do. The statement is strong on rhetoric and very weak on facts, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out. It is glaringly silent on one key area and that, of course, is the area of federal representation when the Territory becomes a state.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Health spoke about the Territory being very easy to pick on at the moment and I agree with him. He said that, the sooner we become a state, the sooner other states will stand up for us, and that, when we become a state, our position will be much stronger. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that he has missed the point. The key point about statehood is the amount and the level of federal representation that it will give us. The reason why we are not to have the railway line, why the Darwin Airport project has been slowed down when there are new international airports at Cairns, Townsville and Perth and why we all accept that federal governments have neglected the Northern Territory over the last 70 years is because we do not have the political clout we need in Canberra. That political clout comes only through representation in the House of Representatives and, particularly, in the Senate. I must admit to being terribly disappointed that, at this stage in the debate, as prominent a person as the Chief Minister himself is prepared to sell the Territory short in terms of Senate representation. He is prepared for us to be a second-class state with less representation in the Senate in Canberra than other states of Australia. That is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe for ensuring that we will not get the same sort of deal out of the federal government in Canberra, whatever its political colour, as other states get because we will not have the same bargaining power. It is as simple as that. A basic first premise of this whole discussion is that, if we are to become a state, we must have the same bargaining power in Canberra as the existing states have. If you want to look at the problems of second-class states, you can refer to the United States of America. There are states that have been accepted into the United States of America which have less representation than the others. They know very well that they are second-class states because they do not pack the same clout that the other states do.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Health, who made a significant contribution to this debate, in an attempt to respond to the Leader of the Opposition's very strong call for a bipartisan approach on this matter, referred to a select committee established by the Whitlam government to look at constitutional development for the Northern Territory. In an attempt to rebut an argument made by the Leader of the Opposition, he pointed out that that select committee had a government majority and an opposition minority. I accept that. I accept that what we are proposing in terms of a select committee is different and has not been done before. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that the difference between the select committee established by the Whitlam government and the proposed select committee is this: the select committee established by the Whitlam government was an attempt by a group of outsiders to determine an appropriate course of constitutional development for this Territory. We have the opportunity ourselves to determine the next stage in our constitutional development. Let us not throw it away for short-term political advantage. Let us treat it in a thoroughly bipartisan way. I would put it to you that the only way we can treat it in a proper bipartisan way is to have equal numbers on the select committee.

Mr Palmer: Who is going to chair it?

Mr SMITH: We are quite happy for the member for Araluen to be the chairman. There is not a problem there. The appearance and the reality of a bipartisan approach on this very important issue obviously requires that there be equal numbers on the select committee. Other constitutions have been developed outside the parliamentary area. The obvious example is the Australian Constitution which was developed by the states getting together. They recognised that, if Australia were to have a federal government, there would be a need to provide equal representation to all the states at that time. There were no arguments then about giving New South Wales more than Tasmania or more than Western Australia because New South Wales was bigger. They all came into the constitutional convention in the 1890s with equal numbers.

Mr Coulter: They would not have come in otherwise.

Mr SMITH: Exactly. That is the point. You are going to make people question much more whether they will agree to our next constitutional step of statehood if, in your very first act in proceeding down that path, you take an obviously political stance on the selection of the committee. I would urge the government to think very carefully about what it is doing on that particular matter.

Mr Speaker, both the Minister for Health and the Opposition Leader stated what happened at the Brisbane convention. I thought that was a very good explanation indeed of the necessity, not the desirability, of equal numbers. A very important part of this exercise is that we do not have to convince only Territorians that statehood is a good and a desirable thing. We have to convince the rest of Australia and we have to convince the governments of the rest of Australia - and there are likely to be a few changes in those governments over the next few years - as we sort out our approach to statehood. We have to convince them. I put it to you once more that the best way of doing that is to ensure that there are equal numbers on this select committee because that is the most convincing way to show the rest of Australia that there is a bipartisan approach to this very important question in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: Bipartisan - 19 to 6.

Mr SMITH: There you go. The government is condemning itself by its own words. It is not interested in a bipartisan approach to statehood. All it is interested in is the CLP view of statehood. There are other people outside the CLP who are interested in statehood. If the government wants to keep them on side, it had better stop making smart alec comments like that or it will drive people away and it will make it much harder to achieve. No one should underestimate the difficulties of selling to the people of the Northern Territory and, more particularly to the people of Australia, the benefits of statehood for the Northern Territory.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the only thing the member for Millner said that I agree with is that it will not be an easy path. I do not think for one moment that anybody said it would be an easy path. The statement made by the Chief Minister this morning is certainly the first step towards further constitutional development and changes in the Northern Territory. In the last 2 or 3 months, there been speculation and discussion outside this Assembly on further constitutional development for the Northern Territory. Much has been said by many people who have an interest in the Territory. Some of those people who have an interest in the Territory sit in other places. The important thing is that the Chief Minister has made a statement this morning indicating that he has nominated the Minister for Health to set up a special committee of this Assembly to institute procedures to allow an easy path towards constitutional development.

The Leader of the Opposition highlighted what he saw as a particular problem. He was concerned about the representation on the select committee. Quite rightly, the Minister for Health said this morning that we did not want to bind ourselves to the statement that the Chief Minister made today and that we needed to be able to consult with other interested parties. That was clearly indicated by the Chief Minister earlier this week. What the Chief Minister has proposed has been on everybody's lips for quite some time. I do not remember the 1957 exercise by a former member of this Assembly, Mr Withnall, when he took the first step towards constitutional change. However, I certainly remember the events of 1972 and 1973 which led to a fully-elected body with some executive responsibilities being established in 1974. That was 11 years ago. From 1974 to 1978, the people of the Territory were governed by elected representatives who had some executive responsibilities. In fact, a decision was taken during that period to move another step along the road to statehood. That was the move to ministerial and Executive Council responsibility which occurred with the first Everingham ministry on 1 July 1978. Even at that time, all the functions were not transferred to the Northern Territory executive. In fact, education responsibilities and a few others were handed over on 1 July 1979. They were all steps towards statehood.

We have had 7 years of successful self-government of the Northern Territory despite what the opposition always says about a lousy front-bench, about a lousy kindergarten approach and about a lousy everything else. It is always putting the government down because the government has done a tremendous job in the development of the Northern Territory since 1978. Certainly, the path has not been easy and an inexperienced group of people has come into this place. But look where the Territory is today. In 1985, we have the highest population growth of the nation. At this stage, we also have more enthusiasm and excitement than anywhere else in Australia, yet we are told that we have a kindergarten approach.

The Chief Minister has taken another important step today by indicating that we will set up a select committee. The Minister for Health said that we have not worked out the terms of reference because it is important that that should be done in consultation with the other parties - the Australian Labor Party and the Democrats - to form an alliance so that we can take the final step. Unless we take the final step, Northern Territorians will remain second-class citizens.

The honourable members opposite did not talk about the neglect of the Territory by governments of all political persuasions from 1911 until 1978. Look at what has happened in the Territory in the last 7 years. We have made some momentous steps towards constitutional development. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about a blueprint. He said that, in the blueprint for the Tuxworth government, there was not one word about statehood. The Chief Minister's approach is to try to develop a better economic base for the Territory as it moves towards constitutional change. But that was cut out from under us by Senator Walsh whose approach was to depopulate the north with machine guns and not allow the Territory to develop in its own right. Of course, the Keating mini-budget did not help either. But that was 3 or 4 months ago, and 24 hours in politics is a long time, as members opposite know. If things are not put down on paper or set in concrete, the opposition says: 'You have put this particular statement and your thoughts together in 7 days'. What a load of poppycock!

Let us examine the Chief Minister's intention to move the Minister for Health into that particular role. To be honest, this idea of a committee to lead us towards constitutional change is something that Cabinet has been discussing for some time. We have all known of the interest that the Minister for Health has had over the years in constitutional development. I was really not surprised when the Minister for Health said that he would not mind doing the job because of his tremendous interest in the constitutional development of the Territory. That was several weeks ago. Of course, a proposition from a Cabinet member to his leader must be considered carefully and I know that the Chief Minister took a while to consider it. I think he has made the right decision because of the enthusiasm of the Minister for Health about this most important step towards constitutional change.

Mr Speaker, one of the reasons why I became interested in politics in 1973 was because of my own and my family's long association with the Northern Territory. I wanted to make a contribution by moving into the Assembly and playing my part in the development of the Territory. For the same reason, I would like to see the Territory move towards becoming the seventh state of this great nation. I am not going to sit here and listen to the Leader of the Opposition belittle the first step which has been taken today, to set up a select committee that will visit every area of the Territory and give Territorians an opportunity of placing submissions before it. At this stage, the terms of reference have not been set but it is an important step. If the Territory is ever to become of economic importance to Australia, we will have to become the seventh state. As Australia in the early 1910s and 1920s came to prosperity on the sheep's back and through primary production, I see Australia's further advancement coming out of the development of the north, not only the Northern Territory but also the northern areas of Western Australia and Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition this morning spent 40 minutes talking about page 3 of the statement and his contention that the Tuxworth ministry has said nothing about statehood. The member for Flynn, who hopefully will be sworn in

today, will take over the responsibilities of the Minister for Health. I would certainly like to wish 2 of my colleagues all the very best and I hope that this Assembly will do the same. The member for Araluen has taken the decision to involve himself in constitutional development and the further development of the Territory. Every person in this Assembly should be thankful for that. It will not be an easy task. I would remind members of the statement that was made by the Minister for Health when I moved from the backbench to become Chairman of Committees. He said that I was going into a minefield. That was what he said to me 7 years ago. It is certainly very true of the area he is moving into today and I wish him well. I also wish my new ministerial colleague well in his duties.

Undoubtedly, there will be a most serious debate over the next 3 or 4 years or however long it takes to reach that statehood. The path will not be easy. It will not be made any easier by the terms and conditions that the opposition and its cronies seek to impose upon it.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I am rather surprised that the Deputy Chief Minister has chosen to respond in such a contumelious fashion. The only relief I took from his offering in this particular context was that he becomes highly entertaining when he becomes angry. I will return later to particular comments I wish to make on his contribution to this debate.

At the outset, we should say what this debate is about. This debate has nothing to do with statehood for the Northern Territory. It has nothing to do with the constitutional development of the Northern Territory. We have heard all sorts of pious statements from 3 government speakers about the constitutional development of the Northern Territory and its progress towards statehood. There has been a public debate to which members of the opposition have contributed outside this Assembly and within it over recent weeks and months. This debate has nothing to do with statehood or with constitutional development. Let me take honourable members out of their suspenseful state and let them know what this debate is about. This debate is about the difficulties that the Chief Minister is having with his Cabinet, with his backbench and with the wider party. That is all that this particular statement has to do with. In the time remaining to me, I believe that I will be able to establish that fact quite clearly.

Before I return to that particular theme, let me make a couple of points in passing about a couple of phrases in this particular document that were either wrong or to which I took exception. The first one is the reference on page 13 where the Chief Minister said that, until recently, the one-sixth of this continent that is the Northern Territory has lain idle. I do not think that I need to expatiate, having done so already on a number of occasions, about the position of traditional Aboriginal cultures in the Northern Territory. However, I do take exception of the use of the phrase 'lain idle'. Perhaps the resources of the Northern Territory have been better developed in recent years but to say that they had 'lain idle', that no use of those resources had been made, is the sort of falsehood I am not prepared to let pass without comment.

Mr Speaker, a further comment I wish to make is in relation to a comment on page 12 where the Chief Minister said that most Australian constitutions were drafted in the 1860s. I imagine that he did not write this particular speech himself, but I suggest he just checks out his speech writers and sends them along to the Darwin Institute of Technology for a quick course on Australian history. In fact, it was 10 years before that, in the 1850s, that

most Australian states received their 'constitutions', I think is the term used. When I was studying Australian history, the phrase was 'responsible government'. There was one Australian state that did not receive responsible government until, I believe, 1868, and that was Western Australia. Thus, in fact, that statement is objectively wrong. Most Australian states' constitutions were not drafted in the 1860s.

Let me return to the reason why I raise this matter. The reason that Western Australia did not receive responsible government until 1868 was because Western Australia was still receiving convicts from the United Kingdom well into the 1860s. Of course, I do not suggest that statehood in the Northern Territory should be held up because the Northern Territory is governed by people who should be convicts. The reason I raise this is because, in historical terms, responsible government was deferred in Western Australia, and perhaps the actions of this government will contribute to the deferral of statehood.

The Chief Minister raised the matter of Aboriginal land rights. Let me say that, despite the Chief Minister's pious statements in this regard, anybody who is genuinely concerned about Aboriginal land rights and the benefits that might accrue to impoverished, disadvantaged Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory by a recognition of Aboriginal land rights would shiver in his shoes if he heard what the Chief Minister had to say. The fact of the matter is that this government has an appalling track record in that regard. For example, I refer to the member for Fannie Bay, erstwhile Minister for Lands, who bulldozed Ntjalkantjamama in Alice Springs and narrowly escaped prosecution for that particular action. These people try to tell us that they are fair dinkum. Associated with the irresponsible and almost illegal actions of the member for Fannie Bay, we have this continual carping and whining about titles at Ayers Rock for traditional owners.

Day after day we have little items in the newspaper from the Chief Minister objecting, for example, to pastoral leases held by Aboriginal people and trying to pretend that the laws of the Northern Territory do not apply to Aboriginal land. That of course is total and absolute nonsense. The Fences Act, the Soil Conservation Act and other such legislation apply equally regardless of the ownership of the pastoral lease and regardless of the form of title. It is a nonsense that the Chief Minister and his cohorts persist in following yet they wonder why Aboriginal people and people of good conscience in this country would not trust them with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and would not trust them with full statehood in that respect. I look forward to the day when this legislature can be entrusted with those responsibilities. By golly, neither I nor my constituents can do anything but shiver in fear at the actions in that regard. Forget the pious sentiment; I am talking about actions. It does nothing but fill people with fear in that regard.

Lest people imagine that my only concern in this regard is Aboriginal land rights, let us briefly look at a couple of others. In case the questions of statehood and constitutional development are issues of interest to a Cabinet trying desperately to reorganise itself, let me say that the constitutional development of the Northern Territory is a subject that is important to all Territorians. Our prospects for statehood are not enhanced in any way by the sort of corrupt practices that have come to be associated with this particular government. I will not rehearse the whole casino debate. It has been gone over sufficiently already in this Assembly.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I am sure the noisy characters on the backbench will be well aware of the corruption in this regard of the people they put in to run the Northern Territory. I will say more during this sittings about land deals at various places around the Territory, but those sorts of actions do not enhance the constitutional development of the Northern Territory in anywise whatsoever.

Let me turn, Mr Speaker, to the actual offerings of our new special minister with responsibility for constitutional development. If this were not costing the Northern Territory government big dough, it really would be a joke. What I do not find a joke is vast amounts of money being spent purely for the purpose of paying a ministerial salary to somebody to pursue an issue, albeit an important one. It is not sufficiently important, however, to justify the full-time work of one minister. There is no doubt in my mind that the workload of a minister of the Crown administering portfolio responsibilities such as health, education, transport, public works or whatever is onerous. There is an onerous, daily administrative burden. There are statutory responsibilities that require action, consideration and negotiation on the part of the minister. When I read that the purpose of this particular position will be to travel the length and breadth of the country to talk about constitutional development, I could not help thinking that the creation of this particular ministerial responsibility will have the reverse effect to what we hoped. Instead of encouraging Australians to take constitutional development and statehood for the Northern Territory seriously, they will say: 'There they go again. They increased the size of the Legislative Assembly by 30% with very little evident benefit and now they are paying ministerial salaries for people to tramp the length and breadth of the country and shuffle a few bits of paper'. Mr Speaker, that is not a full-time ministerial responsibility. I have no doubt about that. I doubt that many honourable members, if they actually thought about what is involved, would have any doubts about it.

It is no secret that the honourable member for Araluen has been a thorough-going critic of the frontbench of this government. There is no doubt in the public's mind, or the minds of members of this Assembly that the Tuxworth government is in serious trouble. There is no doubt in my mind that the only reason for this is because the Tuxworth government needs to reorganise its frontbench to keep the honourable member for Araluen happy and to pay a few debts. I will refer to those debts again in a moment.

It was a valiant attempt on the part of the honourable member for Araluen to lend a face of respectability to this transparent political chicanery. But when it is all boiled down, it is really nothing more than pious nonsense. How do people expect the federal government to respond to these sorts of appointments? I will tell you how it will respond, Mr Speaker: it will start looking at the sums again. It will say: 'Listen, boys, if you can afford that, you can afford to shoulder a few more fiscal responsibilities than the ones you are shouldering at the moment'.

Mr Dale: What about $60 000 a year to study law? Give us your thoughts on that.

Mr BELL: I will let that stay on record, Mr Speaker. I have no idea what the honourable backbench twit there is referring to. Perhaps he can continue either in this debate or tomorrow. But I digress in the direction of idiocy.

Mr Speaker, there are 2 further points I wish to make. We endorse the progress of the Territory towards statehood. I want to place quickly on record that Senate representation is a big problem. The Senate is undemocratic and unrepresentative. I am talking about Western Australian senators or ACT senators or senators from anywhere. By golly, most of my experiences with the denizens of that Chamber lead me to conclude that they reflect its character.

The final point I wish to make is in relation to central Australia. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, I bear a responsibility for central Australian affairs in the Labor opposition. At many times and in many ways, I have sought to further the interests of central Australia in debate in this Assembly and by negotiation outside it. I want to place on record that I am deeply disappointed that, once again, the member for Braitling - however much I may cross swords with him in debate within and without this Assembly - has missed out. I fail to understand why a portfolio such as Youth, Sport and Recreation fails to fall into his lap. I fail to see why somebody who has done so much in that area has missed out. His contribution has been instanced recently by the broadcast of the cricket series from the United Kingdom. That goes to the credit of the member for Braitling. Rarely do I hand out bouquets to CLP politicians. The member for Braitling missed out and the favoured son, the member for Flynn, managed to get up. I suggest that further enhances the proposition that I have argued today that ministries are being handed out in order to resolve a few problems for the Chief Minister who achieved that position by only 10 votes to 8. Obviously, he has to pay out a bit. Bad luck Roger; obviously you were on the wrong side.

Equally one could ask why the honourable member for Sadadeen was not elevated to the ministry. I see an erstwhile member of this Chamber, Mrs Dawn Lawrie, gasping in astonishment. I can see that we all have a fairly keen understanding of why that did not happen. Quite seriously, I have no doubt that the member for Braitling would have been well deserving of the appointment. The member for Flynn's chief involvement in this Assembly has been to use parliamentary privilege to slander vilely journalists in the Northern Territory. He has taken a very scant interest in issues of concern to the people of central Australia and his constituents. I remember one of his idiot comments about traffic lights and his recent lack of interest in staffing problems at Gillen Primary School. It is very difficult to see why he should be rewarded in this way if it is not for reasons of political patronage.

Mr Speaker, I think I have established my point quite clearly: this statement has nothing to do with constitutional development and it has nothing to do with statehood. It is about reorganising the frontbench of the government, and it is a desperate attempt to refloat the sinking ship of the Tuxworth government.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, the response from the opposition to the Chief Minister's statement today has been disappointing but not entirely unpredictable. I say that it was not unpredictable because, if we reflect on the ALP's performance in this Assembly since first it managed to gain a seat in the Assembly in 1977, we see that, for it to be completely negative to every initiative that the government has ever taken, is fairly standard procedure. It seems that even the establishment of consultative machinery on the issue of statehood ranks as no exception to that rule. We witnessed the usual arrogance and conceit of the Leader of the Opposition

whereby, if one does not do exactly as he dictates, then everyone is an imbecile and he will take his bat and ball and go home.

Mr Speaker, failure breeds despair and no doubt a political party which has been unable to gain the support of the electorate in 4 elections over 11 years has plenty of despair around it. I guess a policy of unceasing personal denigration is all it has left to it and it has demonstrated that many times. The attack on the proposal outlined in the Chief Minister's statement was typical of those which were aimed at self-government and every major initiative brought forward in this Assembly by this government since then.

Mr Speaker, in my opinion, the opposition and the media to date have been preoccupied with the question of Senate representation. That issue is but one of many fundamental aspects that need to be addressed. To drag it out now by itself and cement our attitude will do no justice at all to this debate. What is wrong with putting the issues to the community and letting it have a view? Probably there is a very long road between self-government, as we know it today, and full statehood. Who knows what interim constitutional and representational changes might emerge leading to statehood itself? No doubt the opposition has all the answers and will spew them over us at every opportunity.

However, I could not help noting that there was one item on which the Leader of the Opposition did not have all the answers or, if he did, he was not prepared to show many of them today and that was his curious reference to Aboriginal land. He was careful not to nail his colours to the wall over that one. He is very strong about our not being a second-class state, Mr Speaker, as I am sure that we all are, and I would appreciate his elaboration in due course on how he sees land rights fitting into the first-class state that he seeks. I would like to know the member for MacDonnell's views on the same issue of land rights as formerly he has advised us that he sees white Territorians as expatriates. That ought to make for some interesting reading in his draft of the state constitution towards which I am sure he will contribute in due course.

However, Mr Speaker, the debate before the Assembly at present is not about statehood. It is all about the processes which we should put in place with a view to having the statehood question debated. It would have been great if a joint approach to the method of handling the statehood issue had emerged today but, clearly, that is not to be. As we do not agree that all wisdom resides in the boy lawyer across the room, the government will simply have to carry the issue forward not only without his support but obviously with his opposition. Be that as it may, I see no reason to forestall our placing the issues before Australians generally and Territorians in particular. We achieved self-government despite the ALP. Statehood is the next challenge.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for Mines and Energy for his very short address on this matter. He certainly indicated his perception of what this debate is about. It is a straight political exercise as far as he is concerned. I for one do not see this as a straight political exercise. Indeed, the debate on statehood is far too important. I would hope that the government, when selecting the membership of this constitutional committee, will deliberately exclude that minister from that committee. His contributions on this matter will remain political. I think he has quite clearly demonstrated that this afternoon.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out some of the many failings of the Chief Minister's speech this morning. His paper on self-government was as much a paper which heralded the introduction of another minister into this Assembly as it was a paper indicating the direction we will probably head towards in the constitutional development of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I remember some years ago the arguments for increasing Assembly numbers to 25 members from the then 19. One was that government could have an effective backbench and we could develop within this Assembly committees and bodies which a normal backbench would involve itself in. One which has been debated before is a proposed public expenditure committee. That has been soundly dumped on a number of occasions by government members. But we now have the slightly ridiculous situation again where there are as many members of the executive as there are government backbenchers. There is no backbench control over this government once again. I have never considered Mr Speaker to be partisan. I respect your office, Mr Speaker, far more than does your colleague, the government Whip.

Mr Speaker, once again we have government by the executive. Five people will control the executive. Because of the very worthwhile convention of Cabinet solidarity, which I am sure all members respect, 5 people in this Assembly will in fact control it.

Mr Dondas: Which 5?

Mr LEO: That is open to speculation. I could speculate but I do not believe that, in the context of this debate, it is proper.

The Leader of the Opposition also pointed out that, only 5 short months ago, the Administrator detailed the government priorities and the central line this government wished to take for at least the following 12 months if not the term of its entire office. One matter was youth unemployment. Five short months ago, it was the linchpin of this government's thinking. It does seem curious to me that, with so much youth unemployment and with so very little being achieved by this government in the area of youth unemployment...

Mr Dondas: What state has no unemployed?

Mr LEO: Most state governments have achieved very little in lowering the rate of youth unemployment. That is perhaps the reason why the federal government has had to take the initiative. State and territory governments throughout Australia have paid lip service to this pressing need within our community. As I said, it would seem curious that, after this very worthwhile stated priority of the government, we are now to spend some hundreds of thousands of dollars every 12 months on a new ministerial position. Certainly, members of the Legislative Assembly, be they backbenchers or ministers, do not come cheaply. They are very expensive commodities. When you put that together with staff costs and all the rest of it, you are talking about a great deal of money, at least enough to employ some youth within the Northern Territory. However, the government has seen fit to create a special ministerial position to deliberate on our constitutional development.

Mr Speaker, like the Leader of the Opposition, I must at least congratulate the Chief Minister on his selection of that individual. I can think of no member on the government side more fit to hold that position. However, I must restate what the Leader of the Opposition said and take to task once again the Minister for Mines and Energy for what he said. If this

debate continues along political lines, and is aimed at 25% of our population, it will be strangled before it gets off the ground. For the sake of this constitutional development committee, I hope that the Minister for Mines and Energy is not included on it.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, today is a very historic day and I am very pleased to be a part of it. Today the Chief Minister made the government's intention known that we are taking the first step amongst many towards statehood. I too hoped that we would have cooperation from the opposition because this is a pretty big issue. Today, unfortunately, we heard arguments which, to anybody looking in on us from outside, were comparable to asking who invented the wheel. I would like to focus our attention upon something which is important and which the opposition has declared as its intention and part of its policy: a move towards statehood. The government long ago decided that, without any specific timetable, we would head towards the same goal. I believe that our final goal must be full representation with as many representatives in the federal houses that the states have. We may not achieve that in one jump. It would be beaut if we could but the reality is that we may not be able to.

Today is a great day. In spite of getting a few kicks in the shins for our trouble, we have taken that step. I am very pleased to be here at this particular time. Statehood itself will be a 2-edged sword which will both offer privileges to the people of the Northern Territory and confer responsibilities on them. I believe that we must fight for our privileges but, at the same time, we must show that we are responsible. If this Assembly fights over who invented the wheel, it will create a very poor impression on the people down south who are our masters at this stage.

I have been asked, as I dare say many members have been asked in the last few weeks, what the advantages of statehood are. I would like to draw a parallel here between the status of a tenant and a landlord. We have tenant status; we do not have full responsibilities. If something breaks, we can perhaps call upon our landlord to look after that. On the other hand, if the landlord decides that he does not like us, he could use the self-government act to declare us null and void. A few of his neighbours might say that it is nasty and unkind to tip a tenant out, but it is possible. The landlord has greater powers but he also has greater responsibilities. I believe that Territory people are capable of accepting those responsibilities. We are not masters of our own destiny at this stage. I believe that we should aim to become the masters of our destiny.

Self-government has been an intermediate step. It has been very comfortable. We have made great progress, as the Deputy Chief Minister mentioned this morning. We have been supported in many ways but we are growing in many ways. It has been beneficial to the Territory. We have made big strides but we are vulnerable. I think that the mini-budget and machine-gunner Walsh made that very clear. I make a point which may surprise some. In the future, we might even look back and say that the mini-budget and Senator Walsh did us a favour in one sense because they jolted us out of our somewhat comfortable complacency. I am sure that most of us were happy to continue with self-government for a few more years, get some more development and ease into this more gently. But we have been jolted into it and we must prove that we are responsible, that we have the capacity to take hard knocks and that we can win through in the end on this road to statehood. As many members said, it is bound to be rocky.

We will have opposition from interstate. I do not think the opposition will come from the ordinary people interstate. From my discussions with them, I think many of them are very interested that we become a state in due course. We may find that we will get far more opposition from the politicians of the various parties interstate and I think most of us recognise that. They have some reservations about us. I think some of them would say that we are somewhat maverick or even of a selfish breed. I am sure Senator Walsh is one of those. We must demonstrate that we have the ability not only to see ourselves in isolation but to see ourselves as part of the wider Australian community with all the responsibilities and privileges that go with that. I believe that persuasion is better than trying to bludgeon our way through to our goal.

We are not masters of our own destiny in this. Our destiny is in the hands of people in the states. Certainly, the politicians will have a fair part to play in it, but so will the ordinary people. If it comes to a referendum, which may be what has to happen before we can achieve this goal agreed to by all sides, ordinary people will determine our right to statehood. We must persuade them that we are capable of taking a responsible attitude. In the process, we will also fight for our right to full Australian citizenship. This is indeed a moral right, and I am sure we will push that angle. Let us not, however, push only one angle.

I welcome the formation of the select committee. Much consideration has to be given as to how it will be constituted. That was deliberately not declared. You will be kicked whether you do something or whether you do not but we are prepared, in setting up this committee, to listen to the arguments of the opposition. This matter of statehood should be above party politics. All Territory representatives should have an input even if some of us obviously will not be on the committee. Of course, we will be able to bring to the committee the thoughts of our constituents. I would like to put to this Assembly that great things are possible when nobody cares who gains the credit. That might be something which is very difficult for politicians to accept. Both sides have declared that they want to head towards statehood. If we are going to fight over who gets the credit, it will be a sad day. It could shoot the whole thing down before it starts. Maybe I am a dreamer, but I would like to be able to say at the end of this exercise - no matter how many years it takes - that we the elected members of the Northern Territory Assembly have led our people through to statehood and mastery of our own destiny. I would like to see this Assembly as big enough to accept that role and demonstrate to the rest of Australia that we are united, capable and responsible people.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the Chief Minister's statement on statehood and I will be very brief because most speakers have more than adequately covered the main issues. There are 2 main points that I wish to address in this debate today. One concerns our Senate numbers and the other concerns the name of the proposed eventual seventh state of the Commonwealth.

Mr Speaker, the debate concerning the Territory's ultimate move to statehood is rapidly becoming a national one. This debate will gain in momentum and will achieve a high national profile. Even now people from other states are arguing against full Senate representation for the Territory when we achieve statehood. Their argument is based solely on the Territory's population, and it is hypocritical. If this was applied to every state, they would all have to relinquish some of their senators. Only New South Wales,

with the largest population, would stay the same and, of course, that will not happen!

Mr Speaker, the basis for any state to develop its full economic potential is the ability to have total administrative control of all land within its boundaries. In the Territory, this includes, and must include, national parks and Aboriginal land. The Leader of the Opposition has raised this as a issue. In fact, he said it would be a thorny issue and one on which a move towards statehood could founder. I put it to this Assembly that, if the opposition takes the same stance as the government - that is, that all land must be controlled by the Northern Territory - then it would not be a thorny issue at all.

To date, none of the ALP speakers has stated where the ALP stands on whether Aboriginal land and national parks should remain under federal control or cross to Territory control. To date, none of the opposition spokesmen...

Mr Bell: 3 speakers did.

Mr VALE: ...has said where the ALP stands on this issue. Aboriginals are part of the Northern Territory and, of course, must become part of the seventh state, given that they control or have laid claim to nearly 48% of the Northern Territory.

Whilst I am speaking about the Aboriginal issue, I also note that the opposition continually refers to 25% of the Northern Territory's population. I believe that should be qualified because the last official census figures in which Aboriginals were separated was taken back in 1966 or 1967. Since then, they have been included in the total Territory population without a breakdown. Given the fact that the Northern Territory, in recent years, has seen a rapid increase in the European percentage of the total population, with the advent of communities such as Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Ayers Rock and others, I am of the opinion that the total Aboriginal percentage in the Northern Territory's population is now well below 25%.

Mr Speaker, these issues - Senate representation, national parks, Aboriginal land, uranium mining and others - as the debate proceeds, will be progressively taken over by the academics and the constitutional lawyers. But there is one issue which I believe the community feels very strongly about and that is the proposed name for the seventh state. I am certain that a vast majority of Territorians wish to see the word 'Territory' retained in the name of the new state. I would hope that those who have the final say on this issue will bear this in mind because I believe it will go a long way towards achieving public acceptance and full credibility as we move towards statehood.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, let me say I support the Chief Minister's statement in relation to the Territory's move towards statehood. Statehood has now become a question of when rather than if and, if we do not take this first step now, what may become a very long journey will never be completed.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to discuss further the statehood question and our ability to progress towards it in a way which will ensure that broad community support is mobilised in the pursuit of that goal. I wish first to ensure there are no doubts in this Assembly about my personal position on statehood. I believe that the constitutional position of the Northern Territory is an anomaly. I believe that it is impossible for an anomaly of this type to continue to exist indefinitely and I believe that the

moves towards statehood are timely. I will be proud to do my part towards the achievement of a just system of state government for the Northern Territory. I recall the time that I spent in Papua New Guinea before returning to Australia and the very heady negotiations that we had going through the period of self-government and then independence. It is a very heady period; it is one that everybody can be proud to take part in. Given the realities of constitutional development, it is probably the most important period in the development of a state.

Mr Speaker, I would not like the issue of boundaries to be excluded from this debate. The current state boundaries are an accident of the old colonial days. I believe that a very sound argument could be made for a look to be cast in that direction. I refer, for example, to the Kimberleys, the northern part of South Australia and the north-eastern part of Western Australia which have very strong links with the Northern Territory. Some of those areas currently are not very well served by their current governments because they are too remote. I believe that their inclusion in the Northern Territory would assist in developing our own economic viability and really should be looked at in the context of this debate.

Mr Speaker, before I go much further, there is a point that I would like to raise. This arises from what the Leader of the Opposition said this morning regarding what this government maintained was its first priority when we reconvened after the proroguing of the Assembly. I would like to ask what has been done to date in relation to the whole issue of youth unemployment. We had a very interesting statement from the Prime Minister on Sunday. This morning, I would have expected a response from this government in terms of what it has done over the last 5 months and what its proposals are for increasing the employment rate of our youth. All we have had to date is a report of something that came out of the CLP conference. The depth of their wisdom is to cut wages. My electorate has youth unemployment levels approaching 100%. It is a debate to which I would have been very happy to contribute because it is something that is of great concern to me and also to all the older people in my electorate. I mention that in passing because I hope that very soon this Assembly will have the pleasure of receiving the government's proposals on this matter.

Mr Speaker, the member for Araluen referred to the need for a bipartisan approach and he mentioned the need for a broad community consensus. Those are concepts with which I am most wholeheartedly in agreement. It is true, as he stated, that Aboriginal people out bush are inherently conservative and wary of change. It is a trait that they share with many other sections of the Northern Territory community. All of those sections, be they in the pastoral industry, the police force, Aboriginals or whatever, need to be reassured as this debate progresses. They need to know that their interests will be looked after. Every person in the Northern Territory shares some trepidation over change and that is only natural. It is also only natural that a majority of those who have lived here the longest should be the ones who most hanker after the past and who most fear new things.

Mr Speaker, I hope that, in the process of proceeding towards statehood, we will not take the jingoistic road which says that those who are not with us are against us. Let us be sure enough of our arguments so that we are able to encourage people to say what they fear. Let us have those fears out front so that we will have the opportunity of quietening those fears and of finding out ways and means by which we can ease this Territory through into full statehood.

Mr Speaker, there are very real fears in the Aboriginal community over statehood. It pains me to say it in the context of this particular debate but this government does not have a proud record in its dealings with Aboriginal people. I could go into that in very great detail. I would just like to point out a couple of incidents that have arisen in the context of this debate. The Leader of the Opposition has already referred to the Chief Minister's statement in The Age of 20 June. I quote: 'They do not contribute to the economy of the Northern Territory. They are major consumers of services. 25% of the population consumed 35% of our budget, 50% of our hospital beds ...'. Mr Speaker, bad news travels fast. When you make those sorts of statements in the national press about a section of the population, people tend to wonder whether that Chief Minister would look after their interests.

Mr Speaker, I refer again to the statement made recently by the Chief Minister on 8DN in one of his weekly addresses. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of it with me at the moment but I recall that he said that he wanted statehood so that he could organise the devolution of the land rights act and remove the inalienable title over land so that he could resume land etc. There were a number of such statements in that radio 8DN address. Naturally, people become very wary when they hear such comments.

Mr Speaker, I will follow the lead of the member for Araluen in this one and say that, of course, there are fears. There are fears of losing hard-won rights, culture and land. I do not want to travel too far down this track at the moment except to say that mechanisms for quietening those fears will need to be found. I do not wish even to canvass possibilities of how this can be done at this stage. To do so may be construed as a commitment to a certain position. Let me simply repeat that mechanisms will have to be found in the course of our search for a formula for statehood which will provide sufficient guarantees to allay the fears of such a large minority. I have a degree of confidence in the member for Araluen. I believe that, of all those opposite, he is most fitted for this task. I look forward to discussing with him various ways in which we can overcome the very real problems that we will encounter on this road we are travelling on.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude by asserting my belief that full Senate representation should not be negotiable. It is true that there are party politics in the Senate but it is a fact that Tasmania, for example, has been able to use its representation to obtain some very good deals. Not to have 12 members in the Senate would place us inevitably in a second-class relationship with the other states. Mr Speaker, I do not know how we will ever catch up if we first accept less. I believe that future generations of Territorians will criticise us very rightly if we accept anything less than full Senate representation. We require the very best for our children and that means that full Senate representation should be non-negotiable.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, amongst any reasons that anybody might have to seek to see a bipartisan committee established today, I guess the argument that we have just heard from the member for Stuart would be one. He addressed some of the issues which the rest of the opposition failed to do. I imagine that having the honourable member for MacDonnell on any bipartisan committee would be like going to Beirut for your annual holidays. Some of the arguments that he raised today demonstrated his tunnel vision. He raised the Henry and Walker debate, the casinos and all the other issues and related them back to his electorate from where everything is generated. Everything starts off in the MacDonnell electorate. He did not go so far as

to support Mr Walsh and his machine gun; the member for MacDonnell wants selective sniping to be introduced. That goes to show, Mr Speaker, exactly where the ideas and aspirations of the member for MacDonnell really lie. Would you like to take him interstate at all? No way. We are safer leaving him where he is.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he did not have time to prepare for this debate today. He has been speaking about it for 2 months but comes in here with the hollow excuse that he did not have time to prepare for it. He then went on to say that he wants equal representation. He need only look over his left shoulder for a rebuttal of that proposal. The numbers he has just do not stack up. If he wants equal representation, let us have 8 a side because I think that is the only way that we would be prepared to look at that particular matter.

The member for Millner indicated that he wanted 12 senators but I do not think he said it directly. He said that the argument that should be introduced is that we need 12 senators.

Mr B. Collins: I think that means that he said what he wanted.

Mr COULTER: I am not sure if he said what he wanted or not but he seemed terribly confused there. In fact, when I interjected to ask if that meant that we needed 12, silence was the reply.

Mr B. Collins: You are not making a lot of sense.

Mr COULTER: I am just trying to answer some of the issues that the opposition raised today. That proves that the Leader of the Opposition is astute, that there was no sense in anything that it had to offer, apart from the honourable member for Stuart who addressed some of the more serious issues.

Mr B. Collins: I might try that again in a minute.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will cease their interjections and address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, today the opposition avoided a number of issues. Opposition members picked up the Chief Minister for telling the truth, for explaining to people in a national forum that we have a problem with Aboriginal people in terms of their contribution to the economy. I would like to introduce a book which should become compulsory reading for every member of the Legislative Assembly: 'The Aboriginal Economy in Town and Country' by E.K. Fisk. In it, they will find some very interesting statistics. For example, on page 103, it says simply that $215m in social security benefits alone went to the Aboriginal population. I am not saying that that was not deserved or needed. The member for Stuart has also said that there is 100% unemployment in his area, but they are a drain on the economy in those particular cases.

We have been a social playground for the rest of Australia for far too long and the honourable members of the opposition have said for some time now that it is all right and we should let Canberra say what should be done in terms of Aboriginal land or offshore resources. When I interjected to ask why we cannot be masters of our own destiny, the Leader of the Opposition seemed to think that we should leave it with Professor Derek Ovington and that mob in Canberra because they are the ones who look after our land.

Have a look at the section on Aboriginal social indicators. It is interesting to see on page 8 of this book that acts which resulted in Aboriginals gaining freehold title to land were enacted in 1970 in Victoria by Victoria legislation, in 1981 in South Australia by South Australian legislation, in 1983 in New South Wales by New South Wales legislation but in 1976 in the Northern Territory by Commonwealth legislation. The Northern Territory has had enough of Commonwealth legislation and the 70 years of Commonwealth neglect that we have had to put up with. It is time for us to make decisions about our land because you cannot have statehood and allow somebody else to look after your land. That is an issue that must be addressed, and it must be addressed soon.

The other things that are quite obviously on the minds of the opposition members today are the problems with youth and youth unemployment. Once again, they have been led into the trap by their fearless leader, the Prime Minister of Australia, who made an address to the nation about youth. They have jumped on the bandwagon and run with it. How many times do they have to be let down by the Prime Minister in what he promises to do? When will they wake up to the fact that he is not in the best interests of the Northern Territory - and I have some reservations as to whether he is in the best interests of Australia.

Professor Ovington is responsible for Kakadu, Uluru and our other national parks. One man, operating out of an office in Canberra is responsible for our national parks. We must be able to stand on our own feet and decide what is ours inside our boundaries. If you like to look at history, it is interesting to see how the Northern Territory's boundaries came into being - I would not mind preparing a paper for honourable members if they have not read much on that particular matter - and how the area of the Northern Territory was reduced to what it is today. If you go one step further to look at the land rights issue and the lines that have been drawn across the Northern Territory, you will see that it has been squeezed up even more. If we do not move to statehood soon, there will be nothing left because the Commonwealth, using the Territory as a social playground, will have given it all away.

The Leader of the Opposition said that it is absolute rubbish that we should go into uranium mining because of the problems with export licences. He is quite right. The federal government has control over export licences, but may I remind him about Jabiluka and Pancon and their environmental report? May I remind him how far advanced that particular mine was, how economic it was considered to be, and of the purity of the uranium out there long before we ever heard of the mines in South Australia? Please remember that they were copper mines so therefore they were all right. Never mind that, given world prices, copper was going down the hole so fast that nobody wanted to find copper. The fact is that Pancon could have gone ahead much earlier than any mine in South Australia if we had been able to obtain the federal government's okay to proceed. Because we did not have any political clout in Canberra, we were not able to put our message across. The things that have been done to us would not have been tolerated anywhere else in Australia.

Of the issues that were raised today, and which were referred to by the Leader of the Opposition as 'absolute rubbish', Mr Deputy Speaker, you notice that he did not go into much detail about national parks. He said, 'National parks. Yes', as if to say that we have an argument there and maybe they should be returned.

Mr B. Collins: Suspend standing orders and I will do it now.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, he had his opportunity to give us some enlightenment about his views on statehood, but he chose not to do that. In fact, he then decided that he would pin the basis of his argument on rubbishing the Chief Minister and his proposals. They are the very issues on which Northern Territorians have had enough and he would like to find some answers for them. By appointing the member for Araluen to look at constitutional development, the Chief Minister has now decided to look at the issues. We do not even know the issues.

If statehood means 12 senators to the honourable member for Millner, what about land? Does he think about land? He made no mention of it. If he thinks about it, the problems associated with land are enormous. For example, Nhulunbuy operates under a Commonwealth lease. Does that mean that Nhulunbuy will break away if we become a state? Those types of issues will have to be addressed. I hear people saying that it will cost too much. If we are not fair dinkum, if we are not prepared to elevate a member of our government to a status where he can be an equal, where he can travel wherever he likes and talk on that basis because it will cost an extra $20 000 a year, then we are not ready for statehood. I would not like to take that argument any further than the borders with South Australia, Queensland or Western Australia because people would not listen to me. We must have somebody of the calibre of the member for Araluen to address those particular issues.

Interestingly enough, in the past, the Leader of the Opposition has described the Constitutional Convention as a 'talkfest'. I have heard him describe it as a waste of time. All of a sudden, a bolt has hit him out of the sky and it is now a magnificent forum where he can address issues on statehood. That is true because time changes. He referred to various speeches which the Chief Minister had made. At the time, we did not have Mr Walsh on the scene and section 33 of the Memorandum of Understanding being thrown out the door. We were not told at the start of this year that, from 1988, we would be treated like a state in relation to funding. That happened only recently and, as a result of that, we have started to address the issues. If we are to be treated as a state, we might as well be one. It is as simple as that and arguing about whether the Memorandum of Understanding is intact or not will not help very much when it comes to picking up the money because it will not be there. We will not have representation in Canberra to ensure that the money is there and that we are not treated like second-class citizens but in the same manner that every other Australian has become accustomed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will sum up very quickly. The issues will concern land and they cannot be swept under the carpet. Check all the other legislation throughout the country. Send the Leader of the Opposition down to ask Mr Burke about land rights and whether he would like the Commonwealth government looking after them. He was given an example of that the other night when it was decided in the federal Cabinet that his land rights model would be thrown out. He was not told that by the minister responsible, Clyde Holding, but by another Cabinet colleague. Go to Mr Burke and see what he thinks about the Commonwealth looking after his land or that of New South Wales, Victoria or any of the other states. Land will be a very important issue. Also, national parks will be an important issue here and we will not have them run by somebody sitting on the 27th floor of a building in Canberra and not looking out over Uluru or Kakadu. It should not happen here in the Northern Territory.

I do not accept the argument put forward by the member for Stuart that we have not been successful on the issue of Aboriginals and the problems faced by

them. The Commonwealth has had that responsibility for some considerable time and continues to have that responsibility. Whilst the Northern Territory is looked upon as a social playground by people in the southern states, we cannot face the real problems in Aboriginal communities. They need to be addressed by Northern Territorians as masters of our own destiny. Mr Deputy Speaker, you can sit here and argue about 12 senators, bipartisan committees or whatever you like for as long as you like; the real issues have to be addressed in the manner which the Chief Minister has had the courage to do: by setting up a special ministry responsible for constitutional development. The new minister will require the total support of all Northern Territorians to ensure that we get the best deal, a deal that has been denied to us ever since federation was first commenced by Mr Parkes in 1901.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel rather inadequate in following such an eloquent speaker. However, in rising to support the Chief Minister's statement, I must compliment the member for Stuart on his opening remarks. I thought he was one of the very few constructive speakers from the opposition. Regrettably though, it did not take very long before he also went off the rails. But I was impressed with the few words with which he opened his remarks. I must, however, express my disappointment at the opposition's attitude and its negative approach. It has caused me great concern. I am also sure that the community at large will be concerned when it hears what the opposition has had to say today. I believe that today it has done a great disservice to the Northern Territory. I had hoped that the opposition would take a positive view. However, it has chosen instead to adopt a negative approach.

The Chief Minister's statement advised the Assembly of the appointment of a minister for constitutional development who will chair a select committee of this Assembly. It is that committee which will formulate policies for discussion by this Assembly at some later date. It was never our intention to debate the detailed issues at this stage but simply to advise this Assembly of the initial move. From this, the debate will develop.

The member for Millner commented that the committee would reflect only the CLP's view. Let me advise the member that the CLP does not yet have a firm view.

Mr B. Collins: That is pretty obvious.

Mr SETTER: That is true, and nor do you. The policy will be formulated at a conference to be held in October. He is well aware of that and, in fact, his own party is soon to conduct a similar forum.

The Leader of the Opposition's statement that he would not participate in the select committee unless his party had equal representation is typical of his negative attitude. He was followed by several of his colleagues who spewed forth their smoke and their hot air. I liken them to a range of spent volcanoes.

Nevertheless, I am very pleased today to be present on this historic occasion and to witness the Chief Minister set this Assembly on the path to statehood. In fact, I consider myself fortunate indeed to have experienced the introduction of self-government 7 years ago with the prosperity that that has brought. This exciting move today towards further constitutional development will carry on the good work that we have seen in those last 7 years. I look forward also to having the opportunity to witness the granting

of statehood at some time in the future - not in 2 years or 5 years but at some time in the future.

In recent times, we have heard much rhetoric regarding statehood. This has come from the media, from members of political parties and from the community at large, but it has been rhetoric and nothing more. Much of this has been speculation and, regrettably, in the main has centred around what representation we can expect and perhaps what representation we should demand. To use a phrase used by my colleague, let me say that there lies ahead of us a minefield of issues which have to be negotiated and resolved before this final agreement can be reached. Representation is but one of these problems that we must address. It is most encouraging to note the amount of fervour developing in the community. This is a healthy sign. It is only through this debate that the community will become aware of the real issues. My colleague on my right alluded to a number of those issues: land, conservation and so on. It is only through debate on these issues that the community will form its attitude. From this community debate, governments and select committees can develop policies which will truly reflect the feelings of the people of the Northern Territory.

I am on record as saying some months ago that the move towards statehood was imminent but that we should not move until the community feeling required it. We have now reached that point in our history. However, there is one note of caution I would like to raise. Whilst we in the Northern Territory might discuss and argue about what conditions we want as a state, bear in mind, Sir, that there are others involved who are in a greater and a stronger position than us. I refer to the states and to the Commonwealth. They have the constitutional right to have much influence on the conditions under which statehood is granted and, indeed, on whether it is to be granted at all. It is all very well for us in the Northern Territory to be shouting our demands from the rooftops but let me point out that, without their cooperation and sympathy to our cause, our pleas will count for nought. Mr Deputy Speaker, as well as all else, we need to sell our cause to the states and to the Commonwealth because, without their support, we could well enter the next century still as the Northern Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia.

I commend the Chief Minister for his actions and offer the Special Minister for Constitutional Development, the Hon Jim Robertson, and the new Minister for Health and Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon Ray Hanrahan, my full support.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was a little bit disconcerted by some of the comments of opposition members. The Leader of the Opposition said that we must demand full representation in the Senate. That is something that I personally support. We must go for full representation in the Senate. But he said also that we must not demand equality with the states in relation to land and uranium mines. I noted that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that some states in the union of the United States do not have full representation. I believe that he is wrong. It is my understanding that all the states, including the newer ones, have full representation. That is no mean feat. If they can do it, so can we. It is totally unacceptable that the Northern Territory should achieve statehood as a second-class state. We will have achieved little if anything with such a move. We have been, and we still are, the plaything of the federal government. As a state, we will attain at least such security as statehood provides. There is some doubt about that given the High Court decisions on dams in Tasmania.

No one believes that any of the present 6 states would have come into the federation on any arrangement short of equality. Neither would they have been subject to federal government disenfranchisement if they did not enter the federation. They argued from the strength of being states with no chance of losing their status as states. They would not have been territories but sovereign states outside the federation. We as a territory are subject to the whim of federal governments which are happy to use us as a practice ground for every harebrained ideal that noisy interest groups put before them. I would expect all members on both sides of the Assembly, and indeed all Territorians, to have similar views on our right to statehood. I trust the opposition will put aside its petty point-scoring to ensure that we achieve statehood on equal terms with the other states at a time of our choosing.

I am delighted to see the member for Araluen appointed to the position of Special Minister for Constitutional Development. I believe that he is the right man in the right place at the right time and it is fortunate that we have him here. I am sure that he has the qualifications to achieve the deal that we are entitled to with the support of people of all political persuasions. I think that has been borne out at least in this Assembly. I look forward to this period of development to constitutional equality with the states and I applaud the Chief Minister's timely announcement and his arrangements to ensure that constitutional development and equality is achieved.

Mr MANZIE (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of the statement made by the Chief Minister this morning. What is it that is different between Territorians and other Australians, apart from our initiative, drive and optimism? The fact is that, as Territorians, we have no say in what happens in our national parks. A Canberra-based bureaucrat is considered to know better than us. We have no control over uranium mining and we have no royalty income from such mining. Again, people in Canberra know better. We have no control over half the land which makes up the Northern Territory even though the states are considered capable of exercising control over all land within their boundaries. In addition, we do not have the political representation that all other Australians have enjoyed since federation. On top of that, we have been informed by the federal Treasurer that, from 1988, funding for the Northern Territory will be on the same basis as that for the states. Therefore, with economic equality with the states, we must have total equality in all areas. We must move to statehood!

As acknowledged by all in this Assembly, the path to statehood will be long and difficult. It is a matter of great importance involving all Territorians, state governments and all Australians. This government has acknowledged the importance of this task with the appointment of a Special Minister for Constitutional Development. This step has been greeted by some members of the opposition with derision, as has the proposed appointment of a select committee.

I was extremely disappointed by the attitude of the opposition this morning. The Leader of the Opposition complained that he had insufficient time to read the Chief Minister's statement. However, while the Chief Minister was making that same statement to this Assembly, members of the opposition were giggling amongst themselves like a group of schoolgirls at their first social outing.

Mr D.W. Collins: Shame!

Mr MANZIE: I found it extremely shameful.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition used the majority of his time to attack the Chief Minister and government members in a most despicable manner. The issue of constitutional development and statehood was far from his mind as he sought to make political gain from a subject that should be above politics. He described the government as a kindergarten group. One wonders just what his problem was. It dawned on me when he mentioned on 2 occasions that it was he who started the statehood debate and not the Chief Minister or the government. What an ego trip! What a kindergarten performance, Mr Speaker! The progression to statehood has been a stated aim of the Country Liberal Party platform for over 10 years.

The member for Millner confined most of his statements to the matter of Senate representation, an issue which the proposed select committee will address most capably. Most of his speech had little bearing on the statehood issue, but he was out to score as many political points as he could. He did not score very highly.

The member for MacDonnell was another opposition speaker who disappointed me. His comments were negative and he attempted to completely politicise the issue. He spoke about land rights...

Mr Bell: I did not do that.

Mr MANZIE: ...and he described the fear that he is no doubt already spreading amongst his constituents about the possibility of the Northern Territory assuming control of all land within its boundaries just as other states do. He also made the lulu of a statement that Territorians could not be trusted to control their own land. What an attitude! We can control and administer health, police, treasury and a myriad of other functions but the member for MacDonnell considers that Territorians are not capable or fit to control our own land.

I was extremely disappointed with his remarks concerning the position of the Special Minister for Constitutional Development. The member for MacDonnell exhibited a total lack of understanding of the complexities and the workload faced by the new minister. The move towards statehood is not a matter for cheap, political point-scoring. I believe honourable members opposite will be ashamed of their performance this afternoon, with the possible exception of the member for Stuart who did have some quite constructive comments. When the other members read their contributions in Hansard, I am sure they will be ashamed. Territorians who elected them have a right to expect more constructive comments than they have made today. The select committee and its chairman have a most important task in collecting and collating information and coordinating our move along the road to constitutional development and eventual statehood. I urge the opposition to approach this most important of tasks in a sensible and constructive way. We live in Australia, Mr Speaker. We are all Australians, and we deserve to have the same rights as all Australians.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Sanderson averred of my comments in this debate earlier that I said - and I believe I am quoting him correctly - that 'Territorians cannot be trusted to control their own land'. In the debate this afternoon, he suggested that that

was what I had said verbatim. I would like to point out to him and to other honourable members that I said absolutely nothing of the sort. I am quite convinced that, when he has a look at the Hansard tomorrow morning, he will find that his suggestion in that regard is absolutely false.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, despite the giggling and scoffing at the suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition, today is quite an historical day for this Assembly. Despite the fact that he proceeded to denigrate the debate on this important issue, I for one am pleased at the formal announcement that we are on the road towards statehood and that our move towards that end has been properly coordinated today. After 7 years of self-government, recent decisions regarding the financial future of the Territory have made it clear to all Territorians, and for that matter to all Australians interested in this part of Australia, that we are to be regarded as a state, like it or not.

There has been a great deal of speculation in the media and, for that matter, by politicians on both sides of the Assembly. That speculation has surrounded the nuts and bolts of statehood and rarely has it addressed a proper constitutional foundation. The Leader of the Opposition once again has taken a negative attitude to the formal launching of the proper development of the Northern Territory as he has with all other developments in the Territory. If he did not want to debate the issue at this time, he could have sought an adjournment and debated the matter when he had discussed the details of the select committee with its proposed chairman. Instead, he rose to his feet, looked to the press box, checked that the radio was working and that the young students were about to be impressed, and then commenced to grandstand. The rising and the setting of the sun in the Northern Territory is not because the Leader of the Opposition thought of it first and neither will statehood come about for that reason. Statehood will come to fruition only if people who are genuinely interested in the future of this part of Australia strive for it. I would like the Australian Labor Party and its representatives in the Territory to join us in this endeavour. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to show a little maturity on this issue. I quote from the first page of the Chief Minister's statement today: 'We seek the help of all Australians in this endeavour'. That is about as bipartisan as you can get.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, today the Northern Territory is taking a very significant step. We have watched the gradual evolution of some form of constitutional development and self-determination. After a tortuous 70 years of servitude to Canberra, the Territory blossomed forth from 1974 to 1978 into self-government. All of us celebrated that event and all Territorians have worked hard to improve and develop the Territory and take advantage of that opportunity for self-determination. Unfortunately, the further we go down the road of self-government, the relative impotence that our government and our community have as a consequence of the fact that we are not yet a full partner in the federation of states of Australia becomes more and more evident. Quite clearly, the events of this year have brought the debate on statehood to a head. They have not started the debate but they have accelerated the debate, discussion and consideration.

I have always been of the view that the time to start working and considering the progress towards statehood is now, whenever now happens to be. I am a strong supporter of moves that we make on organised and planned progress towards the achievement of full constitutional, political and democratic rights for the citizens of the Northern Territory. If we as an Assembly are not working towards that objective, we do not have a right to be

in this room. Today should have been a day of coming together to work towards a common goal irrespective of which side of the Assembly a member sits. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to contribute to the denigration of the importance of today by lowering myself to the standard of debate that has come from honourable members opposite. In making that statement, I must say that I totally exclude the statements made by the member for Stuart who made quite a statesmanlike contribution, given the difficulty he must face within his party with its rigid hierarchy. It is a shame that his leader did not show the same degree of political maturity in this debate today. The attacks and personal denigrations of the Leader of the Opposition will stand as a shame on him and a shame on this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of points raised in debate that really ought to be addressed. One in particular is a challenge issued by the Leader of the Opposition in his assertion, either directly or by implication, that somehow he has led the debate on statehood. It is fascinating when one sees how people can change position from time to time depending on their political whims. Members of the opposition seem to be very good at that. He asked where the Tuxworth government has made statements on statehood. He challenged people to find one word about statehood in the statement on 26 February about the goals and objectives of the government. I refer the Leader of the Opposition to page 5 of Hansard of 26 February 1985. The final paragraph states: 'My government will use its term of office to continue the economic, social and constitutional advancement of the Northern Territory'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that answers the challenge of the Leader of the Opposition. It has been and will be the role of the government and the Country Liberal Party to work towards the full constitutional development of the Northern Territory. We have done that in the past in the face of vicious opposition from the members of the Australian Labor Party. I refer to their 1977 scaremongering election campaign when they fought against our progress to self-government. It is strange how the times change. Maybe they finally realised the mistake they made at that time. I suspect the only mistake they recognised was a political one in the long term. They do not recognise the fundamental mistake in principle that they made as a party purporting to represent the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is what this issue is about today. We have heard much about bipartisanship. The speech by the Chief Minister is a document that promotes bipartisanship and an air of cooperation. This occurred to the extent that even the proposals for the formation of the select committee and the numbers etc associated with the select committee were not being spelled out and pushed on the Assembly. Rather, they were held aside to enable discussions to occur between the 2 sides of this Assembly and to start that process of bipartisanship.

One can only assume from the vituperative rhetoric of the Leader of the Opposition that he sees it as important to play a numbers game on a select committee of that nature. Presumably he has some intention to introduce party politics to such a select committee. If that is to be the case, I think it would be a tragedy for the Northern Territory and a tragedy for this Assembly. What we need on the select committee are people who are honestly and earnestly desirous of seeing the Northern Territory progress fairly and properly towards statehood. On that select committee, it should not matter which side of the Assembly those members sit on if they are to address this

very serious issue fairly and properly. I was concerned at the comments of both the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Millner in that regard. I would hope that we can approach such a select committee on a bipartisan basis.

I do not wish to enter into some of the debates. However, I am still trying to work out how somebody can say that a ministerial statement which announces the formation of a Special Minister for Constitutional Development, a select committee to investigate constitutional development, an advisory committee and a series of related administrative arrangements is not a debate on statehood. It has me beaten.

Mr Bell: Do you reckon that is a full-time job with all your swag of work?

Mr HATTON: Yes, I do.

Mr Bell: Good on you.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the function of the Special Minister for Constitutional Development is critically important to the Northern Territory. It is highly complex. It is moving into unprecedented constitutional ground in Australia. It will require a complex effort to determine the processes and procedures, to work with 6 states, a Commonwealth government and a multitude of communities that exist within the Northern Territory, and to nurse this process through to fruition. That process needs full-time attention. If one gets away from the gossamer and gloss attitude evident in the comments of the opposition and examines the real complexities of the issue, one would not make the comment that it should not be a full-time job. It is quite patently stupid to make such a comment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to proceed any further except to affirm my wholehearted support for the move and to offer my congratulations to the Special Minister for Constitutional Development and to my new ministerial colleague, the Minister for Health, Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, and to look forward to an uplifting of this discussion in the future so that we can proceed in some bipartisan and logical process towards proper constitutional development in the interests of the citizens of the Northern Territory.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to take a brief moment of this Assembly's time to address the issue at hand, both as a member of this Assembly and on behalf of the constituents of Wagaman. I would like to take the opportunity to have recorded my recognition of this most significant step in constitutional development of the Northern Territory. There is certainly no need to dwell on the realisation that this is a most significant step and all of the benefits that will come from development of the Northern Territory into statehood could go without saying.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to comment on any of the many complex aspects of the forthcoming progression to statehood. I am sure that that matter is best left in the hands of the select committee and for members of the public and various interest groups to add their contributions appropriately. Nor do I intend to acknowledge the ill-based and illogical nonsense that has been forthcoming from members opposite during today's debate. Certainly, it has been a disappointment to me also that the debate has been reduced to such a level. I guess there is some personal

disappointment there too in having a constituent of the electorate of Wagaman, none other than the Leader of the Opposition, who I thought should have had far more to add to this debate than what he gave us this morning. One would hope that the members of the opposition will be able to get their act together and propose some purposeful members to that select committee as it is developed. It is disappointing that almost every issue except the one at hand has been debated this afternoon and that a significant amount of the debate was directed towards personal denigration of individual members and members collectively. Certainly, I endorse the comments of the Minister for Lands in directing the attention of my parliamentary colleagues to the fact that the matter certainly deserves far better attention from us all than has been given to date.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to his colleagues. In fact, I think he said that none of them had any knowledge of the subject at hand. I am not sure if I misunderstood him or not.

Mr B. Collins: You did.

Mr FINCH: Certainly, I was disappointed that, apart from the member for Stuart, none of the members opposite indicated any sort of desire to participate with any degree of enthusiasm in what is a most significant step. I would like to suggest simply that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues should get their act together and accept their responsibilities as elected members of this Assembly to provide fruitful and constructive debate.

I would like to close by commending the Chief Minister for making this most auspicious move towards setting up a methodology that will lead to a most constructive progression towards statehood. I would like to add my congratulations to the Special Minister for Constitutional Development. I am quite sure that, under his leadership and the constructive contribution of his committee, the times ahead will be most interesting and productive.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, my contribution today will be very brief but I would like to draw a comparison between our path to statehood and a situation that exists in the rural area at the moment. I am talking about our path towards local government in the rural area. A parallel can be drawn with a broad brush. Before I start, I would like to say that, when I started to listen to the Leader of the Opposition today, I was caught by his oratorical skill of which he has some. After I had been listening for a while, I became aware that it was very familiar and I wondered where I had heard it all before. I heard a similar delivery a long time ago, more years ago than I care to remember, when I was at school. The Leader of the Opposition may have copied the people to whom I refer. I refer to a certain group of missionary priests who used to come around to the convent breathing hell, fire and damnation. They did this to pep us up and to put us on the right path again. With hindsight, if one analysed what they said, it was repetition, repetition and repetition. If one reads tomorrow what the Leader of the Opposition said today and discounts the repetition, I do not think he needed to have asked for an extension of time. All he had to say could have been said in about 10 minutes.

Mr B. Collins: When you are dealing with stupid people, you have no choice, Noel. Schoolteachers are like that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, if you are dealing with some schoolteachers. You had better look behind you, Leader of the Opposition, and not over here.

Whilst nobody wants to bring party politics into this question of statehood because it should be above ordinary party politics, nevertheless certain facts must be faced if one is talking about select committees. The fact is that about two-thirds of the electorate outside these walls favour our form of government. Two-thirds of the people think roughly the same as we do and any committee that is formed should reflect that.

I turn, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the comparisons I see between our path to statehood and our path to local government in the rural area. I would like to start by saying that, until now - and I hope it continues - party politics have not been brought into the matter of local government for the rural area. I think the Minister for Community Development will bear me out on this. I have spoken with many people in the rural area, both individuals and people belonging to organisations whose politics I know are not mine. Nevertheless, it is too important an issue for party politics to come into it. I think that our path to statehood could follow advantageously the path that has already been established in our move towards local government. Perhaps the reasons for introducing statehood and for introducing local government may not be exactly the same. The minister said that he wanted to introduce local government into the rural area because it has been forced on him by people in another place, namely Canberra. Statehood could be forced on us by the views of people in other places.

I am aware that many people in the electorate want to know if we are moving to statehood. Because our present form of self-determination has been so successful since 1978, they can see statehood as the next logical step and they are starting to ask questions. Are we moving to statehood or are we not? How will our situation compare with other states? What will be the advantages and disadvantages? Most importantly, most people want to know how it will affect their hip pocket. All of these questions have been asked by people in the Darwin rural area in relation to proposals for local government. The first thing that should be considered is the need for guidelines to be drawn up so that we can proceed. The Minister for Community Development will probably be quite embarrassed at my praising him because, in the past...

Mr Coulter: Suspicious is the word.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ...we have had our arguments. Perhaps he has been all sweetness and light, but I have stated my views to him on a number of occasions about certain matters, and I have not minced words. I think he has done the right thing in drawing up guidelines for local government. Whether those guidelines will continue to be the final parameters for the operation of local government is yet to be seen. To date, he has made 2 major changes in the original guidelines because of input from the public. I can see this happening with discussion by the general public about statehood. With the local government issue, there has been discussion not only with individuals but also with different community groups. In fact, the minister and I will be attending another meeting tonight in the rural area. I assume he will be there; I believe he is the guest speaker.

I can see the Special Minister for Constitutional Development having a very busy job ahead of him not only sitting in his office working out his plan of procedure but also consulting with different groups and individuals in the community. In any discussions between the minister and the community, it is very important that what the community says is listened to. I do not say that every idea put forward by the community or even by members as representatives of the community will be accepted. I think it is most important that ideas

that the people and their representatives put forward be considered seriously before acceptance or rejection.

I would like to draw a comparison here with the local government issue. It has been my view, and I will state it in other places if necessary, that perhaps the Minister for Community Development, in considering the local government issue, could consider other views put forward and not pursue only the one view that he has been pursuing about the form of local government that he thinks is the best for the rural area. There are 1 or 2 other forms of local government that could be adopted. To my knowledge, to date he has not even considered them. I am not saying that they would be better than the one he has put forward but he has not given the people and the groups that have put them forward the benefit of being able to say that he has given them his consideration or the consideration of the officers of his department.

I think it is most important that everybody in the community is apprised of the proposed intention to pursue statehood. It is something we have to think about actively if we have not already been thinking about it. Extensive consultation must be had with all groups and individuals. As I have just said, the public input must be considered before it is accepted or rejected and it must be seen to be considered before acceptance or rejection. The minister, like the Minister for Community Development, must be prepared to be malleable if other people appear to have better ideas than his own. I feel certain that he will be malleable. The Minister for Community Development has been malleable up to a point. I would like him to be a little more receptive of views put forward by community groups.

The people in the electorate need to know the monetary aspects of statehood as compared to the self-determination that we have now. That is a very important aspect of the proposed local government in the rural area because people are very careful with their dollars and cents out our way and they do not want to have to pay for anything that they will not reap some benefit from. I am not only speaking altruistically but I am speaking very basically because, when there is not much money around, every dollar counts. We need to know what the cost of statehood will be. We need to know what it will cost us in the way of services. We need to know what the advantages are and what the disadvantages are. We need to know if our present situation will change and, if so, how it will change. All these points need to be considered. They are at issue now, the same as they are at issue in the rural area with the question of local government. I will conclude by saying that there must be public input which must be listened to before it is accepted or rejected.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, in speaking in support of the ministerial statement, I would like to refer to an analogy. The analogy to what we are attempting to set up is machinery to plan a long, difficult and unknown trip. The trip may have all sorts of pitfalls along it. We do not even know the route and we do not know the state we will be in when we finally arrive at our destination. We have not even determined the method of transport or what we should carry on the way to help us achieve the goal that we have set ourselves.

I have heard a lot of debate today. I am sorry to say that I did not particularly like the way in which the ministerial statement was debated by some of the members of this Assembly. I would have thought that we would have been more unified in our approach to achieving statehood and the method that has been suggested today. I believe that there have been some very valid

points made by most speakers in respect of the difficulties that we all know we will face in achieving this end.

I would like to draw members' attention to section 121 of the Constitution of Australia. I am surprised that no one referred to the Constitution today. It makes interesting reading. I am sure that many of my constituents certainly do not realise how definitive that section of the Constitution is in relation to the introduction of a new state into the Commonwealth. We must not be under any illusions about exactly how difficult it will be to achieve statehood. Section 121 of the Constitution reads:

> 'The parliament may admit to the Commonwealth or establish new states and may, upon such admission or establishment, make or impose such terms and conditions, including the extent of such representation in either house of parliament, as it thinks fit'.

If that is not a difficult fight to fight, I do not know what is.

This is a little out of date. I do not have a completely updated version. In the context of the debate today, it will indicate the sorts of problems that we will face. The original states that determined they would federate were New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, with Western Australia not quite determined to join in the brief period before federation. The Constitution made provision for either 1 of 2 scenarios. It might help to know the numbers of members that were eligible at federation to represent each state in the House of Representatives: New South Wales 23, Victoria 20, Queensland 8, South Australia 6 and Tasmania 5. There was a provision in the Constitution that, if Western Australia became an original state, as it did, the numbers would be as follows: New South Wales 26, Victoria 23, Queensland 9, South Australia 7, and Western Australia and Tasmania 5 each. In relation to the Senate, originally there was provision for 6 members. Later, it became 10.

We have a very difficult time ahead of us. I hope that, when we do work our way through the sorts of problems that we will be facing, there will be complete unity. When we set up the select committee - whether on equal grounds or, as has been the precedent in the past, with a government majority - I believe that, because the issue of statehood is of such seriousness to us in the Northern Territory, and disregarding the way in which 'bipartisan' has been bandied around this Chamber today, representation of Territory interests must be paramount. I believe that that will be the case. Disregarding the rhetoric that sometimes occurs in this Chamber, I believe that all members truly believe in the Northern Territory; they would not be here representing their constituents otherwise.

I would like to digress for a moment to read a couple of interesting quotes from the Australian federation conference in 1890. I quote from a speech delivered by Sir Henry Parkes that referred to the select committee set up in Victoria in 1857 to determine the course towards statehood. I think some of the things that he said are as reasonable today as they were then:

> 'On the ultimate necessity of a federal union, there is but one opinion. Your committee is unanimous in believing that the interest and honour of those growing states would be promoted by the establishment of a system of mutual action and cooperation among them. Their interest suffers and must continue to suffer while competing tariffs, naturalisation laws and land systems rival schemes

of immigration and of ocean postage...and a distant and expensive system of judicial appeal exist.

By becoming confederates so early in their career, the Australian colonies would, we believe, immensely economise their strength and resources. They would substitute a common national interest for local and conflicting interests, and waste no more time in barren rivalry. They would enhance the national credit, and attain much earlier the power of undertaking works of serious cost and importance. They would not only save time and money, but attain increased vigour and accuracy, by treating the larger questions of public money at one time and place, and, in an Assembly which it may be presumed would consist of the wisest and most experienced statesmen of the colonial legislatures, they would set up a safeguard against violence or disorder, holding it in check by the common sense and common force of the Federation... Most of us conceive that the time for union has come'.

Without appearing to be preaching to the converted, I would like to refer to another part of that speech. This is in Sir Henry Parkes' own words which, I believe, probably encapsulate what most of us are trying to do today:

'If we are only wise and can only agree among ourselves - if we acknowledge that bond which unites us as one people whether we will or not - if we acknowledge frankly that kinship from which we cannot escape, and from which no one desires to escape - if we acknowledge that, and if we subordinate all our lower and sectional considerations to the one great aim of building up a power which, in the world outside, will have more influence, command more respect, will more securely enhance every comfort, and every profit of life among ourselves - if we only enter into the single contemplation of this one object, the thing will be accomplished, and accomplished more easily and in shorter time than any great achievement of the same nature was ever accomplished before. But let there be no mistake. We cannot become a nation and still cling to conditions and to desires which are antagonistic to nationality. We cannot become one united people and cherish some provincial object which is inconsistent with that national unity'.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I thought I had better speak in this debate. It appears that I am the only one who has not spoken and I do really support the statement that has been made by the Chief Minister today in relation to the moves towards statehood. The debate has been somewhat disappointing but I think that it is important that we realise that the only way this will succeed is to adopt a bipartisan approach.

I might say that I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition in relation to this point. It is possible for committees which have a government majority to operate effectively in a bipartisan manner. I have taken part in many forums where such committees have worked very effectively and have approached their task in a responsible and bipartisan fashion. I think that, despite the concern of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the existing committee system, it is able to work in the fashion that I have described. There is no doubt about that at all. It is vital that we ensure that we have that overall approach. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition is able to take part in the next stage of our development. As has been mentioned, the move to statehood started many years ago. Self-government was another progression

down that particular path and, in years to come, we will eventually take our place as the seventh state in Australia.

I would like to say, Mr Speaker, that it was also interesting to listen to the member for Koolpinyah's contribution in relation to the rural area. It would appear that the Minister for Community Development has a lot to answer for in respect of her concerns. But I might say that she was putting the point of view of her constituents and that same feeling must be evident in this whole exercise. Territorians are the ones who want to have their say in what is happening and we want to be part of the whole progression towards eventual statehood. I must say - and I cannot emphasise this enough - that, if we are to succeed in this exercise, there must be a bipartisan approach. I believe that a a select committee committee system can be set up and, even if the government has the major representation on that particular committee, it will be able to work effectively and in a bipartisan fashion.

I would like to put on record my congratulations to the new Minister for Health and Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs and, in particular, my congratulations to the Special Minister for Constitutional Development. I wish him well in the task that lies ahead of him.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I have found today a most interesting day. There have been no surprises; it has been just about as predictable as we could expect it to be. We have had our fair share of sincerity, humour, objectivity, criticism and all the things that normally go with our debates and discussions despite the importance of the matter before us today and the paper that I gave to the Assembly this morning.

Mr Speaker, there are a few comments that I would like to pick up because I do not think that they should pass unnoticed. Some of the issues are very important. The Leader of the Opposition was absolutely predictable in his approach. He was supportive totally of the concept of statehood but unable to address the matter today because he did not have time. He said he had been treated appallingly and just did not have a chance to read it all. Most of the paper today had nothing to do with the philosophy or issues surrounding statehood, and for anybody to believe the proposition that the Leader of the Opposition did not have time to consider the paper is just nonsense. Where has he been for the last 5 years? He has talked about it publicly in the press. He has been on talk-back radio speaking about it. He has spoken at his own ALP conference about it. I have had private discussions about it with him on several occasions - and very interesting ones, Mr Speaker, when we got into the issues. Anybody in this Assembly who stands up today and says that he cannot make a contribution because he has not had time is really admitting that he is not doing his job or is not interested in it. That is the bottom line.

Mr Smith: But surely you can operate on such an important issue off the bottom line. What an indictment that is of you!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition can contain himself for a minute, I will get to the young fellow if he will be patient.

Mr Speaker, if you take the knocking and the rhetoric out of the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, all that is left is personal abuse. I was going to say to you, Mr Speaker, that the personal abuse does not worry me. One of the things that I learnt very early in life is that,

when guys are giving you plenty of personal abuse, you have got them and you have got them good because that is the only tool they have left. Bring all the personal abuse you like; I can take all you can dish up.

Mr Smith: You should take some of your own personal abuse.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I would ask the honourable member to tell me when I have abused members in a personal way. Politically, I will have a bit of them, but not personally.

I will move on to a couple of points that I want to touch on. The Northern Territory is used to people who seek to oppose its political development from within this Assembly, from within the federal parliament and from within the states. Normally, those people say that they would like us to develop and mature politically but they do not like the way we are doing it. That is the basis of the argument. We have heard it again today, Mr Speaker: 'Good idea, motherhood, statehood, apple pies and custard, raspberry aid, but not unless you do it our way'.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to a couple of clippings. I have one that relates to 1960 and a fellow called Dick Ward, a former Labor member of this parliament whom I would have been proud to call my father: 'The Territory will never develop, as has been shown elsewhere throughout the world, until the people have the reins of government completely in their own hands'. Another clipping is from January this year:

> '"Urgent constitutional reform is necessary to open the way for statehood for the Territory", says Labor's federal candidate, Mr John Reeves. "If the 1988 statehood option is to be kept alive, it will be necessary to meet a fairly tight timetable over the next 5 years", Mr Reeves said today. "The Australian Constitution needs amendments to clarify a number of matters which are identified by Constitutional Conventions held over the past 5 to 10 years". Mr Reeves said a Territory referendum should then be held to determine whether the people of the Territory wanted statehood. "Since the federal referendums will have to be held first and it is usual to conduct referendum in conjunction with general elections, the referendum should be held with this year's general election", he said'.

The last clipping I will refer to is from an interview by the Leader of the Opposition as far back as 1982. The clipping was taken from The Australian. The Leader of the Opposition stated:

> '"I think statehood will happen. There is not the slightest doubt about it", said Mr Collins, 36, born in Newcastle, New South Wales, and a former cattle and cotton farmer near Wee Waa. "But at this point, I think it has got to be a long path. We have got de facto statehood now. We have responsibility for everything with almost the single exception of uranium mining. I think we would be expected, if we wanted to aggressively pursue statehood, to shoulder a much greater percentage of the burden of running the place than we do. The other problem we would have would be constitutional. Mr Everingham, the Territory's Country Liberal Party Chief Minister, has stated he wants 5 members of the House of Representatives and 10 senators. If you had that plus an eventual 25 members of the Legislative Assembly, a citizen of the Northern Territory would be

almost in the position of having to appear before a court to show cause why he or she shouldn't be a politician. It would almost be certain, I think, that there would be solid opposition from at least some states to that level of representation"'.

Mr B. Collins: And there will be.

Mr TUXWORTH: No doubt about it.

Mr B. Collins: I don't argue with any of that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the point that I am making is that this issue is with us, it has been with us for a long time and it is gaining momentum. The honourable Leader of the Opposition went to great lengths to point out that the initiative was really 7 days old. The point that I would like to make is that this is a part of the reform that has been occurring since 1949. It gained momentum in 1966 and again in 1968 when our federal member was given a vote in the House of Representatives. In 1972, a proposition for some local control was put to this Chamber by Ralph Hunt. It was rejected. As my memory serves me, it was rejected by the Labor members of this Chamber at that time with the support of the nominated members. But, in 1974, we had a fully-elected Legislative Assembly.

Mr B. Collins: Thanks to the Labor government.

Mr TUXWORTH: Right. When the then Prime Minister was asked at a function in Tennant Creek why we would not have any constitutional powers bestowed on us, he said: 'Well, you didn't even give us a seat in the House. Why should we give you any constitutional powers?' So it is all above politics. It is all about honour, integrity and constitutional development.

Mr Speaker, in 1978, we progressed to self-government. As one of my colleagues mentioned earlier, there was tremendous opposition from the Labor Party about proceeding to self-government. In fact, it fought a rearguard action that had a big impact on the election. I recall that 'double taxation' was the slogan. The development of self-government over 7 years has really led to a new era which is starting today and the responsibility for taking us through the new era has been vested in my colleague, the member for Araluen, now Special Minister for Constitutional Development.

Mr Speaker, the point that I would like to make is that there has been opposition all the way and most of it coming from the Labor Party in the Northern Territory. His call has been: 'We want it but we want it only if you do it our way'. Great play was made this morning of the fact that, in the Administrator's speech, there was no reference to constitutional development.

Mr B. Collins: Statehood.

Mr TUXWORTH: Statehood or constitutional development. If we develop from our present constitutional position, there is only one way to go.

Mr B. Collins: That is not true.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is.

I would like to quote from the Administrator's speech: 'I have said that my government will use its term of office to continue the economic, social and

constitutional advancement of the Territory'. If any member here saw some form of constitutional development that we could take that was anything short of statehood, then he has a pretty fertile imagination.

Mr Speaker,I would like to move on to the bipartisan approach. As I said a moment ago, everybody talks about being bipartisan until he is asked to come to the line and join in. Then the call is: 'If you do not do it my way, it will not be bipartisan'.

Mr B. Collins: That is right.

Mr TUXWORTH: That was the proposition the Leader of the Opposition put this morning. So far as he was concerned, if the approach to statehood was not done his way, then it would not be done at all. I make the point that the Territory's history is strewn with the records of people who took that position. I would invite the Leader of the Opposition to become involved in a bipartisan approach, if he so wishes.

He went on to say that he was unhappy with the proposition of a select committee because I suggested to him that it would have a 3-2 or 4-3 representation.

Mr B. Collins: Or whatever.

Mr TUXWORTH: Or whatever.

Mr Speaker, let us examine that proposition because it is important. I recall the JPC inquiry that investigated constitutional reform for the Northern Territory. That was a parliamentary committee which had a majority and it submitted a majority and a minority report. By chance, in the course of time, the minority report became the basis for self-government. That is just the way it worked out. In every Commonwealth Hansard, you will find reports from select committees and about 9 out of 10 of them have dissenting reports, from one party or another, on a range of issues.

Mr Speaker, the point that I am coming to is that anybody who believes that whatever committee we form will agree 100% is not really facing the facts. There will be a dissenting report from 2 or 3 people about something.

Mr B. Collins: How do you know?

Mr TUXWORTH: How can you avoid it?

Mr B. Collins: I think we may be able to.

Mr Smith: If we see it your way. That is terrific.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is right: 'You do it my way and we will not have a dissenting report'. Mr Speaker, let me put this proposition to the honourable members of the Assembly. Whether we have a 3-2 committee or a 3-3 committee with a casting vote for the chairman, or a 3-3 committee with no casting vote, it is highly likely that that will have little impact on the report or reports of the committee. I do not regard it as particularly unhealthy to have minority or dissenting reports.

Mr B. Collins: Provided you are in the majority.

Mr TUXWORTH: No. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that there may be occasions when either of us may have dissenting reports for whatever reason. I do not regard that as bad; it is part of the process. This business of saying that the opposition has no interest in being on a committee unless it is done its way or is bipartisan on its terms really smacks of Mrs Collins' little boy Bobby taking his ball and going home. I think this exercise ought to be well above that sort of attitude.

Mr B. Collins: You keep reducing it to that level.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I did not reduce it to that level. The Leader of the Opposition reduced it to that level this morning by his performance.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition then said that uranium was not an issue and, if people really understood the matter, it was the export controls that were affecting the Northern Territory's uranium.

Mr B. Collins: I didn't.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, he did. He went to great pains to say that it was not a matter of state control over uranium and that it was the Commonwealth's export powers that decided whether the uranium mines went ahead or not.

Mr B. Collins: Goodness me, you are uninspiring.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it may be uninspiring but I am responding to a pretty uninspiring performance this morning so I do not have much latitude to work on.

Mr Speaker, the point that I would like to make to the the Leader of the Opposition about export controls and who is responsible for what and who is holding up uranium mining is this: get the Commonwealth to give the companies their export licences tomorrow and then we will see what it is that is holding them up.

Mr B. Collins: That is what I said.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, he did not say that.

The point that I am making is very simply this: let us not worry about uranium and export licences but stick to the bottom line. The bottom line for the Leader of the Opposition is his opposition to uranium mining and it suits him very well that it does not go ahead.

Mr B. Collins: Groan. Talk about statehood.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I would like to talk about statehood in terms of uranium. To put it into perspective, the Leader of the Opposition is already on record as saying that his credentials in respect of an anti-uranium position are impeccable.

Mr B. Collins: Correct. I've been on both sides of the argument.

Mr TUXWORTH: Right, and you are still on both sides. The reality of the uranium issue is that it suits the Leader of the Opposition well to have that matter in the hands of the federal government where it will not go ahead and somebody else can be blamed for it. His opposition to it is well recorded.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition went on at some length this morning about second-class states in America that have fewer senators than other states. It is probably time that we put that into perspective too. The American states have 2 senators per state unless something has happened in the last few weeks. They all have them - the big ones, the little ones, the remote ones. Comparing the number of Australian senators with the situation in America is a completely unreasonable proposition.

Mr Speaker, the economic uncertainty is really one of the key issues in this whole matter. It is really the launching pad from which the Territory has to make up its mind as to what it wants to do. We had financial arrangements with the Commonwealth which we felt were fine. They were the basis of our self-government and they worked well until the federal seat changed in 1983. The memorandum did not have a question mark over it until then and it has now been described as a grubby agreement between 2 conservative governments. It was not a grubby agreement between the Labor party and this government when they held the Northern Territory seat but that has changed since then. In the mini-budget - and I said this before and I will say it again - the 1% of Australia's population in this part of the world took 10% of the nation's cuts. At the Premiers Conference, we were given the rounds of the kitchen. We lost $12.5m before the end of the financial year and we were told that, as from 1988, we would be treated financially as a state. I did not make that statement. I did not ask for it; it was not solicited. Given that that has been given to us as a proposition over which we do not have any control, it behoves us as a community to ask what we are going to do. Are we just going to cop that and then put up with everything else or move on and become a fully-fledged state in the true sense. That is the point we have reached today.

Mr Speaker, I would like to return to the issue of the workload that was raised by the member for MacDonnell. He treated the workload of the special minister as though it was a bit of a jaunt: 'That is a soft cushy job for somebody. Why would he want to have a ministerial title and all other perks of office?' I would like to run through some of the important roles that I see the minister being involved in in the Northern Territory and outside it because it will be the most important aspect of the whole consideration of statehood.

During the course of the day, we have spoken about the select committee. There is no doubt that that committee will need to travel widely throughout the Northern Territory to receive evidence from people who, in the normal course of events, may not have an opportunity to put their views forward through organisations. That is how the joint parliamentary committee worked in the early days and it worked well. At the same time, the member for Araluen in his new role will be heading a government committee which has to address government to government issues that relate to statehood. They are not only matters of concern to us; there will be issues that other governments will want to raise with us.

I will give an example for the benefit of the member for Nhulunbuy. If we are to progress to statehood and if there is to be a resolution in that direction, at some stage we will have to sit down with the Aboriginal community and with the mining company which is operating under a federal act in order to work out arrangements for that area after statehood. Whether that

comes about now or in 2 years time, those negotiations will not happen in 48 hours or even in 6 months. They will go on for a long period of time. It is very complex. Setting aside issues such as royalties and lease expiry dates, the whole agreement with the company, on the basis of which it invested its $400m or whatever in those days, was based around an act of the federal parliament. Those sorts of negotiations will be very complex and will need to be addressed seriously. If you look around the Northern Territory, you will find quite a few examples like that.

Mr Speaker, there will be negotiations with community groups, business groups, the states and the Commonwealth. Discussions will have to take place at a government-to-organisation level and possibly even at a select-committee-to-organisation level. That will involve a lot of travel and will keep the minister on the move. You cannot expect a minister to be doing all those things and, at the same time, be available to administer the affairs of a department. That is pretty unreasonable and it probably would not work to anybody's satisfaction. Once commitments are put in place for negotiations and discussions with community groups, no one wants to get a signal from the minister to say that something has happened that requires his attention and it is all off. It cannot be treated as a part-time job.

Mr Speaker, I would just like to comment for a moment on the future. There is much to be done in the days ahead and the responsibility has been given to the honourable member for Araluen. Undoubtedly, he will be reporting to the Assembly at every sitting on the progress that he has made. I do not doubt that we will have some lively debates and discussions on a wide range of issues as we go along. I do not think that it is something that can be settled at a convention. If we put the issue of statehood into perspective, acknowledge its complexity and get on with the job in a bipartisan way, then we will do our community a great service.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in the debate this morning, a very personal reference to myself was made by way of interjection by the member for Wanguri. Because the honourable member for MacDonnell responded to it, and I thank him for his defence, that reference will now stand in the public record and must be corrected.

In respect of wasting public money on creating ministries, the honourable member asked: 'What about the member who is being paid $60 000 a year to do a law course?' I cannot allow the inference to stand that I am in fact acting in the very highly-paid role of Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly for the privilege of pursuing a private objective of studying law. It must be corrected.

Mr Speaker, it is very appropriate that this personal explanation is made at the conclusion of this debate. Now that the member for Wanguri, to my great surprise, has made my burning of the midnight oil and the occasional weekend the matter of political comment, and considering that the interjection of the member for Fannie Bay made it only too clear who was being referred to, it is perhaps important that I should report on my progress to the Legislative Assembly.

I regret to report to the Legislative Assembly that, as a result of the onerous workload involved with my position in the Legislative Assembly, unfortunately, I have already had to cut down my subject load this year from 3 subjects to 1. I advise the Assembly that I do not have the slightest intention of ever practising law because graduation is too far off for that to be a realistic aim. Nor do I think, Mr Speaker, that the reality is that I will graduate. The facts of the matter are that the statehood debate caused me to embark on what has been a fairly difficult business of trying to cope with the complexity of constitutional law involved in the subject.

Last year, when I knew that that debate was about to heighten, I realised that ad hoc reading of the occasional textbook was not only not enough but potentially misleading. I was fortunate enough to commence this law degree with the sole objective of trying to improve the expertise with which I deliver my contributions to this Assembly. If you like, Mr Speaker, you can call it on-the-job training. I am completely unblushing and unapologetic for the fact that I am doing a law course, and it has not been easy. The results so far are that I have had to throw in 2 subjects because I simply could not cope with the workload.

Mr Perron: My heart bleeds.

Mr B. COLLINS: If the honourable minister opposite wishes to deride the efforts that people make to try to improve the contributions they make to the Legislative Assembly, he can do that.

Mr Perron: You have a long way to go.

Mr B. COLLINS: Obviously, he cannot help himself. Mr Speaker, all I can say is that - and if it had not been for the comment made this morning, I would not say it - late last semester, despite the examination results, I reached the point where I actually considered throwing it in. I sought the counsel of some people whose advice I valued. I am sure he will not mind me saying that one of those people is the newly-reinstated Leader of Government Business, the honourable member for Araluen. I am sure the honourable member will not mind me saying that his advice to me was delivered adamantly. He appreciates the motivation that I have in completing at least the elements of constitutional law which is the one subject that I have retained to continue with the course.

All I can say is that I am sorry that my pursuance of this on-the-job training has become a matter of political comment as far as the Country Liberal Party is concerned. I reject completely the inference made by the member for Wanguri that I am in fact in the position of being paid $60 000 a year to embark on the personal pursuit of a law degree. All I can say in conclusion is that we are all born ignorant and it is a matter of personal choice as to whether we choose to stay that way. It is obvious that the honourable members for Wanguri and Fannie Bay have made their choice.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Ministerial Appointments

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I would like to advise you and honourable members that Executive Council convened at lunchtime. The honourable member for Araluen was sworn in as Special Minister for Constitutional Development. The honourable member for Flynn now assumes the responsibility for the Departments of Health and Youth, Sport, Recreation

and Ethnic Affairs. The Special Minister for Constitutional Development will assume the responsibilities of Leader of Government Business in the Assembly as of this time.

PETITIONS

Pornographic Material

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 11 citizens of the Northern Territory. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. It is in similar terms to a large number of petitions which were presented at previous sittings. I move that the petition be received.

Motion agreed to; petition received.

Winnellie Fire Station

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 8 residents of Darwin relating to the Winnellie Fire Station. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Mr Speaker, standing order 83(g) states that every signature shall be written upon the petition or upon sheets containing the prayer of the petition, and not pasted upon or otherwise transferred thereto. The prayer of the petition was not included on the second sheet. Consequently, a further 18 signatures of residents of Darwin and other areas in the Northern Territory have been excised from the petition as tabled. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

'To the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, this humble petition of residents of Darwin whose names and addresses are set out hereunder showeth as follows:

(1) we are profoundly concerned at the proposal that the Winnellie Fire Station be closed or downgraded;

(2) the expanding Winnellie and Berrimah industrial area faces severe risk from fire due to the storage and use of volatile chemicals, gas and fuel, and due to the possibility of industrial accident;

(3) we believe the high risk to life and the value of stored goods and equipment in industrial buildings require the earliest response from our fire service; and

(4) we believe that the use of substitute stations involving further delay of more than 8 minutes is unacceptable.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Assembly resolve to retain full fire services from the Winnellie Fire Station, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.'

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was going to ask a question of the Minister for Lands. I am sure he would have been expecting it. It refers specifically to the gazettal of a determination of a Crown lease in Katherine and the subsequent exchange of correspondence between himself and myself in that regard. Being a conscientious shadow Minister for Lands, I was reefing through the pile of gazettes when I was flying to Darwin in May. My eyes lit upon NT gazette No G9 of 6 March 1985. In that gazette, there is a determination under the Crown Lands Act. The date mentioned was 26 February 1985. It is a term Crown lease and the purpose of the proposed development is a subdivision for residential development. Then I noticed that the price was $10 which seemed extraordinarily generous for a parcel of land suitable for subdivision for residential development.

At that stage, my curiosity was well and truly aroused. When I turned over the page, my curiosity was aroused even further because I noticed that the grant was made to a firm called Henry and Walker SBS Pty Ltd. In subsequent investigation, I found that the area of land over which this grant had been made is some 51 ha. I thought to myself that that was quite strange. I wrote to the minister on 1 May seeking some explanation of these figures. I said at the time that this struck me as an absurdly low figure and I would appreciate its justification.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some 6 or 7 weeks later, I received a reply from the minister, and it by no means allayed my concerns about this granting at a $120 price 51 ha of land in Katherine to Henry and Walker. I should say that, on the department's own figures as provided in its quarterly journal of March 1985, the rate of increase of the cost of residential land in Katherine has been considerable. You will be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, of the speculation that has occurred because of the Tindal air force base developments and the consequent upward pressure on the price of urban land in Katherine. Thus, it was with a degree of surprise that I received this reply from the honourable Minister for Lands:

> 'In reply to your letter of 1 May 1985, I advise that the price determined for the Crown lease term for the subdivision development of Katherine east stage 2 was considered a fair and equitable price at the time it was agreed in December 1983.
>
> Private development was a government initiative first introduced to the Territory in the early 1980s and the price paid for the right to develop each lease has varied considerably, depending on the degree of difficulty to service the land, local conditions, land demand and other factors. The Katherine east residential development stage 2 was the first release to private development in Katherine and, considering the difficult topography of the land, rocky excavation and uncertain market situation, the development was considered comparable with the first private development release in Darwin at Karama where developers were reluctant to become involved let alone offer premiums for the land. (K4 attracted nil premium and the reserve price was $1 per lot yielded)'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, from that letter, at least 2 questions arise. Firstly, if the price of $10 for this 51 ha of land was regarded as fair and equitable when it was agreed in December 1983, why did it take 14 months for the determination to be made. That question might strike members as odious. Let me hasten to add that it is far from odious bearing in mind that, in between the time the price was agreed in December 1983 and the time that the determination was gazetted, 14 months later, prices increased by a conservative 30% on the department's own figures. That fact alone requires explanation.

The second question I wish to ask relates to the process of private development of land. I do not intend to debate the pros and cons of private development of land in the Territory in this context. It is not appropriate. However, presumably part of the process of private development of land is calling for expressions of interest from potential private developers. I ask the minister: when were expressions of interest for this Katherine east residential development stage 2 called, how many responses were received and what was the nature of those responses? I am quite sure that the honourable minister has a briefing note on it and I hope that he will be able to provide answers this evening to those 2 questions.

While I am still on my feet, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is another matter that I would like to mention briefly. It concerns the Chief Minister. I am pleased that he is still in the Chamber to hear my comments in this regard. It relates to question paper number 5 which was tabled today. Honourable members will notice that, on that question paper, I have had on notice since 16 April a question about the Kings Canyon development. I have been seeking some explanation from the Chief Minister about which infrastructure the Northern Territory government was concerned that the Commonwealth had not provided at Yulara. In relation to Kings Canyon, he said: 'The Northern Territory government will ensure that there is no repeat of Yulara where infrastructure for Aboriginals was promised by the Commonwealth but not provided'.

I have no idea of what he is referring to. I placed the question on notice in good faith because I was not able to ask it at that particular sittings. I think it is about time that the Chief Minister's paperwork is brought up to date and he provides me with an answer to that question. I am sick and tired of this sort of nitpicking because, quite honestly, I do not believe that the Chief Minister can answer this question. I believe he was flying a kite. If he was not, then I will look forward to hearing his response to it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in answer to a question that I asked the Minister for Community Development, he mentioned certain points about the prison farm at Gunn Point. One of them was that Gunn Point or Berrimah would be making car number plates. Whilst I commend the initiative of the minister, I believe that there are things the minister or his commission should bear in mind. In fact, I would like to know who are on this prison industry commission and what their qualifications are to be on it. Regardless, when selecting industries suitable for a prison situation, I think it is very important to consider the level of work experience offered. In the Territory, most prisoners do not stay in prison for extended periods. We have a reputation for handing down short-term prison sentences. Therefore, I believe it is important that some sort of rehabilitation or work experience is foremost in the minds of the people who initiate these industries. The minister also went on to say that prisons in the Northern Territory, if not

overflowing, have a very high rate of occupancy. I can tell him a very good way to reduce occupancy, which was told to me by some prison officers who used to work at the old Fannie Bay Gaol: don't make the prisoners so darned comfortable. There was very little recidivism after prisoners had spent some time in the old Fannie Bay Gaol. Whilst I am not saying that one should go back to those hard old days, I have it on good authority that the prisons in the Northern Territory, especially the prison at Berrimah, are regarded by prisoners as the Hiltons of Australian prisons. Anybody who can choose where he will be imprisoned will choose a Northern Territory prison in preference to a state prison. If we did not make them so comfortable, we would not have so many prisoners.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a certain gentleman has been hitting the headlines down south recently. We will hear more about him in the future. We heard about his foray into a certain situation in the Northern Territory and I believe we will hear more about him. I refer to Mr Ian MacLaughlin, the President of the National Farmers' Federation. I believe he will emerge as a force to be reckoned with in the very near future. He is emerging as a leader of a certain section of the community which is gathering force, and it will be a force to be reckoned with. I was very pleased to see MacLaughlin's foray into the Northern Territory and his concern with the Mudginberri dispute. I will not speak about it today because I hold very strong views on it and I only wish I could help more than I have. Mr Ian MacLaughlin appears to be the right person in the right place at the right time. I do not think luck comes into it; he seems to have all those qualifications. It was very interesting to hear him speak on television the other night. I will not canvass his views again but he abrogated any interest in any federal party at all - Liberal, National or Labor. I think this is a very important point. The farming industry generally feels that it has been let down by every major party. I hope it does not feel the same about the Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory.

The farmers are mobilising. They started about 1972 or perhaps 1973 with a rally at Forest Place in Perth and they have been hitting the headlines periodically since then. The farmers will continue to mobilise. If one has had anything to do with the farming community, one will see without difficulty that the farmers as a group have unlimited power. It is time that the general community, including members of this Assembly and politicians in general, realised that. I do not know if my figures are strictly accurate, but they are substantially correct. Figures published recently in The Australian stated that about 4% to 7% of the population produce about 40% of our export income. That 4% to 7% is the farming community generally. I am not precluding the role that the mining industry has in our primary sector and in gaining export income, but I am not talking about the mining industry as it relates to agriculture. A few years ago, people believed that the farmers rode pretty high on the hog, that they did not really earn what they received and that they were bloated capitalists who did not know how to dirty their hands. Nothing could be further from the truth, as honourable members would know if they have lived, worked and been brought up on a farm as I have. The farmers are beginning to realise that they have muscle, and I hope they continue to mobilise it.

The farmers are on the move, and I would back the farmers any time in a fight. I would back the farmers any time as far as I am able! They are one of the few sectors of the community who still know what work is. They are one of the few sectors of the community who put in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Increasingly, they are not even getting that fair day's pay with the added costs they must pay under current federal government...

Mr Bell: Oh, come on Noel!

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Look, I shut up while you were talking, so you shut up while I'm talking!

Mr Deputy Speaker, have any members any idea of what a fair day's work is for a farmer? Looking around, I do not think many members have been brought up on farms. It is a 365-day-a-year job. Have any members ever worked on a dairy farm and had to get up at 5 am or earlier for 365 days a year? Dairy farms are usually in the colder climates down south. If anybody has ever had to get up at 5 am 365 days a year, including in the depth of winter, he would know what I am talking about. I doubt whether any member here has had to work on a farm in the wheat belt where there is marginal rainfall and where the optimal rains come for about 2 weeks in the year. In that situation, seeding must take place 24 hours a day. I am not talking about 1 man working for 8 hours; I am talking about a few farmers or a farmer and his son actually seeding the whole farm, 24 hours a day for days on end. Few people know what it is like; unionists certainly do not know what it is like.

Most farms have animals and animals do not know what an 8-hour day is. They always seem to lamb, calve and kid out of hours and problems usually happen out of hours also. Animals also go through fences at any hour of the day or night and fences must be repaired. Even if you have gone to bed, no matter what the temperature is and no matter what else is happening, you must get up and mend your fence. How many people have lived on a farm and have had experience of animals which required emergency veterinary treatment? I am talking about stock animals that the farmer may have paid thousands of dollars for. Perhaps it is a stud bull or a stud stallion and the veterinary treatment cannot wait till 9 am the next day. It must be done out of hours which necessitates waiting up with the animal or an emergency trip to the vet. They also have problems with dust storms, droughts, and having to shoot stock because they cannot afford to feed them in time of drought. These are all problems that farmers and pasturalists face. They have to buy feed and organise feed drops to dying stock in times of flood. Then there is the human depredation that the farmer must put up with: the shooting of animals and the part boning out of stud stock. Unfortunately, he cannot shoot the people who do it to his stock. He also has to put up with feral animal depredations. All of these problems make for a 24-hour-a-day job. The farmer must also overhaul and maintain machinery. Barring accidents, the farmer must still lead a normal family life and provide for his family. In respect of workers' compensation, farming is regarded as one of the most dangerous occupations in Australia.

Is it any wonder that the farmers are feeling a bit fed up because they cannot obtain reasonable prices for their produce? They began to feel that it was time to leave their farms. They went to the cities and presented their case vociferously. I am very pleased to see that Mr Ian MacLaughlin has the voice and is beginning to be heard. One might ask why people go into farming. That is a question that many city people ask. People go into farming to do their own thing. Farmers were doing their own thing centuries before all these trendy people started doing their own thing. The only thing is that the farmer does not talk about it; he does his own thing and he does not hit the headlines. Until recently, he did not go marching in the streets if things did not go his way. But he has had a gutful now and he must draw attention to his cause somehow.

The farmer still can retain that primal element of competition which is necessary for life. If you compete against the elements and win, you have really won a fight. You have beaten the storm.

Mr Bell: You really haven't studied this all that deeply, have you?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You be quiet. You do not know what I am talking about.

Mr Bell: You are talking about subsidies.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If the farmer has fought against the elements, has all the stock under shelter and has finished the seeding or mustering, then he really feels that he has won a good fight. If you are going to go into a fight, you pick an opponent that is worthy of your attention. What opponent is more worthy to fight than the climate? I do not believe a fight is worth having if you have a poofy opponent. You must have something worth fighting against otherwise it is a hollow victory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, farming separates the men from the boys and the women from the girls. I say 'women from the girls' because it is one of the few occupations where there is equality. There is a division of labour on a farm or a property but there is equality. It is one of the few places where women have the same voice as the men. The farmers are the backbone of the country. We do not travel on the sheep's back any longer but we do travel on the farmer's back. I think the farmers are getting a bit sick and tired of this. They are beginning to make their voices heard. It is time the community got off and let the farmer obtain a better reward for his effort and let him go on his way.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, some information was brought to my attention late this afternoon. It is of particular importance to the Northern Territory and I believe it is appropriate to take the opportunity this afternoon to advise members of the situation. I understand that the federal Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, the Hon Ralph Willis, announced in federal parliament today that the AMIEU picket may soon be lifted. I further understand that the picket will be lifted to allow the AMIEU to have the matter taken back to the Arbitration Commission. I am advised that the Arbitration Commission refused to hear the matter until the pickets were lifted. One would hope that this would allow Mudginberri to recommence export of its meat in time to save its export contracts. Obviously, I am thrilled to hear the news of the possibility of the pickets being lifted and I trust that the federal Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations is accurate in his information. Certainly, I will not do anything to cut across any moves that may lead to the lifting of those pickets and the normalisation of our meat processing industry in the Northern Territory.

Having said that, I must express a word of caution. I do it with some trepidation. I note that the matters that are before the court at the moment are not matters that can be dealt with by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. They are commercial matters to be dealt with in the Federal Court. The dollar figures that are attached to those are very high. Whilst there is a ray of sunshine on the horizon, I hope it can come to fruition and the matter can proceed to a rational conclusion. Time will tell. Hopefully, one can look forward to a break in what has been a fairly bleak dry season for the pastoral industry and the meat-processing industry in the Northern Territory.

I turn to other matters of more immediate moment in the Assembly today. My good friend, the member for MacDonnell, has raised a couple of matters with me this afternoon. In his inimitable fashion, he has outlined a case based on his diligence and hard work as shadow Minister for Lands. He told us how he noticed an advertisement while slogging through government gazettes on an aeroplane from Alice Springs to Darwin. He has doggedly followed this matter through but he is still not getting satisfactory conclusions.

He asked why it took 14 months to gazette the sale if $10 was fair and equitable. The answer to that is that it is wrong. Unfortunately, the honourable member did not dig deep enough or he has only recently acquired this habit of avidly reading government gazettes because the original sale of the land to Henry and Walker SBS was gazetted on 24 February 1984. I have a copy with me if the honourable member would care to look at it. It refers to lots 1936 and 1937 Town of Katherine granted to Henry and Walker SBS Pty Ltd for the price of $10 for proposed development of a subdivision for residential purposes. A series of events have occurred in the intervening period. For the benefit of the honourable member, I will outline the events that led to the redetermination of that lease and, as a consequence of the redetermination of the lease on 26 February 1985, a further gazettal notice was published.

As I have already advised the honourable member, and as he has saved me some time by reading some of the events into the record, I will not go into the background detail. Suffice it to say that this was the first private sale of subdivisional developments in Katherine. There have been private subdivisional developments at Leanyer and Karama in the northern suburbs of Darwin. He noted rightly the circumstances in K4 in Karama where it was difficult to get people to become involved in this new approach to subdivisional development. Initially, the prices were very low. In fact, in that particular case, they were non-existent. The reserve price was $1 per block.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the price of land reflects its cost as a bulk lot plus the cost of the services and development that have been put in place on that land before it is ready to be sold for house construction. The cost of putting roads, water, power, sewerage, kerbing and guttering, footpaths or whatever is a substantial cost in the development of land, even when a person receives that block of land for nought. In most private subdivisional developments in the Northern Territory, the major headworks have been provided by the government to the edge of the subdivisional area and then the subdivision has proceeded beyond that point at the developer's expense.

In Katherine, the Department of Lands tried unsuccessfully to have an item for residential subdivision in Katherine included in the 1984-85 capital works program. Indications were that this would be difficult and that an item to develop only 40 to 50 blocks at an estimated cost of $900 000 could be included. That was all that could be done with the available money. The Housing Commission indicated in mid-1983 that it required approximately 35 blocks in 1983-1984 and a further 50 blocks in 1984-85. It was obvious that the Department of Lands could not meet the Housing Commission's demands let alone any private demand and, with the possibility of the Tindal upgrading project becoming a reality, the then Minister for Lands agreed to release an area in Katherine east for private development. This was the first of the private developments.

At that stage, it was imperative that development commence at the earliest possible time. There was an excessive demand for land similar to that

occurring in Alice Springs at the moment. The pressure of demand was high, with the possibility that it would intensify rapidly if Tindal were to proceed. The minister agreed that the local firm of SBS Constructions, which was the only local firm capable of carrying out a residential development, be approached to negotiate a development lease over 58 ha in Katherine east which was estimated to yield 310 blocks. The period of the development was to be 5 years with 80% of the blocks being bought back by the government at $20 000 per block, and the price of blocks to private purchasers to be a maximum of $15 000. Fixed prices were being proposed to try to control the price of land. This was done in consultation with the Katherine Town Council, I understand, in an attempt to avoid the problems that the member for MacDonnell raised concerning rapidly escalating land prices in the event of speculation with the proposed developments in Tindal. A clause in the agreement allowed for the renegotiation of the agreement by November 1984 if the Commonwealth had approved the Tindal project.

SBS Constructions investigated the project and advised that it wished to proceed, but that the project was too large for it to handle alone and it wished to enter into a joint venture arrangement with Henry and Walker Pty Ltd. The minister approved this and a lease to Henry and Walker SBS Pty Ltd was signed on 14 March 1984. The first 64 R1 lots were turned off in July 1984. As a result of the announcement by the Minister for Defence that the Tindal RAAF base would be redeveloped, the department renegotiated with the developers on the new terms of agreement, to take effect after 30 November 1984. Those renegotiated terms provided a revised lease term of 3 years. In other words, the development of the lots was accelerated.

It was stated that, provided the developer achieves his contractual targets, there would not appear to be a need to release a further private development until late 1985. A $15 000 ceiling on private sales and $20 000 on buy-back would cease at the completion of the second stage of development, approximately June 1985. The buy-back price would be indexed at the rate of 10% per annum and calculated quarterly, the buy-back being the government blocks. The R1 blocks required to meet RAAF requirements would have a price differential of $750 per lot. That was agreed and settled.

Unfortunately, however, the Katherine Town Council stepped in. The honourable member may be aware that, at the moment, local government has the power of approving subdivisional design; it does not rest with the Department of Lands. Having gone through the department's planning process for approvals for the subdivisions, the matter went before the Katherine Town Council for approval. It objected to a number of elements, particularly to road widths and other matters where it insisted on the inclusion of higher standards. There was a further need in the development for the inclusion of some of the headworks in the development works. As a consequence, the joint venture incurred a cost of some $270 000. The final settlement of the compensation for those additional costs in the contracting arrangements was a combination of land and cash settlement, with some additional land and some cash settlement for the debt. The land increase was based on reasonable planning areas which could be serviced by the current headworks without placing excessive area in the hands of one developer.

It was as a result of a notice of determination required under section 15(5) of the Crown Lands Act, advertising a new lease, that this development has again come to the notice of the public. That was the gazettal notice that the honourable member picked up. It was signed by myself earlier this year. Basically, that answers the 2 questions that the honourable member raised.

Mr Bell: What about questions of interest?

Mr HATTON: The matter was not referred. I have said that we approached SBS and it accepted. It was a move by the government at that stage to try to put it in the hands of local business. Given that we wanted it to move quickly, we did not put it out on a tender or expression of interest basis. A direct approach was made to the only local firm in Katherine that had the capacity to do the work. That firm investigated it and accepted the offer to take it on but subsequently asked if it could go into a joint-venture arrangement with Henry and Walker Pty Ltd. There has not been tendering on that process.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to start by saying that, if the Minister for Lands' report is accurate and there has been some movement on the Mudginberri dispute, that is a very good sign indeed. Certainly, the sooner the dispute is resolved satisfactorily, the better off everybody will be.

It is interesting that he made his comment because what I want to talk about tonight is an industrial relations matter presently being handled by the Northern Territory government. It is interesting because, as we all know, one of the powers that the Territory government does not have at present is over industrial relations. The Commonwealth holds that power itself. It will be interesting indeed to see where that power resides when we become a state because I think there are good arguments for saying that the Northern Territory does not want industrial relations powers and that they are better left with the Commonwealth.

Mr Hatton: We could offer the Commonwealth an agency deal.

Mr SMITH: We could offer the Commonwealth an agency deal. Certainly, that matter was not raised today. It will be very interesting to watch what happens as the statehood debate or, dare I say, saga unfolds.

What I want to talk about tonight is the poor way in which the government is handling its discussions and negotiations with the public service over proposals first put forward in the mini-budget. I refer specifically to proposals to reduce air fare entitlements for public servants. After the mini-budget announcements on that and other matters, the trade union movement as a whole was quite concerned. The government recognised that concern and, on 9 July, there was a very high-powered meeting with representatives of the trade union movement to discuss its concerns. When I say 'high-powered meeting', I mean a very high-powered meeting because all but 2 members of the previous Cabinet were present at that meeting, including the 2 honourable ministers who are currently in the Assembly.

Arising out of that meeting was a letter from the Chief Minister to the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council in reference to the question of air fare entitlements. He said: 'On the matter of the timing for these bylaws' - that is, the air fare entitlements bylaws - 'I should confirm our advice that it has been our intention to introduce the proposed bylaws during the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly and this therefore gives us some 6 weeks to carry out the discussions we have agreed to enter into'. My understanding is that that is an accurate representation of what happened at the meeting and a good step taken by the government. Where it all falls down is that, from 10 July until 12 August, there were no discussions between the 2 parties and no initiatives from the government to back up the good

intentions expressed at the meeting of 9 July to hold discussions with the trade union movement on this particular issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the next correspondence that the Trades and Labour Council had with the government was on 12 August when suddenly it was confronted with a new bylaw that had been signed that very day by the Public Service Commissioner, Mr Ken Pope. There is a very interesting letter that was sent to the Trades and Labour Council announcing that the bylaw had been introduced. The last paragraph read: 'As the bylaws are to be presented to the Legislative Assembly this month, there has been insufficient time for consultation in this matter. However, please contact me' - and a telephone number is given - 'if you wish to clarify any matter of interpretation of the bylaw'. That is a letter from the Director, Personnel Services, Public Service Commission.

The key and important words are: 'There has been insufficient time for consultation in this matter'. We had a commitment from the Chief Minister to undertake discussions and consultation with the trade union movement on this particular matter. The commitment was made by the Chief Minister in the presence of 5 other Cabinet ministers. Six weeks later, nothing has happened. We have a senior member of the Public Service Commissioner's office saying that there had been insufficient time for consultation in this particular matter. That suggests 1 of 2 things: either the relevant section of the public service has been so inefficient that it has not been able to organise discussions or, secondly, we have a disagreement between the political and the administrative arms of the government over what constitutes a reasonable time for discussions to take place. We have a very clear statement from the Director of Personnel Services saying there had been insufficient time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, quite clearly, the Trades and Labour Council had a right to be upset and offended by this after it had been given a clear understanding that discussions would take place. It expressed its annoyance by writing to the Chief Minister asking him what on earth was happening. The response it received from the Chief Minister, to put it very mildly, was most inappropriate. In relation to its concern that there had been no consultation despite the promise, he said: 'I advised that this gave us 6 weeks to carry out discussions and am disappointed that this initiative had not eventuated'. That was an initiative that was agreed to 5 weeks earlier, an initiative that had cooled down a major industrial dispute in the Northern Territory, an initiative that had the prospect of resolving the matter and an initiative which the government at that stage said set the scene for further discussions on a complete re-examination of the whole package of conditions that public servants enjoyed in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have already shown that no discussions took place. It is quite obvious that there was a breakdown in government communications somewhere. Whether it was at the political or administrative level, I do not know but, quite clearly, the government failed to carry out its intention to conduct discussions with public servants on this particular matter. All the Chief Minister could say was that he was disappointed that the initiative had not eventuated. He offered nothing to remedy the situation and is still proceeding with the proposals to amend the current regulations and to take away the entitlements of public servants. It demonstrates once more the ineptness of this government in dealing with public service matters and in dealing with industrial matters in general.

The irony is that, even though the day before he sent the letter to Mr Wharton of the Trades and Labour Council saying he was disappointed that the initiative had not eventuated, he sent a personal letter to everybody attending the Industrial Relations Conference on the weekend, all 150 of them, and he said: 'My government holds the view that the great majority of our industrial problems are capable of resolution by discussion, and meetings such as this are very important in that process'. To that, I would say, 'Hear, hear!' The great majority of our industrial problems are capable of resolution by discussion. They are capable of resolution when both sides enter into negotiations, know what the next steps in those negotiations will be and know that both parties will follow the next steps in the negotiation.

What we have here, however, is a deliberate breaking by the government of an agreement between the government and the unions over what was to be the next step in negotiations on this particular thorny issue - namely, the question of what are appropriate air fare entitlements for public servants. Mr Deputy Speaker, in my view, public servants have a legitimate right to be very upset indeed by the way the government has sold them out on this particular issue and broken the promise that it gave.

All I can say is that it is not too late for the government, even at this stage, to agree not to implement the new bylaw provisions until further discussions take place. It is not a matter of life and death that these bylaws be tabled during this Legislative Assembly sittings. Without any undue effect from the government's point of view, they can be deferred quite easily until the next sittings of this Assembly. It is the proper and appropriate thing to do in this circumstance. It will allow the government to honour its promise to enter into negotiations with the union movement and in return it would encourage the union movement to believe that the government is an honourable employer with whom it can do business. I call on the government to accept the course of action that I have advocated.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I had the honour to be present at what is becoming an institution in the Territory: the Yuendumu Sports Weekend. I think there is no doubt that this year's Yuendumu Sports Weekend was one of the most successful in its very long history. I would estimate that there were approximately 500 people there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall the interest you took in that particular sporting event when you were the member for Stuart, and the fantastic spirit that pervades that sporting event. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know, the events covered are of a very broad nature. There is men's and women's basketball. There is a peculiar game passing for football which goes by the name of Australian rules. There is softball and athletics which includes the 5000 m event. I must compliment the daughter of the member for MacDonnell who became the youngest woman to complete that event this year. I could not let pass the fact that the new event this year was referred to as the 50-lingga event for children under the age of 6 years. Lingga is a Walpiri unit of measurement which roughly equates to something less than 50 m. I would like to put on record that my 3-year-old daughter participated in that event and did finish, coming in last but not disgraced. There were also the events of spear throwing, traditional dancing, rap dancing for the younger members and, of course, the tug-of-war. I myself was a member of the Alice Springs team which reached the semi-finals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this year, the traditional team event followed its traditional course with the teams from Lajamanu and Yuendumu in my electorate

doing extremely well. When we got to the semi-finals of the men's A grade football, however, disaster struck! A team from South Australia - a Pitjantjatjara team in fact - beat the Yuendumu team which has held the cup for so long that it has it nailed to the wall. We ended up with the horrifying possibility that the cup for the blue-ribbon event could in fact go south of the border. There were many fears expressed that, with some of the local politics between the Walpiri and the Pitjantjatjara, it might never come back again. However, honour was saved in the final event when the Lajamanu team in my electorate was able to beat the Pitjantjatjara team, and the whole thing was restored to its normal and proper balance. The cup remains in the Stuart electorate.

I would like to compliment and thank the minister responsible for the work he did on the roads between Lajamanu and Yuendumu and on the road from Alice Springs out to Yuendumu. The work was undertaken at very short notice in the period leading up to the event. You can imagine that, when a crowd of 5000 people travel on these roads, the roads get cut up. It is essential that they are in quite good condition before the events actually take place. The minister assured me that the roads were completely graded before people went out there. It is indicative of the numbers of people that, unfortunately, by the time everybody went home again the roads were completely potholed. I think that lends weight to my argument that we need to extend the bitumen out towards Yuendumu. I hope that will be a feature of the budget to be brought down next week.

I would also like to pay tribute to the YMCA which has carried on a tradition of sending out qualified umpires to assist in the events. The major work, as always, falls on the sports committee at Yuendumu which, once again, did an extremely noble job in organising the large number of events that took place over the Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. While the number of spectators in the Yuendumu Sports Weekend does not match some of the premier events in Darwin or indeed the football finals in Alice Springs, the number of participants in this sporting event would undoubtedly make it the major sporting event on the Northern Territory calendar every year. There is no other sporting event that attracts a greater number of participants.

I would like to place on record my congratulations for the fact that they are carried out in the very best spirits. The competition between the various communities is always fierce but in the traditional spirit of sporting events. People try very hard to win but there is no disgrace to the losers who participate to the best of their abilities. I should pay tribute again to the Lajamanu team. They were the champions in the men's A and B grade football, they won the mens A and B grade basketball and they won the women's A and B grade basketball. Given that Yuendumu traditionally dominated those events, I thought Lajamanu did very well to take them out. However, Yuendumu were not disgraced as they were the finalists in most of those events and took out the Athletics Cup whereas Lajamanu took out the North Flinders Mines Shield for the overall champions of the weekend. The sports committee for a long time has consisted of a number of Aboriginals working together with some of the Europeans there. Together they put on an event that is a real credit to Yuendumu and to the large numbers of Aboriginal people who travel for it. This event has been taking place now for some 23 years without a break and I think that in itself is a quite commendable effort. Every year, they have undertaken the enormous amount of work involved in organising this event and I would like to place on record my commendation of those people.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was most interested to hear about the sports a Yuendumu. Participating in and witnessing such a sporting event would be a most interesting exercise indeed. I was quite enthralled and I must make an attempt to visit Yuendumu next year because nothing would please me more than to see the member for Stuart participating in a tug-of-war.

Mr Ede: It's good practice.

Mr SETTER: I am sure it is. In fact, when one casts an eye over the opposition benches that are almost vacant at the moment, I would say that, put together, they would make an excellent tug-of-war team. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition would be selected perhaps as the anchor man. No doubt, that is a role that he fulfills quite regularly. No doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, they pick up their skills at the ALP annual conferences as I am told that quite a bit of to-ing and fro-ing goes on there from time to time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to speak to you concerning my proposal to introduce FIS capital city pricing into the Northern Territory, in particular into Darwin. Several months ago, people in the Northern Territory were subjected to an 8% rise in the cost of fuel which was caused by the federal Labor government's policy of retaining its import parity pricing at that time. That was coupled with the removal of the freight equalisation scheme. This has increased freight charges substantially and these have been reflected by price rises right across the board, particularly here in Darwin because we are furthest from the source of supply. Almost all goods consumed in the Northern Territory are freighted in on the basis of FOT ex-southern capital cities. For those who are not familiar with road transport terms, 'FOT' means free on transport at the source of supply. What this means, in fact, is that we pay capital city prices plus freight and sales tax on that freight. In other words, the capital city price plus the freight equals an ex-Darwin warehouse price. On top of that again comes the sales tax. Thus, we pay sales tax on the freight content of those goods.

People in remote areas have been fighting this inequality for many years. Years ago, when I was in Mount Isa, there was a great move to attack the federal government on this issue. Successive federal governments have faced onslaughts from country people because of this inequality.

The answer to this problem is the introduction of FIS capital city pricing into the Northern Territory. Under such a scheme, goods would be sold ex-Darwin warehouse at capital city prices, plus sales tax if applicable, but there would be no sales tax on the freight content. Unfortunately, Alice Springs would receive little benefit as it is equidistant to Darwin and Adelaide. I am afraid that is a fact of geography about which we can do little. It will, however, benefit the townships north of that city. Currently, some goods are delivered FIS Darwin at capital city prices. However, there is no pattern to the system. We find that some suppliers have a national price list which includes Darwin as an FIS capital city and others do not. It depends on the policy of individual companies.

However, I believe that, as a government, we should adopt a policy of encouraging all southern suppliers to implement FIS capital city pricing, particularly in the Darwin area. Most companies could easily develop such a system. It just means that we, as a government, should motivate them. It would require them to calculate their freight to Darwin and absorb this into their total national freight account. They know what their freight to Darwin

is because they are sending products here every day of the week. It would be quite easy to extract from their national freight costs what their annual freight to Darwin cost is. They could then pro rata that cost across their total national sales and, from that, they could develop a national FIS capital city price list. The same system applies now for every other capital city so it would be no problem for them to do it. What it needs is a bit of motivation on our part in order to force them to do it. An example of what we could do is to give preference to those products that are delivered FIS capital city prices into Darwin. There are other ways.

When the freight is paid at the point of dispatch, then the sales tax applies only on the FIS capital city price and not on that price plus freight to Darwin. Considerable benefit would result from this move. It would mean a reduction in the cost of landing goods into Darwin. There is no question about that. On some products, the sales tax rate is 15% or 20%. On luxury items, it is around 30%. In those cases, a reduction in sales tax on the freight content would be considerable over a 12-month period.

Another benefit is that, if we monitored this system, it would prevent local merchants from adding excessive freight and taking advantage of the system. Customers could easily ascertain the correct price from the manufacturer's national capital city price list. I am not accusing any local suppliers of doing that sort of thing but the opportunity is there. I know that there have been accusations of firms loading the freight content. In other words, instead of adding on the actual freight content plus the sales tax, they inflate that freight content and so increase their profits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Confederation of Industry and Commerce and the Master Builder's Association have been promoting this policy for some years. Regrettably, they have met only with limited success. Both these organisations see the potential benefits to the Northern Territory as a whole. It would stabilise the pricing structure of most goods, eliminate paying unnecessary tax and protect the consumer from the freight rip-offs I mentioned a moment ago.

If goods were delivered FIS Darwin, damage incurred in transit would be the responsibility of the southern supplier and not an add-on cost to the Darwin merchant. Let me just expand on that for a moment. If you purchase goods FOT southern capital city, and you are responsible for the freight, as soon as those goods are delivered to the transport company and consigned, the responsibility for damage is yours; it is no longer the supplier's. However, if goods are consigned FIS capital city price into Darwin, the responsibility for any damage lies with the consignor rather than the receiver. That is very important because we all know the vast distances over which our goods are freighted. The roads are rough and the damage factor is quite substantial. I have been in the business myself for many years and I know that that is a fact.

Mr Deputy Speaker, several years ago, the then Chief Minister, the Hon Paul Everingham, wrote to every major manufacturer or manufacturer's agent involved in the manufacture of merchandise for the Northern Territory. Mr Everingham addressed himself to 3 areas. Firstly, he reminded manufacturers that free inter-store capital pricing is an arrangement under which products are delivered at a common in-store price applicable to every capital city in Australia, and that the Master Builders' Association of the Northern Territory was conducting a campaign to stimulate interest among interstate suppliers in pricing deliveries to Darwin on a free inter-store capital city basis. He

pointed out the advantages of the scheme. First of all, it would mean a more effective marketing and advertising effort in the Northern Territory. General purpose advertising material would mean more mileage for the advertising dollar. In other words, they could have national advertising material instead of having special advertising material for the Northern Territory. It would provide much greater penetration into the rapidly-growing Territory market because products would be cheaper because there would be no tax on the freight. Naturally, there would be lower administrative costs. Mr Everingham pointed out the potential of the Northern Territory as a substantial growth area. He said:

> 'Since achieving self-government in 1978, the Territory's population has grown at an average annual rate of 4%. Its projected growth is 3.9% per annum until 1990. In the years since self-government, employment has increased by 20%, building by 37%, mining and manufacturing by 132%. In the last decade, we have seen a 150% increase in tourism, and that is going up at an ever-increasing rate. These are sure signs of a strong, growing economy and a rapidly-developing market and I can assure you that there are many southern suppliers who want a share of the action'.

Finally, Mr Everingham's letter concluded by drawing attention to the fact that the adoption of free inter-store capital city pricing for deliveries into Darwin would provide firms with a competitive edge. If they deliver FIS, as I pointed out, they would have that competitive edge. It should yield good dividends over a period of time because of the high growth potential of the Darwin market. Territory firms could then be expected to support manufacturers and suppliers who are prepared to deliver on a free inter-store capital city basis. Needless to say, such pricing arrangements will benefit Territory firms and consumers, particularly large volume buyers such as the mining and construction industries and so on.

The ultimate spinoff for all concerned would be the stimulation of Territory growth and the expansion of markets. This would mean not only cheaper prices but also the upgrading of local facilities which would in turn increase efficiency. Let me just dwell on that for one moment. In the past, there has been a policy of local preference. I believe that that was eliminated only recently. I stand to be corrected on that point. I believe that this government should have a policy of encouraging the southern suppliers to come to the Northern Territory and establish their businesses in the Northern Territory. It is through encouraging these southern suppliers to invest their money, set up their businesses, employ people and provide a better service to the Northern Territory community that we will develop on our road towards statehood.

It is my understanding that the Chief Minister's office was approached recently to confirm his government's continued support of FIS policy. I would urge the Chief Minister to make this commitment and to instruct all departments to specify and purchase only products known to be supplied on an FIS basis into the Northern Territory. The result of this action would be to reduce the cost of supply, to eliminate the tax content on freight and to put pressure on other suppliers to convert their FIS capital city pricing policy to include Darwin and other centres in the Northern Territory. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend these recommendations to you.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION
Appreciation of Service - Mr N.J. Gleeson

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that, on the retirement of Norman James Gleeson from the position of Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, this Assembly places on record its appreciation of the long and valuable service rendered by him to the Northern Territory and conveys to him and his good wife wishes for many happy years of retirement.

Mr Speaker, Mr Gleeson has a long and distinguished period of service in the Northern Territory. He began work in the Territory as a clerk in the General Services Branch in 1957. While he was in that branch, Mr Gleeson acted as assistant to the Director of the Northern Territory Centenary of Exploration Celebrations. Transferring to the Administrator's Branch in 1962, Mr Gleeson worked as Assistant Public Relations Officer and Exhibition Officer with the responsibility for arranging and staffing Northern Territory exhibits at capital city shows. From September 1962, Norm Gleeson assisted the Northern Territory Director of the 1963 Royal Visit by the Queen and Prince Phillip and performed the duties of artist-draftsman and Assistant Public Relations Officer before and during the Royal Visit.

On several occasions, Norm Gleeson served as Official Secretary to the Administrator during the time of Mr J.C. Archer, the Hon Roger Dean, the Hon Roger Nott and Acting Administrator, Mr R. Leydin. From 1964 to 1969, Norm Gleeson served the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory as a sub-editor and then editor of Hansard. In 1969, Norm Gleeson left the Territory to work in the Commonwealth Public Service in Adelaide, returning to the Territory as Serjeant-at-Arms in the Department of the Legislative Assembly in September 1975. He acted as Clerk Assistant for 12 months in 1977-78 before being promoted to that position in 1978. Mr Gleeson then acted as Deputy Clerk in October 1983 and has subsequently acted as Clerk of the Assembly on a number of occasions before his retirement on 31 July 1985.

Mr Speaker, I wish to record, on behalf of the members of the Legislative Assembly, our commendation of Mr Gleeson's distinguished career in the Northern Territory and our gratitude for the manner in which he has served the people of the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this debate this morning to support the motion unreservedly. I also have a potted biography of Mr Gleeson's very distinguished service to the Northern Territory in front of me but do not think it is necessary to repeat what the honourable Chief Minister has already said. Norm began his career with the Legislative Assembly in 1964 which means that his association with the Assembly, with a break in between, stretches over a period of 21 years. Norm leeson occupied other positions prior to that and during his period of employment away from the Assembly with a great deal of distinction.

Both Pettifer and Erskine May speak at some length on the important role of officers, particularly senior officers, in our parliament. Of course, the primary role is that they must be seen at all times to be entirely impartial in their advice. They must be available for that advice to all members of the Legislative Assembly irrespective of their political complexion.

Mr Speaker, by way of an aside, could I say that I was very pleased to see last night on television that tradition being upheld in a very strict manner indeed by Johnny Peris. When he was interviewed in the mall as to what his views were on the government, he said very promptly: 'I cannot express an opinion on that. I work for the Legislative Assembly?' Indeed, the Assembly would become unworkable very quickly if any member were not able to go to the Clerk or the other officers of the Assembly and seek advice in the full knowledge that that approach would be treated in the strictest confidence and that the advice given would be totally impartial.

I want to place on record the extraordinary value - and in fact my job would have been impossible without it - of the advice that I have received from Keith Thompson, the former Clerk, from Norm Gleeson and now from the current Clerk of the Assembly, Mr Guy Smith. In the absence of the Clerk, I have sought advice from Norm Gleeson. It has always been given promptly and without reservation and it has been essential to the proper workings of the Assembly that that should have been done.

I am sorry to see Norm leave. On a personal level, I have greatly enjoyed my association with Norm Gleeson in the time I have been in the Legislative Assembly, as have all other members of the opposition. He has performed his functions in a very distinguished manner.

Norm has contributed to various formal functions that have been held and there is some note of that in the biography. A notable aspect of his contribution to such functions was his preparation of the formal invitations and place cards. This might only seem a small matter but it was something which was commented on by everyone. I refer to the immaculate manner in which they were prepared and in a form which is not often seen these days. It was with some interest that I discovered - and this is not a pointed remark - that Mr Gleeson achieved that high degree of skill because he went to the trouble of seeking some tertiary assistance. With some feeling, I can only commend that kind of initiative. He attended a technical college in order to improve his ability in art.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is called calligraphy.

Mr B. COLLINS: It was not just calligraphy; it was art generally. I understand that Mr Gleeson is an extremely talented and prolific artist in his own right. I dare say he will be able to devote much more time and attention to his art now that he has retired.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I can say that it has been a privilege and a pleasure knowing Norm Gleeson. I am sorry that we will not be able to avail ourselves of his services any longer. I join unreservedly with the Chief Minister in wishing both Norm and his wife, Betty, the very best for their well-deserved retirement.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I too would like to join the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to our former Deputy Clerk, Norm Gleeson. I first met Norm in 1975 a few months after I entered this distinguished Assembly. There were 19 members in those days and now there are only 6 of those left. I guess you could say Norm almost got rid of the lot of us.

I think one of the things that I will always remember about Norm Gleeson is his sense of humour. I recall the official presentation of the Mace by the

federal parliament. Norm and the Clerk and all the others, done up in their finery, came through the Assembly. Norm lifted the Mace off his shoulder and put it down on the table. His wig came with it!

Mr B. Collins: I still have that on video tape.

Mr VALE: Later, I told someone that, in the Northern Territory, one of the uses of the Mace is as a wig remover. One of the Melbourne papers picked it up and Norm was not very pleased with me; he let me know that in no uncertain terms. One of his fortes was that he knew how to express a firm opinion.

I think his sense of humour came through on a number of occasions in the Assembly. Some time ago, there was a member who tended to speak often and long and frequently became dull and boring. The Leader of the Opposition knows to whom I am referring. One day this particular honourable member said: 'Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to bore the Assembly'. Norm turned around and quickly but quietly said: 'Someone should have him up for misleading the parliament'.

Mr Speaker, I will be forever grateful for the assistance and advice that Norm Gleeson offered to me from the time I first met him in 1975 until his recent retirement. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I note that Norm is a talented artist and I suppose that, during his retirement in Victoria, he will utilise both the scenery of that state and his ability to the fullest extent. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Norm and his wife, Betty, and wish them both a very long and happy retirement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I have not known Norm Gleeson as long as has the honourable member for Braitling. I came to this Assembly in 1980 and, of course, the member for Braitling has been here for many years. However, when I came here in 1980, whilst I would not say that I had greatness thrust upon me, it was a very small opposition then, as it is now, and we had many functions to perform. As a very junior member of this Assembly, I was also the opposition whip, as I am now. However, I can say that that task was made much easier by the assistance that was given to me by the staff generally and, in particular, by Mr Norm Gleeson.

Mr Gleeson was always available to offer advice or any assistance that I might require as whip or in connection with general functions in this Assembly. Whilst I am sure that the person who has succeeded him, Graham, will perform the function most admirably, I must record my thanks to Norm Gleeson for assisting me as a new member to the Assembly. I am sure that those colleagues of mine who have been here for an equally short period of time feel that way too.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah) : Mr Speaker, I cannot let this occasion go by without speaking my words of praise for Norm Gleeson. Probably, I have known Norm longer than other honourable members. I recall one particular time when he was working in a certain place which was not mentioned in his curriculum vitae. I think it was in the early 1960s that he was Secretary of the North Australian Show Society. It was during that time that I came to know him. He lived here for long periods, both before and since then. From working with him in the show society at that time, and having known him and Betty for a number of years, I have no hesitation in saying that people like them are an asset to the Northern Territory.

It was with some regret that I heard Norm say that he and Betty are retiring to Victoria. I feel certain that they will come back again either to live or to visit. During Mr Gleeson's employment with the Assembly, he has maintained the high standard that we expect of officers who work here. I feel that the gentleman who will take his place will continue in this same high tradition. As elected members of the Assembly, we have been very fortunate to have people of the calibre of Norm Gleeson and the other Assembly officers past and present.

I add my good wishes to Norm and Betty Gleeson for the future. I feel certain that we will see them back here in the future.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to record my sincere appreciation of the efforts of Norm Gleeson over the years. Members might be interested to learn that Norm Gleeson organised the first rodeo in the Top End. That was in 1963 during his term as Secretary of the North Australian Show Society. With the rodeo coming up on 30 August, it would seem appropriate to have him honoured on that occasion. The extent of his community involvement over the years is not widely known, which is typical of the silent achiever which Norm is. I would just like to add that to the kind thoughts and wishes that have been expressed for both Norm and his wife Betty on their retirement.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I would like to support the motion of the Chief Minister. Norm and I have something in common because I taught him a job when he first came to the Motor Vehicle Registry back in 1958 after I left school. When I became elected as member for Port Darwin, Norm Gleeson taught me many of the things that I had to learn in this Assembly. I am very grateful to him for that assistance.

I support what has been said here this morning, particularly about Norm's artistic talent. Norm was a dedicated officer. He was also a perfectionist. Everything that he did was done to perfection. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion that has been moved by the Chief Minister and I wish both Norm and Betty well in their future.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I too would like to place on record my grateful thanks to Norm Gleeson for his friendship, his advice and his help over the years. We have all lost a friend. I hope it will not be forever. I hope Norm will come back to the Territory every now and then. He is a pretty good traveller.

Norm is a good friend. He has a tremendous sense of humour which was of great help to him inside and outside of this Assembly whenever things became a bit rough. Norm's wisdom and experience were very helpful to me and I would like to place that on record. I do hope that he and Betty have a very happy retirement and that we will see them from time to time.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I give this motion my fullest support. Mr Gleeson has been of great personal assistance to me since my election to the Legislative Assembly in 1974, and particularly since my election as Speaker. The Legislative Assembly can ill afford to lose a man who has such great procedural knowledge, a man liked and respected by his colleagues and a man whose unfailing sense of humour and approachability made working with him a pleasure.

Norm and Betty were constituents of mine when I was the member for Ludmilla. Norm is a man of many parts. Not only has he had a distinguished career in the public service but he has served in the Navy. He has been a taxi driver and has worked for an oil company. He therefore has always had his feet firmly planted on the ground.

Norm and his wife Betty intend to retire in Victoria. Like Norm, Betty is a person of great intelligence and liveliness, and has a marvellous sense of humour. She has been of great support to him throughout his career and I wish them both a long and happy retirement.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Safe Working Conditions - Peko Mine

Mr SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Stuart:

'Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose under standing order 81 that the Assembly discuss this morning, as a definite matter of public importance, the following: the failure of the government to ensure that employers provide safe working conditions for workers in the Peko Mine at Tennant Creek, and for Territorians in general.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Ede Member for Stuart'.

Is the proposed discussion supported? The honourable member is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is without doubt that the government has failed to ensure the safety of workers involved in the gold extraction process at Warrego. The evidence of unsafe working conditions is incontrovertible and so is the evidence of the government's indifference which is personified by the minister's failure to become involved in the issue and by the silence of the local member. I will explain that the workers involved in the gold extraction process at Warrego have been exposed for an indeterminate period to mercury levels which are grossly unsafe, to levels which are 10 or 20 times above the accepted safety level.

I will begin by putting this debate into its historical context. A Mr Karanovic worked in the gold room at Peko Wallsend's mine near Tennant Creek for 18 months from 1980. In a judgment in the Victorian Supreme Court, handed down in April this year, Mr Justice Southwell found that Mr Karanovic had brain damage, heart and kidney problems, loss of vision, a defective memory, depression and troubled breathing. He is virtually unemployable and has had his life expectancy cut by at least 10 years. It was found that Mr Karanovic had been poisoned by mercury.

The gold extraction process at Warrego was described by the judge as 'primitive'. Mr Justice Southwell said that the negligence of the mine operators meant that Mr Karanovic had been exposed constantly during his employment to toxic levels of mercury vapour and to repeated skin contact with quicksilver. It is very interesting to see the level of interest that the

government members have in this total debate. They are quite prepared to stand by listening while people in Tennant Creek are poisoned but they are not prepared to debate it.

It was found that the badly-designed gold room allowed mercury droplets to settle in the porous walls, floors and equipment. To give an indication of how bad things must have been, air samples taken after conditions had been improved still showed mercury in the air at a level 20 times that recommended by the World Health Organisation. To quote from Mr Justice Southwell: 'The methods employed were little better than primitive; effective they may have been to produce gold cheaply, effective they were not to prevent exposing the operators to unnecessary risk of disease'. Karanovic was told to wear a mask when 'the big boss from Sydney' was visiting. No one had told him that a mask was vital under those conditions.

Mr Speaker, here I am referring back to the evidence given and the judgment in that case. It is worth noting, firstly, that urine tests for mercury poisoning were carried out only spasmodically. Secondly, when Mr Karanovic was found to have excessive mercury in his urine, he was left to work in the same conditions and, thirdly, no further investigations were carried out.

Let me summarise, Mr Speaker. We have a situation where workers have been exposed constantly to extremely high levels of mercury even after supposed improvements had been made 1981. I note that, in 1981, major renovations were carried out in the gold room. Obviously, someone in authority became aware that conditions were not up to scratch. I would presume that the Department of Mines and Energy had carried out its own tests prior to 1981 and, given the situation described by Mr Justice Southwell, was aware that the conditions were grossly substandard. The department gave directions for the 1981 revamp.

What would be a reasonable course of action for a ministry that had been worried enough about the situation to order a revamp of the premises? Obviously, after the revamp was completed, it would instruct the department to monitor the situation closely to ensure that the revamp had been successful. It would advise department inspectors to visit the mine unannounced at various times to run tests when various stages of the process were in operation. Even if it was not his own electorate, the minister would take a close interest in those results. He would have them carried out regularly over the ensuing years to ensure that the situation did not recur.

Was this done, Mr Speaker? That is something that this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory, not to mention the hundreds of people who have worked in that gold room over the ensuing 4 years, demand to know! If the tests were done, we demand the results! Was it the case that, for 4 years, the department made unannounced visits and checked the room at various stages of the process and found that everything was within the standards? Mr Speaker, I put it to you that it is highly unlikely that that notorious room would produce readings within the standard for 4 years and then suddenly produce fairly consistent readings of up to 20 times the standard! Why was an employee of the department so frustrated that he went to the press? Was he despairing of getting the minister to act by any other strategy?

Mr Speaker, to expect us to believe, without some incontrovertible proof, that the recent readings are an aberration would be an insult to our intelligence. It would strain credibility beyond the breaking point. Until proven otherwise, the assumption must be that this situation has been going on

for at least a number of years. Given that it is in the electorate of the former Minister for Mines and Energy, now the Chief Minister, it is inconceivable that he was not notified of the results. The workers at Peko have a right to know. Did their local member conspire to hide the fact that some of his constituents were being poisoned? Is his relationship with his former employers so cosy that he acted in their interests while failing to protect his constituents?

If this is not true - and I hope for the sake of all those innocent miners that it is not true - the government can prove it. It can table in the Assembly the originals of all the tests carried out between 1980 and those that we have for 1985. It can table advice from the department that these tests were carried out on an irregular basis, without giving prior advice to the company and at various stages of the extraction process. Until that time, we are entitled to believe the worst.

Mr Speaker, the situation has been disastrous for Mr Karanovic. He has been described as being in a 'somewhat pitiable state', with IQ results in the 'very defective range'. Given the Karanovic case, given that workers may risk brain damage, heart and kidney problems, loss of vision, defective memory, troubled breathing and reduced life expectancy, one could expect that improvements would have been made. One could reasonably expect that the minister would have been involved at that stage. Regrettably, and to the minister's discredit, that has not been the case. I note also that the local member, the current Chief Minister, has been similarly subdued. It concerns everyone that a supposedly improved work environment can return such incredibly bad results and that this situation has obtained for years.

On 11 June 1985, certain tests were carried out at Warrego. These results showed mercury levels very far in excess of the threshold limit value as adopted by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia in 1983-84. In fact, Mr Speaker, one worker's mercury badge reading was 20 times the threshold limit value. The senior chemist concluded: 'From the levels found, some of which are 20 times the allowable threshold limit value, employees working in the area are at a very great risk of being poisoned by mercury'. This is an incredible situation. The senior chemist continued: 'I suggest that all work in the area of concern be ceased immediately and not allowed to resume until it can be shown that levels of mercury in the air are below the threshold limit value'.

On the basis of that report, it would seem reasonable that the area of concern should have been shut down immediately. Of course, that did not happen, and it is reasonable to ask why not. Why did the minister allow workers to continue to be at risk?

On 28 June, a second laboratory report from the Occupational Hygiene and Environmental Laboratory showed excessively high readings of mercury in the air still. It also noted that the threshold limit value was exceeded by 20 times. On 2 August, the Director of Mines wrote to the FMWU regarding the test results on 28 June. That was some 7 weeks after a shutdown had first been recommended. The letter referred to the results as 'reliable data' which indicated that the air could contain above the recommended threshold limit value of mercury.

The letter also referred to a detailed monitoring of the gold room that was to take place during the next smelting. It said:

'As well as a carefully supervised monitoring program, there will be studies on procedures and engineering aspects of the room which has, in fact, been revamped in 1981 after directions by the department'.

Mr Speaker, that letter foreshadowed a detailed report on the monitoring exercise and I can assure the minister that that report is awaited with great interest.

Further tests were undertaken on 6 and 7 August. These continued to indicate excessively high levels of mercury in the air. Eventually, the workers chose to withdraw their labour on the basis that they did not know whether or not their working environment was safe. The workers were forced to do what the minister should have done 2 months earlier: they closed the gold room.

Mr Speaker, the conspiracy of silence over the whole issue has failed to inspire confidence. If the working environment is safe, it would be a relatively simple matter for Peko Mines to demonstrate that. Certainly, the company can retain a report it has commissioned but why does it choose to do so if the working environment is safe? All the evidence that we have shows definitely that it is not safe. Certainly, the company can hide behind the nominal authority of the Department of Mines and Energy, which it sees as the proper authority to investigate, review, set, approve or change standards and procedures, but why does it need to?

While it may be of comfort to Peko Mines to cooperate fully with the Department of Mines and Energy to assess when any changes are warranted to the Warrego gold room in terms of equipment, environment or operating procedures, that is of little comfort to the workers. It is of concern to me that Peko can blithely say: 'The department is the proper authority to investigate, review, set, approve or change standards or procedures'. Indeed, that is the department's responsibility but how can the workers have any confidence in that liaison when, as happened on 30 June, the senior chemist sees a dangerous situation, recommends a shutdown and it simply does not occur? Quite correctly, Peko can blithely say: 'The statutory body controlling all mining and processing operations at Warrego is the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy'. But when the minister responsible for the department fails to exercise his authority, what confidence can the workers possibly be expected to have in him? It would seem that Peko and the minister would like the Warrego miners to continue to be kept in the dark and sit silently, hoping that, in spite of his record, the minister will eventually do the right thing.

It would be responsible for Peko Mines to hand over to the FMWU a copy of a report commissioned by the company into environmental conditions in the Warrego gold room and to allow the FMWU-appointed consultant access to the gold room to undertake an independent survey. The issue of workers' health is an important one and, accordingly, the attitude of those involved should be responsible. How many Karanovic cases must there be for the government to accept its responsibility to oversee the safety of workers?

It is common knowledge that Mr Karanovic is not the only worker who has been affected by mercury. Even the local member would be aware of that. He would be aware of another gentleman who has so much mercury in him that he is referred to in Tennant Creek as the walking thermometer. Obviously, the failure to disclose test results creates anxiety. In this situation, that anxiety is well founded.

Furthermore, there are concerns about the methodology used for the testing. I am advised that company tests since April this year have been conducted at times when no retorting or smelting was being undertaken and, accordingly, those results must be of dubious validity. I am referring here to the mercury-sniffer tests. I am further advised that advance notice was given of some of the Department of Mines and Energy tests. People in the department told Peko: 'We will be out next Thursday so that we can run some of these tests'. This has happened over the period of 4 years and Peko Mines was able to close down parts of the process and clean the area up before the tests were carried out by the department. Accordingly, some of those tests are regarded as suspect.

In addition to the mercury levels, there are other concerns regarding Peko. It is probably natural that, having become aware of just how dangerous their working situation was with regard to mercury, they started to look at some of the other areas. It appears that there are areas where cyanide is being stored and utilised, very close to areas where acid is being utilised. As members would be aware, if there is an accident in that area, there would be a cyanide-acid mix. If that happened, we would be into something which I hope would even stir the local member and the current Minister for Mines and Energy into some form of action.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, there are very many questions which remain unanswered in relation to this dispute. Perhaps the central questions are: how long has the problem existed and why has it not been fixed? Given that the gold room was revamped in 1981 at the direction of the Department of Mines and Energy, it is surely reasonable to assume that it was monitored prior to 1981, in 1981, in 1982, in 1983, in 1984 and in 1985. If not, I would like to know why not. All those results and the documents relating to them should be made available to an independent authority for assessment, as should all the records of the medical tests on the workers. Only this will give those workers some degree of confidence that the minister responsible is seriously looking after their interests. Not to do so would allow this whole matter to continue.

As an aside, I note the ignorance of the minister regarding the duration of the problem. When he was asked on Territory Extra whether anyone had any idea of how long this problem had existed, he replied: 'I could not tell you that. You know I have not yet personally visited this mine in my new portfolio. I could not tell you how long it has existed'. I find it very hard to accept that the minister was that ignorant. If he had not been briefed in the history of the matter - and I remind you that this interview took place 2 months after the closure of the gold room was recommended - perhaps he could have asked the local member and the former Minister for Mines and Energy who I am sure is very well aware of the history of this matter. The story going around in central Australia is that, if the minister's fish had levels of mercury approaching those experienced by workers at Warrego, he would have instructed the council to drain the harbour. It is a sad story, but is is an indication of the depths to which this government's credibility has fallen. People now believe that big business and the minister's fish rate higher than Territory workers.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was expecting a little bit more substance in what the honourable member had to say this morning. He is trying to give the impression that the whole of the Northern Territory is somehow under some great cloud of pollution which the government has done nothing to eliminate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, firstly, I wish to touch on the conspiracy of silence that I have been accused of running with the company on this matter. I gather the member for Stuart is cranky because I would not respond to his every press release or comment in the media on this very subject over the past several weeks. I have been discussing the matter with union delegates and the company rather than in public, except for a couple of occasions when I was phoned by the media. If the member for Stuart cares to look at all the public transcripts, he will realise that there is hardly a conspiracy between myself and Peko Mines on this matter. In fact, we have had a fundamental disagreement over the release of a consultant's report. Of course, the member neglected to mention that I have said publicly that I believe the report could be given to the unions. That is hardly trying to shore up the company's position. The honourable member will find my words in the transcriptions. Obviously, they did not do much for his argument so he left them to one side.

Perhaps I could run through some of the recent history of the matter and indicate the protections that are available. In January 1980, the Department of Mines and Energy, in conjunction with the Department of Health, initiated an investigation into mercury exposures of workers at the Warrego gold room. Following the investigation, a program of medical checks on the personnel employed in the amalgam smelting process was introduced. The area was also restructured and extended and items of plant relocated to improve the working environment. Regular atmospheric sampling was instituted. With the company's cooperation, the department has continued ongoing surveillance of the operation using as the standard recommended levels of atmospheric contaminants and procedures for checks on people working with mercury as laid down by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.

Personal monitoring badges which were worn on 7 June this year were tested on 12 June as part of the department's routine monitoring program. These tests showed abnormally high readings. As the honourable member said, the results showed some 20 times the threshold limit value which is termed TLV. The high levels were of sufficient concern to the senior chemist to recommend to the government mining engineer at Tennant Creek that action be taken to cease operations in this area. This internal memo was leaked to the media which subsequently carried reports that the department had failed to action an internal departmental recommendation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, further tests were taken immediately following the original very high readings. That examination showed that the sampling procedures used in that test were quite unsatisfactory. Further tests were taken and analysed on 28 June. In that instance, 3 out of 4 of the tests were above TLV but not anywhere near 20 times. TLV is the level of contaminants under which it is believed that workers may be repeatedly exposed day after day without adverse effect. The levels are used as guides in the control of health hazards and should not be used as fine lines between safe and dangerous concentrations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is very important that we try to grasp the concept of these monitoring procedures. The broad expression that it is '20 times beyond acceptable level' certainly sounds very dangerous and very dramatic. I react to such statements as any layman would. On seeking further information, I was advised that the allowable level, as it is termed under the National Health and Medical Research Council figures, is a TLV of 0.85 mg/m^3. The TLV is the maximum allowable level to which a worker can be safely exposed working 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week for his working life without adverse effect. Levels in excess of the TLV are allowable if the time is less than 15 minutes and it occurs no more than 4 times in 8 hours.

I am advised that the smelting and retorting processes actually take place for a few days every 2 months, not 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week for a man's entire working life. The amalgam section - which we did not direct the company to shut down - is occupied primarily only in the mornings. It is used virtually on a half-day basis. We also need to consider the wearing of masks and protective clothing by individuals in an environment that has high air readings of mercury. Protective clothing very significantly reduces the body intake of such substances. As most people are aware, the wearing of masks drastically reduces the intake levels of pollution.

Subsequent to the earlier tests, further samples were taken. I have a list of tests that have been taken since April this year. I would be happy to provide the honourable member with that rather than read out a whole series of dates and tests. Tests taken on 6 to 8 August this year were analysed. The company was instructed not to use certain processes until the measures required for protecting employees and upgrading the area had been completed and tested. Peko commissioned consultants, Kuttner and Collins, to report on ways of improving the gold room. The report was commissioned some time in May and a copy was received by the Department of Mines and Energy in early August.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to table a telex that I sent to Mr Ray Rushbury of the Miscellaneous Workers Union. I had a number of conversations with him on the telephone about this process. I sent him a copy of the document that honourable members will have on their desks in a minute. It specifies the instructions which were issued to the company about the results of tests taken and the fact that the company was required to carry out certain works prior to any further smelting being undertaken. We also instructed the company, as I understand is normal practice, that a copy of that directive to it was to be posted on the notice board at Warrego and that a copy was to be entered into a mine record book. I understand that mine record books are kept as part of the regulation of mining in the Northern Territory. Major incidents and major factors which affect the working of a mine or the workers at a mine should be entered into these books.

On the subject of individual monitoring tests - which the honourable member for Stuart did not seem to pay much attention to - the testing of mercury levels in urine samples and blood samples is also regarded as a significant, relatively easy and accurate measure of the mercury levels in the human body.

Mr Ede: A bit late.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member says it is a bit late. It is a monitoring measure and one that I am sure very few people would advocate abandoning. I wonder if the honourable member for Stuart is advocating its abandonment. It seems he just prefers not to mention it.

In addition to the atmospheric monitoring, a doctor visits the mine on a regular basis. I believe a doctor from Alice Springs is employed by the company. The urine samples are taken on a monthly basis and have been for quite some time. Blood samples are taken on a 3-monthly basis. I believe that the workers have personal files where all this documentation is entered. The workers at the mines have complete access to these files. They can get complete photocopies of the files at any time. If they care to pass that information on to others, then so be it.

I do not wish to defend the company's point of view; I will just spell it out: it refused to issue the health records of workers to a union, or to anybody for that matter, en masse. It was happy for individual workers to receive all the results of the tests that each had undertaken. That is standard practice. However, handing over numbers of files on personal medical information is not company policy. I guess one can understand that. But, as I understand it, every worker has access to that information.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to touch on a few of the matters relating to controls in the Northern Territory under the Mining Act.

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

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of the Government Business): I move that the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member foreshadowed in the media at least that he proposes to introduce legislation into the Assembly to give workers access to records relating to their health and safety. I would bring to his attention some legislation that is already on the books. I do not wish to discourage him; it is his prerogative to introduce a private member's bill. He can do so to his heart's content. But before he goes babbling away in the media about how there are no protections in the system and the government could not care less about mine workers or any workers in general, he should examine quite a raft of documentation on these very matters. They should be no secret either to himself, as a member of this Assembly, or of course to the unions. The requirements to carry out medical checks on employees and maintain medical records in the Territory mining industry are covered by 3 pieces of legislation. In particular, they are covered by the Mines Safety Control Act. I commend the honourable member for Stuart at least to have a browse through that act before he flies off on the subject. The other 2 pieces of legislation are the Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Act and the Mines Safety Control (Radiation Protection) Regulations.

I think I should spare the Assembly a reading of several pages of analysis of the provisions under those acts and regulations. They deal with all the requirements and are really quite extensive. There are several pages of them.

Mr Ede: Give it to us.

Mr PERRON: If the member would like me to read them out, I will.

Mr Ede: You are just proving that it is not working.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I ask for clarification. Is there any time limit once I have been given an extension?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members are entitled to one extension of time only.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not give detailed explanations on those 3 pieces of legislation. I will point out, however, that the safe working conditions for employees in the Northern Territory, other than those covered by the Mines Safety Control Act, are covered in other pieces of

legislation such as the Construction Safety Act, the Dangerous Goods Act and the Inspection of Machinery Act. Other complementary legislation applicable to workplaces is administered by the Department of Health. Members might also care to read the recommendations of the recent inquiry into workers' compensation in the Northern Territory.

Without going into pages and pages of information which is covered under existing acts, I would like to dispel any view that the honourable member cares to put forward that people do not have access to their own records of environmental matters which affect them in their workplace. I will say something about the Mines Safety Control Act. Section 18 states: 'The persons employed in a mine may, at a meeting and by a vote of the majority of the persons present at that meeting, authorise 2 of those persons, 2 other persons who are practical miners or 1 of the persons present and 1 other person who is a practical miner, to inspect at the cost of the persons employed in the mine of the whole or any part of that mine'. There are several subsections. I will read one: 'The owner, agent or manager of a mine shall afford every facility for an inspection under this section to be carried out'. Also, the findings of such an inspection must be entered in a log book. I am not sure why such an inspection has not been carried out or sought by the workers in this particular case. I will find out because I have arranged to go to Tennant Creek to talk to the unions and management on this matter on Friday of this week. No doubt, many matters will be cleared up.

In conclusion, I would like to advise honourable members of an interesting statistic which they will find in the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Energy which will be tabled during this sittings. They will find a table showing that, between 1976-77 and 1984-85, the numbers of people employed in the mining industry increased by about 20% yet the accident frequency rate is very slightly above the rate it was in 1976-77. There has been a 20% increase in the work force and an accident frequency rate increase of 2%. That table is considered to be a pretty good measure of the level in safety of mines in the Northern Territory and shows that there has been in fact a significant decrease in the number of accidents per employed person. We believe this stems from the legislation which the Territory now has in place and as a result of the inspections which are carried out on a regular basis.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I have been known sometimes to admire speeches by the Minister for Mines and Energy but, certainly, that was not one of his best speeches. I have rarely seen a minister approach such a serious subject with such a lack of interest. Of course, as it concerns people, that fits in because the minister has shown on repeated occasions that he is not interested at all in people.

Mr Speaker, the second conclusion I came to as a result of the minister's statement is that we have a very serious situation indeed and the government is not doing anything about it. If one wants any confirmation that there is a serious situation, one need only look at a telex sent on 9 April by the minister himself to Mr Rushbury of the Miscellaneous Workers Union. It says: 'The badge tests that were taken and analysed on 9 August gave readings as follows'. I will just give the highest reading - that of the foreman - which was 1.17 mg/m^3. The senior chemist of the Department of Mines and Energy, in a separate communication, defines a safe level, as adopted by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia, as 0.05 mg/m^3. We have a situation where the personal sample of the foreman was 23 times over the acceptable level on 9 August this year. That was 2 weeks ago.

Mr Speaker, the minister went on to say that those figures indicate there is still a problem, especially with the gold smelting process in which the foreman was engaged. Ten days ago, there was still a problem. We gave the minister the opportunity today to tell us what he is doing to reassure the workers at Warrego about this problem and he fluffed the opportunity. To his shame, he showed his complete and absolute lack of interest in the whole subject.

The minister started off by saying he would give us a history of the government's concern and interest in the operations at Warrego. He started historically. He said that, in 1980, the government directed certain changes in the operations of the gold room. He then skipped from 1980 to 1985! From 1980, he went to 12 June 1985, at which time he said there was a badge test taken in which high readings were recorded. He later skipped back a couple of months and said there had been tests since April 1985. Coincidentally, that happens to be the very month in which Mr Karanovic received his massive damages sum from Peko Wallsend. We have an unexplained gap. What happened between 1980 and 1985? There can only be 2 possible explanations. One is that tests were done and there has been a conspiracy of silence about the results. The other is that, in the period 1981 to 1984, there were no tests on the effectiveness of the changes to the operations of the gold room previously ordered by the government.

It is time the government answered the basic question: what happened in the period 1981 to 1984? Why were these high reading levels not picked up shortly after the operations of the gold room were altered and not picked up until after Mr Karanovic received his huge payment? I would submit to you, Mr Speaker, that there is a very serious matter that the government has not attempted to answer, and it had better hurry up and do so or this issue will escalate even further than it has at present.

Mr Speaker, I want to move on to the more general aspects as mentioned in our MPI, and it is a pity that we only seem to talk about industrial health and safety matters when a serious industrial health or safety matter has become manifest. The last time I spoke on this matter was in August last year after the death of a workman on the Elizabeth River bridge. At that time, we pointed out that there were weaknesses in the act and that they prevented workers, or the union representing those workers on that job, from reporting safety faults and demanding that government inspectors go out and examine those faults. As I said at that time, it was only through the good offices of the minister at that stage, who is now the Chief Minister, that the safety problems at the Elizabeth River bridge were dealt with because clearly the management had no interest, the workers had no power and only the minister could do it.

We pointed out then that there was a particular weakness in the legislation and that weakness still remains. The government has not learnt a single lesson from the Elizabeth River bridge situation. It has not moved one amendment to tidy up the weaknesses in the act that were revealed in that situation. Obviously, if it can get away with it, it intends to follow the same path in relation to the Warrego Mine situation.

Mr Speaker, in the Northern Territory we have a situation where we have undoubtedly the worst system of occupational health and safety in Australia.

Mr Perron: How would you know?

Mr SMITH: Because, Mr Speaker, I have taken an interest in this particular issue. There have been comprehensive reviews of industrial health and safety in the states yet nothing has happened here. It has not been a priority of this government. It has not examined the matter since 1978.

Mr Perron: Does that mean that we are the worst in the country?

Mr SMITH: I listened to you in silence.

Mr Speaker, the following evidence backs up amply my statement that we have the worst system in Australia. There are large areas of work in the Northern Territory that are not covered by any occupational health and safety legislation at all. We do not have a factories act, Mr Speaker. We do not have regulations or laws dealing with bakehouses.

Mr Finch: Have we any factories that are not covered?

Mr SMITH: The honourable member for Wagaman has just earnt himself a well-deserved reputation in Winnellie, which I will make sure the people there find out about.

Mr Speaker, we have no regulations dealing with bakehouses, explosive power tools or floor coverings. We have no regulations covering hearing conservation and maximum noise levels. We have no regulations covering local government industries, rural industries, spray painting and welding. At present, we have no regulations covering air space and ventilation, heating appliances, and the standard of lighting in factories. In all of those areas, industries in the Northern Territory are completely free from regulation.

We have almost a complete lack of statistical reporting of injuries and work time lost through disease caused in the workplace. The only compulsory reporting of time lost through accidents occurs under the Mines Safety Act whereby, I am happy to say, all lost-time accidents must be recorded. In the much-renowned Construction Safety Act mentioned by the honourable minister, it is required only to provide a report on loss of work time if the loss of work time through any particular accident is greater than 7 days or where the accident has been caused by electric shock or people have been overcome by gas vapours or fumes. For other accidents where loss of work time is less than 7 days, no reporting is required at all.

Then there is the Inspection of Machinery Act which really takes the cake. Under that act, accidents which result in structural alteration or extensive repairs to buildings must be reported but there is no requirement to report injury to a worker. It seems to me that there is something very peculiar indeed there.

Mr D.W. Collins: Yes, workers' compensation.

Mr SMITH: I am glad that you mentioned workers' compensation. We all know how successful the workers' compensation scheme is and that one of the major problems with workers' compensation in this Territory - and one of the major reasons that premiums are so high - is that we do not have an effective scheme that forces employers to undertake their rightful role and insure people. The Doody report revealed that we are collecting only half the contributions that we should be collecting. Half the employers are not insured and, consequently, do not report industrial accidents. They damn well should be reported. I hope that the government will get off its butt and do something about the Workers' Compensation Act very quickly.

Mr Speaker, we have heard already of the difficulties that the Trades and Labour Council and the unions have in securing reports on behalf of their members. It is very easy to talk about individual members having the ability to look at their own files and their ability to organise meetings and then make an assessment of the plant. What we are talking about is the ability of the worker and the organisation representing that worker to get alternative expert advice on key health and safety issues. At present, there is no legislation in the Northern Territory that provides for that and the minister has shown his complete and utter disregard for the value of lives of workers in the Northern Territory by dismissing that possibility out of hand. Once again, he has shown that he is not a fit person to handle a ministry which deals with people in any shape or form whatsoever.

Mr B. Collins: Give him Fisheries; he will handle that all right.

Mr SMITH: Yes.

Mr Speaker, as I pointed out in August last year, and as the honourable minister said, we have a situation whereby occupational health and safety regulations are all over the place. There are provisions scattered throughout legislation under the control of different ministers. Surely we have reached a stage where we are intelligent enough and have sufficient concern for the health and safety of workers in the Northern Territory to get it all together and ensure that all workers in the Northern Territory are covered by an appropriate form of legislation so that, when they go to work, they know they will not be subject to unnecessary risk of injury or of contracting a work-related disease. Many of them do not have that assurance at present.

How many times must we learn these mistakes the hard way? How many Warregos must we have before we get the message that workers are entitled to minimum acceptable standards from their employers? We know from bitter experience that employers will not do this without prompting and without government assistance.

Mr Speaker, to conclude on a positive note, the government needs to legislate in this area and there are a number of principles it needs to encompass in providing that legislation. I will go through them quickly. Firstly, there needs to be a single body which is responsible for the legislation. I would recommend the Department of Industry and Small Business. Secondly, the legislation needs to provide for a cooperative effort by management and labour on these matters. Thirdly, it needs to make provision for minimum health-care facilities. Fourthly, it needs to provide for adequate research and education in the field of occupational well-being.

Mr Speaker, the government must act. I do not want to be forced to stand up here after the next industrial accident that occurs and make this speech again. We are long overdue for some action on this particular matter.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, what is this MPI all about anyway? I suppose it is up to me to inform honourable members, particularly those opposite, just what it is all about. I need to do that because it is quite clear from the debate this morning that this is just another half-baked attempt by the opposition to jump on a media bandwagon - and a fairly rickety one at that. It seems the only thing that prompts them into any sort of action is the press running a story. It is quite clear that the members for Stuart and Millner are ignorant in a number of areas. It is obvious that neither they nor their advisers have gone to any trouble to check the actual

situation at Warrego. I was down there last Friday and was surprised to learn that, although the representative of the workers had been in town, he had not gone to the trouble of visiting the site in question. As I understand it, he has never been in the gold room. I wonder whether any of the members opposite have been to Warrego mine or the gold room or have taken the trouble to check the real situation on the ground.

The members for Stuart and Millner do not understand what is involved in industrial safety. I am surprised at the member for Millner. He expresses such a profound interest in the subject but he certainly has not gone to the trouble to find out what the current situation is with Northern Territory regulations and acts. He raised a number of questions this morning. If he had done his homework and looked at regulations, instead of just the principal act, he might have found that, in the Inspection of Machinery Act, there is a requirement for reporting. There are many other instances where he has illustrated his absolute ignorance on the subject. It would seem to me that he has no understanding of the role of government or legislation in safety matters. One would have expected opposition members to obtain some sort of expert advice because they have no understanding of the fundamentals associated with the work practices at Warrego or the monitoring of mercury in the gold room. In fact, I would suggest that, once again, members opposite have done absolutely no homework, and probably none of them has been to the site.

Mr Speaker, what we need to do is to put some sanity into this discussion and to talk briefly about the whole question of work safety. We need to put it into perspective. The success of industrial safety relies on a 3-way partnership. The 2 principal shareholders in the partnership are the employees and the employers. I do not deny for one moment the role which government plays, but one needs to have an overview of where responsibility lies. It is only with genuine involvement of workers and employers that real safety will be maintained in the workplace. There is no doubt that it is in the best interests of employers as well as employees that there are adequate safety measures and that injuries and illnesses are reduced to an absolute minimum. I say 'absolute minimum' because, other than introducing the big-brother attitude that the member for Millner was advocating, and placing an inspector in every workplace to look over every worker's shoulder, there is no way that we can do anything else than reduce to an absolute minimum illnesses and accidents that occur.

I am also of the firm opinion that the less the government interferes in such matters the better. The role to be played by government as the third and minor partner is principally to set the basic parameters and ground rules. It should provide practical advisory support for the implementation of safe practices. Only when necessary should it provide specific regulatory processes. We have heard the minister refer to the legislation that is in place. The member for Millner suggested a blanket regulation to cover all things. Whilst the day may come when that is necessary, one would hope that legislation directs itself specifically to each and every industry as applicable. I am horrified at the thought of a bulky act that covers all things. People would get lost within its framework.

Whilst on the subject of regulations, the member made some fairly wild statements about industries that were not covered. I asked him which specific factories were not covered by existing regulations. He did not answer. I can tell you why he did not answer. It was because, to my knowledge anyway, there are no workplaces with any sort of hazardous activity that are not covered by existing regulations. The question went begging.

Mr Smith: I did not even argue that point. What are you carrying on about?

Mr FINCH: That is the whole crux of it. If we have sufficient regulations and legislation at the moment, what is the beef about legislating the government's role in it?

The Department of Mines and Energy has its staff of over 40 spread throughout the Northern Territory to cover our work force. Our industries do not compare with the steelworks at Port Kembla or the big coal mines. The risk factor in our industries is much lower than in many of those traditionally unsafe work areas interstate. Certainly, in combination with the activities of various other departmental safety inspectors, there are trained safety personnel who ensure continuing on-the-site safety day by day. Certainly, when all of those activities are combined, you see that safety in the Northern Territory is well attended to.

Mr Ede: Ask Mr Karanovic.

Mr FINCH: If the honourable member will be patient, we might move to those matters shortly.

I am sure that even members opposite, despite their lack of reading ability and investigatory powers, would acknowledge that safety in Australia, including the Northern Territory, has progressed dramatically over the last 2 decades. That is worth noting. That has been brought about by a great number of things and I guess the most important component is people's interest in the subject - not just that of workers, unions and members of the opposition but, more importantly, the overall work force. Combined with improved technology and communications, there is no doubt that, in the last 2 decades, we have come a long way with safety in the workplace.

However, regardless of these things, people cannot be programmed. There seems to be some suggestion that we can end up with a 100% safety record. I put it to honourable members that that is not, nor is it ever likely to be, totally achievable, but that will not stop us from trying. Through its significant and practical approach to the subject, there is no doubt that this government has acknowledged that the safety of workers is a serious matter.

The member for Millner made some bold references to a great number of things, as did his colleague, but I guess most of them do not warrant any response. Most of them had no basis in fact and many indicated a lack of understanding. At best, some of them were simply malicious. Perhaps the member for Stuart would like to repeat outside some of his allegations about government arrangements with companies. The honourable member for Nhulunbuy was not even prepared to voice his interjection about CLP donations from companies loud enough for it to be recorded. I am sure that would make interesting reading outside.

As I mentioned, I visited Warrego a week ago. One needs to understand the processes that take place within the gold room - the amalgamation process, the retorting and the smelting. Of course, the big problem is the presence of mercury which is a material that vaporises. It vaporises at different rates at different temperatures and is much heavier than air. We need to realise which monitoring tests have been put in place by the government and by the company over a period of time.

The honourable minister mentioned the use of lapel badges and the technical data surrounding those. It is important to realise that wearing a badge on your shirt does not represent directly the inhalation of mercury vapour. Obviously, one needs to be practical and understand what the whole test is about and also that the levels that were set by the national health organisation are safe levels. As mentioned by the minister, they are at a safe level for a worker who will be exposed over an entire year. It is no good taking 2 or 3 results out of the whole batch and saying they are representative of what is happening.

Certainly, the government recognised that there were problems at Warrego. Those problems have been addressed by actions that were taken 4 years ago and earlier this year which resulted in a clean-up of some possible traces of mercury from the floor. Currently, they are being remedied by the installation of air-conditioning plants. Nobody addressed the fact that the works have been completed. In fact, there has been a slight overreaction because there is now an air-conditioning plant that will transfer air at some 20°C every 2 minutes. Exhaust fans have been placed over the presses. Other means include containing the vapour and reducing the temperature, thereby reducing the quantity of vapour dramatically. However, the most effective means is by air transfer. It is only by removing air that we will fix the problem. One would not suggest reducing air temperature to the point where vapour will not occur because I am quite sure that the workers would prefer not to work below 0°C.

Without talking too much more about the government's role, let us recognise simply that the problem has been addressed. That ought to have been acknowledged by members opposite. Their response has been based purely and simply on a newspaper report used purely and simply for political purposes. It has not been in the interests of the workers otherwise they would have gone to the trouble of finding out a little bit more on the subject. They would have visited the site or had someone visit the site, even if it were the union representative, to see what was happening there and to ensure that the works proposed by the company would be an effective long-term solution. There is no doubt that the couple of hundred workers at Warrego, or however many there are, have been disadvantaged by losing pay during the last week or 2. Those 4 or 5 workers who know what the hazards are in the gold room do not want to lose their jobs. To suggest that hundreds of workers over the years have been affected by this mercury vapour is a nonsense because those 4 or 5 workers would hardly change over the years.

Mr Speaker, to take one court case - which, it was suggested, was poorly defended - and to use that when there was no clear indication that mercury was the specific cause of the chap's ailment, is once again a statistical nonsense that members opposite are becoming too well known for. He has an ailment. People are conscious of that and they are doing things about the potential dangers in that gold room.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time this morning, the Minister for Community Development quoted me as using in this Assembly the phrase 'selective sniping'. I would like to place it on record that at no stage in debate in this Assembly have I used that phrase in relation to Territorians, laws of the Territory or any aspect of affairs that might come within the purview of this Assembly. I assume that, when the minister has perused yesterday's Hansard, and satisfied himself that I did not

use that particular phrase, an apology will be forthcoming and that he will strike from the record of this Assembly his comments of this morning.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Electricity Commission Amendment Bill (Serial 136) and the Public Service Amendment Bill (Serial 135) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in relation to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 136)
PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 135)

Bills presented together and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, during the June 1985 sittings of the Legislative Assembly, the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Bill was introduced and passed all stages. In the light of comments received subsequently and some concerns which have been raised about the implications of the legislation with respect to NTEC employees, some minor amendments are required to clarify certain aspects. In addition, some minor technical drafting amendments are necessary to clarify the legislation. I remind honourable members that I gave a commitment that this would be done at the time these concerns were raised.

I emphasise that these minor amendments do not in any way extend the scope of the legislation. I believe it is appropriate for them to pass all stages at these sittings in order to put beyond any possible doubt the government's intentions in this regard. Indeed, given the commitments which the government gave to do this, it would be irresponsible not to effect passage now.

The first matter relates to the Electricity Commission Act. The effect of the inclusion of the new section 31A of the Electricity Commission Act at the last sittings was to require the chairman and the employees of NTEC to be treated as employees under the Public Service Act. It was not intended that NTEC employees should be subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act but, to put this matter beyond doubt, an amendment to the Electricity Commission Act is necessary. Clause 2 of the Electricity Commission Amendment Bill now before the Assembly accordingly deletes the reference to NTEC employees in section 31A.

The second matter relates to that part of the legislation which empowers the minister to direct the transfer of a chairman or director of a statutory corporation. The government's intention has been to enable the minister responsible for the Public Service Act to direct the transfer of a chairman or director of a statutory corporation where the act governing the relevant corporation provides that, in respect of the employment of that chairman or director, the corporation is a prescribed authority within the meaning of the Public Service Act. To achieve this, minor technical amendments are required to subsections 4(1) and 4(2) of the Public Service Act.

With respect to subsection 4(1), clause 4(a) of the Public Service Amendment Bill now before this Assembly provides that the term 'prescribed authority' first appearing in the definition of 'employee' be replaced with the term 'statutory corporation'. Under Territory legislation, prescribed authorities may be categorised in 2 groups. With respect to the first group, the term 'prescribed authority' is defined in the Public Service Act. The definition provides that a prescribed authority is one which is either listed in schedule 2 of the Public Service Act or specified in the act under which the authority is established. However, in fact, few authorities have been specified per se. In the second group, which therefore forms the majority, the acts under which the authorities are constituted prescribe them to be authorities only for certain purposes. The proposed amendment overcomes the possibility that the definition of 'employee' might have been narrowly construed to be limited in application to the first group of prescribed authorities. The substituted term 'statutory corporation', as defined in the Interpretation Act, is of a suitably broad application to apply to both groups of prescribed authorities.

An amendment to subsection 4(2) of the Public Service Act is also required. Subsection 4(2) of the Public Service Act provides:

> 'A reference in this act to an employee employed in the service of a prescribed authority does not include a person appointed as a member of a prescribed authority'.

As persons such as the Chairman of the Darwin Port Authority and the Chairman of the Electricity Commission are members of their respective authorities, this section conflicts with the intention that these employees should be subject to transfer at the direction of the minister. It is therefore proposed to exclude section 32 which provides the minister with the power to direct such transfers from the ambit of subsection 4(2). In order to give effect to this proposal, subclause 4(b) of the Public Service Amendment Bill inserts in subsection 4(2) after 'this act' the words 'other than in section 32'.

The final matter relates to a new section 16A of the Public Service Act. As it presently stands, this section empowers the minister to direct an employee to carry out any or all of the duties of the Public Service Commissioner with regard to public accountability of departments and authorities and the prevention of discrimination in public service employment. The section gives the employee, under direction, the powers of the commissioner to enter premises, summon persons, take evidence, issue general orders etc in pursuance of his duties. The employee is further required to report to the Legislative Assembly with regard to his activities. However, an employee under direction would have to delegate at least some of his powers in order to operate effectively. As matters now stand, he would have to rely on the delegation provisions of the Interpretation Act. Unfortunately, paragraph 46(7)(b) of the act prevents the delegation of a power or function relating to the investigation or detection of offences or unlawful acts. This has obvious ramifications with respect to investigations concerning public accountability and possibly also with regard to anti-discrimination matters.

A much wider power is contained in section 13 of the Public Service Act which enables the commissioner to delegate any or all of his powers. Accordingly, it is appropriate for the new section 16A to be amended to give this power of delegation to the employee under direction. Clause 5 of the bill therefore inserts a new subsection (3) in section 16A in order to provide

that a person under the direction of the minister will have the same power of delegation as the commissioner has under section 13 in relation to the function he is directed to perform.

Mr Speaker, in the last day or two, the Leader of the Opposition made passing references to the public service legislation. The opposition would appear to be not so much interested in the details of the legislation, and certainly not interested in the details of the amendments before the Assembly, as it is in creating as much concern as possible. Therefore, I would like to say something about the government's approach to the Public Service Act and the public service generally.

The Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Act, which passed all stages in the June sittings, had 4 objectives: to provide a simple and straightforward power for the Administrator to terminate the Public Service Commissioner; to give the minister responsible for the Public Service Act express power to transfer departmental heads; to give the minister express power to transfer and or terminate the heads of certain statutory authorities; and to enable the appointment by the minister of a person other than the Public Service Commissioner to carry out certain responsibilities which were previously confined to the commissioner, and which are in the areas of public accountability; that is, internal audit and non-discrimination in employment. These objectives were achieved in the legislation and the government makes no apology for them.

Mr Speaker, it is the government's view that the public service exists to advise on policy and to implement the decisions made by government and ministers. Surely no one would argue with the proposition that the elected government is entitled to expect that the decisions it makes and the policies it adopts will be carried out efficiently and vigorously by the public service. Too often, this is not the case. A common criticism of the public service - not just here in the Northern Territory, I might add - is that this responsiveness to the government of the day is not always adequate.

The amendments to the Public Service Act and the other related measures were deliberately designed to establish an appropriate relationship between government and the key senior officers who have responsibility for the implementation of the government's policy and programs. As such, they are designed to enhance the performance of the public service in fulfilling its role.

Over the weeks since the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Act was passed, it has become very apparent that not everyone agrees with the course that we have set. In other words, not everyone agrees that the proper relationship between the public service and the government should be prescribed in the relevant legislation. The comments of honourable members opposite indicate that the opposition is in this camp. The opposition may feel that it is appropriate for the public service chiefs to be cossetted and protected if they choose not to do the government's bidding, but the government does not.

Not surprisingly, the public service unions have also taken exception to what the government has done although, in all fairness, it is clear that they have not properly comprehended some of the changes. They have represented the changes as being sinister and have sought to apply an extremely wide interpretation of them.

The ACOA has prepared a detailed submission which is very critical of the legislation. I have responded to this submission at some length because it is important to establish what the government is seeking to do and what it is not seeking to do. The ACOA's criticism spans a range of matters and, as such, it is likely that the matters raised will be of interest to this Assembly. I believe it is certainly important for all honourable members to be properly informed about this legislation and the government's intention. It is therefore appropriate for me to canvass these issues here.

Mr Speaker, the ACOA argues that the amendment act has changed the role, status and independence of the Public Service Commissioner by deleting the sections which allow his termination only under certain prescribed conditions. This observation is true, but it has significance only if it is accepted that the commissioner will be the type of person who will be paralysed by the potential threat of termination, or if one's view is that the commissioner should be free to exercise his powers and prerogatives totally without thought to the government's objectives and policies. The government accepts neither proposition. It is the government which determines policies and has the right to require the commissioner to carry them out.

The ACOA notes that there is no longer a 7-year term-of-office requirement for the commissioner. That is correct. There is nothing inherent in the office of the commissioner which requires this.

The ACOA notes also that there is no longer an age requirement for retirement by the commissioner. Again, this is correct. This gives the government complete flexibility. There is a general requirement in the public service for retirement at age 65. It is open to either the government or the commissioner to write into the contract of employment retirement at age 65 or any other age.

The ACOA notes that there is no longer an invalidity retirement provision. That is correct although it is not valid to draw emotive conclusions. The commissioner can expect treatment no less sympathetic than for public servants generally. It is to be expected that invalidity retirement provisions would be negotiated by the commissioner in the contract of employment.

The ACOA argues that no person who lives under threat of termination at any time can be said to be truly independent in his decision-making. The ACOA has apparently paid little attention to what happens in the private sector. It is far more important for the commissioner to implement the government's decisions than to make decisions. It is far more important that the commissioner be responsive to government policy than he or she be a law unto himself or herself. This in no way detracts from the clearly defined statutory duties of the commissioner to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service. The matter is quite simple.

The ACOA disagrees with the moves the government has consciously made to ensure that public service policies and procedures will reflect current government wishes. The government makes no apology for this act. The commissioner must be subordinate to the government with respect to the implementation of matters of general policy. The person appointed as commissioner is not bereft as the ACOA implies. It will be open to the commissioner to negotiate suitable terms of employment, which naturally would include severance provisions. Indeed, one would expect that a person suitable for employment as public service commissioner would be eminently qualified to negotiate a suitable contract of employment.

We now turn to the duties, powers and reports by the commissioner. The ACOA has claimed that, in respect of internal audit and discrimination in employment, the minister may now direct an employee to act as if he or she were the commissioner issuing general orders in employment or recruitment. The ACOA claims this creates scope for political favours in recruitment or promotion. This is emotive and inaccurate. The minister could direct a person other than the commissioner to take action in the areas of audit and discrimination in public employment. That direction cannot be to take action which is unlawful or contrary to the spirit of the legislation. The minister's direction is limited to the provisions of subsections 14(2) and 14(3) which ensure that there is public accountability and no discrimination in employment. The minister can direct the officer only to do what the commissioner can do, and the commissioner can take only those actions which are necessary to ensure the proper use of public moneys and that there is no discrimination in public employment. A ministerial direction cannot be given outside of this framework. It is the nominated officer who, under section 16A of the Public Service Act, is empowered to issue general orders. It is not the minister. These general orders can be only for the purposes laid down in subsections 14(2) and 14(3), and the general orders cannot be in conflict with the letter and spirit of the legislation.

The ACOA claims that the minister may direct the officer to enter premises, summons persons and accept evidence and documents. The ACOA argues that the officer would not have to have regard for the Public Service Act or the correctness of the actions, but regard only to the ministerial direction. Mr Speaker, this is contrived and inaccurate. The ACOA itself notes that the commissioner currently has these powers but would not use them lightly. In taking such actions, the commissioner must have regard for the purposes set out in subsections 14(2) and 14(3). The same would be true for an officer other than the commissioner. In any event, the minister could not direct the officer to enter premises. He could only direct him or her to take action to achieve the purposes of subsections 14(2) and 14(3). The officer would be empowered to do these further things if necessary to carry out his or her duties and the officer is not empowered to act otherwise.

The provision empowering the officer is only an enabling provision to ensure that the requirements of public accountability and non-discrimination in employment can be achieved. The ACOA claims that the minister can prevent any critical matters being reported to the Legislative Assembly because the nominated officer is empowered to report under section 16 of the Public Service Act. This is not true. The officer is required to report on those matters which come under subsections 14(2) and 14(3); that is, public accountability and non-discrimination. Indeed, it is in the public interest that he should draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to these matters. The minister could not direct the officer in respect of section 16 reports. The minister directs under section 14. How he or she reports would be a matter for him or her as it is currently for the minister.

The ACOA further claims that the minister now has legislative authority to give a direction, through the general orders, that would refer to any personnel or management-related function of the service; for example, filling vacancies, recruitment, promotion, part-time work, salary, travel etc. Mr Speaker, this claim is completely untrue. Only 2 people may issue general orders: the commissioner and the person appointed under subsection 14(2) or 14(3). The latter may only issue general orders in respect of matters falling within the areas of public accountability and non-discrimination in public employment.

The ACOA further argues that duplication, conflict and ambiguity may result in the general orders with more than 1 person empowered to issue those orders. It is arguable that this might happen but it could only be the case in the areas prescribed by subsections 14(2) and 14(3). The government will expect parties to exercise common sense to ensure that it does not.

The ACOA ascribes a certain sanctity to the general orders because it is these which enshrine the protection etc which public servants find comfortable. Again, it is not the minister who issues general orders; it is the officers who are empowered. Neither does the minister direct what the general orders will be. But there should be no doubt that the general orders should promote and implement current government policies. They should not be allowed to frustrate what the government has decided to do.

The ACOA has contrived an unfounded interpretation of these provisions, presumably because it objects to the thrust of the legislation. The ACOA interpretation of section 16A cannot be sustained. I repeat, Mr Speaker, the minister can only direct the nominated officer to take a step which the commissioner may take. The conditions precedent must be that the commissioner or officer must think it necessary for the purpose of ensuring that all transactions involving moneys are properly made, or to take steps to ensure that there is no discrimination in employment. The actions taken can only be in relation to those circumstances; that is, taking all necessary steps for those purposes. The powers and obligations under sections 15 and 16 and the power to issue general orders under section 60(10) are circumscribed in this way.

Mr Speaker, if the government wants an officer other than the Public Service Commissioner to have responsibility for internal audit and discrimination, then that officer must have the powers of the commissioner to carry out the job. The amendments are designed to achieve that. There will always be a commissioner. He is deprived of no power under the act and he shares power in areas prescribed by the amendments.

Mr Speaker, the ACOA notes that the Administrator now has the power to terminate and or transfer a number of chief executive officers of statutory authorities. This observation is correct and was the government's intention. The ACOA claims that this conflicts with the rationale behind the establishment of statutory authorities; that is, statutory authorities must have a freedom and independence not found in government departments. The ACOA argues that an unfettered power to dismiss chief executive officers conflicts with the reason for the establishment of authorities. This is an unacceptable argument. Statutory authorities are arms of government and part of ministerial portfolios. They exist to carry out government policy. They must be responsive to government policy and the government's requirements. It is no more tenable to have a chief executive officer of a statutory authority who fails to carry out a government policy than it is to have a departmental head act that way.

The ACOA raises concern that the chief executive officers can ill afford to be in conflict with their minister. Why should a chief executive officer be in conflict with the minister? The principle of ministerial responsibility requires the corresponding power of ministerial direction. No non-elected person should be able to assume a position over elected persons.

The ACOA further argues that persons of talent and integrity would not accept appointment as chief executive officers under these arrangements. It

is reasonable to expect that a person with talent to have sufficient of it to negotiate an adequate contract. It is also reasonable to expect a person with integrity to recognise the doctrine of ultimate ministerial responsibility and to advise and assist the minister to the best of his or her professional ability.

The ACOA also argues that all other public service legislation in Australia provides protection to holders of senior office. The amendment legislation applies only to chief executive officers and those officers are in a special situation which they must accept. Those who are public servants and who are terminated as chief executive officers remain public servants. That is a more than reasonable protection. Those on contract will presumably seek to negotiate appropriate arrangements in the event of termination.

The ACOA further claims that the legislation is in error because departmental heads cannot be terminated by ministerial direction. The ACOA is in error. The amendment act does not provide for their termination. It gives the minister express power to direct their transfer.

Mr Speaker, the ACOA notes that the amendment act makes NTEC employees subject to the Public Service Act as well as their own award. This means that NTEC employees can appeal against public service promotions and lodge grievance appeals and complaints to the Public Service Commissioner. The amendment act does have this effect. The further amendment to the Electricity Commission Act which I have now proposed will remove NTEC employees from the provisions of the Public Service Act. The ACOA knows this. I made it perfectly clear in June that this would be done.

Mr Speaker, it is important that honourable members appreciate the purposes and objectives which the government had in mind in its amendment of the Public Service Act and other related acts. It trusts that the issues are now clear and that any further discussion - if indeed there needs to be any - will be confined to the facts and will not seek to peddle opinion which is mischievous and misleading. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ENERGY PIPELINES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 140)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the Energy Pipelines Act was passed by the Assembly in August 1981 and commenced the next year. Since that time, pipeline licences have been issued for the Palm Valley to Alice Springs gas pipeline, the Mereenie to Alice Springs liquid gas pipeline and the Helling to Darwin section of the Amadeus to Darwin gas pipeline. By and large, the act has achieved the aims for which it was enacted; that is, to provide a suitable framework for the orderly development of our hydrocarbon resources.

Mr Speaker, with any such act, from time to time, minor difficulties arise, particularly in the light of our rapidly-increasing experience in the field. The amending bill deals with one such technical difficulty.

Subsection 13(4) of the principal act requires an applicant for a licence to serve notice on persons along the route affected by the proposed pipeline. Subsection 15(1) allows the minister to grant the licence only after the expiration of 28 days after the last of the notices has been served. Similar provisions apply to applications for permits. Legal opinion has recently been received that the wording of these provisions may contain a technical defect which, because of circumstances - for instance, in respect of a deceased or untraceable owner - might raise doubts on the ability of the minister to issue a licence. Although the legal opinion casts doubt, no complaints have been received from landowners that they were unaware of any project crossing their land. Given the importance of the current pipeline projects to the Territory's development plan, the government has acted promptly to improve the machinery for issuing a future licence and remove any possibility of doubt about the validity of existing licences.

Mr Speaker, the amendments are modelled on those contained in the New South Wales Pipelines Act and provide that service may be effected by any of the following means: personal delivery, posting to the last known or usual place of residence, leaving the notice at the last known place of residence or business with some other person over the age of 16 years and, if none of those means is available, by prominently attaching the document to the affected land. The amendment validating previously issued permits and licences is, as is clearly stated in the amendment, to be for the avoidance of doubt although no questions have been raised as to this validity in the past by affected persons. The proposed amendments achieve the same result without altering the intent of the section - that is, to provide a proper mechanism by which affected landholders are both notified and have an opportunity to have any objections considered. The net effect of the proposed new section is simply to bring the provisions of our act into line with those of New South Wales. The effect of the validating provisions is the same as if the New South Wales provisions had been in this act from the outset.

Given the particular circumstances surrounding the issue of each pipeline licence, the wide publicity, the easement negotiations and preliminary survey work conducted with the latest licence which authorises work for the northern section of the Alice Springs-Darwin pipeline, I am quite satisfied that, in each case, the original intent of the act has been fulfilled and no citizens' rights will be adversely affected by this bill. If these amendments are not enacted, some doubt may linger as to the validity of existing pipeline licences and, on the best advice available, there is no way short of an amendment to ensure totally that future pipeline licences will be validly issued. That situation would thwart the purpose of the act and would be clearly unacceptable. It is for that reason that the government has had the current amendments drafted. The need for the early passage of this amendment will be obvious to honourable members and I foreshadow a motion to enable the bill to pass through all stages at this sittings.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Conservation)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment Bill (Serial 131) and the Bushfires Amendment Bill (Serial 130) - (a) being presented and a read first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stages 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.

BUSHFIRES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 130)
TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 131)

Bills presented together and read a first time.

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

Both bills are of a minor nature and correct an anomaly in the respective principal acts. As with most junior advisory councils and committees, it is common that their proceedings, deliberations and general issues put before them are not subject to broad-scale community discussions. The community's interests in the councils and committees are widely represented and subject to roll-over at specified times. At these times, members are selected from the community at large to represent its interest in the workings of government. However, the workings of government at this level can be a long way from implementation or policy adoption stages and, hence, it is inappropriate that they be widely broadcast or subject to misinterpretation. These minor amendments align these 2 acts with those governing a large proportion of like bodies. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SOIL CONSERVATION AND LAND UTILISATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 132)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

As honourable members can see, the 2 amendments contain only minor aspects relating to the function of the Soil Conservation Advisory Council. The first introduces a provision to set a term of office for members of the council. To date, there has been no provision to allow the general review of membership. Some members of the existing council have been part of the council since 1971 and, whilst they may still have a valuable contribution to make in advising the Conservation Commission and government on soil erosion matters, it is appropriate that there be a prescribed review of membership. Allied with the setting of a term of office are provisions permitting members to be eligible for reappointment and also allowing the existing members to hold office for a period of 3 years from the date of the commencement of the amendment.

Finally, the bill also introduces a provision to protect against the unauthorised disclosure of confidential material considered by the council. This is a standard provision applying to government advisory bodies and rectifies an earlier omission. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Lands)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the Planning Amendment Bill (Serial 118) and the Lands Acquisition Amendment Bill (Serial 119) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stages, the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

PLANNING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 118)
LANDS ACQUISITION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 119)

Bills presented together and read a first time.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

The purpose of each of the bills is identical. Protection from civil or criminal action is proposed for members of the Planning Appeals Committee constituted by the Planning Act and the Lands Acquisition Tribunal created by the Lands Acquisition Act. At present, there is no protection for members of these bodies in respect of defamatory statements made by members in the exercise of their duty. The only exception is where the Planning Appeals Committee hears appeals from the Northern Territory Planning Authority. In this case, the authority's protection, given by section 29 of the Planning Act, is conferred on the committee. In the case of the Lands Acquisition Tribunal, bodies in all states exercising similar functions have such protection for their members. For the equivalents of the Planning Appeals Committee, protection exists in all state jurisdictions except Tasmania.

These kinds of provisions are common to determinative bodies. For example, in the Territory, members of the Consumer Affairs Council have protection from liability for their actions carried out under the relevant act. A similar provision also exists in the Liquor Act and is common in other Territory acts. It is possible that a situation could arise where members performing their statutory functions would make defamatory statements. Although this is unlikely, without statutory protection they would be liable to a civil action. A provision which would afford protection to the members of these bodies, when they are acting bona fide and in good faith in the exercise of their statutory functions, is justified. Reference to the protection afforded to members of similar bodies elsewhere in Australia and to members of bodies such as the Consumer Affairs Council and to the anomalous position whereby members of the Planning Appeals Committee receive protection only on some appeals justifies such a provision. When inserted into existing legislation, such provisions in the states and the Territory have not been made retrospective. I feel that, if such provisions were enacted as proposed, they too should not be retrospective. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 129)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The bill deals with 3 minor matters relating to the board of the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission's board has recently reviewed its structure and meeting arrangements. The commission would like to see its membership continue to be representative of community views and a modest numerical increase, to further enhance that objective, is proposed in this bill. With 4 of the present 8-man board being preselected, as it were, within the terms of the act, the opportunity for broad interests of the community to be represented is limited. In fact, provision for an additional member will ensure a public majority on the board and this will be of benefit in assisting government to determine the commission's direction and pursuits.

The second aspect addressed in the bill relates to timing of meetings. Most commissioners have many other demands on their time and talents. On occasions this has created difficulties in obtaining a quorum within the existing constraints to meet at least every 3 months. The commission meets at least 4 times a year and this bill proposes entrenching that as the norm in lieu of the restrictive 3-month provision. This will also give more flexibility to coincide meetings with various advisory councils which work to and with the commission. Such joint sessions accrue many benefits to both groups involved.

The final matter effected by the bill relates to material considered by the board. The Conservation Commission is an advisory body to government and, as such, it is inappropriate that material that is still in the formulation or advice stage should be subject to public consumption or media debate. Indeed, the expansion of membership of the board will allow greater public input at that level and permit its views to receive full consideration. That this should spill over into the wider community arena is inconsistent with the role of such bodies.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS REGISTRATION BILL
(Serial 114)

Continued from 23 April 1985.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition welcomes the introduction of this bill which should lead to proper accreditation of health practitioners and the regulation of professional groups involved. This should provide the public with protection against unqualified practitioners as well as promoting high standards within the various professional groups.

As the minister said in his second-reading speech, this single piece of legislation will cover the various categories of practitioner. Otherwise, we would need to have 10 separate bills to cover each of these professions.

The bill establishes a registration board for each category which will be made up of: a chairperson, who will be the secretary of the relevant department or his nominee; 3 ministerial appointees, each to be a registered practitioner in the relevant category; and 1 further ministerial appointee, which is in the public interest. Appointment to the board is for 3 years, with provision for 1 further term. The board must meet at least once every 3 months and is to be responsible for the registration of practitioners, and the issuing of practising certificates.

There is to be investigation and hearing of complaints against practitioners and the maintenance of a register of practitioners. It is also empowered to publish guidelines relating to professional conduct and ethics, standards of equipment and premises, advertising and research. A publicly-available register of practitioners must be kept by the registrar and the register is to be gazetted annually. After registration, a practitioner must obtain a practising certificate, which is renewable at the start of each year. Complaints against practitioners are to be lodged with the registrar who must submit them to the board as soon as possible. The board must consider a complaint within 3 months and may cancel or suspend registration, or fine or reprimand the practitioner.

Mr Speaker, the bill also establishes a review tribunal made up of a chairperson, who must be a legal practitioner nominated by the head of the Department of Law, and 2 ministerial appointees, who must be practitioners with at least 5 years experience, and selected from nominees of relevant professional associations. Appeals can be made against a refusal to register or to restore registration, or against disciplinary action. The tribunal is empowered to substitute its own decision for regional decisions.

The bill also introduces offences relating to practising without registration and practising certificates. It also introduces transitional provisions which entitle current Territory practitioners to provisional registration. Special transitional provisions based on experience are introduced for chiropractors.

Provision is made for practitioner companies where no fewer than half the persons forming the company are practitioners of the same category, but I would draw the minister's attention to the fact that this provision does not permit practitioners from different categories forming a company. It thereby prevents the possibility of providing a comprehensive clinic-type service. I think this is a deficiency in the bill, given that such centres are proving quite popular elsewhere. Perhaps the minister could examine this matter when reviewing the operation of the legislation.

Mr Speaker, another deficiency which I consider to be of much greater significance is the problem of training Aboriginal health workers. Since these trainees are still in the process of obtaining their professional qualifications, they are unable to qualify for registration. This means that, under the bill, they are not entitled to practise, yet in some remote communities these trainees provide the only ongoing medical services. During their training, they are supervised by visiting medical staff, but they carry the day-to-day responsibilities for providing these health services. It is essential that this be recognised and allowed to continue. Thus, I will be introducing an amendment during the committee stage to ensure that communities are not deprived of this important service.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I welcome this bill in part. I have been persuaded by my colleagues that there is a need for protection for the Aboriginal health workers who do not have their own professional association and who operate in remote communities. These people earn their certificates through a course which is controlled by the Department of Health and, as a result, we know what training they have undergone. I certainly was not aware of the point that the honourable member for Arnhem just made, that in some communities the trainees are the only people available to provide basic health services. I certainly agree that this does need some attention. I would not have thought there were too many places where there was no professional person to supervise a trainee but, if this is indeed the case, it needs to be addressed. I support the member for Arnhem wholeheartedly on that.

When it comes to the other 9 professions which are mentioned, my experience over a considerable number of years suggests that community control is very effective. Before and during my 5 years in the Assembly, I have not had a complaint from a member of the public against any one of the people in these professions. Certainly, I have had absolutely no community pressure for these people to be registered and licensed. The only people I have had pressure from for registration and licensing were those people working in these areas. They have a vested interest. The justification for it - and how often do we hear this - is that it is in the public interest. My experience is that the public itself is definitely not asking for it.

This bill in essence is not new. It was one of the first bills that I came across when I became a member some 5 years ago. Eventually, it dropped off the notice paper. One of the reasons was that it was difficult to establish what standards should be put forward. Even in the present bill, membership of the professional association as the key element is possibly fairly broad. I would suggest that it is intended to be that way. I recall another reason. It was pointed out in regard to the previous bill that there were certain people practising in the Territory who had splendid reputations but who would not qualify under the proposed legislation. Some had relatively big names in the community. It was pointed out that the community would have been in an uproar if we had passed the bill through at that stage. The bill eventually lapsed for those reasons. The complaints that I have had were from practitioners in the field who complained about other practitioners in the field who do not have the same qualifications. I have a standard answer for those people. I advise them that the quality of service that they give and the reputation that they build up will determine whether they have a good livelihood from their profession. Conversely, a bad reputation in our small community - where the word of mouth is pretty powerful - would soon destroy one's livelihood.

In situations like this, one generally expects somebody to drag out a hard case. I was reminded of that horrific suicide bombing of the Connair hangar. However, I do not recall a case in Alice Springs or in the Territory in general where, for example, a chiropractor had been sued for damaging a patient's spine. There may be cases but I certainly have not heard of them; I am sure they would have been newsworthy. These people are acutely aware of the potential problems for them and the financial ruin they would face if they damaged their patients. Their care is very evident. If it were not, we would be inundated with complaints from the public. I have not had any. I wonder if other members have.

The pressure to register and license people in this area has come from the vested interest groups themselves. There will be a cost to the public in setting up these boards. Membership will cost the taxpayer. I am wary that this will become the first step towards a closed shop. You see it time and time again: increase the qualifications required to limit the supply which increases demand and therefore facilitates the charging of a high fee.

I am also aware of petty jealousies. As I have mentioned, complaints have come only from members of professions. In many ways, they are looking for protection because they do not want competition. One argument used by these people is that they want to protect the reputation of the profession. That sounds pretty reasonable but there are some holes in the argument. Let us take doctors, for example, who are registered, licensed etc. The reputations of doctors are not all the same. Some have excellent reputations and others have very poor reputations. The word gets around the community. I am glad of that because the community reacts by seeking out the people with a reputation for giving good service and curing ailments. If this legislation goes ahead, community controls will still operate because people will vote with their feet.

One thing does concern me. People who are new to an area might need a chiropractor. I dare say seeing certificates hanging on the wall would reassure them but I wonder whether we might be instilling a false sense of security. If the government approves a practitioner, people would feel he is okay. That is something we need to be very careful about.

I trust that the sole consumer on these boards will be chosen with care. That person, along with the Secretary of the Department of Health or her deputy, will be alert to potential jealousies and attempts to exclude people without reasonable grounds. There may well be practitioners in our communities who have excellent reputations and large clienteles. Their patients have been helped and they know it.

Mr Speaker, I support the Aboriginal health worker aspects of the legislation. However, as far as the other parts are concerned, I wonder whether we are not just increasing government controls which tend to stifle our economy and the country in general.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, generally, I support this bill. The legislation is obviously aimed at getting rid of quacks. I think that should generally be welcomed by practitioners and the community alike. Media comment by health groups involved has been fairly favourable so far. I was a little concerned about the position of Aboriginal health workers but my colleague, the member for Arnhem, has been assured that those health workers who are currently practising and have been awarded the basic skills certificate by the Department of Health will be eligible for registration. There is still a problem regarding trainee health workers which I will come back to later.

There is one technical point which should be made. Under clause 25, conditional registration may be authorised so long as the applicant complies with subparagraph 23(b)(ii)(A) or is medically fit to practise or is of good fame or character. Obviously, the erstwhile Minister for Health, with his experience in these legal matters, will correct me on this but it does appear that a person who is of good fame and character could have himself registered as a health practitioner. No doubt, this will be fixed up in the committee stage.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the provisions relating to companies. Some time ago, we passed legislation enabling doctors to have themselves incorporated. It is strange that, in this bill, a person is only allowed to incorporate with people from his own category. That sounds rather strange. An opportunity could have been taken to set up companies whereby, for example, a physiotherapist and a social worker could work in the same company. A person who requires extended physiotherapy treatment may need assistance from a social worker. The combination of those 2 skills in 1 company would have been of benefit. I am not quite sure why that has been excluded. Possibly, the new minister will be able to inform us about that.

Some people have said that we are lumping 10 different categories together and that will make people believe that they are all of equal status. They have suggested that we should have only 3 or 4 groups. I am not offering any opinion on that. I do not think that the matter is sufficiently weighty to require one. However, the qualifications required for each group are slightly vague. It says that a person must have sufficient qualifications to enable him to be able to apply for registration in his particular association. There is some argument that he should actually apply and be accepted into that association. The membership of that association could then lead to his registration in the Territory. Most of those groups have their own code of ethics, peer group review and continuing education and information which is available to the practitioner as a member of the particular association. I think that we could have gone a bit further if there were some doubts about some of these groups.

We will have a chairman, 3 ministerial appointees in each category and 1 ministerial appointee representing the public interest. Does that signify that we will have 50 people listed on these boards? On the face of it, that would appear to be fairly inefficient. However, I recognise the problem. If we were to go the other way and have a group of so-called experts, they could reflect their own particular professional background when deciding whether or not to approve registration. It is a difficult one.

One group that was missed is health surveyors. These people are becoming more and more important and I am a bit surprised...

Mr Tuxworth: They do a public exam.

Mr EDE: They do a public exam. Will that give them all the benefits of registration? I am not quite sure. Aboriginal health workers do an exam within the Department of Health but that, by itself, does not give them registration. They must proceed to the next process of application etc.

The bill will be very effective for Aboriginal health workers who are practising and who have their certificates. I recall the years that I spent as Director of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs and the problems that we foresaw at that time due to the fact that there was no registration. The people who worked for that organisation, the doctors for example, could get themselves a form of professional indemnity coverage for acts performed in good faith. But we had no method by which we could gain any form of coverage for the health workers if an action were taken where they would have been covered if they were registered. The people themselves were not in a position to be able, out of their own finances, to provide damages to the people hurt. Whereas, if we had been able to get that coverage, it might have been of some assistance, not just to the Aboriginal health workers themselves but also to somebody who, in good faith, was hurt by their assistance.

Mr Speaker, there is still the matter of trainee health workers which, as my colleague indicated, will be addressed in an amendment which is to be circulated. The problem is that, while trainees in many of these other areas are under the direct supervision of a superior, and do not really need the benefits of registration, the situation is not the same with trainee Aboriginal health workers. For example, I can think of 3 communities offhand where the only on-the-spot health care available is performed by a trainee health worker. The Department of Health attempts to give that person as much support and supervision as possible. However, that is just not possible on a 24-hour basis, and these people are on call 24 hours a day. They are enrolled at the Health Workers Training Centre and they are gaining their skills. In the course of time, they will get their certificates. However, in the meantime, it is not possible for them to say: 'I cannot treat you for this because I am not registered'. One suggestion was that they obtain a form of conditional registration for them to operate only in certain fields. However, that is fairly impractical out bush. If somebody comes to you with a busted head, you say: 'Sorry, do not come to me with a busted head because I am not covered for that. If you have an ulcer, you are right'. My colleague will propose an amendment to cover acts done in good faith by trainee health workers in that system.

Mr Speaker, this bill has been coming for a long time and we have talked about it outside and inside this Assembly for a number of years. I commend the minister responsible for introducing it. I hope that he will accept the amendment proposed by my colleague and that it will be speedily enacted.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, in general, I support this legislation. After having listened to the member for Stuart concerning the 10 boards, it looks very much as if this legislation was drafted by Sir Humphrey of 'Yes Minister' fame. With so many boards, I am somewhat concerned at the potential cost factor. I wonder how often these boards will be required to meet, where they will be required to meet and what their payments will be.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to a couple of groups covered by this legislation - naturopaths and osteopaths. There has been some concern expressed by the medical profession concerning the activities of some naturopaths and osteopaths. They are a little concerned about the type of qualifications that some of these people have. In some instances, they can obtain a certificate or a degree for virtually $1 down and $1 a week. I know that that disturbs members of the general medical profession.

I note that the Aboriginal health workers are included in this legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work that those health workers have been doing in the communities in recent years. It really is a pioneering role that they have taken on. If my memory is correct, the Chief Minister, in his role as Minister for Health quite some years ago, in conjunction with the Aboriginal people and the Department of Health, was instrumental in setting this up. Some months back, the honourable member for MacDonnell and I attended a graduation ceremony in central Australia. I used the words 'pioneering aspect' to these people. Of course, they held their graduation ceremony on the northern edge of town in the Pioneer Football clubrooms.

The reason I raise this is that one of the speakers that night, Mrs Abbott, delivered a paper which I believe should be compulsory reading for all members of the Assembly. She outlined in great detail the problems that these health workers experienced in the past and the great role they play in the community.

Mr Speaker, whilst raising those 2 issues concerning naturopaths and osteopaths - and again I stress that there are only a few in the community whose qualifications are causing some concern - and the cost aspect associated with 10 boards with 5 members each, I indicate my general support for the legislation.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah) : Mr Speaker, in rising to speak this afternoon, I think I could say without fear of contradiction that, at one time or another, the majority of members here have been treated by the people who are the subject of this legislation - certain professional people who have asked now for us to initiate a form of registration for them.

In my own experience, most of the people in those categories who have practised in Darwin have worked to the benefit of the community. They have been upstanding and professional people. Perhaps a few have not been as good as others; they were the quacks whom nobody wants to hear about but, unfortunately, their mistakes point out the deficiencies in the system. That is probably why this legislation is before us today.

Mr Speaker, I agree with the remarks that the honourable member for Sadadeen made about the necessity for further registration. I too have reservations about registration and more registration. I know that, in this case, it has been asked for by the people themselves. I do not know whether it is their wish to regularise their profession and keep out people who are not as professional as most of them are. However, I think that, somewhere along the line, we must examine this whole matter of registration. I also agree with the honourable member that, if a professional person has a good name, word of mouth is his best advertisement. Unfortunately, there are some people in the community who either are not literate, are a little dumb or will not listen to other people. Usually, they are people who will not take any responsibility for their own actions and decisions. If people elect to go to quacks in the community, and the results are not as good as they had expected, then they complain loud and long to everybody about their bad treatment. If they had only listened in the first place to somebody of higher standing in the community, as most sensible people would do, their problem would not have occurred.

Even with the form of registration that we intend to introduce for these paramedical professionals, I still think that it is up to the people themselves to follow the basic tenet of caveat emptor. Many people do not and, increasingly, the community must take the responsibility for a person who is not able to make up his or her own mind and who does not want to accept responsibility for his or her own actions.

Looking at the whole question of registration realistically, probably we will continue to regulate at the request of people in professions like this, trained people and so on. However, I think that the implications will bear examination. If we continue to regulate in this way, we will turn into a big brother community which I would abhor because it would take away the free will that we are all born with. Somewhere along the line, we must accept responsibility for our own actions and our own choice of the professional people whom we ask to treat us.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to make a few brief comments about this. Unlike the honourable member for Koolpinyah, with the exception of Aboriginal health workers, I have never had anything whatsoever to do with chiropractors, dietitians, naturopaths, occupational therapists, osteopaths,

physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists or social workers, despite the fact that many honourable members might suppose that I require the administrations of far more than one of those groups.

I must say something about the comments made by the honourable member for Koolpinyah and the honourable member for Sadadeen - fortunately not joined by the honourable member for Braitling - about government regulation and overregulation and concerns about caveat emptor, the free marketplace and all that sort of thing. I really do find it galling when it is just raised as a point of principle ad nauseam. I presume that there are some very good reasons and precedents for this sort of registration around the country. Without having actually looked into the matter, I presume that the people who are responsible for the policy and the legislative drafting of this particular bill are well aware of those precedents around the country. In view of that, I find the concerns of those 2 honourable members somewhat puerile.

My reason for speaking briefly to these bills is of course because Aboriginal health workers, who have in fact treated me and my family at various times when we have been living in the bush, are constituents of mine. I may also have chiropractors, dietitians and so on amongst my constituents but I am certainly not aware of it. However, there certainly are a considerable number of Aboriginal health workers living in all the communities in my electorate. I have followed the education and professional development of Aboriginal health workers with considerable interest because of the relationship between western medicine and Aboriginal attitudes to health. These people can play an important role.

The length of tenure retained by some people in these positions is worthy of note. It would not be appropriate for me to mention particular names because, if I do, there will certainly be some people equally worthy of mention who will be forgotten. It should be pointed out that, in most cases, people have held these particular jobs for several years. In terms of patterns of employment movement of Aboriginal people around communities in my electorate, this is reasonably unusual. I believe that the work of those people is important. I will continue to be interested as the registration process develops and as I continue to observe issues in communities in my electorate.

Mr Speaker, there is one particular anecdote that is, I believe, worth placing in the Parliamentary Record. It relates to one particular Aboriginal health worker who has been in that position for some time now, and it also relates to newspaper reports about the acquired immune deficiency syndrome in Aboriginal communities. I have no intention of commenting on that particular issue and the totally inaccurate media reports that have already been the subject of debate in this Assembly. At the Darwin Airport, I ran into this particular Aboriginal health worker whom I have known for many years. He had travelled up here from the Centre for a particular course. I asked him what he was up here for, and there was a bit of confusion. I did not understand the Pitjantjatjara word that he used to explain why he was here. He said to me that he had been up here 'STD-ku'. I stopped and thought: 'STD-ku'? I asked him what it meant and he explained that it refers to particular diseases. It is Pitjantjatjara for particular diseases that are contracted as a result of sexual intercourse. As an example, he told me the Pitjantjatjara for acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS: 'tjinguru pikatjararingu poofter wanu'. I have no intention of giving an English translation of that. I imagine that honourable members will be well aware of its meaning. However, I think that the fact that such conversations can occur is not a bad indication of the effect of the Aboriginal Health Worker Training Program.

I heard the honourable member for Stuart refer to the cooperation between the community-based health services and some people working for the Department of Health in the area of health worker training. I understand that that sort of cooperation is continuing and that the Aboriginal health workers working in the community-based health service in my electorate, specifically at Kintore these days, are enjoying the fruits of the Aboriginal Health Worker Training Program.

With those few comments and my hearty endorsement for the registration of these people, I close my comments on this particular bill.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments about this legislation. I will not tell members just how long it has been in the system but it has been there a long time. I am particularly pleased to see it because of the impact it will have on health workers in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon some members asked why we would want legislation like this to license or authorise people to carry out professional work related to the medical profession. There is a good argument just to say: 'Let them all go. If people want to go to quacks, what they get will serve them right'. I held that view until I was the Minister for Health and had to pay some of the bills for people who had gone to see quacks. There is no doubt that there are many very clever and competent people who provide services that are not truly medical but certainly offer a lot of benefit. Chiropractors are one group and many others have been named this afternoon. Occasionally, these professional groups attract unsavoury types who have scurrilous motives and are interested only in the dollar. Whatever happens to their customers is irrelevant. They are gone on the next plane and people like us are left to pick up the pieces. When you have seen examples of the resultant costs to the taxpayers, it makes you a little more in favour of licensing people to practise in such fields.

I want to touch particularly on the health workers because I believe that this legislation and the registration proposal are milestones in the development of their profession. When I came to the health portfolio, I was left in charge of health workers. I must say that Dr Gurd, Dr Reid and many of the people who had been working on the project for some time before I came had established very solid foundations. However, they were being crippled in the work they were doing because the Commonwealth would not acknowledge the programs and the amount of money available was really minimal. The Commonwealth would not acknowledge the program because many officers in Canberra thought that some of the proposals were barbaric.

As I became interested in the health portfolio, I became very concerned at the profile of utilisation of hospital beds in the Northern Territory. One honourable member opposite said yesterday that I comment on this often: 25% of our population consumes 50% of our hospital beds. That is a statistical fact, and it is not a desirable one. Over a period of time, we must change it. We cannot proceed over the next 20 or 30 years accepting that half of our hospital beds will be taken up unnecessarily. When I say 'unnecessarily', I mean that we should try to change that profile back to a normal one in so far as the rest of the community is concerned. If we can do that, savings to the taxpayer will be absolutely enormous.

It became obvious that the long-term objective of getting bed utilisation by members of the Aboriginal community back to a normal profile was really one

of taking our system of medicine to the Aboriginals. While we had done a lot of good work in that area, there were some constraints on us. It was obvious that the only way to get the message across was by Aboriginal health workers taking our health system to the communities.

As a government, we decided that we would expend several million dollars a year for at least 10 to 15 years in order to change that profile. I think that is happening and people who move through the Territory can see the success of the program. The significant improvement became obvious to me when the health workers held their annual conference at Katherine. I think that was in 1982. They did not hold it in a pub with $75-a-day expenses. They camped out under the trees at Donkey Camp and worked out their own code of ethics. I thought that was a fantastic initiative.

Today, they are being recognised in legislation. This is the first step. We will see the formalisation of the health workers' activities in the Northern Territory embodied in more legislation as the days go by and as they become more sophisticated and achieve higher levels of education and competence.

I would like to conclude with a little story about one of the health workers from Yuendumu, a young fellow called Francis Kelly. Francis Kelly was really very much a showman in his own way. Jennifer Adamson, a minister from South Australia, went to have a look at the health centre at Yuendumu. Francis was there, looking very smart. He invited the minister in. She said: 'Francis, what qualifications do you have?' From the windowsill, he picked up a bottle with about 30 teeth in it and said: 'They are all my own work'. The minister said: 'Do you have any other qualifications?' He said: 'No, I have happy customers'. He said to the minister: 'Sit down in the chair and I will have a look at you, Mrs Adamson'. She was really out of her comfort zone by then, but she sat down in the chair and Francis checked her teeth. He said: 'I would recommend that, when you go back to Adelaide, you see your dentist. You have a cavity in the third upper left'. With that, we all went our way.

There has been tremendous improvement in the performance, competence, ability and learning of the Aboriginal health workers. They are having a tremendous impact throughout the community. I think they are giving many Aboriginals a new dignity and identity. Recognising the Aboriginal health workers in this legislation today is another milestone in their progress, and I think it is fantastic.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, with pleasure, I rise to endorse all of what the Chief Minister has just said about the program of health worker training that has been embarked upon in the Northern Territory. Some years ago, my wife was employed within the health worker training scheme in Nhulunbuy and the work that she and other people did within that training program certainly left its mark within my electorate. One thing is clear about medicine and rising medical costs: if you can prevent people from being hospitalised by means of educational programs, whether the people are in the bush or in town, that is certainly worth while.

Because of the changing nature of their lifestyle, Aboriginals are living in more consolidated areas now. Aboriginal people are no longer the nomadic people they were generations ago. Their changing lifestyle requires a degree of assistance and education which was not necessary some generations ago. One of the biggest contributions to that education is the training scheme. If the new Minister for Health is to have any priorities within his portfolio, I

would certainly recommend the Aboriginal Health Worker Training Program. Notwithstanding the opposition's amendment to this bill, I would certainly endorse the recognition that has been paid to those people who work very hard under extreme conditions. People come from communities which are lacking in basic facilities such as washing machines and even water in many cases. They must work hard at presenting themselves for work in clean clothes every day. They work very hard and it only fitting that their efforts are being recognised and endorsed by this Assembly today.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will only say a couple of words on this matter. I was fairly close to this because I had some responsibility for health workers in 3 mission hospitals. It was a matter of some concern to us over a long time that these people were not protected. We had very efficient and effective health workers in the health centres under my control at that time. There could have been enormous repercussions if something had gone wrong for health workers in relation to some of the operations they carried out.

I recall a young fellow at Daly River who was very competent. In fact, he was from Port Keats but he worked at Daly River. On one occasion when this young fellow was responsible for the health centre, he was approached by a young couple from Darwin who had been fishing on the river. By whatever means, the young woman had a fish hook embedded in her cheek. It had completely disappeared inside the cheek. They asked this young fellow: 'Where is the sister in charge?' He said: 'I am in charge here today. What is the problem?' The fellow said: 'My wife has a fish hook in her cheek'. He could feel it there. Sure enough, it was inside her cheek. This young health worker settled the girl down and walked across to the sink. He got all the gear, washed his hands, came back and began setting up. The young husband was there with his mouth wide open and unsure of what was going to happen next. The young health worker took the hook out of the girl's cheek. He made a neat cut, took the hook out and stitched it up again. I am told that the operation was perfect. That is the sort of professionalism that we are seeing from health workers today. They do have the right to protection and I commend the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not been around long enough to tell interesting stories like the ones that have been told this afternoon but I will keep you posted. I will be very brief in addressing some of the queries that have been raised by the members for Arnhem, Nhulunbuy, MacDonnell and Stuart.

As a point of clarification, subclause 5(1) will create 10 boards for the 10 categories of health practice. The positions will be honorary apart from the appointment that is made by the Secretary of the Department of Health. That will take some time.

The member for Arnhem was quite correct when he made his point about companies. It was not addressed in this legislation but it has been recognised by the department and an amendment will be proposed. I foreshadow 4 other technical amendments in the committee stage.

The member for Stuart picked up the point of registration and the acceptance of qualifications. My reading of the correspondence over the last day or so clearly indicates that the professions involved considered that to be the most salient point about which they were all concerned. On the advice of the particular Australian bodies that set the standards, it was decided

that it would not be a prerequisite for people seeking registration to belong to the respective Australian associations. This matter has been discussed at great length with the practitioners and that is the position that the department has taken.

The members for Sadadeen, Koolpinyah and Braitling talked at great length about overregulation and the ability of individuals to seek their own practitioners and accept the responsibility. I would point out to them that it is also a responsibility of the government to protect the public at large. I certainly support and welcome this legislation.

I will not deal now with the particular amendment proposed by the honourable member for Arnhem other than to endorse the comments that have been made generally in the Assembly this afternoon regarding the high respect afforded to Aboriginal health workers and the great amount of good work that they do in the community.

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy spoke briefly on some of the priorities that I might establish. I would like to assure honourable members that that is indeed the direction in which I am heading. Honourable members, particularly those responsible for rural electorates, will shortly be receiving correspondence from me inviting them to participate with me in a general tour of rural areas, particularly to examine health services.

I foreshadow that I will be moving that the committee stage be later taken. I will circulate the amendments as soon as I have them.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

STATUS OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 84)

Continued from 23 April 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have agreed with the honourable member for Millner that I will stop trying to predict the length of debates. All I can say is that, if the bill that we have just dealt with provoked the debate that it did, I dread to think what is going to happen with this one.

The question of artificial insemination and in vitro fertilisation can be and often is controversial. Indeed, it provoked controversy in what I thought was a very useful debate in this Assembly already. But I must say that, despite the fact that I have some very firm views as to some of the areas into which this often esoteric science is progressing, there should be nothing in the bill that is before the Assembly today which is controversial and should not be supported. Perhaps it is a brave statement to say that this legislation is long overdue and simply recognises a human problem in terms of the legal status of children who are brought into this world by means of in vitro fertilisation or artificial insemination. Whatever one's views are on the processes themselves - I have some strong opposing views on some of the areas in which this research is going - there really is very little that could be controversial about trying at least to satisfy the status of children who are born through these procedures.

The bill introduces a new part into the Status of Children Act. It addresses the legal situation - and I stress that - not the moral situation of children born as a result either of artificial insemination or in vitro fertilisation. I hope the 2 things are kept separate. The mother giving birth is the mother for all purposes, even if the ovum was not hers; that is, the woman from whom the ovum was taken is not the mother. As well, there is an irrefutable presumption at law that the de facto husband is the father of the child, even if his semen was not used, so long as he has consented to the fertilisation process. It should be noted that, legally, this consent is presumed but is refutable. As a corollary, the man whose semen is used is presumed not to be the father of the child. I would suggest that common sense would indicate that to be a very supportable proposition because of the implications to the child of anything other than that situation.

In respect of the artificial insemination of a single woman or a married woman without her husband's consent, the bill provides that the man whose semen is used is not the father unless he later becomes the husband of the mother and, if he does, he does not incur any liabilities until he becomes the husband unless there is an agreement to the contrary. The concept encapsulated by that arrangement, I concede, could be the subject of a very long and contentious debate. I seem to be getting some agreement on that. But I say again that, like it or not, some children are in this world as a result of these practices, and for their sake the matter must be regulated.

The provisions of this bill apply to pregnancies and births occurring before or after the commencement of the legislation, but not so as to affect any vesting of property which had occurred before that commencement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when introducing this bill, the honourable Attorney-General pointed out that the legislation was in line with that passed in Victoria and South Australia last year. There is New South Wales legislation but to date that covers only donor semen situations.

As far as the legislation itself is concerned, the opposition welcomes this bill. For the sake of the children involved, it clarifies the legal situation on questions of legitimacy, inheritance and parental status. In my view, the legislation before us today is long overdue and the opposition welcomes and supports it.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure you that I will be brief on this particular subject because it is certainly one that I have views on. To be quite frank, it is an area which becomes quite frightening when one thinks about its full possibilities. It frightens me more than a great many other things happening in the world today.

There are people better qualified to debate the issues of artificial insemination and in vitro fertilisation than I. The Attorneys-General have been debating it on a regular basis since about 1977. Artificial insemination and in vitro fertilisation bring a great deal of happiness to many families in Australia. The happiness shown by parents after long waits to have children is quite something. For that reason, I think it is a marvellous idea. But the whole concept of genetic engineering is rather frightening.

Whilst there is happiness brought to a lot of people, I am led to believe that, even at this early stage, there is a great deal of misuse of artificial insemination. I am led to believe that some women use artificial insemination to have children so that they can gain social service benefits, and that they

have little consideration for the children after they are born. That is the tip of the iceberg in this type of misuse, and it worries me greatly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill provides for the status in law of the person born as a result of these programs, by legal means or not, and I think that is the important thrust of the legislation.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, the legal status of children resulting from in vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination procedures has been the subject of much discussion for a considerable number of years in the legal and medical professions. I am pleased to support the minister today in his positive moves to address this matter legally. I say 'legally' because I do not intend to address the moral issues. I believe the moral issues are particularly difficult. They are something of a minefield. However, what we are trying to do today is to set up a legal status to protect those children who are born as a result of the procedures that are currently available. This bill sets out quite clearly the various techniques and procedures currently in use and defines the relationships between donors and recipients, and the legal status of men and women relating to maternity and paternity.

I would like particularly to address one procedure today: surrogate motherhood. Its incidence is growing and I found it very difficult to find out much information about it. I actually wrote a letter to an American who is involved in this field to try to gain some understanding of just what is happening. He informed me that, in some countries, there have been particular difficulties over deciding whom the child belongs to. Amazingly, this problem has not occurred in the United States, and perhaps it is worth while explaining the processing and screening techniques adopted there.

Over the past few years, a number of agencies and organisations have become involved in the promotion and practice of various aspects of reproductive technology. These include: artificial insemination by donor; sperm banks; in vitro fertilisation; surrogate embryo transfer, where the surrogate mother is impregnated and the embryo then flushed from her uterus; implantation in the uterus of the social mother; and surrogate motherhood arrangements and contracts where a surrogate mother agrees to bear a child for a couple, usually infertile, conceives and carries the child for the 9 months of pregnancy, and agrees to hand the child to the couple at birth.

This lawyer from the United States spoke of his experience in running a private legal practice in California. The practice has a reproductive technology arm. It screens and selects surrogate mothers who will bear a child for an infertile couple, organises the artificial insemination of the surrogate mother, draws up birth contracts, sets up psychological counselling for both parties and arranges an adoption if necessary.

In Australia over the last couple of years, there has been substantial public interest and concern about reproductive technology programs and related practices such as surrogate motherhood. Since the lawyer started organising surrogate motherhood contracts, 26 babies have been born. He stated that no problems had arisen with the surrogate mothers wanting to keep the children to whom they had given birth. His agency applied stringent safeguards to the screening and selection of surrogate mothers. A potential surrogate mother was required: to have other children; to provide details and a history of previous pregnancies and childbirth and evidence of easy pregnancies; to have a loving and stable relationship with her other children; to have a strong and loving relationship with her husband, who must be fully involved with and

support the surrogacy arrangements and contracts; not to be destitute and thus in it just for the money; to have a strong psychological, emotional, physical and genetic make up; not to want any more children - and usually the husband had had a vasectomy; to know personally an infertile couple; and to believe, with her husband, that the child is not theirs.

Surrogate mothers who were accepted into the program went through almost 2 years of psychological backup. This comprised a 3 to 4-month screening program and 3 to 5 months of being artificially inseminated during which period the surrogate mother and her husband were required to abstain from sexual intercourse. On average it took about 4 inseminations for the surrogates to achieve a pregnancy. There was constant monitoring of the surrogate mother's condition, including medical and psychological tests, and attendance was required at group sessions after the birth for 3 months' post-natal counselling and assistance in the process of having her baby adopted by the infertile couple.

The lawyer stated that all surrogate mothers to date had allowed the infertile couple to be present at the delivery. This was to assist the bonding process of the couple and the baby. Some problems had occurred initially with the program because the first 3 or 4 surrogate mothers had become very depressed because of the birth and loss of their child, and he indicated that this had caused those running the program to fear for its future. He went on to say that, while there was some depression on the part of some surrogate mothers, not 1 of the 26 to date had reneged on her contract as they all clearly understood they would be kidnapping the child if they did.

I am pleased to say that the bill before us today reinforces the status of the children born under those conditions. The children produced as a result of these processes and their social parents are given due protection under the law, and I support the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, the technology of our time is something I hold in awe. I thank the Lord I have lived through the period of this world's history when 'change' has been the optimum word. During this century, and indeed the last 40 years, we have seen a rate of change greater than since life began on this earth. This change is like a snowball: it gathers in magnitude and it increases speed as it rolls along. With this change, however, hand in hand, caught up and entwined, is the development of technology and science and all the range of skills which these encompass. The rate of development and change is so rapid that one has only to lose contact for a moment, perhaps take a sickie for a day, and the rest of the world has moved on. Many people make this mistake and spend the rest of their lives trying to catch up. Because of the Status of Children Amendment Bill, we are debating this subject today.

When I was a child - yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was a child once upon a time - I read of Buck Rogers and his companions who travelled through space in rocketships visiting far-off planets and discovering new and wonderful things. Little did I realise that, in a few short years, man's advancing technology would make this a reality. Little did I realise that man, through a similar technology, would be able to fertilise the human ovum from outside the human body by purely surgical means. This can be done without the love, affection and physical contact which for millions of years have been necessary to commence the cycle of life that is so important for the propogation of our species. Nor did I anticipate the many manifestations which this new technology would would have, nor perhaps the sinister uses to which it could be put.

Who would have imagined, for example, that it would be possible to develop a human foetus in a test tube? In time, our technology will doubtlessly develop to the point where human beings can be produced in cocoons without the need of physical contact with their mothers. The possibilities of all these developments are mind boggling. Do not laugh at that because, only 10 to 15 years ago, we never would have considered possible what is happening today. Regrettably, we have allowed our scientists to proceed without ensuring that the implications are considered. I believe it is time we stopped to assess the situation. This is the moment to mark time and allow the law and religion to catch up.

To date in the Northern Territory, children born as the result of this new technology have had no status in law. The amendments to this act will provide them with legal recognition. Let me mention some of the complex legal problems which currently exist. What is the legal status currently and who are the legal parents of the child conceived as a result of donor sperm which is not that of the mother's husband? It is very complex indeed. What is the legal status of the child, its bearing mother and her husband if the ovum was donated by another woman and the sperm by a donor other than her legal husband? These are but a few of the legal problems which surround this technology. The amendment to this act clarifies the status of children born as a result of either artificial insemination, a donor or in vitro fertilisation. It legitimises the birth of the child and provides its consenting mother and her husband legal protection. I support the amendments and commend the minister for bringing the matter before the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION BILL
(Serial 107)

Continued from 18 April 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill conforms with the uniform legislation agreed to by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General after wide consultation with interested groups. It has already been enacted in New South Wales and Victoria, and other states are expected to follow suit. The bill repeals the old South Australian Arbitration Act which currently applies in the Territory. In comparison with some other rather contentious legislation, it should be noted that this legislation binds the Crown.

The main areas covered by the bill include the appointment of arbitrators and umpires, the conduct of arbitration proceedings, awards and costs, and powers of the court. It should be noted that the authority of the arbitrator is irrevocable and a party can apply for a stay of court proceedings if the matter is covered by an arbitration agreement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the law relating to arbitration is extremely complex and the bill, by its nature, is long and detailed, dealing with a number of technicalities. Indeed, it is an area of the law that is beset with technicalities. It results from long consideration by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General and, hopefully, it will be enacted Australia-wide and will provide uniform provisions. Arbitration often provides a more speedy and less costly resolution of disputes than the court system and its use is, in my view, to be encouraged and facilitated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to raise a matter of some controversy in the context of this debate. However, it was with some surprise recently, in respect of the very vexatious situation surrounding Mudginberri abattoir and the meatworkers dispute, that I saw the National Farmers' Federation and the employers involved in that matter decline the opportunity to discuss, without prejudice to either party, some possibility of resolution of that dispute. It was with some amazement that I heard that the reason being promoted by those people as to why they did not want to sit down and talk about it was that the matter was sub judice and therefore could not be discussed. In fact, I had never heard anything quite so ridiculous.

Mr Hatton: On the advice of their solicitors.

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to that, there are always 2 legal arguments or perhaps 223 legal arguments in respect of such disputes. I am simply giving my view. The honourable minister is perfectly free to disagree with me. It is my view, from my experience of these matters and the court system, that courts welcome any procedures - provided they are reasonable and do not conflict with the court system - for reaching settlements out of court whilst proceedings are still under way. There are some pretty settled procedures among lawyers for ensuring that that happens. It is a very commonplace procedure indeed. The very expensive process of litigation can be avoided. Territory courts are not nearly as overloaded as the courts in other states but the overloaded court system can be relieved in some way.

I viewed the reasons given in that particular matter - and they may well have been based on legal advice - as surprising, disappointing and not particularly valid. I am sorry the meeting did not take place.

I stress again that we welcome the introduction of this legislation for the very reason that it may lead to promoting the resolution of such problems by the process of arbitration which often provides a far smoother and far less costly resolution of disputes than the court system and should be encouraged and facilitated. I believe this legislation will have that effect and the opposition supports the legislation.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am delighted with the bill before us because, when it is accepted around Australia, we will have uniform legislation throughout the country. It has already been enacted in a number of states, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned. It is very important that the people of this country know where they stand. This is particularly important because so many commercial arrangements take place across state borders. I am sure it will be welcomed by people involved in contractual dealings over which disputes may arise.

I also applaud it because it is an attempt to simplify the system. In the main, it will keep lawyers out of the system, although an arbitrator may feel that a particular party may need a lawyer. I hope that that is kept to a minimum because I would suggest - and I may be howled down for this in certain quarters - that lawyers tend to have a vested interest in prolonging disputes. I think that is self-evident.

Much will depend on the quality of the arbitrators. I am sure that very capable and impartial people will be found to supervise this process. By this process, the settlement of disputes will be achieved as quickly as possible. Some contracts may involve millions of dollars and may have many ramifications if disputes cannot be settled. If this process proves to be as worthy as I

hope it will, it will be of great advantage to the commercial world in Australia and to Australians in general. Another advantage is that the costs of arbitration and settlement of disputes will be kept to a minimum. I welcome this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (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.

OFF-SHORE WATERS (APPLICATION OF TERRITORY LAWS) BILL
(Serial 110)
INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 111)

Continued from 23 April 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, these are non-controversial bills. I am sure they can be dealt with in a very speedy manner. In fact, there is absolutely no need for any other member in the Assembly to have anything to say about them at all because I will say everything that needs to be said.

The Interpretation Amendment Bill repeals section 60 of the Interpretation Act that provides that every act of the Territory has effect over internal waters and the coastal sea and the other bill introduces provisions to take its place. The new provisions are more comprehensive than the current section 60 which presented 4 problems, all of which were enumerated by the honourable Attorney-General when he introduced the bills.

The legislation should be supported by both sides of the Assembly. I indicate that the opposition supports the bills without reservation.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, predictably, the matter of the federal budget came up in question time this morning. It is of interest to all Australians. Its specific impact on particular areas will be a matter of comment during the course of these sittings by members on both sides of the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the thorny question of statehood has dominated the proceedings this week. I am very pleased to see that, according to the front page of today's NT News, any CLP member who asserts himself to the point of wanting to have a position on statehood does so at considerable personal risk.

I was pleased to see that the honourable Leader of Government Business received a spray from the Northern Territory's federal member, Mr Paul Everingham. He now joins our Chief Minister in the role of being a target for the federal member. I was interested to hear in reference to the federal budget this morning the honourable Chief Minister complaining about the granting of $14m of federal money for the Townsville Airport and the neglect of the airport here in Darwin. I join with other members on this side of the Assembly who remarked that, if we could persuade our federal member to spend more time in the Northern Territory and less in north Queensland, perhaps we would get the $14m instead of north Queensland.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the particular aspects of the federal budget that I would like to cover this afternoon are largely the ones which have been neglected by politicians and political commentators generally. One of them in particular deserves highlighting. I am sure there would be no argument from the other side that, in the national context, the budget generally was a good document.

It would be useful if this Assembly considered the full implications of what the budget says about the state of the Australian economy. When the Labor government took office, it faced a potential deficit in excess of $9000m. Last night, Paul Keating announced that the deficit would be below $5000m. I must say that it surprised me and many others that he had managed to get it that low. The Treasurer has in fact achieved almost a halving of the deficit in that period. The significance of it lies not simply in the act of cutting and restraining government expenditure but in the creation of a growing economy which allows the removal of government stimulus as the private sector takes up the slack. That is the way it should be. The Labor Party has done this as part of a cohesive economic policy. I must say that, as a member of the Labor Party, it is of particular significance and pride to me to see a Labor government finally taking steps for the benefit of this country that the conservative governments have been afraid to take. They have talked about taking steps but they have never taken them. A good example is the deregulation of the banking industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it has not happened by accident. One can talk about the breaking of the drought, the overseas situation and all the rest of it but even the opponents of the federal government must concede that the particular economy we are enjoying at the moment is the result of a cohesive economic policy. The government was prepared to attempt the much-maligned trilogy and it has in fact succeeded in achieving the targets. It set the targets and it has reached them. I think it deserves some credit for that.

Unlike the previous conservative federal government, reducing the deficit is not part of some mumbo jumbo that has no relation to reality. I remember having a dispute with the former Chief Minister about this. To my horror, he said in respect of the railway question: 'We should be able to fund the railway straight out of the deficit. It would not matter if the deficit went beyond $10 000m; it would make no real effective difference'. I still have the tape of the interview when the honourable member said that. That is not correct.

Reducing the deficit is not mumbo jumbo; it is essential. The reduction of the deficit has been carefully planned and executed by the federal government. That process has involved some very dramatic growth in gross domestic product. In both 1983-84 and 1984-85, the rate of growth of the Australian economy has been above 4.5%. That exceeds any achievements in the

4 years preceding the election of the Hawke government. This rate of growth is expected to be achieved once again in 1985-86.

A number of complementary things have happened. The growing economy has meant higher revenue without tax increase. Employment growth has meant lower payments in some social security claims. That brings me to another important issue in the 1985-86 budget: employment. Labor market aggregates give a picture of continued success in the creation of jobs. The Hawke government has reduced the unemployment rate from a peak of 10.4% to the current rate of 2.8%. While that is no reason for satisfaction, I take considerable pride as a member of the Australian Labor Party in seeing that achieved. I might say that it gives me a considerable degree of relief to see it at least going in the right direction. Some very important steps have been taken in seeking to solve the problem of youth unemployment in Australia. I understand that the honourable member for Millner will be discussing some of these matters in more detail later during these sittings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to focus on what is undoubtedly the most important issue in this budget. The reason that I am speaking in the adjournment debate this afternoon is largely the result of the lead story on the front page of the NT News today. It correctly identifies the most important issue in the budget: the question of discounting wages and the impact of the depreciation of the Australian dollar. In his speech last night, the federal Treasurer made it very clear that the federal government would be seeking the cooperation of unions and business in approaches to the federal Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for the next 2 national wage cases.

I support the argument put forward by the federal Treasurer that Australia needs the cooperation of the trade union movement to ensure sound economic recovery. Particularly because of what was said at the weekend conference of the Country Liberal Party, I must say that the rhetoric about a vision of Australia as if the trade unions do not exist is absolute palpable nonsense from people living in cloud-cuckoo-land. Trade unions are an important reality of the mixed economy we have in Australia and that issue must be addressed. You can dress it up whichever way you like. You can dress it up as a prices and incomes accord or you can dress it up as collective bargaining. No matter what political complexion the federal government has, trade unions are a reality in the economic processes of this country. They are the legitimate representatives of the workers of this country and they deserve to achieve that respect and that consideration. I support the argument of the federal Treasurer. The Labor Party is not about to become involved in permanently reducing real wages.

In considering the success of the Australian economy in the last 2 years, it would do us all well to remember the magnificent part played by ordinary men and women in Australia through their trade unions. It is a role that, over the last 2½ years, has largely been forgotten and neglected. The role has been played down and ignored by many commentators.

However much you deride it, the results and the marks are on the board. The accord has worked. It may not continue to work; it may cease to exist. All sorts of terrible things are being predicted to happen to it, but it has worked so far. Indeed, the federal opposition and the whole conservative movement in this country do not have any prescription at all for a successful wages policy, apart from the open slather that dominated the last years of the Fraser government.

Far be it from me to give gratuitous advice to the federal Leader of the Opposition, Mr Peacock, as to how he should run his party. If I did, I would say the smartest thing he could do would be to hand over immediately to Mr Howard. I hope he does not. The one aspect of the current federal opposition's policies which people perceive as a real problem is its continual attacks on the prices and incomes accord. It continually attacks it, but it has not come up with any viable alternative. That is certainly the problem as perceived by the business community in Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the year or 2 ahead of us that will break or make Australia's well-being, it is the trade unions who will contribute most. All of us should be aware of this and we should not allow ourselves to indulge in party politics for the purpose of simply kicking unions. Let me note also the outstanding role played by that much-maligned group of people, the union officials, who have carried the message of the accord across this country and have encouraged their colleagues - and it has not been easy - to support growth and support the accord remaining in place. Anyone who is aware of the sometimes stormy relationships that exist between unions and their officials will appreciate that I do not make these comments lightly.

It is interesting to read in the budget documents that the number of working days lost through industrial disputation in 1984-85 was very low in comparison with the past 15 years. It is also interesting to note that the number of disputes directly related to wages has declined and issues relating to managerial policy and working conditions now account for a much higher proportion. I think this displays the discipline of the union movement, and it is to its credit.

Before any members opposite choose to raise the issue of Mudginberri, I think they should fully consider the role adopted by conservatives in this country in seeking to initiate a national dispute with unions at this critical time. Could I also point out to the Assembly that the private, non-farm, corporate-sector, gross-operating, surplus share of gross national product is now higher than at any time since 1968-69.

I have attempted, and I think I have succeeded, to speak English during this debate. I was interested last night to hear on ABC radio a debate between John Howard and Paul Keating. At one stage, they were interrupted by the commentator. He said: 'I am sorry, Mr Howard and Mr Keating, I think we have reached jargon overload'. Indeed, that often happens, no matter which Treasurer or shadow Treasurer one talks to.

To put it simply, the trend I have mentioned was the cornerstone of much of the argument of the Fraser economic policy that the share of profits had to be returned to some golden-age level. This has been done and I think that there is a considerable onus on the business sector to begin to produce the goods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to conclude, I would like to record my congratulations to the Treasurer, to the Prime Minister and the federal Caucus and to record my commiserations to the federal opposition which, I am informed, was able to muster only 3 questions on the federal budget this afternoon in the House of Representatives. That is the information that I have. I will check it further but I think it is accurate. In respect of that matter, I must say that I think we did a lot better in the Legislative Assembly this morning, simply in terms of dorothy dixers, than the federal colleagues of the government in this Assembly did in Canberra this morning: 3 questions in

parliament today on the federal budget after it was brought down last night. On the fourth question of the day, the Treasurer, the Hon Paul Keating, was actually standing in the House calling out to members of the opposition to ask further questions, and there were no takers.

I believe that there are some deficiencies in the federal budget for the Territory and one in particular that the opposition is extremely angry about. We will continue to pursue it. It is the question of the Darwin Airport terminal. That is a matter on which this opposition has pledged its full support to the endeavours of the government in the Northern Territory and we will continue with that. At every opportunity, we press the federal government on that issue. Only last week, I had a long and useful meeting here in Darwin with the Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley. At the top of the agenda for that meeting was the Darwin Airport. We all agree that it is disappointing indeed not to see more encouragement than there has been in the federal budget. An amount of $650 000 was there with a statement - which, fortunately, still leaves the door open - that further budget commitments for the airport are pending the inquiry that is taking place at federal level. This opposition, along with the Northern Territory government, will continue to press the federal government about the essential nature of the construction of the Darwin Airport terminal.

All the federal ministers whom I have talked to about this and who have come to Darwin have had to experience the delights of the Darwin Airport terminal. They never argue against our need for one. I hope that, before too long, and certainly no later than the next budget, there will be tangible evidence of the success of the approaches made to the federal government by both the government and the opposition in the Northern Territory.

I wish to conclude by congratulating the federal government and the trade union movement for the way they have cooperated to bring about a dramatic resurgence of growth in this country, a dramatic reduction in the deficit and a decline in inflation and unemployment. I hope for all our sakes that the much-maligned accord can hold together and continue. There is no doubt at all that, if it does not continue, it will be to Australia's great...

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, yesterday I commented about the Katherine east stage 2 subdivision. I wish to make further comments following my questions in question time this morning. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that in question time this morning I asked the honourable Minister for Lands whether he would table estimates of costs and returns for that particular subdivision. I was going to ask him to explain why expressions of interest were not called for that particular development. I spoke on this subject last night. I appreciated the answers that I received from the minister and I know the decisions that he is called upon to explain to this Assembly are not decisions of his making. He has been forced to carry the can for somebody else, and I feel sorry for the minister that he has been forced into such a position. But I think it is about time that somebody came clean. The fact of the matter is, disagreeable as it might seem, that one must draw the conclusion that the Country Liberal Party has allowed public money to be transferred to its own account. That is the way that this deal in Katherine has been carried out.

I hear a few plaints from the government. If it treated this matter a little more seriously and presented its information a little more coherently,

perhaps there may be some satisfactory explanation. However, after trying to follow this up for about a week, I am still unable to obtain any satisfactory explanation. The comments that were made by the minister in this Assembly last night did not explain what appear, quite clearly, to be irregularities.

Let me just spell it out again for the honourable minister. I appreciated the extra information that he gave to me last night, but in no way has that allayed my concerns. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am forced into a position where I can make no other conclusion on the facts presently available to me than that the Country Liberal Party has had its snout in the trough. Let me explain that, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will recap briefly what I said yesterday which was that my attention came to a gazettal in March this year of a determination of $10 for 54 ha of land in Katherine. I saw that that was given to a company referred to as Henry and Walker SBS Proprietary Limited. I made no issue of it at that stage. I said nothing at all.

I thought that there was probably some logical explanation for this and I wrote to the minister. The minister said that it was a fair and equitable price in December 1983 when the figure was agreed. I said: 'Tell me, sir, why have 14 months elapsed from that time? Why were there no expressions of interest?' The minister has failed entirely to explain why expressions of interest were not called and why tenders were not called for this particular project. All that he said in this Assembly last night was that the minister agreed that the project should be given to SBS constructions. There was no mention of any tender process and no mention that there was a public call for expressions of interest. That was my first point.

What he did say last night, Mr Deputy Speaker, and what has given us cause to make further investigations, was that the March 1985 gazettal was a redetermination. As the honourable minister said to me last night, it is a complex business and certainly I hope that there is some justifiable explanation. However, I repeat that, at this stage, on the basis of facts available to me, it looks as though the CLP has had its snout in the trough.

The minister said last night that a price was agreed in December 1983. He said that that determination was given in a gazette in March 1984 for the same price of $10. I have that gazette here. At that stage, I am told, there had to be some reorganisation of a subdivision because of representations made by the Katherine Town Council and some compensation deal was organised by the Department of Lands, though not in any public fashion, to my knowledge. It is worth noting that the determination of March 1984 was over lots 1936 and 1937 whereas the determination of March this year was over lots 1936 and 2136. Okay, further explanations are required of that. The answers given by the minister last night were unsatisfactory.

My investigations lead me to the conclusion that not only do Henry and Walker, as we know well and truly, have very close associations with the Northern Territory government - and I am quite sure that the majority of Territorians would say that that was the understatement of the year - but it appears that the principals of SBS Pty Ltd in Katherine also have remarkably close connections with the Country Liberal Party in that particular town. Given that there was no call for expressions of interest, one is led to the conclusion that the CLP has had its snout in the trough.

Mr Dondas: That is 3 times. Try that 1 more time.

Mr BELL: Until I get a decent answer for it, Nick, if I need to say it 6 times, I will do so. On the facts that are available to me, the CLP has had its snout in the trough.

Mr Dondas: That is 4 times.

Mr BELL: Let me state the questions that I want answered. I will put them on record and then maybe I will get a straight answer.

Mr Hatton: Will you give me a copy of it?

Mr BELL: The honourable minister says that he wants a copy of the questions. I think that I gave a relatively articulate description of the problems last night and still I have not received a satisfactory answer. The honourable minister is well aware that he has capacities within this Assembly to introduce information at any stage by way of ministerial statement, by way of a dorothy dixer from one of his backbenchers or however else he pleases. He seems to require them written down 1 by 1. My notes are in a somewhat inchoate form but I will do my best if that is what he requires.

The questions that I want answered are these. In the case of this particular subdivision, why were the developers compensated? How much cash did they receive by way of compensation? How much extra land did they receive by way of compensation? On the basis of departmental estimates of cost and returns, what was the departmental estimate of the profit that would derive to the developers, bearing in mind that the government had undertaken to buy back 80% of the blocks? Mr Deputy Speaker, that is 80% of the blocks. I am quite sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you would leap at the chance to be involved in that sort of entrepreneurship. If the government is to buy back 80% of the blocks, one can hardly describe that as daring entrepreneurship.

To put my next question on the record: why is it that tenders were not called initially in December 1983? I will tell you what it looks like to me. To me it looks as if, in December 1983, the Country Liberal Party machine said: 'Listen boys, we owe $200 000 for all these TV ads and for the election campaign we have just run and we are going to have to dig up the money somewhere?' By golly, Mr Deputy Speaker, one could hardly be accused of being paranoiac if one were to imagine a minister of the Crown in that position being prevailed upon by members of his party machine to say: 'Okay. You have kicked $10 000 into the campaign. Here is a subdivision, boys'.

Mr Dondas: Oh, it does not work like that, Neil. You know that.

Mr BELL: Well, if it doesn't work like that, you tell us how it works and why.

Mr Robertson: Neil, are you imputing improper motives to the minister?

Mr BELL: I am not imputing motives but I am putting a construction on the sparse facts that are available to me. I could hardly be described as paranoiac in drawing the conclusions that I have, given the fact that I have written to the minister once, I have spoken about it already in this Assembly and now I must pursue the matter when there are matters of far more urgent concern to my constituents that require my representation here.

As I say, I want to know why tenders were not called initially for this development. Mr Deputy Speaker, bear in mind that, from December 1983, land

costs were rising by 30% - a great increase. That is on his own department's figures. If it cannot dig them up for him, I can.

I was advised yesterday by the honourable minister that, subsequent to SBS Constructions undertaking this development in December 1983, it found that it did not have the capacity - whether that was financial capacity or whether it did not have capacity in terms of plant, I am not quite certain - and Henry and Walker were brought in. Why was there no call for expressions of interest at that stage? Were they the only 2 determinations? What caused the redetermination that had to be gazetted in March this year? The determination of March 1984 and the determination of March 1985 both refer to the same grantee: Henry and Walker SBS Pty Ltd. Last night, the minister said that the chief problem with the redetermination was that they had to call in Henry and Walker, so I will quickly recap my questions and add a final one. Why were the developers compensated? How much cash did they receive? How much extra land did they receive? What was the department's estimate of the profit the developers stood to make? Why were the tenders not called initially in December 1983? Why were tenders not called when there were subsequent renegotiations? Finally, what is the connection with the Country Liberal Party of the principals of SBS Pty Ltd and the principals of Henry and Walker?

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, there are 2 points that I would like to raise in the adjournment debate tonight.

The first concerns the permit system for Aboriginal communities. It follows some remarks I made during the last sittings when I suggested that the permit system should be totally reviewed in view of the fact that vast amounts of government funding is going into those communities to provide for services such as health facilities and police stations. If my memory is correct, I used Yuendumu as an example. I believe it is strategically located halfway between Alice Springs and Halls Creek. It could, if properly developed, provide facilities for the travelling public and a fairly high rate of employment for the Aboriginals of that community in manufacturing artifacts for sale and provision of service station and other facilities for the travelling public.

I said in that speech last sittings that I thought it was absurd that places such as Yuendumu still required the permit system. I am delighted to report tonight that, at long last, one Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory has abolished the permit system. In a formal letter to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission on 25 June this year, one of the largest Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, Yuendumu, advised: 'We wish to convey to you, sir, that it is not the case, and travellers using this highway are welcome to use the facilities at Yuendumu'.

Mr Speaker, this letter arose as a result of a publication issued by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission advising travellers using the Tanami Highway that permits were required. Actually, they are required under legislation, but I am delighted to report tonight that, for the first time ever, an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory has in essence abolished the permit system and advised travellers that they are welcome to utilise public facilities when travelling through its community. I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating the community of Yuendumu for that progressive step. I think it will go a long way to breaking down some racial tensions that have existed in Northern Territory communities for many years and I would hope that other communities will follow suit.

I also said during the last sittings that there are some problems in Aboriginal communities. For example, their living areas are much more public than ours tend to be, at least in central Australia. I think something is needed, signs or whatever, to keep the travelling public from just ambling into those areas for photographic sessions and public gawking, for want of a better word. In the residential areas of these communities, privacy must be maintained. I think it will probably take some time for the rest of the Territory to realise what a large step Yuendumu has taken towards what I hope is the ultimate abolition of the permit system.

The second issue I would like to raise tonight concerns the renal dialysis unit which is needed in central Australia. In reply to a question of mine, the former Minister for Health said that there were presently 6 to 8 residents of central Australia living in Adelaide and undergoing renal dialysis treatment. My information - and it is fairly current - is that there are presently 10 residents from central Australia, 8 of whom are Aboriginal, who had to move to Adelaide in order to receive dialysis treatment for kidney failure, and 2 more are expected to travel to Adelaide shortly. That makes 12. My understanding is that we are talking about the central Australian geographical region, not the political region, so some of these people may in fact come from just across the border in South Australia.

Mr Speaker, discussions have now been under way for over 4 years with a view to establishing a dialysis facility for Alice Springs to serve the needs of central Australian residents. I think it is high time that this money was forthcoming. There are emotional problems caused by splitting up families because one parent must stay in Alice Springs to work while the other attends for treatment in Adelaide. Other problems are related to the education of the children required to stay in one spot or the other. Then there is the need to travel those vast distances and the associated costs.

I would suggest that, because there are probably some South Australian people receiving treatment and there are Aboriginal people receiving treatment, a number of federal departments could be approached for assistance and funding. DAA is obviously one. I am also advised that highly-qualified staff will be needed in central Australia, at least in the early stages. My contacts in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in South Australia have advised that they are more than willing to make available 2 fully-trained nursing sisters who could be based in Alice Springs while Alice Springs-based nursing sisters undergo the specialised training needed to operate and maintain the dialysis units.

I have also been advised that it is quite probable that the dialysis unit will ultimately need to support between 10 and 20 people. The minister said that my suggestion of using one of the presently vacant wards in Alice Springs Hospital could not be agreed to. He went on to talk about hepatitis B. On that matter, the Adelaide people advised that the provision of a service to Alice Springs is becoming somewhat embarrassing in terms of numbers. They think that, in the not-too-distant future, they might need to advise central Australian people that they will have to make alternative arrangements for dialysis treatment.

The other point I would make is that, in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in South Australia, there is a ward which is completely devoted to the care and treatment of renal patients. Obviously, it would have a problem with infection control of hepatitis B and other diseases that we have in central Australia. I do not necessarily think that that is an argument against setting up a ward in central Australia, at least on a temporary basis.

Given the fact that, according to my figures, there are 10 residents from central Australia presently living in Adelaide, and 2 more to go, we need urgent action from the Northern Territory and South Australian departments and possibly from some federal ministers and departments as well.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to touch on the issue of federal road funding in the Northern Territory and to correct some misinformation which has been spread throughout the community by colleagues of the members opposite who sit in another place.

On 29 July, the federal Minister for Transport, the Hon Mr Morris, issued a press release headed: 'Boosts to National Highway Funding in the Northern Territory'. This press release said that projects worth $26.5m are spread over the national highways in the Northern Territory though emphasis is being placed on upgrading the Stuart Highway. The minister went on to say: 'This allocation reflects the federal government's recognition of the Territory's dependence on road transport from both social and economic viewpoints'. The press release went on: 'Expenditure on national highway projects in the Northern Territory under ALTP in 1985-86 is some $17m. The balance of ALTP funds available to the Territory in that period, $22m, is for the development of arterial local road networks'.

Another release a few days later by Senator Ted Robertson in local newspapers sung the praises of federal funding and said it was the best thing since sliced bread and that the Territory was certainly getting extra funding for roads. The fact is that, in total, the Northern Territory is receiving $4.7m less this year from the federal government in relation to road funding.

I would just like briefly to go over some history of road funding and explain where we are at. The federal government collects fuel taxes and other revenue and provides from its revenue funds for some of the road building in the states and territories. To make sure the states and territories play their part, the federal government requires expenditure from the states and territories to a quota which is based on expenditure by them in 1981-82. The federal government has provided funds to us through a number of sources, 2 of which are the ALTP and the ABDR and these are common to all states and territories.

The ALTP stands for Australian Land Transport Program. It is a replacement for the Road Grants Act and came into effect in July this year. Funding for the program is provided from a trust fund established by a fuel excise levy imposed on motor spirit and diesel fuel. The rate of duty will initially be 3.66 c per litre and will be subject to a 6-monthly adjustment related to the consumer price index after July 1986.

The new act provides for separate funding arrangements into 2 periods covering the initial 2 years and the subsequent 3 years. During the first 2 years, a relativity study is being undertaken for arterial and local roads and there will be a redistribution of funds in this area. However, no state or territory will be reduced to less than 90% of its current share. The allocations by the ALTP for 1985-86 are less nationally than the Road Grants Act allocations for 1984-85 without any allowance for inflation. In the Territory, however, there was a slight increase on the RGA 1984-85 figure, of which Mr Morris has made much, but it was still less than what we would have expected under a continuation of the RGA. The Northern Territory received $28.4m which was a $0.6m increase on the $27.6m under RGA. However, our expectations were for $29m.

The other common program is the Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program, the ABRD. This program was introduced in 1982 extending to 31 December 1988 to provide additional funding for upgrading the Australian road network with particular emphasis on the national highway system. The national allocation to the Northern Territory was determined at $11.1m per year for the duration of the program. However, this is negotiable depending on national circumstances. Underspending in other states might make additional funds available. The 1984-85 provision was $10.7m with an approved addition of $2.5m, elevating the allocation to $13.2m. This in effect only offsets the underspending in 1983-84 when the federal minister froze the program while the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link was considered. The 1985-86 allocation was $10.6m compared with the anticipated $15m which was considered necessary to keep the program rolling to its ultimate conclusion in 1988 and picking up the slack from earlier years.

The Accelerated Stuart Highway Program, ASH, was announced in the 1984-85 federal budget as a $27m program over 3 years with $2.7m in the first year. It was as a consequence of a recommendation in the Hill Report and it represented a sop to the Northern Territory for reneging on the railway. Funding was outside normal federal road funding. After last night's budget, we know that, after only 1 year, the federal government has now abolished that program. Previously approved and committed works in 1984-85 provide for an inescapable revote cash demand of $2.6m in 1985-86 which has now been absorbed within the new Australian Land Transport Program. This was kept at $2.6m by not committing other already federally-approved items on the ASH program.

The expectations for the ASH program being blown out the window have resulted in those projects having to be considered in conjunction with other national highway projects within the ALTP and the ARBD program. Consequently, a number of necessary projects have had to be deferred. The upgrading of the Victoria Highway outside Katherine will now be a much slower business.

In total cash terms, in 1984-85, the Territory was provided with a total of $43.7m which was made up of $27.8m from the RGA, $13.2m from the ABRD program and $2.7m from the ASH program. In 1985-86, the allocations are $28.4m from the ALTP and $10.6m from the ABRD program which is a total of $39m.

There is no way that road funding from the Commonwealth has increased and, given the escalation in civil engineering costs that have occurred, the amount of roadworks that can be undertaken is considerably reduced. The Territory has always contributed over quota but the general approach of the federal government to our funding this year means that we have to cut our road funding to the minimum to meet the quota. Given the spending conditions placed by the federal government on funds that it provides, it is our local roads that will be affected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think it was right for me to put the record straight in view of a number of statements that have been made by people from another place which have tended to give an incorrect impression to the public as to exactly where we are with road funding.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like first of all to follow on from the comments of the member for Braitling regarding the situation at Yuendumu in relation to permits. I think it is a positive step. I did not raise it myself because, according to the Land Rights Act, there is still another step that must be completed. The letter that the community wrote to

the Tourist Commission is a positive step but my information is that it must now place a notice in the local newspaper. I was waiting for that to occur.

Every year, the Yuendumu community waives the requirement for permits for the duration of the Yuendumu sports weekend. It should be understood that the waiver that they are talking about in this instance is not total waiver; it is to allow people to utilise the facilities on their way past Yuendumu or if they are going out there and coming back. It does not indicate a relaxation of people's extreme suspicion of situations which occur in Alice Springs where people may be sitting under a tree and a bus load of tourists arrives and they creep behind logs to take photographs. Understandably, this gets people's backs up and I am sure it would get mine up if they tried it on me. I think that the community has made a very sound move in trying to broaden its economic base. I think it is an excellent move. As long as we do not have some person making a complete idiot of himself by wandering around west camp or trying to take photos, it will probably continue and assist the business enterprise at Yuendumu.

That was not the main reason why I wanted to speak tonight. I wish to talk about the vexing matter of electricity charges on remote communities. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall that, at the last sittings, ministers apparently got together and, in the space of some 24 hours, dreamed up a method by which they would recoup some of the very regrettable losses which we incurred at the hands of the federal government. However, the decision to raise $1m by putting charges on essential services on Aboriginal communities was an example of the very hasty decisions which this government sometimes makes. It indicated its lack of understanding of the situation on Aboriginal communities and its apparent belief that it is not necessary to get its act together in this area.

For example, no real basis has yet been given as to how the money is being allocated between communities. We have heard at various times figures of $2 a week across the total community. We have heard other figures such as 20% of fuel costs. However, we do not know as yet what the basis is. We have been told some things. For example, we were told that no non-Aboriginal public servants employed on the community were to be charged. This is the type of rather idiotic planning which really gets up people's noses. Take the example of a school where you have an Aboriginal teacher and a non-Aboriginal teacher who are both doing exactly the same job and one lives next door to the other. One of them must pay these charges and the other one receives the services free. It is absolutely ridiculous.

The government decided not to adopt the option of introducing meters. It said to the community: 'We are withdrawing $47 000 from your TMPU grant this year and you will have to raise the money'. The community has the extremely difficult problem of working out how it will split this up among the people that it can charge. It cannot charge the non-Aboriginal public servants. That leaves it with Aboriginal public servants and non-Aboriginals outside of the public service.

The first decision that is generally made is that it would be fairly inequitable to impose electricity charges on people living in humpies. While the minister may believe that there is some inordinate benefit for people to be able to sit in their humpies and gaze across at the street lights of the town some few hundred metres away, it has generally been felt that these lights should not attract a charge.

We then come back to the matter of housing, much of which is completely substandard and without electricity at all. In one community, the decision was made that only houses connected to electricity would be required to pay for electricity. It would be rather difficult to argue against that. However, it worked out that the number of houses involved and the amount of money involved would mean that it would cost each house in the vicinity of $25 per week. To put that into some context, the average rate for electricity for a family in that community would be about $150 per quarter. That is in the vicinity of $12.50 to $13 per week. The levy that this government decided to impose on these people meant that they would have had to pay twice the average rate. Many of the people concerned were saying: 'Well, I am not an Aboriginal; I work for the council. I have the full range of electrical facilities in my house. My co-worker there, who has just started with the council as a trainee, has yet to be able to acquire all those things. So far he has a couple of lights, a jug and a fridge'. The usage rate between those 2 is completely unbalanced but how could one draw a line between them? Is that why the government decided to lump the problem on the community? Presumably, it decided that it was a bit too hard.

What about the pensioners and the people who get rebates in town? People in communities are unable to obtain rebates because, if the community decides to give someone a rebate, it must then jack everybody else's charges up to about 3 times what they would be paying in town!

The government has imposed the $47 000 a year or whatever - it varied between different communities. I would like to point out that money does not mysteriously turn up at the council every fortnight. The community must find somebody to make the collection. I do not know whether you realise this, Mr Deputy Speaker, but that is not a particularly easy job with something as unpopular as this. People can see that it is grossly inequitable, that it was imposed without any consultation and that there are non-Aboriginal public servants who are getting out of it. The collection would take at least half to two-thirds of a person's working time. In the community I have been talking about, the $47 000 would have needed to be increased by another $12 000 to $15 000 to cover collection costs. It would then have had to increase its charges yet again.

Another point that seems to have escaped the minister is that the councils are not party to any contractual arrangement between NTEC, which is supplying the electricity, and the people who are consuming it. They have no relationship. The contractual relationship is between NTEC and the consumers. The councils are not a party to it. They cannot enforce anything. They cannot enforce the collection; they cannot enforce the disconnection because they are not a party to the contract. The majority of communities are incorporated either under the Associations Incorporation Act or its federal equivalent and those acts do not provide them with the ability to make rules which would give them any powers to collect. They do not have any power to disconnect because only NTEC can come out and take off the pole fuses. Communities are being asked to raise all these charges that they do not have the power to collect. They do not have the power to take anybody to court for non-payment and they do not have the power to disconnect. It is patently ridiculous!

Mr Deputy Speaker, when I spoke in the debate before, I said that I believed that meters should be installed. The Chief Minister remarked that he was going to circularise my communities and tell them about that. He need not bother because I have told them all along that I thought that was a fair and

reasonable way of doing it and, with one exception, they all agreed with me. There is one very small community which the honourable member for Braitling would know. It is called Pmara Jutunta and its people are strong supporters of his. They refuse to pay on the basis that the water for Ti Tree comes out of their block and, if the electricity comes back the other way, they reckon it is a fair exchange. The broad majority of the communities agreed that the only fair basis was metering. The communities would agree to metering as long as the charging is on the same basis as for Territorians elsewhere - the same rates for commercial and the same rates for domestic usage. In towns, the elderly and other classes of pensioners are entitled to rebates and people on communities would have those same entitlements. I do not see anything unreasonable about that. I think that, if this government tries to push ahead with its extremely unjust proposals, it will only further lower its credibility amongst Aboriginal communities.

I would propose as a first step that the Chief Minister call a Chief Minister's conference. We have not had one for a couple of years to my knowledge. One should be held in the south and one in the north. He could then discuss with the respective communities what the problems are. I am quite certain that, from such discussions, he would find what I have found, and not just in my electorate and the member for MacDonnell's electorate. I have had representations from people in the electorates of Arnhem and Arafura who have all agreed that it is completely inequitable. They would like to find another solution such as metering.

I understand that there would be difficulties with metering. The places are remote. It may be that we can come up with some arrangement whereby the councils act as agents for NTEC. NTEC would pay them 7% or 8% for carrying out the collection, reading the meters and being a reception point. These things can be worked out if we do it rationally. Let us not have these 24-hour decisions which are foisted on the communities and which public servants must then try to interpret. That gets us nowhere.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to address briefly some of the issues that the member for Stuart referred to in the Assembly tonight. I intend to make a statement. Now that I am aware of some of his concerns, I will be looking at the issues. He did give us prior knowledge that this was a concern of his. Of late, we have become used to the opposition using this cost-saving exercise. It sends most of its messages via the front page of the NT News these days to save on postage.

He said in the NT News just recently that a particular community, Ali Curung, had $47 000 taken from its budget. The truth is that it was $35 000. He was out some 25% on that one for a start.

As for the cost of providing services to communities, the fuel cost alone to communities serviced by electricity is somewhere in the vicinity of $6.75m a year. The cost of supplying town maintenance and public utilities is in the order of $30m per year. We are recouping around 14.8% of the fuel bill, a token contribution which works out roughly at $1.50 per person per week. I will be addressing the issues of metering and how we intend to recoup moneys.

I will not be getting involved in the legal pedantics that the member for Stuart has addressed tonight in terms of how we should charge because the opposition has said on many occasions that we should consider the traditional methods and get away from the legal system or the Westminster system. We should look at some of the ways these people have of solving those particular

problems. I will be addressing that. If he looks in his legal dictionary, I am sure he will not find the term 'chuck-in fund' which is illegal. However, it has operated quite successfully in places like Elliott, at the north and south camp, and at Daly River and a number of other places where people have addressed the fact that services cost money and that they should contribute to them. I will be addressing all of those issues in this Assembly and offering solutions for some of his concerns about how communities might solve their own problems in their own way. This is what the opposition has advocated on so many occasions.

When the government takes that opportunity, we are ridiculed and rubbished by the opposition for it. I do not intend to speak any further on this tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I will be looking with interest at tomorrow's Hansard. I will be answering the issues that have been raised by the member for Stuart and I wonder whether we may not again see these issues - which were based on inaccuracies - on the front page of the Northern Territory News or perhaps addressed in adjournment debates. Maybe some direct representation from the member for Stuart to the responsible minister would enable these issues to be addressed in a more logical manner.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah) : Mr Deputy Speaker, my heart bleeds for the honourable member for Stuart. I was nearly in tears when he was telling us about his poor constituents who must pay for electricity. He is not Robinson Crusoe in this matter and neither are his constituents. If it is good enough for my constituents to pay for community services in the future, it is good enough for his constituents to pay also. Many of my constituents did not want to pay $5000 to get the power on but they had to pay it whether they could afford it or not. They found it from somewhere. If you want services, you must pay for them.

I agree with the Minister for Community Development that it is strange that socialism only seems to work at certain times with the socialists on the other side: it only works when it suits them. As the minister said, if we agree to do things the way the Aboriginals want us to and it does not suit ALP policy, we will be rubbished. If we do things our way, we will be rubbished.

While I am talking about the inequities in supply of services, I would like to touch on another matter that the honourable Minister for Community Development spoke on this morning: town camps. There is a camp that is not strictly in my electorate but, for all practical purposes, it is. It is at the 14-mile. When I was the member for Tiwi, the Knuckeys Lagoon camp was also in my electorate.

It has been put to me that these town camps are a staging place for Aboriginals on the way to complete integration with normal suburban life. They are supposed to be a stage between living on the settlements or towns and living in suburban areas. As I see it, there is much more to it than that. I do not think the town camps work to the betterment of Aboriginals and their future, and this applies particularly in respect of their children.

I can only speak from experience of people in the 14-mile camp. They have left their life in a settlement or town. The people there come mainly from Maningrida. They have come to live in a town camp and they have lost their Aboriginal identity, their family identity and their clan identity. Many of them have lost their self-respect. I feel sorry for them and they feel sorry for themselves but they do not know what to do about it. They do not have any family, clan or tribal identification in these camps.

Many other Australians, especially people in my constituency, see a certain financial favouritism in the operation and establishment of town camps - a favouritism of which they cannot avail themselves. At this camp at the 14-mile, water and electricity were provided and a road was built into it. The road cost about $12 000. At the time, it serviced about 20 people living in that camp.

Just across Howard Springs Road lives the largest egg producer in the Northern Territory who, despite my representations, cannot get a road built to his property. He has been there for a number of years and his operation is the backbone of the egg and poultry industry in the Northern Territory. He has something like 45 000 head of poultry yet he cannot get a road into his property; all he has is a track. Talk about financial favouritism! There are 20 people who have a $12 000 road into their property. They have had water and electricity provided at a cost to the government of about $8000 and $4000. Many people at Darwin River would have liked their power and water provided free but they must pay for it out of their own pockets.

I have had a lot to do with the people at the 14-mile camp. They come to my office and I try to help them when I can. They know they drink too much but it cannot be explained to them what drink does to them. I have more to do with the women than the men and I think it is unfortunate that they are drinking more than they used to.

It seems to me that it is more convenient for them to live in town camps because their behaviour would not be tolerated in their previous tribal communities. I would say that it had been suggested to them that they leave the communities because of their drinking habits and so they came into town and brought the problem with them. Somebody had to decide where these town camps would be set up. The 14-mile camp was rather a subjective decision made by a certain person, and made not without some self-interest. It has been put to me that, if it is good enough to build town camps for black Australians, it is good enough to build town camps for white Australians who come to town. What about the white prospectors who come to town? What about the white stockmen who come to town? I am not talking about wealthy people; I am talking about people who have a hard time making an honest dollar. Surely they deserve the same consideration? Why can't they have town camps set up for them? Pursued to its logical conclusion, most sensible people would realise that we cannot set up camps for everybody who comes to town. Therefore, why do we have these camps at all?

In the rural area, I think it must be made clear that, if a camp is set up, that is where the Aboriginals will live. As the honourable minister mentioned this morning, at the 14-mile they have gone to another camp across the highway. I would like to tell the minister that the camp has been discontinued. Only 2 people have gone back to the camp that was built for them. It is fenced very well at the expense of the federal taxpayer. It has 5 buildings on it now.

It is all very well building the camps but when do we stop building the camps? There are Aboriginals camped along the Arnhem Highway at Humpty Doo. There are Aboriginals camped on Crown land at Berry Springs. There are Aboriginals camped at an area other than the Knuckeys Lagoon site on McMillans Road. If camps are provided, that is where the people must live even if one group cannot get on with another group. If people are offered accommodation in a Housing Commission block of flats and happen to be Chinese who cannot stand living next door to Italians or Danes or Greeks, that is just hard bickies.

They must live next to these people if they want to avail themselves of that accommodation.

I think a little common sense must be brought to bear on this subject. We cannot keep providing camp accommodation for every Aboriginal group which comes to town. I am not saying that they all drink. There are some good ones who are looking after their children and their wives and do not bash them up. There are some people who are making a genuine effort to progress to living in a house in town. That is their wish and I am not knocking them. Somewhere along the line, we must say that there are enough town camps. If people want to live in a town camp, they must live in the ones already existing. Many people knock the old patriarchal attitude of which people of conservative political views were accused regarding Aboriginals. Many of these trendy people say that Aboriginals must have self-determination in all the decisions that they take about their lives. When I look at these town camps, I cannot see any self-determination. Somebody has made a subjective decision to build a town camp in a certain place and that is where the self-determination finishes. People make a decision to come from the bush to live here but the health sisters visit them, the welfare officers visit them and Aboriginal groups visit them. I had a request once to see if I could find a vehicle to take the dogs from the 14-mile camp to be dipped in a tickacide because many of them had ticks. Many of my constituents who do not live in that camp would also have liked their dogs dipped in a tickacide to get rid of ticks.

In many ways, I regard town camps as a retrograde step because a lot of the Aboriginal people lose their self-respect. I feel that they would be far better off staying in their communities and living with their own people. I feel particularly concerned about the children. There are children whom I have seen in these camps whose health suffers somewhat. I know their nutrition is deficient. I know they attend school very irregularly.

I would like to speak about the Knuckeys Lagoon Aboriginal camp. It is my understanding that that was originally gazetted as a public recreation area. I am talking about the early 1970s. I would like to raise the issue of the area of land immediately around Knuckeys Lagoon because it is my understanding that the Aboriginal people and part-Aboriginal people who live at Knuckeys Lagoon tend to regard the whole area as their own. One glance at a map will show that it is not. The central area around the lagoon is the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, which means that the public has access to it. I know there is a sign on the gazetted road going into the lagoon which forbids entry to the public. I am not exactly certain where it is because I did not have an opportunity to go and see its exact placement but I query whether it is on the actual land to which it refers or whether it is on a public road.

I would also query the perceived boundaries of this block at Knuckeys Lagoon. I ask the Minister for Conservation to undertake an inquiry into the whole matter to identify the area of land which belongs to the general public and the area of land which has been allotted to the Aboriginal people. To my knowledge, this is a special purpose lease and does not attract rates. I stand to be corrected on this but I think I am correct. The other blocks owned by people in Berrimah have attracted rates for a number of years. These people at Berrimah have been paying rates for a number of years but without any representation.

I think the whole subject of town camps must be examined. I can only speak for the 2 that I have mentioned. There must be rationalisation. We

really must look closely at where we, the white Australians, are going on this matter. I think the black Australians must examine it also. I will probably be considered a racist for bringing it up but it seems to me that this question of racism only works one way. If you bring it up and want to discuss it frankly, you are a racist. If you bring it up and want something for Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal people, you are not a racist. It seems to me that you cannot have your cake and eat it too.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wanted to say a few words on each of 3 firsts. I will not keep members too long. If I have time, I would also like to say something about a couple of other matters that have been raised this afternoon.

Last Wednesday, I attended the inaugural field day at Katherine Rural College. This was a combined effort of both the college and the Northern Territory Grain Growers' Association. Given the short notice of the field day, the number of manufacturers and suppliers who took part was very commendable. There were quite a number of field trials of machinery and equipment and a good variety of displays. Industry interest was good and I am sure that it will improve in future years. I am told that, from the response on this particular occasion, it will continue.

I must commend the Katherine papers, particularly the Katherine Times, which provided a very good coverage of the day. I congratulate the organisers and all those who contributed either by providing displays or just through their attendance. This type of facility for farmers to keep up to date with farming technology is extremely important for the fledgling but growing Territory farming industry. Since it started a couple of years ago, Territory grain growers have been going to Toowoomba for the very big field day down there. They do that just to keep up to date with what is going on with agriculture in the rest of the country. I was very impressed by the amount of support from interstate manufacturers and suppliers who showed their belief in the Territory farming industry by their presence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it must be the time of year for inaugural occasions. On 2 August, I attended the inaugural cattle sale at Elliott. The idea of having a regular cattle sale at Elliott has been floated for some time. But it has not been easy to gain the interest of an auctioneer to conduct the sale and I guess it would have been difficult to attract buyers to Elliott as well. Credit goes to Elders for finally recognising the merits of a cattle sale at Elliott and for tying it in with the Alice Springs sale to catch the buyers who attended that sale. There was good support from local cattlemen for the sale. Well over 1000 head were provided. There was strong bidding from buyers. Prices were good and I am sure that the Elliott cattle sale will become a regular and popular event.

Another first was the opening of the first DRCS telephone service by Telecom on 3 July at Daly River. The old Daly came alive that day with more than 300 invited guests being plied with food and drink by Telecom in the grounds of the Daly River Police Station. The latest technology was on show under the big top provided for the occasion. Telecom had on show all the latest stuff that it could offer. It was pretty interesting to see all this technology displayed in a place like Daly River. I do not think Daly River has seen anything like it before and I commend Telecom for being on time with the delivery of the DRCS services at Daly River. I was concerned that it would not be on time. Travelling around during May right throughout the electorate, I was assured that the DRCS service was 12 months behind schedule.

When I spoke to the minister, Mr Duffy, at Cox Peninsula last year, he assured me it would never get behind time and that it would be completed in 5 years.

Concluding from reports around the electorate that it was well behind schedule, I wrote a very strong letter to Telecom. As a consequence, some of its heavies came to see me in Batchelor, which I thought was a big day for Batchelor too. They told me that it was definitely on time and that I was wrong. However, after a little pressing, I discovered that it was not the DRCS system that was behind schedule but the microwave link from Kununurra to Katherine. Telecom admitted that it was behind schedule because South Australia decided it needed the money more than we did. But it is going ahead now, thank God, and we will have that microwave link before this time next year.

Direct-dial telephone services, telex and all the latest advances in telecommunications has ensured that Daly River will never be the same again. I am assured by the South Australian-Northern Territory manager that the DRCS remains on schedule. The Territory has been upgraded and now has a regional manager. In the past, it has been at the mercy of South Australia but now it has a little more strength with a more regionalised management system.

All of my electorate, and indeed all of the Territory, will have direct-dial telephone links by 1990 as originally promised last year. That will make life much easier for people in the bush, and for me too. Communications within my electorate are extremely poor and I almost find it easier to get in my car and drive 1000 km than make contact through the present system. That is no criticism of the hard-pressed people who operate the system but only of the antiquated system itself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was disappointed to hear the Minister for Transport and Works say that the Victoria Highway upgrading is to be deferred to a later date.

Mr Smith: He said it would be slowed down.

Mr McCARTHY: Slowed down then - that means deferred to a later date does it not? Certainly, completion of it will be deferred. The electorate of Victoria River absorbs half of the Stuart Highway, the full extent of the Victoria Highway, the full extent of the Buchanan Highway, most of the Duncan Highway and a good part of the Arnhem Highway. All those roads are extremely important to the economic growth of the Territory. Most of the Territory's cattle are carried for sale and to abattoirs along those roads. The Territory supply line traverses them. The bulk of the tourist travel uses them. Victoria River is a very important electorate. There is no doubt about it. Any delay in upgrading these important corridors would be extremely detrimental to the Territory's well-being in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was rather interested in the comments of the member for Stuart on power supply to Aboriginal communities. Like a lot of matters related to Aboriginal people, it is one that I have been fairly close to for a long time. In my previous position, I was very keen to see that Aboriginal communities participated in the economy of the Northern Territory by paying for services. I was also very keen to see that all other persons living on Aboriginal communities contributed in the same way. Some years ago, we set up in those Aboriginal communities for which we had some responsibility a provision for all persons to pay rentals at a reasonable rate, to pay for power, to pay for water and to pay for all other services that were provided.

Last year, Daly River was able to find from its own resources 56% of its entire budget. I do not think there is another Aboriginal community in the Territory that is doing that. That is a community of about 250 people. It is not a big one but it was able to find 56% of its budget by taking on contracts, which it is still doing - it has a very good road contracting service - and by charging $7.50 per week for services. It is certainly nothing like $25 per week suggested by the member for Stuart, but it is able to find every bit of the money that is required to meet the charges that have been imposed by the Territory government.

The member for Stuart seemed to imply that Aboriginal people should be asked whether they want to pay for these services. Well nobody ever asked me whether I wanted to pay for services. Wherever I go, I pay for the services that I use. I think that that is something that we must all do in this country. We cannot expect to get things for nothing.

He indicated that councils have no powers to collect these sorts of charges. In fact, they do have the powers. They have better powers than anybody else because they are there. They control the community and they can impose all sorts of penalties if these services are not paid for.

Mr Deputy Speaker, he also indicated that the Territory government had said that white persons living in Aboriginal communities did not have to pay. That was a ridiculous statement. I am sure that it was never intended that they should not pay. I believe that all that was said by the minister was that the government would not charge for services used in places like schools, health centres and whatever, but it would charge individuals. Certainly, places like Bathurst Island, Port Keats and Daly River for many years have been charging white persons - all of their staff, schoolteachers, right across the board - the same service charges as everybody else pays. It can be done and it should be done. There is no idea whatsoever that these private people living in Aboriginal communities should not pay for the services they receive. I do not think that that was ever intended. I think it was rather ridiculous for the member for Stuart to say that that was the case.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start by referring to a couple of comments made by the last speaker. I am pleased that Elliott has had its first cattle auction but, with the advances in technology, I wonder how much longer we will have cattle auctions in that form. I understand that, in the south, they are getting away from physical cattle auctions and cattle are being auctioned by TV hook-ups. With the coming of AUSSAT to the Northern Territory, I would think that that would be one of the ideas that our ever-vigilant farming and pastoral communities would look at. I would not be surprised if we did not have an ongoing annual cattle sale at Elliott but that, in a few years time, although the auctioneer might be based in Elliott, people would be on their stations and looking at the cattle they wanted to buy on their TV sets. I guess that, for those who like cattle auctions and their atmosphere, that will be the price we will have to pay for progress.

Secondly, I can assure the honourable member that the member for Stuart, in his discussion on the Ali Curung situation, was quite correct in saying that the government's proposal specifically excluded white government employees at Ali Curung from payment of electricity charges. I understand that the government subsequently corrected that. Under its latest proposal, if I am right, white government employees will be expected to pay some contribution. I think that that is only fair and reasonable, even though I would not have said that 4 or 5 years ago, in a different capacity, where it

was felt by my previous organisation, and probably still is, that one of the incentives that attracts people to remote communities is the freedom from government charges. However, I think that it is fair to say that that has led to a less zealous approach to consuming the resources provided by government. A charge of some description, certainly not a major charge, may make people a little more aware of how much fuel costs and dissuade them from leaving their air-conditioners on all day when they are not really needed because they are working at the school, health clinic or wherever.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wanted to speak primarily on the federal budget. I think an appropriate place to start is with the champagne breakfast that Price Waterhouse put on this morning. I think I should congratulate Price Waterhouse on the initiative that it has taken in organising its first champagne breakfast to provide an opportunity for comment on the federal budget. The more people who talk about these things, the better off everybody will be. I think, too, I should congratulate Price Waterhouse on the objective way in which it went about commenting on the federal budget. It is interesting to get out of the political atmosphere in which most of us spend most of our time and go out and talk to other people who have an interest in government decisions - accountants, lawyers and so on. You really get a different slant on what government decisions mean to those people. It was refreshing to see the objective way in which the commentators went about describing what decisions had been taken and their implications for the Northern Territory.

It appeared that the general feeling of people at the Price Waterhouse breakfast was that, overall, Paul Keating had done a very good job with the budget. I think that they appreciate particularly the efforts that have been made to rein in the deficit, to reduce unemployment and to keep inflation down to a pretty low level. One of the Price Waterhouse people commented specifically on the Northern Territory budget and his belief is consistent with the belief put forward by the honourable Chief Minister, myself and, of course, a number of other people. It is that, although we do not have a generous amount of money to play with, certainly we have an amount of money and a commitment to capital works projects in the Northern Territory that is sufficient to enable the economy of the Territory to progress along much the same lines as it has in the past. Of course, after the savage cuts imposed on us earlier this year by the federal government, it is some relief to be able to say that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to comment more specifically about the federal budget, many of the things that have been done in that budget for the Northern Territory have, in fact, resulted from Northern Territory government representations at the Premiers Conference in May this year. When he went to Canberra, the Treasurer and Chief Minister sought to adjust the debt charges payment. This has been done. Without going into detail, debt charges payments now appear in our general revenue collection rather than a specific allocation being made for them, and this was provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding and is a reflection of the fact that we have grown up and are accumulating debt charges now on a basis roughly equivalent to a state.

Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable Treasurer sought a modification of the formula in the Memorandum of Understanding and this was done. He sought some technical changes relating to the division between recurrent and capital funds and this was done too. I think that the pleasant surprise that has come out of the budget probably falls in the area of the honourable Minister for Education where there seems to be a sum of somewhere

between $4m and $6m that no one was expecting. That is encouraging news and it should enable us to make some initiatives in the education area in the next 12 months.

The other encouraging news contained in the federal budget, which was the subject of the address to the nation by the honourable Prime Minister, was the commitment and the priority that the federal government will give to the problem of youth employment. The government has proposed a wide range of measures to deal with this problem, including youth traineeships, which combine training and work for a year with weekly payments of $90, creating 10 000 places this fiscal year and 75 000 places by 1988. Secondly, there is an initiative in relation to education allowances which will encourage young people to stay at school and at higher education facilities. Thirdly, there is an initiative in standardising unemployment benefits. Fourthly, there is an initiative in providing some assistance for young people in relation to rental payments. It has been recognised that not every young person lives at home and some assistance has been provided for young people where, for whatever reason, they are not living at home.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think we all have a duty to support these initiatives and I hope that the Territory government will be most cooperative in this area. I note, in particular, that there is a reference to negotiating with the states and the Territory on the issue of payroll tax and workers' compensation premiums for employees under 21. I have not been able to establish the extent of what the Commonwealth has in mind. Whilst I appreciate that, in any negotiations with the Commonwealth, a state or territory government must always seek to maintain its own revenue base, I hope that the Northern Territory government will enter into these negotiations with an open mind because I think employers will find it a very helpful contribution indeed if payroll tax and workers' compensation for employees under 21 can be done away with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other news in the budget for the Northern Territory was that Tindal has been funded to the extent of $28m. Last night it was interesting to watch the confusion about the exact allocation for Tindal. There was a figure of $176m and a figure of $169m for the all-up cost of the project. Apparently the correct figure is $176m. There was a figure of $30m for housing that some people started talking about. $30m would provide an enormous number of houses in Katherine, so hopefully that is true. I work it out to be something like 450 houses, but I am not guaranteeing that my arithmetic is correct.

Mr Manzie: It would be good for Katherine.

Mr SMITH: Yes, it would be good for Katherine all right. But it seems that the real figure that the federal government mentioned was $28m for works assisting the establishment of an F18 fighter squadron. At this stage, no one knows exactly what that is for but it is good to know that it is proceeding with Tindal.

For Channel Island Power-station, there is a total commitment of $52m with $14m to be spent this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one factor is sometimes forgotten. It was raised yesterday in the statehood debate: the question of uranium royalties. In the last 5 years, the Northern Territory government has received over $20m in lieu of uranium royalties which, as we all know, are paid to the Commonwealth

government. That is paid at a rate of 1.25% directly from the Commonwealth Treasury to the Northern Territory Treasury. $20m is not an insignificant sum. In fact, the allocation this year in lieu of uranium royalties to the Northern Territory government is $4.2m.

Another major contribution has been a 30%, or $1.3m, increase in capital grant money for TAFE. I suspect that we will hear in the budget next week exactly where that will occur.

To conclude, once again I want to contrast the amount of information the federal government provides in its budget papers with the amount of information that the Northern Territory government has provided in the past and, obviously, will continue to provide. In fact, it is even worse this year because we do not have access to the public accounts information for the last 12 months. It is very difficult indeed for people who have an interest in the budgetary process in the Northern Territory, whether they be politicians or members of the community. I can tell you that there are members of the community who have a very strong interest in what the Northern Territory is putting in its budget. It is very difficult for them to assess what is in the budget when the basic tools are not provided. Until the budget is brought down next Tuesday, we will not have a statement of the money that the Territory government had available to spend last year and what it actually spent. It makes it almost impossible for us to come to grips with what is going on, whether the money was spent wisely last year and whether there are ways in which the spending priorities of the government can be improved. That is just one of the problems.

The other problem is that the Northern Territory government just does not provide enough information. Obviously, that is something that I will be commenting on again next week. But I think there is a stark contrast between the volume of material we get from the Commonwealth government and the minuscule amount of background and supporting material we get from the Territory government.

Mr HATTON (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a couple of points to make tonight. Firstly, I wish to respond to a question asked this morning by the honourable member for Nhulunbuy concerning the Nhulunbuy wharf management agreement. If I can record this answer for the honourable member's benefit, he can perhaps read it tomorrow.

On 13 July 1984, an agreement was signed between V.B. Perkins and the Northern Territory government providing arrangements for the construction and management of a proposed wharf at Nhulunbuy. The basic terms of the agreement are: (1) The Northern Territory undertook to build a new wharf at Nhulunbuy on land leased by V.B. Perkins; (2) Perkins would provide some contribution to the cost of the wharf by way of concessional freight rates for materials used in its construction; (3) on completion, the wharf would be operated by Perkins but remain the property of the Northern Territory government; (4) Perkins would operate the wharf as a public wharf for at least 6 days per week; (5) Perkins would provide all the usual public facilities - for example, fuel and fresh water; (6) reasonable berthing would be provided for fishing vessels at the rate applicable within the Port of Darwin; (7) Perkins would maintain the wharf and keep it in good order at all times during its economic life, estimated to be 25 years; and (8) Perkins would have the right to charge and retain fees in respect of the use of the public wharf by vessels other than those used by the government, although this could be revoked by the government with 14 days notice in the event of any non-compliance by Perkins with the terms of the agreement.

The net effect of the agreement is for Perkins to have the obligation to operate the wharf as a public facility in return for the right to charge fees subject to the conditions laid down. I might add also that V.B. Perkins contributed quite substantially, I understand in the order of some $70 000, to the construction cost of the wharf and, in addition, provided $100 000 worth of freight assistance for the construction contractor. I trust that answers the honourable member's question.

This afternoon, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have again heard a most outrageous outburst by the honourable member for MacDonnell. Last night, I used the phrase, 'my good friend, the honourable member for MacDonnell'. I would like now to withdraw the words 'my good friend' following his outburst and his misinterpretation of the response that I provided yesterday. I was not required to provide it for him but I did it as a matter of courtesy. He has obviously not read or understood what I said. He quite clearly misinterpreted what I said and he made some quite serious allegations against this government. It is a matter that will need careful and considered response. I will be making a response by way of a statement at the appropriate time.

Just to clarify a couple of points, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a list of the prices paid by that particular developer for the land in Katherine over the period and it shows that, right through until June 1985 - the last figure here is 31 May 1985 - there was a price of $20 000 per lot paid to the Northern Territory Housing Commission, $20 000 per lot for lots purchased on behalf of the Department of Defence and $15 000 per lot for land put on the private market. This is in accordance with the agreed contract and, as I stipulated last night, prices were increasing after this date. From 30 June, it went to market value and market value in Katherine this year has been estimated at $19 000. Thus, for every block of land it has been selling this year on the private market, it has been losing $4000 compared to market value. Part of the reason why there was a particular arrangement made for this subdivisional development was to assist the local community at the request of the local government to ensure that there was not a too rapid escalation in the price of land because of the anticipated acceleration in demand as a consequence of the anticipated construction of Tindal.

The Northern Territory government incurred some additional cost, as I outlined last night, again to accelerate the release of land and to meet some charges which otherwise would have been government costs, such as headworks. That was done by way of a cash-and-land package, as I outlined last night. It is not inconsistent with similar circumstances that can exist where the terms and conditions of a contract have been made and there is a necessity to compensate the developer. As I said, there have been a number of very specific allegations and requests made this afternoon and they will be dealt with in detail at the appropriate time.

I want to speak about another equally serious matter: allegations against the Northern Territory Conservation Commission made by the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment in a press statement issued on 13 August this year. The Hon Barry Cohen saw fit to release a statement which was laughingly headed: 'Facts on Uluru'. In that statement, he made a series of serious allegations about the Northern Territory Conservation Commission's management of Uluru National Park. I am not going to beat about the bush. Mr Cohen called into question the integrity of senior and respected Northern Territory public servants. Mr Cohen talked about serious misspending and misappropriation of funds in that statement.

It would be obvious that the Conservation Commission's accounts and financial records, including expenditure on contract moneys paid to it by the ANPWS, are regularly audited. From self-government to 30 June 1982, audits were carried out by the Commonwealth Auditor-General under arrangements made with the Territory. Since then, audits have been carried out by the Northern Territory Auditor-General. Neither of the Auditors-General has ever suggested that the commission has dealt with the funds improperly in any way. You would have to infer from the minister's statement that he suggests that one or other or both of the Auditors-General have not carried out competently the audits of the commission's records or, conversely, he does not even know the basics of the financial arrangements that exist so far as statutory authorities and his own statutory authority are concerned. We have been providing those audited accounts to the ANPWS on an annual basis. Never have they been queried by ANPWS.

The Conservation Commission has absolutely nothing to hide. I can assure the minister that we would welcome a special audit of our operations at Uluru and Yulara if such were to be considered necessary. In view of the minister's allegations, we offer him the opportunity to call for a special audit. We would expect that such an audit would highlight the annual deficit in funds - and 'deficit' is a word that would be well understood by all members of the federal Cabinet - provided by the ANPWS for the management for Uluru. We would also expect that such an audit would highlight the problems the commission faces from the lack of any financial agreement with the ANPWS or any arrangement to provide a notional component towards commission overheads for the park's running expenses.

Our preliminary estimate - and I emphasise 'preliminary' - for the shortfall of funds provided by the ANPWS for the payment of salaries and direct operational expenses at Uluru for 1984-85 is in excess of $88 000. We would welcome an independent audit to confirm this figure. The bulk of the funds comprise the continuing carry-over of a debt of about $85 000 for repairs to the bitumen of the Ayers Rock circuit road and park access road following heavy rains in March 1983 that still have not been reimbursed to the Northern Territory. I emphasise that this direct shortfall does not include the costs for services and overheads for the park which are incurred on a daily basis by the Conservation Commission.

I might say that I have responded specifically to the allegations of Mr Cohen in a letter to him of Monday this week. I will read part of that letter:

> 'You say that ANPWS park funds are being spent at Yulara and that commission rangers work at Yulara. The inference to be drawn is that the relocation of park headquarters and the visitors centre from the park to Yulara was carried out without the agreement of the ANPWS. The ANPWS was part of a combined planning team which met as early as February 1983 to plan the relocation of staff, facilities and park operations from Uluru to Yulara. Not only were there no objections voiced by ANPWS to this process at the time but their involvement in it was so complete that it even extended to approving by telex on 13 May 1983 that Commonwealth assets could be relocated to Yulara. Enclosed is a copy of correspondence between the ANPWS and the CCNT on this matter.

> As a result, park headquarters are located at Yulara. Rangers operate at Yulara with a field operation base at the ranger station in the park. This is managed and costed as a completely separate operation to the discharge of commission responsibilities from Uluru'.

It goes on to refer to the minister's telex in which he stated that he emphasised that the Commonwealth government is concerned to ensure the development and viability of the Yulara project and all future actions of the Commonwealth government would be designed to ensure the success of the project. I will not continue on that but I will quote more of the letter:

> 'The facts are that the Conservation Commission's responsibilities as client authority for Yulara are carried out by a separate unit of the commission, namely, the Yulara Development Office which is entirely funded by the Northern Territory government appropriation. In fact, environmental rehabilitation work carried out within Uluru National Park was performed by the commission's Yulara Project Office environmental staff at no cost to the ANPWS.
>
> You should also note that, prior to the relocation of the park office and headquarters to Yulara, the park office operated from the demountable at Uluru National Park. This was supplied by CCNT as no suitable facilities had been made available by the ANPWS. Park headquarters at Yulara had been provided at no capital cost to the ANPWS. Further, there are only 6 staff houses provided by the ANPWS within the park, with the seventh under construction, and a number of substandard flats. Only 4 of these are occupied by CCNT staff. The remainder are occupied by ANPWS and Mutitjulu community staff. There are 13 CCNT park staff accommodated within various houses and flats at Yulara village. The houses, rental subsidies, electricity, water and other services for the staff at Yulara are provided by the Northern Territory at no cost to the park.
>
> Prior to the construction of Yulara, CCNT staff working in the park were expected to live in substandard flats, caravans and even tents located within the park. The reality is that the Northern Territory provides at Yulara, at no cost to the ANPWS, a park office, headquarters, staff housing and other support services which the ANPWS have not provided within the park - nor funded'.

I might say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that also goes for the visitors' centre at Yulara. It was constructed by the Northern Territory with Northern Territory money. The only expenditure by the ANPWS in so far as the Yulara visitors centre is concerned is the payment of salaries to 3 women who work on a part-time basis keeping that visitors' centre open until 10 o'clock at night. That is a total cost of $36 000 for salaries and uniforms. That particular expense may be debatable. We do not believe it is. We believe it is providing a service to the park and remember there is over $88 000 which ANPWS owes us.

Another of Mr Cohen's criticisms alleges that an enormous number of cars have been bought by the Conservation Commission. He said that most of the cars are parked outside the interpretive centre at the Yulara centre and are not being used at all. Mr Cohen and his Director of the ANPWS, Professor Derek Ovington, should be aware that the Conservation Commission has an establishment of 20 positions for the park. In addition, there are

3 ladies who staff the Yulara visitors' centre from 8 am to 10 pm. The late closing hour means information is being provided outside park closing hours and vehicles are used to facilitate the return to their homes of the employees who staff that centre at a cost to the Northern Territory. There are 21 items of registered vehicles and plant for the park. Of those 21 items, a tractor, a tip-truck and a station wagon have been provided by the Northern Territory at no cost to the Commonwealth. The remaining 17 items of plant and vehicles were all bought by the ANPWS on ANPWS orders raised and authorised in Canberra. If Mr Cohen now considers there is an unwarranted number of vehicles in the park, perhaps he could ask his director why their purchase was authorised in the first place and, if there is an excess of vehicles, why the ANPWS, when it stationed another person at its park this year, purchased another vehicle without any consultation with the Conservation Commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on about the work that is occurring but I notice that I am running out of time. I seek leave for this letter to be incorporated in toto in Hansard so there is a record of my response to Mr Cohen and so that our responses to those allegations will be on the public record. There is no justification for and no truth in those allegations.

Leave granted.

'The Hon B. Cohen MP
Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600

My dear Minister,

This letter is to confirm my telex sent earlier today.

I refer to your news release of 13 August 1985 which is headed "The Facts on Uluru". You have made a number of allegations concerning the Conservation Commission's management of Uluru (Ayers Rock - Mt Olga) National Park.

You refer to the lack of ability by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission to collect entry fees to Uluru Park.

You refer in the course of that comment to a survey which suggests that up to two-thirds of visitors to the park may not be paying the entry fee and, further, that no good effort has been made to collect fees.

We are unaware of by whom the survey was conducted. I request that you produce the survey results on which your statements are based. I suspect that the survey referred to was one carried out by the Central Land Council to ascertain visitor attitudes to Aboriginal involvement in the park and at the same time to ascertain the Aboriginal community's attitudes to tourists. The Northern Territory government has never received a copy of that report.

To the best of our knowledge, that survey was conducted by asking a series of questions of tourists at the base of Ayers Rock. I suspect that one of the questions asked was whether the visitors had paid park entry fees.

Perhaps like the people who undertook the survey for both you and Professor Ovington are unaware that only a small percentage of visitors to the park actually pay the entry fee across the counter at the Ayers Rock ranger station. The rest are either airline passengers or coach passengers whose fare structure includes entry fees. These fees are remitted to the Conservation Commission as agent for the Commonwealth by the airline and coach companies. Consequently the majority of people on coach or airline tours would not know that they had in fact paid an entry fee to the park. On this basis alone, a substantial number of visitors are in fact paying an entry fee albeit unwittingly.

There is a problem controlling visitor entry to the park for the remainder. Almost 3 years ago - 24 August 1982 - ANPWS was advised of changed visitor entry movements to the park as a consequence of the relocation of the camp grounds to Yulara.

There is a tendency for some motorists to pass the ranger station where entry fees are collected. This problem was discussed with ANPWS officers on site later last year and again in March this year.

It was agreed in those discussions that the solution would be to realign the entrance road in the immediate vicinity of the ranger station. We subsequently proposed in the draft forward works proposals for Uluru the reconstruction of the appropriate section of the park entry road. Those proposals went to ANPWS in March of this year. We have not been advised whether the proposals have been accepted or, if they have, whether sufficient funds will be included in this year's capital works program to allow the necessary reconstruction to take place.

In the interim, all motorists who stop at the entry station to pay their entry permits are issued a windscreen sticker. Rangers patrolling the park advise any motorist who does not have a windscreen sticker to return to the ranger's station to pay his entry fee. This process is time consuming and inefficient and it has been pointed out in discussions with the ANPWS that the only effective solution is a realignment of the entry road as has already been agreed by ANPWS and CCNT officers on site.

Your second, and perhaps most serious allegation, is that there have been "some serious misspending and misappropriation of the funds". The Conservation Commission's accounts and financial records, including expenditure of contract moneys paid to it by the ANPWS, are regularly audited. From self-government to 30 June 1982, audits were carried out by the Commonwealth Auditor-General under arrangements made with the Territory. Since then, audits have been carried out by the Northern Territory Auditor-General. Neither Auditor-General has ever suggested that the commission has misspent or misappropriated funds. I can only infer from your statements that you are suggesting that one or the other of the Auditors-General has not carried out his audits of the commission's records competently. The CCNT has nothing to hide and would welcome a special audit of its operations at Uluru and Yulara if such were to be considered necessary.

We would expect that such an audit would highlight the annual shortfall in funds provided by the ANPWS for the management of Uluru.

We would also expect that such an audit would highlight the problems the commission faces from the lack of any financial agreement with ANPWS or any arrangements to provide a notional component towards other commission overheads for the running of the park. Our preliminary estimate for the shortfall of funds provided by the ANPWS for the payment of salaries and direct operational expenses at Uluru for 1984-85 is $88 684.91. We would welcome an independent audit to confirm this figure. The bulk of the funds comprise the continuing carry-over of a debt of approximately $86 000 for repairs to the bitumen of the Ayers Rock circuit road and park access road following heavy rains in March 1983. I should point out that this direct shortfall does not include costs for services and overheads for the park which are incurred by the Conservation Commission.

A further of your criticisms alleges that "there are an enormous number of cars that have been purchased by them" and "most of the cars are parked outside the interpretive centre at Yulara centre and not being used at all". As you should be aware, the Conservation Commission has 20 staff positions for the park. In addition, there are 3 ladies who staff the Yulara visitors' centre from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm - and obviously that late closing hour means information is being provided outside the park closing hours. Vehicles are used to facilitate the return to Uluru of the employees who staff that centre.

There are 21 items of registered vehicles and plant for the park. Of those 21 items, a tractor, a tip-truck and a station sedan have been provided by the Northern Territory. The remaining 17 items of plant and vehicles were all bought by the ANPWS on ANPWS orders raised and authorised in Canberra. If you now consider that there is an unwarranted number of vehicles, perhaps you could ask your director why he authorised their purchase in the first place.

By way of further background, I note that in 1983 there was a severe shortage of vehicles in the park. In the 1983-84 financial year, because of the constraints in funding advised to us by the ANPWS, the commission initially requested the replacement of 2 vehicles and the purchase of 1 additional vehicle. Following discussions with ANPWS officers on site and in Alice Springs, the program for 1983-84 was increased to the replacement of 3 vehicles and the purchase of 1 additional vehicle.

In the event, the ANPWS in fact purchased 7 vehicles in 1983-84. Not only did ANPWS purchase 3 of the 4 vehicles requested by the Conservation Commission but they also provided 4 additional sedans and station sedans which were quite inappropriate for park duties and which were definitely not requested by the CCNT.

Further, in March of this year, the ANPWS stationed an officer at Uluru to supervise the activities of commercial film crews. The ANPWS purchased an additional vehicle specifically for that officer's use, again without any consultation with the Conservation Commission.

I find it extremely difficult to reconcile your criticism of an over-supply of vehicles at Ayers Rock with the actions of the ANPWS in providing these vehicles to the commission and themselves. There is ample evidence to suggest that, if there is an over-supply of

vehicles, this is the fault not of the Conservation Commission but of your Director of the ANPWS, Professor Ovington.

You say that ANPWS park funds are being spent at Yulara and that commission rangers work at Yulara. The inference to be drawn is that the relocation of park headquarters and the visitors centre from the park to Yulara was carried out without the agreement of the ANPWS.

The ANPWS was part of a combined planning team which met as early as February 1983 to plan the relocation of staff, facilities, and park operations from Uluru to Yulara. Not only were there no objections voiced by ANPWS to this process at the time, but their involvement in it was so complete that it even extended to approving by telex on 13 May 1983 that Commonwealth assets could be relocated to Yulara. Enclosed is a copy of correspondence between the ANPWS and the CCNT on this matter.

As a result, park headquarters are located at Yulara. Rangers operate out of Yulara, with a field operation base at the ranger station in the park. This is managed and costed as a completely separate operation to the discharge of commission responsibilities for Uluru.

It might be salutary to refer to your telex of 22 November 1983 to the Yulara Development Company in which you say that the Commonwealth government will not inhibit in any way the viability of the Yulara tourist village, giving your unqualified support to the development of that village. You say: "I would wish to emphasise the Commonwealth government is as concerned ...to ensure the development and viability of the Yulara project and all future actions of the Commonwealth Government will be designed to ensure the success of that project". I have now to conclude from the general thrust of your 13 August news release that those sentiments are no longer held by you.

The facts are that the Conservation Commission's responsibilities as client authority for Yulara are carried out by a separate unit of the commission, namely, the Yulara Development Office which is entirely funded by a Northern Territory government appropriation. In fact, environmental rehabilitation work carried out within Uluru National Park was performed by the Commission's Yulara Project Office environmental staff at no cost to the ANPWS.

You should also note that, prior to the relocation of the park office and headquarters to Yulara, the park office operated from a demountable in Uluru National Park. This was supplied by CCNT as no suitable facilities had been made available by the ANPWS. Park headquarters at Yulara had been provided at no capital cost to the ANPWS. Further, there are only 6 staff houses provided by the ANPWS within the park, with a seventh under construction, and a number of substandard flats. Only 4 of these are occupied by CCNT staff. The remainder are occupied by ANPWS and Mutitjulu community staff. There are 13 CCNT park staff accommodated within various houses and flats at Yulara village. The houses, rental subsidies, electricity, water and other services for the staff at Yulara are provided by the Northern Territory at no cost to the park.

Prior to the construction of Yulara, CCNT staff working in the park were expected to live in substandard flats, caravans and even tents located within the park. The reality is that the Northern Territory provides at Yulara at no cost to the ANPWS a park office, headquarters, staff housing and other support services which the ANPWS have not provided within the park - nor funded.

With respect to the Yulara visitors' centre, this and the display contained within it are provided to service visitors to Uluru National Park and for no other purpose. Again, the building and the display have been provided at no cost to the ANPWS. In fact, the display paid for by the ANPWS at the Ayers Rock ranger station within the park was designed to complement and reinforce the Yulara display. This was approved by the ANPWS for payment. Lease rentals, electricity and water for the Yulara visitors' centre are similarly paid for by the Northern Territory at no cost to the ANPWS.

Only salaries and uniforms for the 3 employees of the Yulara visitors' centre are charged against the park budget. These amount to approximately $36 000 per annum. It is debatable whether the cost of these salaries and uniforms are met from funds provided by the ANPWS for the park or whether they are met from within the annual shortfall which has to be met by the Northern Territory government each year.

I remind you that the old visitors' centre in the park was part of the old Ayers Rock Hotel. These premises were purchased along with the other motel leases pursuant to the recommendation of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment. The Northern Territory Reserves Board purchased these leases and fixed assets on behalf of the Commonwealth. The Mutitjulu community requested that Ayers Rock Hotel not be reopened. It was then converted into a temporary visitors' centre and ranger station. The building has always been substandard, having no fire protection.

When the Yulara visitors' centre was being designed, details of the proposals were made available to the ANPWS. Although comments were requested of the ANPWS, there is no record of any comments being received.

In terms of the Uluru Plan of Management, there have been many distressing incidences of non-compliance by the ANPWS. I refer you to my detailed ministerial statement on management and control of Uluru made in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on 6 June. That statement contains well-researched information with which it would be to your advantage to acquaint yourself.

I have been available all year to meet with you and discuss any problems being experienced with regard to the day-to-day management of Uluru National Park by the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. I remain available for the consultation required in the Plan of Management. I reiterate that the Northern Territory government regards as totally unacceptable any proposal which removes the day-to-day responsibility for Uluru National Park from the Conservation Commission. I must say that your approach this year, as well as that of your director, Professor Ovington, can only be interpreted as a grasping at straws to find any excuse to take over

the management of Uluru, notwithstanding that this is in direct contravention of the Plan of Management as well as the spirit of all previous agreements between our 2 governments. If this is your aim, you should at least have the honesty to admit this publicly.

Although I would have assumed that you are conversant with the details of the statement I made in the Legislative Assembly on 6 June, your recent press release appears to indicate otherwise. For your information, I enclose a copy of my statement together with copies of other documents tabled by me in the Assembly.

At the recent Council of Conservation Ministers meeting on Norfolk Island, I outlined some quite specific complaints of the Northern Territory regarding the non-compliance of the ANPWS with the Uluru Plan of Management and of the director's failure to provide the delegations necessary to allow the CCNT to effectively and efficiently undertake its day-to-day management responsibilities. Despite assurances that a detailed response would be provided, no such statement has eventuated. Only 2 possible conclusions can be drawn: either you are indifferent to the criticisms and are deliberately conspiring for the purpose of wresting day-to-day management from the CCNT or you find the criticisms indefensible. I believe the latter to be the case but suspect that your motives are more closely aligned to the former.

Yours sincerely,

STEVE HATTON'.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, as I stand here this evening, I could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that all evening I have been at a tennis match because I note that, whoever has been sitting in the Chair, he has been just like a tennis umpire whose head has been swinging from this end of the court to that end of the court to the other end of the court. That is fine but I live for the day when perhaps Mr Speaker will develop tunnel vision and look straight down the body of this august Chamber directly to where I am standing. I can assure you it would assist me greatly.

However, following that little bit of frivolity, Mr Deputy Speaker, I intend to speak this evening concerning peace and disarmament. Perhaps one might wonder why I would talk about peace and disarmament because here in the Northern Territory we are not really in a position to do much about it. Let me point out to you, Sir, that we are the front line of defence because probably more than half of the world's population lives within easy flying distance of where I stand tonight. In fact, I am told that, at Cam Ran Bay in Vietnam, the Russians have a squadron of backfire bombers which are quite capable of bombing this fair city at any time they wish.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I say to you that peace is an objective we all share, but what I am talking about today is the means of achieving it and the options open to countries like Australia to influence the superpowers to make arms control talks more effective. Arms are the product, not the cause, of east-west tension. Disarmament can be achieved only when those tensions are eliminated. Only a deeper understanding of each other's viewpoint can ease international relations. The source of the problem is the conflict between the differing ideologies of the western democracies and the Soviet Union, and the boundaries and spheres of superpower influence which stem directly from

the settlement of World War 2. Many other historical, geographical and political factors have worsened the tensions and misunderstandings, and these have been aggravated by the massive Soviet build-up of nuclear and conventional weapons over the past 30 years. Fear and suspicion represent great potential for future military conflict involving the superpowers. In the event of such conflict, the use of nuclear weapons would be virtually unavoidable. It is the fear of nuclear destruction which motivates people to call on their governments to bring maximum pressure to bear on the superpowers to stop the arms race and begin the process of disarmament. Frustration with the stalemate between the superpowers had led some people to call on our ally the United States to disarm by itself. Most Australians recognise, however, that such a policy of unilateral disarmament would be highly destabilising and potentially disastrous if put into effect. There are some who believe that Australia might be able to isolate itself from world conflict by shedding its defence alliances and military installations and by establishing a nuclear-free Pacific. That concept, however superficially attractive, is tragically misconceived.

The overwhelming weight of defence and scientific opinion is that there cannot be a limited and regional nuclear exchange. Any such exchange would inescapably escalate to worldwide proportions. Consequently, in a nuclear war, there would be no winners, no escape for neutral nations and no protection in so-called nuclear free zones. Nuclear effects are worldwide. No nation, no matter where it is situated, can opt out of nuclear war. The test of any effective policy for peace, therefore, is whether it assists the prevention of nuclear outbreak no matter where the first bombs may be directed. Unilateral disarmament and attempted neutrality are not viable alternatives; they can only add to the risk of war.

The prevention of a world war over the past 40 years has depended principally on the international deterrent - in other words, on the uneasy balance between the 2 superpowers and a combination of nuclear and conventional weapons which means that, if either side launches an attack, the retaliation would be so massive and destruction so great that the attacking nation would wish it had never started the conflict in the first place. This is the doctrine of mutual assured destruction. The removal of that balance by disarmament by one side or by the arms build-up by either of the 2 superpowers would cause great instability and substantially increase the risk of war. The balance is the deterrent needed to maintain peace. A reduction in arms while maintaining that balance must be the objective of all the world if a lasting peace is to be possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I now turn to arms control and disarmament. The technological knowledge to rearm speedily, both conventionally and with nuclear weapons, will remain available. Weapon technology cannot be frozen or reversed. Once invented, it is with us. The nature of weapons will reflect the advancing technology of societies; hence, it is important to reduce tensions by increasing international understanding. Certainly, arms reduction is needed. The superpowers have many times the amount of weaponry needed for defence and deterrence or, indeed, to destroy the world many times over. The larger the volume, the greater the risk of error. The aim must be to achieve a stable balance at the lowest practicable level so that neither party may fear or attempt a pre-emptive strike.

Australia, as a middle-ranking power, has significant influence with its allies, particularly the United States. Furthermore, Australia will be influential in international forums if it is prepared to pursue its arms

control goals in conjunction with the other middle-ranking powers. Our primary objective must be to encourage and participate in negotiations to reach agreements for significant, mutual, fair and verifiable arms reduction. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the only real disarmament is mutual disarmament. Likewise, accurate verification by independent authorities is essential for increased trust and stability and a reduction in world tension. Nuclear weapons cannot be abolished overnight. What we must strive for is a means of living with nuclear weapons and managing them until they can be abolished. Unrealistic proposals can only discredit the cause of arms control. In the end, we will be judged on achievements, not on high-minded declarations which are impossible to implement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with regard to US facilities in Australia, it is acknowledged that, ever since their establishment in Australia, the US installations at Exmouth Gulf, Pine Gap and Nurrungar have been the subject of controversy. I am quite sure that some of our colleagues from Alice Springs can confirm that. Opponents of these installations argue that they make those parts of Australia prime targets for enemy attack in the event of war. Australia's survival depends on the maintenance by the western alliance, and predominantly by America, of a defence system strong and dispersed enough to persuade an opponent against a first strike. Clearly, our security is considerably enhanced by the existence of the installation at Exmouth Gulf which communicates with submarines which form the major part of the US deterrent force. As we benefit by its peace-keeping effect, we should not be unwilling to accommodate it.

So far as Pine Gap and Nurrungar are concerned, it is clear that their essential functions consist of receiving and interpreting signals from satellites. Mr Deputy Speaker, all international discussions on arms reductions and control stress the imperative need for accurate verification and compliance. There is universal agreement that, currently, the satellite is the most effective means of monitoring and surveillance. Indeed, the conference on disarmament in Geneva has been examining the desirability of drawing up a treaty to prevent the development of anti-satellite missiles which must be protected from destruction. It follows that groundstations receiving and interpreting satellite messages should be included in such a treaty. Without them, effective verification would be impossible.

The immense value of the US facilities in keeping peace far outweighs the disadvantage that they might be targets in a nuclear war. If such a war occurred - and God help us - Australia would not escape its consequences regardless of any installations on its soil. For that matter, neither would New Zealand. In 1983, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hayden, said that those facilities have a global significance as a system of deterrence and certification that makes arms control and reduction feasible. They are an additional reason for us to be an active participant in the search for stability through arms control and disarmament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is regrettable that the federal government's recent failure to assist its principal ally in the testing of the MX missile, its admission that the ANZUS Treaty is now inoperative and the growing unrest within its left-wing ranks have cast a serious doubt on the government's ability to give and fulfil defence and disarmament commitments to its allies. Likewise, Australia should support the United States' research into the Strategic Defence Initiative or, if you like, Star Wars. The aim of the SDI is to render strategic nuclear weapons obsolete.

We must support the United States' declared objective of endeavouring to strengthen peace and stability by moving away from a deterrent based on the prospect of rapid and massive nuclear retaliation. The conduct of research into the feasibility of non-nuclear defensive systems involves the replacement of the doctrine of mutually-assured destruction based on attack with a morally much more acceptable concept of assured defence.

The Soviet Union has a substantial superiority in conventional forces. Furthermore, it is already heavily involved in Star Wars research and is ahead of the United States in significant respects. Clearly, the result of the Soviet Union developing a defensive anti-nuclear shield unilaterally while retaining superiority in other forces would destabilise the deterrent and lead to the possibility of a first strike. Therefore, it is important that the United States should conduct similar research to assist in restoring and maintaining the balance.

The United States' determination to proceed with SDI research has helped to persuade the Soviet Union that it is in its best interests to participate in the arms limitation talks in Geneva.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to conclude, in a nuclear age, peace and disarmament are issues which involve the very survival of life on earth. Australia is a society founded on democratic ideals which combine a desire for peace with a commitment to freedom. The challenge facing us is how to achieve peace and disarmament while, at the same time, maintaining the security which preserves our democratic values, rights and freedoms. Our aim must be to secure the maintenance of peace based on social justice, human dignity and freedom so that much more of the world's resources which now are diverted to armaments may be turned to the relief of the widespread human suffering, starvation, poverty and disease being experienced particularly in Third World countries. Above all, we must raise the level of debate on the complex subject of nuclear weapons, deterrents and disarmament and not allow the issue to be dominated by fear, emotion or spurious philosophy. Nuclear war will be prevented by the development of practical policies, not high-minded declarations or beautiful prose about the fate of the earth, such as we hear from our opposition benches from time to time.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

TABLED PAPER
Natural Disaster Relief Payments

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table proposed guidelines and procedures for the distribution of payment for personal hardship relief in the event of future natural disasters in the Northern Territory. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

This paper was circulated to members last evening. Mr Speaker, I have circulated to honourable members the proposed guidelines and procedures to operate for the relief of Territorians affected by natural disasters. The document details the method by which personal hardship relief payments would be distributed. It has been compiled following an extensive review of procedures after Cyclone Kathy struck Borroloola on 23 March last year. By way of information, total relief payments to Borroloola and nearby residents totalled $80 945. Mr Speaker, 175 families applied for assistance and 148 families were deemed eligible for relief payments.

I seek comments from honourable members and the public on the proposed new guidelines. It is appropriate that such comment be sought now as a matter of some urgency. The dry season is rapidly concluding and the wet season, with its ever-present cyclone risk, is almost upon us. I believe the guidelines will allow the government to respond more quickly and effectively in the event of any future natural disaster, and I look forward to receiving input from members and the public in the near future.

Debate adjourned.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 106)

Continued from 17 April 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the basic aim of the bill is to provide for appeal to the Police Promotions Appeal Board in a case where a commissioner has refused a promotion or transfer on the grounds that a medical examination has shown that the member in question would be unfit to discharge the duties attached to the relevant position. Appropriate amendments are made to the existing appeal provisions. In line with this, provision is made for appeal against a promotion or appointment of somebody else where the applicant is refused the position because of a failed medical examination but is otherwise eligible to appeal.

The amendments raise the question of whether members should be appointed to positions for which they are unfit medically. I guess we can assume, Mr Speaker, that the appeals board, made up of a magistrate, the commissioner's nominee and a police association nominee, will not set aside refusals unless they feel that the appellant is capable of performing the duties. Mr Speaker, I have spoken to the police association which instigated these amendments. Given that the police have lost some appeal provisions as a result of legislation that has been passed in previous years, the opposition has no difficulty in accepting these amendments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TUXWORTH (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.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 109)

Continued from 17 April 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill makes the usual kinds of corrections to legislation and also repeals a long list of South Australian acts which still apply to the Territory. I noted from the bill that a number of the corrections were obviously a result of the haste with which the legislation relating to the Criminal Code was prepared originally. From our usual spot-checking of the bill, it appears to be accurate and the opposition supports it.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I took over as chairman of the government's Statute Law Review Committee when the honourable member for Berrimah moved upstairs. I must commend the honourable minister on the tremendous amount of work carried out by the committee under his chairmanship.

It is not inappropriate to comment briefly on the philosophy underlying the approach to statute law revision taken by the former committee. The committee believed that some legislation is both necessary and desirable to set reasonable parameters within which the various sections and members of the community can conduct their affairs, to ensure a degree of fairness in dealings between people and to oil the wheels, in order to help people to do what they want to do rather than to hinder them. Mr Speaker, unnecessary regulation and unwarranted interference by government is undesirable, both as a matter of principle and in practical terms, because they inhibit initiative, cause delay, increase the size of the bureaucracy and are often costly to the taxpayer.

There are now 966 acts of the state of South Australia in force in the Territory. This bill seeks to repeal 871 of them. These are all acts which either never had, or do not now have, any application or relevance to the Territory. The remaining acts, 95 in all, fall into various categories. A few are important basic pieces of legislation, such as the Partnership Act and the Trustee Act. There are a fair number of private acts most of which also remain in force in South Australia. The South Australian government has been approached to identify the reasons for the retention of those acts in that state. Hopefully most, if not all, can be repealed here in the not-too-distant future.

Some of the remaining acts need careful research to identify whether or not they should be kept. Others need review. The Children's Protection Amendment Act, which bans the sale or supply of tobacco to children, is one example with which most members will be familiar. In general terms, obviously it is desirable that some of the old South Australian acts should be repealed and re-enacted as Territory legislation in order that their substance may be retained. The opportunity can then be taken not only to update the acts but to make them easier to understand.

Mr Speaker, some members may be familiar with the following little poem which is called 'The Parliamentary Draftsman'; the poet remains anonymous:

'I'm the Parliamentary Draftsman,
I compose the country's laws,
And of half the litigation
I'm undoubtedly the cause.
I employ a kind of English
Which is hard to understand:
Though the purists do not like it,
All the lawyers think it's grand.

I'm the Parliamentary Draftsman,
And my sentences are long:
They are full of inconsistencies,
Grammatically wrong.
I put parliamentary wishes
Into language of my own,
And though no one understands them
They're expected to be known.

I compose in a tradition
Which was founded in the past.
And I'm frankly rather puzzled
As to how it came to last.
But the Civil Service use it,
And they like it at the Bar.
For it helps to show the laity
What clever chaps they are.

I'm the Parliamentary Draftsman
And my meanings are not clear,
And though words are merely language
I have made them my career.
I admit my kind of English
Is inclined to be involved -
But I think it's even more so
When judicially solved.

I'm the Parliamentary Draftsman,
And they tell me it's a fact,
That I often make a muddle
Of a simple little Act.
I'm a target for the critics,
And they take me in their stride -
Oh, how nice to be a critic
Of a job you've never tried!'

Mr Speaker, the language used in Territory legislation has been greatly simplified in recent years and, although much remains to be done, I think both the Assembly and the people of the Territory should be grateful to those responsible. I am sure budding lawyers will take notice of that.

Whilst on the subject of language, an editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald of 1 January this year ended with these words:

> 'Simplifying legal language would also mean fewer acidic exchanges between the bench and the bar. In the late 18th century, the Lord Chancellor complained to his adversary, Curran, that the words he was seeking to differentiate, "also" and "likewise", were clearly

synonymous. Curran replied: "No fanciful distinction, my Lord. My Lord, the great Lord Lifford for many years presided over this court. You also preside, but not likewise"'.

Mr Speaker, many parliaments have at times attempted to do some very strange things. I would like to give an example of something a parliament has actually succeeded in doing. In the same issue of Statute Law Review as that referred to earlier, the author recalled:

'What befalls man is mistaking the highest human enterprise of legislation with that of the divine. It would be hard to imagine a greater presumptuousness on the part of the legislative enterprise than to deem a live man dead so as to facilitate administration over his estate during his life'.

This is what was done by the John Donald MacFarlane Estate Administration Empowering Act of 1918, a private act still on the statute books in New Zealand. MacFarlane, having been declared insane originally, somewhat unexpectedly no doubt, regained his sanity. He is said not to have been at all upset at having been deemed dead by parliament. The author recounts that when the daily paper brought news of a neighbour's divorce and misconduct, he is reported to have said with a chuckle: 'If I were to misbehave myself, I could not be divorced. That is certain. I am dead'.

Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, before I actually get to the substance of what I have to say about this bill, I wish to disassociate myself from comments about the parliamentary draftsmen made by the previous speaker, lest those gentlemen of good repute associate me with those sorts of accusations. It is worth placing on the record that I received representations about an act that had been repealed in South Australia but had failed to be repealed in the Northern Territory. In particular, the Treason and Felony Act caused considerable concern. In fact, it has been involved with a matter that continues to be sub judice. I think that this Assembly repealed or at least amended it some 3 or 4 years ago.

Mr Speaker, I note that the Statute Law Revision Bill has some amendments to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. As shadow minister for lands, I believe it is apposite to comment on them. I became aware of the need for the particular amendments to this act when the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority report was tabled earlier this year. On page 15 of that report, it says that the authority is concerned and disappointed that no action has been taken despite prior agreement of all parties to amend the act to remove the present need for the authority to obtain budget approval from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the necessity for the auditor to report to the Commonwealth minister. The report went on to say that it remains the hope of the authority that the government will give consideration to the need for amendment of these provisions which are currently creating considerable administrative difficulties for the authority and the Commonwealth minister.

Having seen that, I made some inquiries and it transpired that the Northern Territory government has been somewhat dilatory in this regard. I understand that, in June 1981, the then Chief Minister indicated that he wanted the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act amended. I have a copy of a minute which indicates that the Chief Minister's instructions were: 'In the event of the Northern Territory government accepting the proposal of the razor gang

that funding of the Sacred Sites Authority be transferred to the Northern Territory government, there will need to be an amendment to the present act to take account of this'. That was more than 4 years ago. I find it quite interesting and somewhat ironical that, when this was transferred from the Commonwealth to the Territory, there was not much political comment by our conservative opponents in this Assembly because that increase in financial responsibility for the Territory was imposed on them by their conservative colleagues in Canberra. In 1981, the then Chief Minister was interested.

In 1982, a very conservative Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Ian Wilson, said in correspondence with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority: 'I understand that the Northern Territory government is proposing to amend the act so that the need for my approval for the authority's budget is removed from the act'. In 1983, the Labor Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Clyde Holding, wrote to the Chief Minister: 'It seems to me anomalous that I am required to approve estimates of expenditure for an authority which is funded by your government. It would seem that an amendment to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act should be made during the next 12 months to avoid this situation in future years. I look forward to your cooperation in this matter'. Not to be deterred, that man of some persistence, Mr Clyde Holding, corresponded with his dear Chief Minister again on 6 November 1984 and said somewhat querulously this time: 'I remind you of the need to amend the act to remove the anomalous requirement for my approval of the annual estimates. Responsibility for funding the authority was transferred from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory government on 1 July 1981'.

Mr Speaker, I think that 4 years is a fair time for these amendments to see the light of day. Given the dearth of sitting days and the dearth of legislative effort that the government puts in - I do not think we had 20 sitting days last year - and given the interest that the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has expressed in this matter, I think that it could have seen the light of day a little bit earlier than August 1985.

Mr Robertson: That's not statute law revision.

Mr BELL: I notice a further querulous comment from the reinstated Leader of Government Business. I think that my comments are quite reasonable. The fact is that the government has taken 4 years to get a very ordinary amendment onto the Territory's statute book and that has created administrative difficulties for a statutory authority for which it is responsible. I do not resile in any way from taking a few minutes of the Assembly's time to speak to this particular bill. I endorse the bill but I say that the government has been tardy in this regard.

I also wish to indicate a drafting error. The bill amends sections 17, 19, 21 and 23 of the principal act and it refers to omitting 'the Parliament of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth minister'. Nowhere in sections 17, 19, 21 or 23 does the word 'Commonwealth' appear. That is a drafting error that may need to be picked up.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is the first time I have ever spoken to a Statute Law Revision Bill. The only substantial thing that the Leader of the Opposition said, apart from supporting the legislation, was that this bill is in front of us because of the haste with which the Criminal Code was put together.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say that.

Mr ROBERTSON: Look up Hansard.

Mr B. Collins: Oh, rubbish!

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I went over and checked with him as to what on earth he could possibly mean by that. I was told - and he was aided and abetted in this opinion by the honourable member for Nhulunbuy - that it related to the Law Officers Act, the Legal Practitioners Act and the Magistrates Act.

Mr B. Collins: The member for Nhulunbuy did not even speak!

Mr ROBERTSON: All right. I am talking about the conversation I overheard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us look at it. The reference to the Law Officers Act in this bill is...

Mr B. Collins: The things that agitate people. It is unbelievable.

Mr ROBERTSON: If you are going to come out with garbage like that, it is about time you were corrected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, time and time again in this Assembly, the honourable member comes out with irrelevant nonsense as he has done this morning. He gets away with it time and time again because no one can be bothered picking up his trite nonsense. It is about time it stopped. Let us look at what he claimed was an omission of a cross-reference in the Criminal Code that needed this legislation to be brought before us.

Mr B. Collins: I didn't!

Mr ROBERTSON: That is what you said. Look up Hansard.

The reference to the Law Officers Act is: 'Omit "Crown Solicitor to the Commonwealth" twice occurring'. What has that to do with the Criminal Code?

Mr B. Collins: I didn't realise that was a conversation of record.

Mr ROBERTSON: I asked you for an explanation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may get to the nonsense of the argument of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr B. Collins: I cannot believe that this is a debate on a Statute Law Revision Bill.

Mr ROBERTSON: Neither could I until you said something utterly stupid and irresponsible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, he connected the need for this legislation with what he claimed was the haste with which the Criminal Code was enacted. The record will so show. The reference to omitting the 'Crown Solicitor for the Commonwealth' was because the Commonwealth government changed the title of that officer to that of Australian Government Solicitor. Let us look to the Legal Practitioners Act for justification for this nonsense that was put before us a while ago. It is in relation to an amendment to the Commonwealth

Judiciary Act. Let us go to the Magistrates Act which was the other justification that was used. The amendment is to omit the definition of 'Territory'. So much for the nonsense that we keep hearing from the Leader of the Opposition in this overwhelming desire he has to knock everything.

Mr B. Collins: What a load of crap!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr ROBERTSON: Precisely as you describe it. It was a load of precisely that material that the Leader of the Opposition put forward in debate on a matter as simple as a Statute Law Revision Bill.

Mr B. Collins: What an ass you have just made of yourself.

Mr ROBERTSON: The ass was you making a reference to something that ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order! Would all honourable members, the Leader of the Opposition included, refrain from interjection. I should also advise the Leader of the Opposition that I think he is skating fairly close to using unparliamentary language.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, in response to your admonition, with which I agree, as you would know as an experienced parliamentarian that is a 2-way street which even applies to maiden speeches. Interjection is not to be used in parliament but the onus is also on the person speaking not to invite such interjection or provoke it.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): As a member of the government's backbench Statue Law Revision Committee, I am happy to speak in this debate. I am very pleased to be involved on the committee because I believe very strongly that we have too much legislation and regulation and that it is having an adverse effect on the good government of the people of this country. Our role was simply an advisory one but much effort was put in under the chairmanship of the now Minister for Community Development and the member for Wagaman. I would like to pay particular tribute to the hard work done by Mr Tony Thursfield who was our legal adviser until his recent departure.

The South Australian acts which we are repealing today are dead wood and have no application whatsoever. This was checked out by the committee with the aid of Mr Thursfield. No act was proposed for repeal without first undergoing careful scrutiny. In fact, any act which seems to have any potential relevance will be retained and checked with South Australia. Some very interesting acts are being repealed. These will still be available as archival material and members can check them out.

I would recommend that members read the titles because they show that things were very homely in South Australia which was settled in 1836. Its 150th anniversary is coming up next year. Act No 12 of 1851 was to secure for the Hon Charles Sturt a $600 pension for life. No 10 of 1847 was an ordinance to promote the building of churches and chapels for Christian worship and to provide for the maintenance of ministers of the Christian religion. Maybe it is a good job we are repealing that because the Christian churches might demand a stipend. At one stage, Adelaide was known as the city of churches. No 10 of 1850 was an ordinance to secure to William Bennett Hayes certain exclusive rights over a charcoal-making process which he had developed. It is very homely stuff. I think that the Territory is far more sophisticated now

than South Australia was then even though it was a state. I think that is an argument which we could well and truly use in our case for statehood. The Continental Railway Act of 1904 showed the then planned railway through from Adelaide, Maree, Alice Springs and on to Darwin. The Alice Springs railway was built in about 1926-27. There was some movement from the northern end and, as we know, we have never completed the intermediate distance.

An important point was raised in committee by Mr Thursfield regarding reasons why we should get rid of this dead legislation. An American company wished to be involved in a business deal involving some $5m. It sought legal advice as to what laws applied in the Territory. Mr Ron Whithnall's daughter provided the information with the rider 'and possibly certain acts from South Australia'. The American company said, 'They do not even know what laws really apply to them in the Territory', and promptly dropped the contract.

I think it is very important that we are very clear what law applies in the Territory. This is a very good attempt to clarify that situation. I assure members that this was not done willy-nilly. Every act was checked very carefully through the good offices of Mr Tony Thursfield and with help from the South Australian parliament. The committee took its job very seriously and we are pleased to see that this pruning of the dead wood is about to occur. We hope there may be a bit of pruning of some of the live wood in the future.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to foreshadow that we do not propose to process this legislation through the committee stage today. The reason is that there are 2 very short but reasonably important amendments which the Assembly may care to consider.

The Acting Chief Justice has difficulty with a provision of the Motor Accidents Compensation Act. He and his colleagues consider that a specific judge must be appointed to constitute the tribunal under the act. It should refer to a judge by name rather than state that a judge comprises the tribunal. The amendment is a simple one. The difficulty caused is in scheduling of cases etc. It is not a difficulty in terms of entitlement of persons who may be making claims under the Motor Accidents Compensation Act.

The other amendment relates to consistency in terminology in the Payroll Tax Act which was amended in June of this year. There are 2 redundant words in several places in that act which could have an effect on the total amount of wages, cutoff on thresholds and that sort of thing.

I will give a more detailed explanation later. I just wanted to explain why we were not proceeding through committee at this time. Those 2 matters have been brought to my attention. We have the choice of leaving them aside until we have gathered a few more amendments or we can deal with these matters by passing amendments to this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be later taken.

FIRE SERVICES ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL ACT REPEAL BILL
(Serial 108)

Continued from 18 April 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill repeals the Fire Brigades Arbitral Tribunal Act. The tribunal was responsible for establishing conditions of service for members of the fire service. Apparently, a federal award now covers those people and this legislation will be gazetted to commence once the Commonwealth government has introduced the regulations which will confer jurisdiction on the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Mr Speaker, after some consultation, the relevant union - the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union - is in complete accord with the passage of this legislation. The opposition certainly supports it.

Debate adjourned.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS SUBSIDY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 122)

Continued from 6 June 1985.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to advise the Assembly that the opposition has no hesitation in supporting the Petroleum Products Subsidy Amendment Bill. We note that the bill eliminates power kerosene from a list of products covered by the subsidy scheme as the federal government did in 1983. Secondly, we note that the bill extends the power of delegation to cover authorisation of payments under the scheme. Currently, I understand the minister must authorise all payments. Thirdly, we note that there is a validation clause in this bill so that payments made between 1978 and 1983, which were not authorised by the minister personally, will be validated. With those few comments, I once again point out that the opposition has no hesitation in supporting this legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 123)

Continued from 6 June 1985.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise as opposition spokesman for transport and works to indicate the opposition's support for this bill. We note that this is potentially somewhat more contentious because the bill provides for identifying photographs on drivers' licences. This has been a contentious provision in other areas. The opposition has no desire to oppose the placing of photographs on drivers' licences. We note that applicants for licences or renewals can be required to provide a photograph or they can be required to be photographed if the photo supplied by them is not suitable for the licence. There is also a provision that the applicant may be required to furnish a statutory declaration with his application. This is to overcome the problem of a person using someone's licence when driving or trying to gain entry to a hotel, for example, in the case of an under-age drinker. On an emotional level, the introduction of photographs on licences could be regarded by some people as one further invasion of privacy and another step towards the Orwellian future. The opposition, however, finds this proposal fairly hard to argue against and we believe that it will be useful.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have one query that I hope the minister will answer for me. I refer to the cost of providing such photographs on licences. Presumably this will place a burden on the Territory exchequer. I would be interested to hear about the actual financial details - that is, the actual cost of providing photographs on licences. With that one query, we broadly support the bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to support this bill and the introduction of photo licences. It is something which some other states have introduced recently. It could be a contentious issue. The Alice Springs Branch of the Country Liberal Party has been pushing for it and arguing about it for some time and now it has reached the stage of legislation. When I first heard the idea, I was very anxious about the invasion of privacy and individual freedom. I have come to the conclusion that there is very little difference between the present situation and the one which will result from the legislation. The advantages are that it will allow the police to do their work more comprehensively and to clamp down on some illegal actions. I believe the police were very persuasive to the group in Alice Springs.

I want to mention the problem of under-age drinkers. Some teenagers, by virtue of their body size and the way they dress, can get past the publican. I believe 18 is the age when most of those people would have a licence. A photo licence should make it relatively easy to check on attempted under-age drinking by these people. It should make it easier for the publican who has a very difficult role and also for the police.

Something else happens reasonably frequently. Someone is convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol and loses his licence. Afterwards, he may borrow a friend's licence. If he is picked up again, he has the friend's identity. This is said to happen. If the person whose licence is borrowed happens to be picked up, he has 24 hours to show his licence at the nearest police station. He can recover his licence from the borrower. Everything then looks above board. The photo licence will make that extremely difficult except maybe in the case of identical twins but I do not think there would be too many of those around.

An important point made in his second-reading speech by the minister was that there was no way a second copy of the photograph would be kept on any government records. I find that reassuring. There are other uses for a photo licence to the law-abiding citizen. It will provide extra proof of identification when one is seeking credit or for various other reasons is asked to produce identification. A photo licence will be particularly useful to the holder.

The honourable member for MacDonnell asked what the cost of photo licences will be. Certainly, some cost will be involved in producing them. I believe the photo will be sealed in a plastic envelope which will make it fairly difficult to tamper with. There is presently a cost with police trying to chase up people who are using licences illegally. The police say they spend a lot of time doing that. The photo licences will help them to get on with their job and prevent the shenanigans which people get up to with licences in their present form. If there were any attempt to use the photo licences for purposes other than those which are envisaged in this particular bill, I am sure every member of this Assembly would look at that with considerable disquiet. I hope members from both sides will oppose any attempt to use these licences to invade the privacy of individuals. I support the bill.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would also like to speak in support of this bill. In my view, it has been very long in coming and I am delighted to know that we will have a former sergeant of police in charge of the legislation. That is probably one of the main reasons that we have the legislation. One of the things that went through my mind very quickly was whether or not the member for MacDonnell, who supports the legislation, would be photographed before or after an election campaign. Perhaps he will have 2 photos taken because whenever an election campaign comes he has his beard shaved off for posters and 'How to Vote' cards. I wonder whether he will have 2 photographs on his licence.

Mr Speaker, as a former member for a bush electorate in central Australia, I noticed that on many occasions the police and motor registry people had tremendous problems with positively identifying exactly who was the driver of the car and who was the holder of the licence. I am certain that police officers and motor registration people will be delighted and so will those people who, when they travel interstate from time to time, are asked for a copy of a licence for identification when they try to cash a cheque.

Some concern has been expressed by people on Aboriginal pastoral properties about their ability to get into town to have their photographs taken for a licence. I do not really think that would be a problem because all of those people visit the main centres, such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine or Darwin, at least once a year.

I do not believe there will be any invasion of privacy. I think those people who have been speaking out against this aspect of the legislation possibly have something to hide. If this legislation is enforced properly and not abused, then it can only protect the law-abiding citizens of the community from those who break the law.

Mr Speaker, the member for Sadadeen said that a number of states have introduced similar legislation. My understanding is that we are second only to Victoria in enacting this legislation, although New South Wales has indicated that it proposes to go down the same road. With those few comments, I indicate my support for this bill. I congratulate those people who first proposed this legislation and former police sergeant, Daryl Manzie, for introducing the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, while I support this bill generally, I point out that some doubts exist about the efficacy of using photographs to ensure that the right person is doing the right thing. In London, a journalist put this theory to the test recently. He swapped his own photograph with a similar one of someone else and found he was able to cash his cheque. Then he used a photograph of someone who looked quite different and found he was still able to cash his cheque. Then he decided to test it to the limit. He replaced his own photograph with a picture of his wife and, lo and behold, he was still able to cash his cheque. By that stage, he was completely frustrated because he did not know how to go about getting his cheque refused. In desperation, he tried using a picture of the family dog, an Alsatian. He went up to the counter. The teller looked at the card and then cashed his cheque. That goes to show that we cannot always rely on photographs to stop people from doing the wrong thing.

In spite of that, I support the bill. Many people in my electorate often have a very real need for identification; for example, for cashing social security benefits cheques. People go to the bank often but they do not have a

bank account. Frequently, they ask me to identify them so that they can cash their cheques. This should assist them in cashing cheques without having to visit town and open an account. To an extent, it will be of assistance to the police. It will eliminate the practice of people swapping driving licences, which is a fact of life. Certainly it happens, as the member for Sadadeen said. I think we must find some way of stopping it.

I would hope that the actual operation of the legislation will be looked at very carefully because, in spite of what the member for Braitling said, there will be some problems for people from outlying areas. Sometimes people do not come into town for many months on end. I am sure that the minister will take that into consideration and ensure that the legislation is implemented with a minimum amount of difficulty for the people involved. Despite the limitations found by the London journalist, the new system should benefit us all.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bill. This bill has 3 main components. The main issues in relation to the photographic licences are: the deterrent aspect, the enforcement aspect and the personal identification aspect which is a spin-off.

The deterrent aspect relates to the ability of people to exchange drivers' licences. Not so very long ago, a constituent of mine was involved in a motor vehicle accident. He was a passenger but, thinking his friend, the driver, might not have been able to pass the inevitable breath analysis test, out of the misguided goodness of his heart, he slipped quickly into the driver's seat before the police arrived on the scene. He made himself out to be the driver of that vehicle. As it turned out, all the participants in the accident were breathalysed and none of them actually exceeded the limit. However, he had identified himself falsely as the driver of the vehicle and he was fined and felt suitably embarrassed. I think photograph licences will deter people from using that opportunity to exchange seats in an accident and will also allow the police to determine more easily who was driving at any time.

The spin-off of being able to use a licence as a personal identification card has great merit. I support that aspect.

I raised a query with the minister about proposed new section 10AA(1) where it says that the registrar 'may' require a photograph to be taken. I am assured that the word 'may' is used rather than an imperative 'shall' to accommodate the person who is away from the Northern Territory at the time his licence is due for renewal. In that situation, a temporary licence may be granted until such time as the person returns to the Northern Territory and a photograph can be affixed to his licence.

I think it is a very good move and it is one that I was involved in promoting when I was chairman of the Road Safety Council. I indicate my support for the actions taken by the minister.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of this bill. A couple of queries were raised by honourable members.

The member for MacDonnell was concerned about the possible financial cost of the introduction of photographs on drivers' licences. I cannot put a specific figure on the cost involved to produce photographic drivers' licences. That will not become apparent until such time as tender prices

relating to the equipment have been finalised and all the required commitments have been firmed up. However, it has been assessed that the possible cost could be about $2 per licence. Under those circumstances, whatever occurs will be on the user-pays principle. I would also like to remind honourable members that there has been no rise in the cost of a driver's licence since 1978 so that, even if the additional cost is as high as $2, that will still be a very modest amount to pay for the potential benefits that honourable members have described.

The honourable members for Braitling and Stuart mentioned possible problems that might be involved for people in outback communities who are a long way from centres of administration. I do not think a problem will arise because it is intended that suitable equipment to process these photographic licences will be installed in police stations. Also, it should be remembered that, in order to obtain a licence, a person has to go to an administrative centre for that purpose in the first place. Anyone who is contemplating obtaining a licence will be able to have the necessary photograph taken at the place where he or she would apply normally. If circumstances arise which make that impossible, the registrar will still have power to issue a licence where a photograph is not available. That would be done on the basis that, when the photograph became available, the licence could then be issued with a photograph.

The member for Stuart mentioned some of the dangers of using licences for identity purposes. That was a valid point. He spoke about a situation that occurred in London and it is probably relevant to recall a problem that occurred in Australia some years ago. A new system was introduced in the federal parliament requiring identity cards. On a particular occasion, a young female journalist designed her own identity card, painted it herself and placed it in a plastic card. This identity card had the photograph of an Alsatian dog on it and I believe that that particular journalist roamed through the precincts of the federal parliament for 3 weeks and on no occasion was challenged. I think that all members and, indeed, the community at large should be aware that the mere fact that a photographic licence is available does not provide a sure means of establishing identity.

The whole idea of the licence is that it is issued to people to certify that they are qualified to drive a motor vehicle and that they are fully conversant with the traffic laws in the Northern Territory. There are certain legislative requirements in relation to the use of motor vehicles which require people to have a licence. The addition of a photograph on the licence will ensure that the holder of the licence is in fact the person who produces it when requested to do so by a member of the police force. I have had personal experience of some of the problems that can be involved in relation to the identity of drivers. I know of circumstances that have occurred where, through a series of incidents regarding the misuse of a licence by a particular person, another person has been wrongfully imprisoned. The whole series of events commenced with the production of a licence that was lent to somebody for the purpose of trying to conceal the fact that he was driving without a licence. Obviously, nobody wants that sort of circumstance to occur.

I do not think any other problems were raised regarding this particular bill. I feel that it will be of great benefit to the police and the community at large. The member for Stuart mentioned difficulties experienced by people in outback areas in identifying themselves in relation to the cashing of cheques. I think that, as a consequence of this legislation, many problems

experienced by some people will be solved. These are in addition to the problems of law enforcement concerning the driving of motor vehicles.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION
Noting Ministerial Statement on Strehlow Collection

Continued from 23 April 1985.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the Strehlow Collection is of considerable interest to many Aboriginal and white people in central Australia. By all accounts, it is a magnificent collection of objects. I would like to put a few facts on this matter to the Assembly. The first is that the federal government called upon the Territory government to help get the collection back. It admitted that it could not do it; it was not too proud to admit that. It asked the Territory government to see if it could do something which, obviously, it was very happy to do.

I believe that all bar one carton of the collection is now in Darwin. The final carton should arrive in the very near future. It will be stored safely, unopened, in the vaults of the local museum. Political bias aside, we should all be very pleased that this collection has come back to the Territory. Agreement has been reached with the people who had charge of these objects and the collection is back in the Territory. I look forward to the day when the objects are returned to central Australia in some suitable manner. After lengthy consultation, certain of those objects may be available for display to the general public. I have been assured that the government will not try to force anything upon anybody in this matter. No doubt, there will be considerable debate, bargaining and discussion.

It has been alleged by certain people that the government has paid out a great deal of money in the bargaining over this matter. However, I have been assured that, apart from some help with transport costs for some of the boxes within Australia, no money has been paid out to anybody, not to the foundation nor to its chairman, John Bannon, nor to Mrs Strehlow. That is one assurance that I can pass on to people who have been concerned about money being paid out. Another assurance I have received is that, if money is to be paid out at all, it will not be for the artefacts themselves but for the papers which Professor Strehlow put together, no doubt with the help of his wife. These are very much a part of the Strehlow family's possessions. The papers are theirs but, without them, the collection would be extremely difficult to make head or tail of. I think that any fair-minded person would say that that is a fair and sensible arrangement.

I think the government is to be applauded on its achievement in regaining the collection. Along with many people in central Australia, I look forward to the day when some of this collection can be displayed. I am sure it is of considerable interest to many people worldwide. It has been described as the crown jewels of the Aboriginal people in central Australia and I am sure there will be great interest in its return there. I commend my colleagues on regaining it.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make several comments in relation to this collection because I have commented on it publicly since the last sittings and since the time it became the subject of debate in this Assembly. I am not quite sure where to start because there are many things that I could say about it.

The first point I make is in relation to the moneys paid out by the Northern Territory government and the moneys promised with respect to this collection. The Minister for Community Development travelled to Toronto to negotiate the return of this collection with Mrs Kathleen Strehlow. Quite rightly, his fare was paid. However, I am not quite sure why an air fare for the member for Flynn was paid. I think that question was raised before and I do not wish to dwell on it. What I do wish to dwell on in this respect are the promises of a position, a pension for life, accommodation and an ex gratia payment for Mrs Kathleen Strehlow. I do not have the statement in front of me. It is not clear to me whether this would be a payment to Mrs Strehlow herself or to the foundation.

What I wish to comment on is the fact that the people who are the subject of this collection, people who are my constituents and who have contributed and whose families have contributed to this collection, are prevented from living in their country because we are unable to provide renal dialysis for those patients in Alice Springs. That was the substance of my recent comments on this particular subject. In a news report on this, a spokesman for the minister was reported as saying that no money had been paid for the collection and none would be paid in the future. If that is the case, I would very much like to hear what the minister has to say about the promises he has made in this particular statement. The spokesman said: 'Some money will be paid for Professor Strehlow's personal records and diaries which complement the collection but there will be no payment for any artefacts'. The spokesman also said: 'Mr Bell's call for a renal dialysis machine has nothing to do with the Strehlow Collection'. That is precisely what I take exception to.

We have determined already that the Northern Territory government has undertaken to pay substantial amounts of money, whether presently or in the future, to obtain this collection, and yet the very people who are the subject of it are forced to live in Adelaide or Darwin because the Northern Territory government is unable to provide these facilities. I suggest that those priorities are somewhat less than suitable. When I made a recent visit to Adelaide I was particularly upset to see these people obviously so lonely and so far from home. In that context, I think that it is worth while paying tribute to the work of at least 2 people who have made some effort to make life for those people in Adelaide a little less lonely. I refer particularly to Mrs Helen Burns, the elder sister of Pastor Paul Albrecht, who is known to the central Australian members here. Mrs Helen Burns has put considerable effort into making life less lonely for those people. I will not dwell on that subject because the topic here is the Strehlow Collection.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: In case the members opposite who are interjecting imagine there is no connection, I sincerely trust that I have explained, both for the minister and, hopefully, for his less intelligent backbench, the connection between these 2 issues.

Mr Speaker, I have been a member of the Strehlow Research Foundation for several years. I developed an interest in ethnography generally before I was

a member of this Assembly. I was working as a linguist and I took some interest in a variety of anthropological issues of considerable importance in central Australia. We hear the Strehlow Collection referred to as the crown jewels of Australian anthropology. I must admit that I find that term rather overblown and I think it rather sad that that particular metaphor is used. Let me try to explain briefly what I believe to be an appropriate way to consider the collection.

In all fairness to the minister, I believe that he has made considerable efforts in this regard. There are 2 parts to the collection. Firstly, there are the notes, films, books and personal library belonging to the late Professor Ted Strehlow. Essentially, they were his personal goods for him to will as he wished. The second part of the collection is the tjurrunga - the sacred objects made of stone or wood or whatever. The circumstances under which Professor Strehlow obtained those particular objects are much more problematical. Let me place on record in this Assembly the fact that there are now traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people in central Australia who have a deep concern about those particular objects. We have a real problem of working out some process, without infringing Australian law and without infringing Aboriginal law, whereby those people can have appropriate access to those objects.

Honourable members may have heard Mr Mick Wagu, a blind elder - a very important man in my electorate - discussing these particular objects. I am satisfied that men like Mick Wagu have a real interest in them. The problem in this context is not just in setting up some museum in central Australia; a very deep question of right and wrong is involved with this particular collection. This problem of right and wrong will sorely test the capacity of this Assembly, of the Minister for Community Development and whoever else may be responsible for these objects, including the Strehlow Research Foundation, to find some suitable way of arranging for that access.

What bothers me is that, hitherto, debates about the Strehlow Collection have been conducted in an extraordinarily emotive atmosphere. I do not believe that I have contributed to that emotive atmosphere in any way. Honourable members on the other side of the Assembly might choose to disagree. I have made the point about the claims of people who are forced to live in Adelaide, and I have connected those 2 issues. I do not think that is unreasonable. Otherwise, I have made the point publicly about separating the tjurrunga, and access to them, from the issue of the late professor's personal property.

I mention this because, unfortunately, some of the emotive atmosphere stems from the foundation itself. I will not quote from newsletters that have emanated from the foundation but I am seriously concerned about the degree of political partisanship that characterises some of the contributions, particularly those of the chairman, Mr John Bannon, in this regard. I am not referring to the Premier of South Australia, although there are a large number of people who imagine that the Premier of South Australia is the Chairman of the Strehlow Research Foundation. This John Bannon was a National Party Senate candidate during the last federal election. Incidentally, I am not convinced that the export of this particular collection from the country - which was announced in the heat of a federal election campaign by a National Party candidate in that election - was entirely devoid of political motivation.

As further evidence of the sort of political motivation that appears to characterise some of the public statements from the foundation, I could quote from newsletters but I do not choose to. I should also place on record some of the very emotive criticisms made by many other white fellows who work in Aboriginal organisations. On reading some of the research foundation's newsletters, one frequently gets the impression that, apart from themselves, anyone who is not an Aborigine and is involved with Aborigines is ipso facto suffering from motives that are entirely dishonourable. There have been almost actionable criticisms made of some people whose contributions to Aboriginal affairs and race relations in northern Australia have generally been very positive.

I wish to add one more caveat and that is in relation to some of the material that I have hitherto said was the personal property of the late Professor Strehlow. That caveat is that a great deal of public money was expended in the collection of some of that material. I am not saying that that is relevant or that that in any way assails the ownership or the right of the late professor to will that material, but I believe that it should be placed on record. A considerable amount of public money went into the collection of much of that anthropological and linguistic data.

There is perhaps one other point that I should draw to the attention of honourable members. I presume that the member for Sadadeen has read the book 'Aborigines Artefacts and Anguish', a biography of the late Professor Strehlow written by Ward McNally, a name that would be known to honourable members. I recommend his book to any honourable members who are interested in getting some background on the work of the late professor and the problematical relationships that developed in the latter years of his involvement with Aboriginal communities.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I want to place on record - in case it has not been done before - my congratulations to the Minister for Community Development who is the sponsor of this statement. I believe he deserves bipartisan congratulations for contributing to a more orderly arrangement with respect to the collection. I have made some criticisms of particular arrangements surrounding that, but I would be disappointed if honourable members were to interpret those comments as a thoroughgoing criticism or condemnation of his efforts.

There are 2 final points I would like to make. One is to reiterate what I hope will happen. I say this as the member for MacDonnell, many of whose constituents are concerned with this. Firstly, some appropriate arrangement must be drawn up for access to that collection by Aboriginal people. Secondly, as a high priority, this government must ensure that those people who are the subject of this collection are able to live and continue to live in central Australia.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Report of Inquiry into the System of Workers' Compensation in the NT

Continued from 28 February 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, the topic of this debate is very important indeed. It refers to the report of the Doody Committee of Inquiry

into Workers' Compensation in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, in those parts of the world that have workers' compensation systems, there has been great concern about what has been happening over the last 10 to 20 years. That concern has arisen in 3 areas. First of all, there has been a concern that the costs of the system of workers' compensation have been rising rapidly. Secondly, there has been a concern at the fairness of the system. Thirdly, there has been a concern at the effectiveness of the system.

Mr Speaker, within Australia, I think all states have been concerned about the operations of the systems that have served them up until the last couple of years. We have seen completely new systems of workers' compensation introduced in Victoria and New South Wales. Just the other day, the Premier of South Australia introduced a proposal to revamp the workers' compensation system in that state completely. Mr Speaker, we have now had our own inquiry. Hopefully, that inquiry and the government's reaction to it will set us on the path to a workers' compensation system that will serve us well into the 21st century.

Mr Speaker, any system of workers' compensation should aim to do 3 things. As far as possible it should: prevent the occurrence of occupational injury and disease; provide prompt and adequate rehabilitation for those who are injured and maintain injured workers in an economic position roughly equivalent to the one they had before they were injured; and, accomplish both those objectives within the bounds of reasonable costs.

In setting up the committee, I think the government recognised that our present system accomplishes none of these aims successfully. There are a number of identifiable faults with the present system. First, as I mentioned yesterday in another debate, there is a complete lack of statistics on the occurrence, nature and extent of workers' compensation claims in the Northern Territory. It is only fair to say that the present operators in the area of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory deserve the condemnation of this Assembly for their failure to provide an adequate range of statistics. Of course, I am talking about the insurance companies who presently operate workers' compensation. They have let themselves and the community down, and I have no doubt that their failure in this key area of statistical presentation and development is one of the major reasons why the Doody report has recommended the concept of a single insurer.

Secondly, a major fault with the present system is that we lack umbrella occupational health and safety legislation under which all workplaces are covered. The report states that there are whole areas that are not covered at present, and I agree. The report says also that responsibility for occupational health and safety is split between different government departments. Another major fault in the present scheme is that there is no encouragement to employers to provide safe premises. It has been demonstrated in other parts of the world and other parts of Australia that the most effective means of encouragement is the establishment of a merit and demerit scheme whereby an employer, if he or she provides a safe working environment for his or her employees, can claim a workers' compensation rebate. Obviously, when there is a financial incentive, we are likely to see action to improve the safety of premises.

The second major area of weakness under the present scheme relates to rehabilitation which at present is a joke. Neither the government nor the insurance companies operating in the field have taken rehabilitation seriously. There has never been any emphasis at all placed on the very basic

and desirable position that as many employees as possible should be returned to the work force. The emphasis has been to pay them out and get them off the books as quickly as we can.

Mr Speaker, the third major area of concern is the cost of the present scheme. There has been a significant increase in the cost of workers' compensation as a percentage of the hourly cost of employing labour. Because we do not have a proper statistical base in the Northern Territory, I cannot give you Northern Territory figures on that. Certainly, in Victoria - and these figures come from the Cooney report on Workers' Compensation in Victoria - the figures are quite staggering. In 1974, 0.9% of the total hourly cost of employing labour was due to workers' compensation. In 1981, it jumped to 2.5% and, by 1983, it had increased to 4.1% of the total hourly cost. In anyone's view, that is a significant escalation in the cost of workers' compensation as a component of the total cost of employment. In the period 1974-81, the average general rate of growth was 31.9% of workers' compensation costs. By 1981-83, it had grown to 49.3%.

Mr Speaker, that identifies quite clearly the weaknesses in the present scheme and the need to review the scheme. We have now before us the Doody report. We need to assess the Doody Report under 3 main areas: safety, rehabilitation and benefits. At the conclusion of my speech, there are a number of other matters I want to mention as well.

The attitude of the Doody report to safety is summed up in paragraph 4.1 of the recommendations:

> 'The key to reducing both suffering and costs in the workers' compensation system is simply the elimination of injury and disease in the workplace; that is, accident prevention'.

Strange as it may appear, that is a fairly radical statement because, previously, the philosophy of the workers' compensation system was that accidents were inevitable and that accident compensation was a cost the system had to bear. It has now been demonstrated that, with proper safety programs, accidents can be reduced quite significantly. It is the legitimate aim of any workers' compensation legislation to attempt to reduce workers' compensation cases to an absolute minimum with the ultimate aim of removing them completely. Obviously, that is unlikely to happen, but much greater emphasis is now put, and quite rightly, on reducing the extent of workers' compensation accidents. The more effective we are in reducing the number of accidents, the more effective we are in reducing the premiums that employers have to pay.

Mr Speaker, it is further recognised that the workers' compensation system should positively encourage safety consciousness among employers and their employees. In other words, it is a 2-way street. There are responsibilities on both employers and employees. The main recommendations of the Doody report under the heading of safety are these:

> '1. That umbrella occupational health and safety legislation be introduced to cover all workplaces'.

It would seem that the honourable member for Wagaman has won out on that. He now has both the Doody committee and myself against him.

> '2. That the erection or extension of buildings for use as industrial or business premises be subject to approval under this legislation.

3. That employers be required to report all hazardous incidents whether or not they result in injury.

4. That all workers be given statutory protection covering unsafe working conditions.

5. That the administration of all safety and related employment legislation be the responsibility of one department under one minister.

6. That research be undertaken into the effects of the use of drugs and alcohol on safety in the workplace.

7. That employers and employees be encouraged to agree on safety measures, including the provision of protective clothing and equipment, and to include these agreements in industrial awards.

8. That incentives be given to employers by way of merit discounts but only where they have both approved safety programs in place and good claims experience.

9. That penalties be imposed on employers with consistently bad claims experience.

10. That the commission be empowered to reimburse part or all of the cost of attending approved safety training courses.

11. That the commission be empowered to make grants to approved organisations for the promotion of safety awareness and practices.

12. That consideration be given to supporting the establishment of workers' health centres.

13. To implement the foregoing recommendations that sufficient occupational health and safety specialists and facilities be recruited and provided'.

Mr Speaker, in my view, there is no doubt that, if that comprehensive package of recommendations on safety in the work force were adopted, we would see a very significant decrease in the number of workers' compensation cases that have to be dealt with and in the costs of the whole system. I would urge the government to support those recommendations.

I want to make specific mention of the merit system again. I think one of the most successful ways known to encourage employers to maintain safe premises is to reward them financially if they do. You can reward them financially by offering discounts on the amount of the premiums they have to pay. Another point that the Doody report makes is that it is essential, if these recommendations are to be introduced and to work properly, that a proper collection of statistics be taken and kept. Obviously, under the new system, this has to be a high priority.

The second major area is rehabilitation. The Doody report recommendations mark a significant change in emphasis from previous arrangements. Basically, the Doody report is aiming to get as many people as possible back to work. It states that greater emphasis must be placed on the rehabilitation of injured workers. It states that more emphasis should be placed on the social,

vocational, emotional, psychogenic, financial and legal aspects of rehabilitation.

The report states that the receipt of benefits should generally be conditional upon an injured worker participating in a reasonable rehabilitation program. That is a very significant recommendation in my view. I think it has been too easy in the past for employers to write off employees or employees to write themselves off in the sense of opting out of the work force. The basis of any new proposal that we adopt should be to get as many people as possible back into the system. By saying that an employee will obtain benefits under the scheme only if he undertakes a course of rehabilitation would be an effective manner of ensuring that we do get the maximum numbers back into the work force as possible.

Mr Speaker, the Doody report also said that the commission should coordinate the employment of disabled workers. Another extremely important recommendation is that the commission should provide incentives to employers to continue to employ workers who have been injured by sharing wage costs and by indemnifying employers in case of aggravation or recurrence of injury except where the employer is negligent.

It recommends that permanent partially incapacitated workers who are placed in alternative but lower paid employment have their wages made up to their actual pre-accident earnings. That is an significant recommendation indeed. It recognises that some workers may be injured so severely that they cannot go back to their old place of employment but they are suitable for a lesser-paid job. To encourage those people to become involved in the work force in an active way, the commission will pay the difference between what they receive in their new occupation and what they received in their previous occupation. That is a very effective means of encouraging people back into the work force and making them useful members of society.

Mr Speaker, it recommends that the commission should pay all rehabilitation costs. That is very sensible. The system we have at present only pays lip service to rehabilitation. I believe that full implementation of the Doody report would provide proper emphasis on rehabilitation and would allow many more people to return to the work force.

Mr Speaker, the third area is probably the most contentious: benefits. That it is contentious is demonstrated by the fact that we have a majority and a minority report in this key area. The broad position taken by the majority report is that, if a worker has all his hospital and medical expenses paid ad infinitum, his house altered if necessary, his artificial aid requirements met and his weekly earnings substantially maintained, there seems little justification for further compensation for economic loss - that is, there is little justification for the right to sue a negligent employer at common law. The key to this majority recommendation is that there should be no limits to meeting the legitimate needs of a workers' compensation victim.

Unfortunately, that is not a concept that the government has accepted in relation to victims of motor vehicle accidents. If the government was considering the abolition of the right to sue at common law, it would be an essential pre-requisite in my view that it not place arbitrary limits on the amount of compensation that any individual could obtain from the system. If an individual has a requirement for hospitalisation for the rest of his life, or has a requirement for home nursing care for the rest of his life, it is an essential element under a proper scheme of workers' compensation that that be

provided. If you are prepared to provide that, you can then start talking about the abolition of the right to sue at common law. I do not know what the government's position is so I am in the dark.

Mr Perron: What sort of checks would you have?

Mr SMITH: That is a good question. I cannot give a specific answer but I am sure the Workers' Compensation Commission, or whatever it will be called, can develop the expertise to check that only legitimate claims are met. I realise that problem but I think it can be overcome. It is an important principle.

The minority report argues that we should retain common law claims. It says that the inquiry was not able to demonstrate that the actual cost of common law claims was excessive although it did say that they were likely to increase. It further said that a properly-structured common law system provides a mechanism for striking at negligent employees.

It recommended some changes to the common law system as it stands at present. It said, for example, a loss of earning capacity should be made as a weekly payment rather than as a lump sum. Conversely, it said that a lump sum should be restricted to pain, suffering and loss of amenities. The opposition believes that common law should be retained but not under the present system. It requires a significant amount of tightening up. We believe that it provides one of the key incentives to encourage employers to provide a safe work place.

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

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I move that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I thank the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, if you can establish a system of common law which strikes at negligent employers, I believe that would be a very effective way of eliminating them. For that reason, the opposition supports the continuation of a common law system.

There are a number of other issues that I want to canvass. The Doody report makes a significant comment on the present under-declaration of wages. I think that the figure is that only about 50% of the total possible premiums are being collected. That leads to the second point that there is at present an avoidance of workers' compensation insurance by a large number of employers in the system. An effective workers' compensation scheme must provide a comprehensive cover for all employers and employees in the Northern Territory. If that can be done, it should result in a significant reduction in the costs to individual employers.

Another vexed question is the concept of whether we should have a multiple insurer or a single insurer. In determining whether you are in favour of the multiple insurer and a single insurer, it is a question not only of an objective assessment but also some degree of ideology is involved. It is interesting that the Doody committee recommended, by a majority, for a single insurer. That is the position that is supported by this opposition. We

support it on 2 main grounds. Firstly, we support it on a philosophical ground. It is difficult to argue that the control of social service which is established under legislation and is a compulsory system should be in the hands of private enterprise. We do not believe that such a monopoly should be handed over to private enterprise.

Secondly, if you do not accept that philosophical argument, there are practical arguments that are well outlined in the Doody report. The Doody report demonstrates quite clearly that the failures in the present system - and there are large number of them - are due in large measure to the insurance companies not carrying out their job properly. The failure of the present system to come to grips with rehabilitation and the failure to provide an adequate collection of statistics can be sheeted home quite clearly to the failure of the present companies operating in the field.

The second practical reason why a single insurer is better than a multiple insurer is that the system proposed by the Doody report relies for its effectiveness on a firm central control. That firm central control is necessary for the collection of essential statistics, for the handling of claims in a uniform and fair manner, for accident prevention and for the proper coordination of accident prevention and rehabilitation policies. It is necessary also to allow premiums to be struck equitably. The main reason for striking premiums should be the safety or lack of safety in the workplace and not, as happens in the present system, the need to attract or keep business. Insurance companies in competition to each other do not seem able to develop an effective system whereby the main criterion for premium setting is safety in the workplace.

Mr Speaker, this issue is very important. I commend the government for the consultation it has undertaken in this area. I understand it has had ongoing discussions with all interested groups after bringing down the Doody report. I hope that we will hear quite soon what the government's intentions are in this area because there is a need to act very quickly to establish a workers' compensation scheme in the Northern Territory which is fair and equitable and is something we can be proud of in the 21st century.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I was interested to hear the comments of the member for Millner because we are attempting to canvass as wide a number of opinions as we can on this report so that we do get it right. I would like to begin by commending the board for the way it has undertaken the most difficult task of addressing social legislation of this magnitude. It does not necessarily mean that I agree with every conclusion that it has reached. Nonetheless, I can appreciate the magnitude of its task in trying to arrive at a balanced view.

The main issues at stake in workers' compensation legislation are quite often forgotten. They fall into 3 categories of course. There are benefits for employees, benefits for business, and benefits for insurers. The insurers are looking for lower claims, fewer claims, safer workplaces and a properly constructed rehabilitation system to cope with injured workers, to reduce the claim payments and to return the worker to his place of employment. Businesses expect lower premiums, reduced complications in handling claims and claim procedures, an increased certainty that insurers will be stable and a properly constructed rehabilitation scheme. Employees are used to looking for higher statutory benefits, a better structured common-law judgment, streamlining of procedures towards judgments on claims, greater safety awareness and practice by employers and a properly constructed rehabilitation scheme.

If these 3 factors work correctly and in reasonable balance, the community as a whole will benefit. Certainly, the benefit would come through to the employees if there were better areas for them to work in and there were safety procedures to be followed. Certainly, there would be great benefits to employers in the reduction of premiums that would follow from the fewer number of claims.

I agree with the member for Millner that one of the major ways to establish that sort of scenario is to encourage employers to provide safe working premises. To attain that, it is important not only to reduce the overall premium on the first payment, but to provide incentive schemes to allow that to happen. It is a bit like the carrot and stick. There must also be additional follow-up with safety legislation and visits by safety inspectors to ensure that the premises are being conducted safely. There must be a competitive market in the insurance industry to encourage efficiency and innovation among insurers to allow the benefit schemes to work.

Over the years, we have seen front-ended and back-ended benefit schemes which, on some occasions, have been offered by different insurers. I think that is healthy. There must be free access to the market for the people who are writing this business or wishing to have this business written so that the overall efficiency of the scheme can continue. I disagree with the conclusion of the inquiry that the commission be the sole insurer. Another factor in relation to that is the argument that there is a lack of support by local insurance companies in keeping money within the Northern Territory. It may be of interest to the Assembly that today I was able to obtain some figures on the estimated total investment within the Northern Territory by insurers. It amounts to some $80m a year.

Turning to some of the factors in relation to claims payments and the amount of premiums that need to be collected throughout the scheme to make it work, it might be of interest for members to know some of the claims figures in Australia. I wish to refute some of the statements that were made by the member for Millner about the type of payments that are being made. The claims figure in Australia for private insurers for workers' compensation in 1978-79, not including claims outstanding, was in the order of $306m. In 1979-80, it rose to $344m, an increase of 12%. In 1980-81, it rose to just over $500m, an increase of 58%. In 1981-82, the last year for which I have figures, it rose to $532m, an increase of 74%. There were further claims outstanding as at that year. I will not go through the whole total, but suffice it to say that, in 1981-82, that figure rose by an additional $1.343m worth of claims outstanding which reflected an increase of 32% over the 1978-79 figures. During that period, the total amount of premiums that were earned by all insurers in Australia was in the order of some $500m in 1978-79, $445m in 1979-80, $486m in 1980-81 and only $658 833m in 1981-82.

This leads me on to one of the other matters that I believe should be addressed as a result of the Doody inquiry: the tightening up of the collection of premiums from employers. There is reference on page 71 of the report to the declaration of wages and spot orders. The Doody committee noted that there was a staggering shortfall in wages declared for premium assessment. They believe that one of the most effective ways to overcome the problem would be to require all wages declarations to be accompanied by a statutory declaration so that the premiums can be correctly assessed. They make no effort to mention the amount of money that is lost. It might surprise members to know that, with the premium base that we earn here from a small work force, there is nearly $12m a year estimated to be lost in the premiums

area by the shortfall in wages declaration by employers. I certainly support the collection of that amount of money to assist the scheme.

Mr Speaker, the abolition of common law is an argument which has been going on for some considerable time now and it is not a matter which can be dealt with lightly. It is a matter which is emotive in some instances and certainly people can become very dogmatic in the method in which they approach the argument of common law. I have tried to be flexible with my understanding of the committee's recommendations on the common law aspect. I have taken advice from many other people. Having been in the insurance industry myself for a considerable number of years, I applied my own thoughts to the problem. I am afraid I must conclude that I disagree with the abolition of the right to sue at common law, as does the member for Millner, and for very good reasons which are similar to those that he mentioned.

Common law rights have operated in workers' compensation and motor accident compensation schemes for a considerable number of years and the right to sue at common law has been considered always to be a very basic right of an individual. I agree with that concept. Unfortunately, the common law payments that are being made and the claims that are being met under the guise of common law, on many occasions, have been untoward. The prospect of claiming common law damages and suing for rights under common law is one which seems to hold itself up as being very attractive to people injured in either the workplace or on the roads. Unfortunately, that concept has been encouraged by the legal profession, I am sorry to say.

I believe that approaching the problems of common law would be better served by some adjustment to the common law scheme which would allow for structured settlements and special assessments. I agree that those particular settlements should consider the loss of future earning capacity, the loss of amenities of life and any pain and suffering. However, I do not agree necessarily that there should be lump sum settlements or deferred settlements. I believe that the system would work far better if there were ongoing payments based on the wages of a person at the time, plus payments for additional medical, hospital and special treatment expenses.

There is one major problem with common law which the insurance industry has considered to be inequitable. The problem occurs after the redemption of the common law right and the payment of a lump sum benefit to an injured person. Some cases have involved many years of judicial argument and difficulties with the legal system and also the medical system. The problem is that sometimes, once the worker has received his cheque, he either makes a miraculous recovery or he has failed to invest the money wisely and has lost it. In one case that I am personally aware of, an injured worker was killed in a motor-cycle accident on the day he received his payment which was in excess of $100 000. The cheque was in his pocket at the time of death. The only beneficiaries from that were the relatives, and they were not immediate relatives. He was a single person. I do not believe a windfall profit should ensue to the extended family in a situation of that type.

I would like to turn back to the proposal for a sole insurer for a moment and mention the New Zealand and the Canadian schemes. There was a comment made by the member for Millner - or it may have been an interjection by one of his colleagues - in relation to the New Zealand system. Whilst on the surface the New Zealand system, which was set up after the Woodward inquiry, appeared and possibly still appears to the uninitiated to be working well, financially at least it is not working well. The partially-funded workers' compensation

scheme in New Zealand, which does not include the right to sue at common law and pays only 75% of average weekly earnings, had a deficit of $101m at the end of its first 9 years from 1973. At the major conference of insurance companies in 1984, New Zealand refused to supply the 1982-83 figures. It has since refused to give any figures. As I understand it at the moment, it does not now publish deficits on the New Zealand scheme. There is no way we can establish what has happened in New Zealand since the 1982 figures when accounts were published.

Canada followed a very similar route. Canada has a scheme which pays 70% of the average non-taxed weekly earnings. It does not have a limit on the lump sum. It has no common law rights and no rights for dependants; it is a pension scheme only and it does not allow redemptions. In 1983, that scheme had a deficit of $500m. The estimate at the moment is that that deficit will never be retrieved. Since 1974, it has been attempting to catch up by charging higher premiums to the employers. It has not improved the situation one iota; it is further down the drain. I understand it is still going down the drain today.

Rehabilitation and injury prevention are 2 of the most vital components of any new approach to workers' compensation. The most practical incentive for the encouragement of that scheme is the system of penalties and merits based on accident records and safety programs. There are plenty of precedents for these types of schemes. I understand that South Australia now has a workers' compensation rehabilitation advisory unit. The statistics and information it provides on particular employers is used by the insurance companies for determining reductions in the premium contents. I believe that that sort of system would work well.

The member for Millner mentioned the lack of statistics in the Northern Territory and alluded to the fact that the insurance companies in the Northern Territory had something to hide. Having been in that industry during the years that the honourable member is probably referring to, I would like to reassure him that, at no stage, did we attempt to hide the figures. As occurs in many other areas of endeavour in the Northern Territory, particularly in relation to statistics, we happened to be treated as part of South Australia. That happens in many areas in the Northern Territory as we all know. There were no statistics in relation to workers' compensation in the Northern Territory that could be separated out until this last year. It was always considered that the Northern Territory had such a small statistical base that it was not worth while setting up a separate statistical evidence-gathering exercise here. That is part of the reason why we were absorbed into the South Australian figures. Hopefully, now that the Northern Territory insurance companies are addressing this problem, statistics will be collected over the next few years, and we will have a much clearer picture of what is happening in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I have probably said enough. I would commend the report to your attention and, with those brief remarks, I will take my seat.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the need to reform our present legislation on workers' compensation was brought home to me very personally. A very good friend of mine was severely injured at his workplace in Nhulunbuy some years ago. He is a migrant who spoke very little English. His wife spoke very little English and they had 2 small children. He was looking after his mother-in-law who was dependent upon him. For 5 years, while solicitors wrangled and doctors gave opinions, that man and his family had to exist on

social security benefits. You and I may feel that social security benefits provide adequately for the average family but, if you are a cripple and you cannot drive and no member of your family speaks enough English to obtain a driving licence, you are obliged to rely on taxis. If you have a young family to raise, it is absolutely impossible. This man who prided himself on his ability to work, who had never been forced to beg for anything in his entire life, was reduced to begging to get by. It took him 5 years to obtain a settlement. To see a human being reduced to that state certainly brings home the need for reform in certain areas.

Mr Speaker, like the previous speakers, I believe that the pursuit of claims at common law cannot be allowed to continue. There must be a form of compensation so that a working person who through no fault of his own - or even if it is his fault - can be allowed to bring up his family. His family should not suffer simply because he has lost his employment through an industrial accident or through industrial illness. That has been a principle understood in Australian society for quite a number of years. It is not a voluntary matter, Mr Speaker. In fact, in a number of areas of insurance, we insist that it be compulsory insurance. Third party is compulsory insurance and so is workers' compensation.

I was interested to hear the figures supplied by the member for Ludmilla on the parlous state of the schemes that operate in New Zealand and Canada. However, because the insurance is compulsory, it seems illogical for it to be a matter which is subject to commercial interests. It seems to me that a matter of social compulsion such as insurance in these 2 areas should not be the subject of commercial profit. Although I am sure the member for Ludmilla's figures are entirely accurate, a matter such as this should not be open for commercial profit even if those 2 schemes in New Zealand and Canada are in a parlous state. I would suggest that, in all areas of insurance, it is a matter of what premiums are charged and how efficiently those organisations are operated. As a person who has not been involved in the insurance industry, it would seem to me that, given the economies of scale involved with a single insurer, that would appear to be the cheapest option. Whilst there may be some bureaucratic reasons why those insurers are not financially successful, I would hardly think that there are good commercial reasons why they are not financially successful. I believe that the single insurer offers the best hope for these compulsory or social insurance matters which society, I think quite correctly, has deemed necessary.

I believe, however, that there should be some onus on the negligent employer with no-fault insurance. There does need to be a common law component. Mr Speaker, I submit that the appropriate entity to pursue that matter of common law would be the insurer, multiple or single. I happen to feel that it should be a single insurer but, if it were a multiple insurance situation, the particular insurer should be obliged by law to pursue an employer under common law for negligence. This is opposed to the working person who is obliged under sometimes extreme circumstances to have to pursue the matter on his own behalf. The example I gave was not the 'Latin back' or the 'migrant spine'; the person was severely injured. Indeed he will remain crippled for the rest of his life. I am sure the member for Casuarina knows to whom I am referring because this person was one of his constituents.

Mr Speaker, those persons certainly do require the full protection of our society and their employers, if they are negligent, certainly need to be pursued to the extent that our laws can pursue them. I believe that the bodies which should pursue those negligent employers are the insurers. Indeed, our laws should compel them to pursue negligent employers.

Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has covered the full range of the Doody report and its recommendations. There is very little that can be added about the report. It made some excellent recommendations and I only hope that, within the very near future, the government changes the present system which is causing personal hardship to the unfortunate victims of industrial accidents.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, one of the things that has not been emphasised today relates to the high cost of workers' compensation. The member for Millner mentioned that, in Victoria, it rose over a period from 0.9% to 4.1%. This cost of workers' compensation, which is compulsorily imposed upon the employer, is itself a barrier to the employment of other Australians. It would behove us to lower the cost of workers' compensation by whatever means available so that it will have an effect on the capacity of employers to employ more people.

The Doody report is fairly comprehensive. Like the member for Ludmilla, I have not been convinced by all of its recommendations. He has had considerable experience in the insurance field but I am a complete layman. I was very grateful to have the opportunity to attend some seminars which the government party arranged. We met with the Insurance Council of Australia. We met with representatives of the Department of Health who were interested in safety and rehabilitation and we met with officers of the Territory Insurance Office. We met with the unions and it was good to hear their views. We met with our own Country Liberal Party non-elected members group to discuss the views which the party was putting to them and, through them, to us. We met also with the Law Society.

As I spoke to the Minister for Industry and Small Business, who will have responsibility for any legislation which we come up with, I realised that there is one group, which is pretty important in all this and with which we had not held any discussion. That is the people who are compulsorily required to pay the insurance premiums. I believe that there has been some input from them but not to us as a group. Reports have come in and no doubt they will be available to us, but it might have been interesting to hear the opinion of a few individual Territorians who have to pay this insurance as employers and find out how they envisage it affecting their judgment of whether they can employ more people or not. No doubt, there would be a variety of views but I think they would be very valuable. I dare say honourable members could talk to employers and obtain their reaction to this particular point. It is perhaps significant that we have consulted these other groups, many of which have a vested interest in the whole matter, and yet the people whom we make pay have not spoken to us or been represented because they are a diffuse group that is spread throughout the Territory. Organisations such as the Master Builders Association may attempt some input. In fact, I believe it was involved in the Doody inquiry through Mr Merv Elliott. That is fine but maybe that more diffuse group should be consulted. I believe the small business group is starting to become organised and perhaps we could and should have looked at that.

Mr Dondas: It is not too late.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: No, it is not too late. As the Chief Minister said, the most important thing is that we produce this legislation, and that we get it right. Certainly, I would welcome the views of the small business community through its representatives.

Arguments have been put here today for a single insurer and there has been reference to the Doody report which recommends that. Arguments have been put against it. I have tried to keep an open mind when weighing up the whole matter but, as a result of studying, listening to and having the chance to ask questions of a whole range of people, I believe that the best thing we can do as a government is to have as many insurers as we can. This is a personal view and it may be changed if I am convinced by the arguments of my colleagues. I make it clear at this stage that we should not limit them other than to require that they obey the rules that the Commonwealth lays down for insurers by having sufficient back-up funds to cover the liabilities they will have.

Apparently, the governments' single insurers involved in workers' compensation in this country are not observing that rule. They are not covering their liabilities; they are only covering the contingencies. That is one of the things that frightens me. I am afraid that, if the government sets up its own insurance office, we will be forced down the road that some of these people are taking. For example, superannuation looks as if it could well and truly blow out when we cannot fully fund the claims that will be made. I would hate to lead Territory people down that particular path.

In my discussions with various people, I have sought their views on whether the government has a role to play and I believe that it does. The insurance industry said that one of the problems it has is collecting the premiums. People in the industry are aware that they are not receiving all that they could and should receive in the Territory. The Doody report says we are collecting a little over 50% and many people are dodging payment, either by understating the amount they pay or by evading making payments altogether. The insurance company would go to a particular company and say: 'We want to check your books. We do not believe that you are doing the right thing'. The employer would then say: 'We will terminate business with you. We will go to another company'. I was a little bit astounded by that, but they assured me that this is the way things go. They do not have the teeth to force the issue and determine whether or not the employers are paying what they are required to by law. I believe that there is a role that the government can play in this particular issue. I have suggested to my colleagues that, whenever a major claim is made by an employer on behalf of an injured employee, that should automatically mean that the books of that particular company should be checked thoroughly. That would take the nature of a spot check rather than a check of each company. I dare say spot checks could be conducted sporadically and would prove very useful.

I read in The Australian yesterday that tax officers require people to assess themselves. That releases more taxation officers to go after the people they believe are evading tax on a large scale. The tax assessments that people make for themselves would be accepted. However, no doubt a few spot checks would be carried out to keep everybody on their toes and a little bit honest. I believe that the government could implement a similar scheme with insurance and perhaps tie it in with the safety aspects of the workplace. As every member has said, if we can make the workplace safer and if we can make employers and employees more safety conscious - and both have an important role to play - we can reduce the cost of workers' compensation insurance. If claims are reduced, premiums can be reduced. In addition, if we can collect all the premiums that are due, the person who is paying in a sense for those who are not paying their share will pay less.

Rehabilitation featured very largely with all of the people that we spoke with, and that was very pleasing to note. When a person has been injured, every effort should be made to coax or even demand that that person make every attempt and accept every opportunity for rehabilitation and, as far as possible in the circumstances, get back into the work force and, for the sake of his own morale, lead as useful a life as possible.

During discussions with members of the Law Society, my initial thoughts were that the lawyers would demand that common law be upheld. However, they were a very reasonable group of people. I was very pleased to listen to their points of view. They made the point that, although there are some sensational claims and sometimes lawyers and the community think that they may be over the fence, unless you have actually been involved with such a case, you cannot really judge. We have a sort of gut feeling on these matters but, in spite of that, these huge payments represent only a relatively small part of the total costs. It is the multitude of little claims which add up to the high cost. Having heard that from lawyers and confirmed it amongst other people who know a lot more than I do about it, I feel less worried about the common law aspect that I did initially.

No doubt, there was some agreement amongst our members that, if common law were retained, this lump sum which members have spoken about should not be a part of it, and it would be far more reasonable to make small regular payments to people in this position rather than a large lump sum. Of course, that is open to further debate amongst ourselves when the bill is introduced in this Assembly. It is a complex issue. The most important thing is that, when we come forward with a bill and debate it in the Assembly, we end up with something which will benefit the many people involved - the employers for their costs and the employees for the benefits and the chance of rehabilitation. If, in the process, we can keep those costs down, we will help to lower a barrier to increased employment. It is important that, when we do it, we get it right. I am sure that that is the reason why the government is not rushing headlong into this matter.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, first let me compliment you on your new wig. I think it is quite becoming.

Mr Speaker, it always amuses me to listen to the member for Sadadeen as he espouses his line. He tries to fit everything in with his small-government, capitalism-is-the-greatest philosophy. It is rather amazing to reflect that, to the best of my knowledge, until he came to this place, he was employed by the government and he had never actually practised what he preaches. It will be interesting to see how he gets on when he does get out there in the real world. On the matter of evasion, I can assure him that I have talked to a number of people in the insurance industry who have been told that, if they try to push any further with regard to checking up on the amounts that are paid out in wages, they would very quickly go to another insurer. That is one of the reasons why I favour the single insurer concept.

Mr Speaker, I believe the member for Millner would back me in saying that the opposition believes that the implementation of the Doody report in full would give us a good system. We are worried that the government may take a little bit of this and a little bit of that and come up with a hotchpotch which will not advance us very far.

There are a couple of points that I want to raise and I put these to the committee itself. I note that I am the only MLA who made an oral submission.

It was pointed out by the committee that the claim rate by Aboriginal workers is extremely low. The committee stated that either they have exemplary safety records or they do not claim workers' compensation. My experience with people working in the pastoral industry has been that the notification of accidents rate is extremely low and the number of claims is extremely low. It is what is generally referred to as a macho-type operation. There is a certain degree of peer pressure involved in people not presenting for treatment for what their peers would regard as rather minor accidents. As Dr Trevor Cutter pointed out in his very good submission to the board of inquiry, these may result later in life in a series of complex illnesses which are obviously related to compensational work injuries. Because of the isolated nature of their work, the injured persons did not report these at the time. These often relate to such things as partial blindness, arthritis and bad backs which are common among ringers. I know many who are flat out even driving a bus now.

Mr Speaker, to overcome this, we may have to go one step further than the traditional reliance on employers to report injuries. I believe that the problem is so bad that the government should institute a system whereby people such as health workers, rural health sisters and doctors working out bush etc should be required to furnish a simple report stating the name, the nature of the injury, the date of the injury and where the person was working. This should be sent to the central insuring body so that it has some record which it can check to see that the employer is in fact reporting the accidents. If the employers knew that this system was in operation, they would increase the level of their reporting rather markedly.

Mr Speaker, I want to talk a bit more about the under-declaration of wages because it is an extremely significant item, given that there has been quite an amount of talk about how expensive this thing is and that everybody is continually losing money on it. It seems to me that the figures are rather horrendous. In 1981, the shortfall as a percentage of the premium income that should have been received was 54.5%. In 1982, it improved a bit to where there was only a 32.8% shortfall. In 1983, it was back to a 45.6% shortfall. We are averaging a shortfall of around 45% which means that slightly more than half of the amount of money that should be paid in is being paid in. It seems to be rather logical that, if you are collecting only half of the insurance premiums that you should be collecting, there is no wonder that this whole system is having problems. That is one of the areas that should have been tackled well before this and it should be given priority now. As I mentioned before, with the multiple insurance system that we now have, employers can bring pressure to bear by trading off one insurer against another. That is not the only thing. There is the simple matter of dishonesty. There are a number of employers who, because there are no spot checks and spot audits at the moment, are able to get away with it.

There is also the overuse of the contract system whereby people are setting up fantastic schemes so that they are able to get out of paying for payroll tax, workers' compensation, travel etc which they would be required to pay if the people were under a normal form of employment. These are areas which should be looked at. The matter of spot audits is something which will have to be taken up rather quickly if we are to reduce the amount of non-payment associated with this. It was suggested today by the member for Ludmilla that prevention is better than cure. I think that is the correct position to take. In the debates that we had yesterday about the mercury levels at Warrego, my biggest disappointment was that it is quite obvious that, no matter how good a system is, it will be to no avail if the minister lacks the political will or the energy to enforce the system and to ensure

that the working environment is safe. It then comes back to the workers themselves. They have to take industrial action. In light of many statements made by members opposite at their recent conference, regarding fighting funds and unions, the situation at Warrego shows just how necessary unions are to fight for the conditions of workers, particularly when you have a government which is adamant that it will not carry out its duties in this regard. I hope that, when we have the new legislation, the prevention of situations which will give rise to the need for workers' compensation will be looked at. I hope we will be moving towards some comprehensive industrial safety legislation and that this government will find that it has the will to use the provisions to ensure that people are able to enjoy the benefits.

I commend this report; I think that it is an excellent one. My only reservation is that it does not go far enough regarding the notification of accidents by Aboriginal employees, in fact all rural employees. It is shown up with Aboriginal people because of the statistical base. However, it is definitely the case with all rural employees that their receipt of entitlements under workers' compensation is well below par.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking in support of the minister's statement this afternoon, I must say that the Doody report on workers' compensation has been probably the most discussed document in the community for some time - even by the opposition. It has caused both applause and concern from various sections of the community. I must compliment the government on its approach to this issue and the way it has invited all interested parties to have an input.

Various groups have already put forward their views. These include trade unions, the insurance industry, the legal fraternity, the TIO and various others. Of course, the matter is still open for discussion and the government welcomes further input from anybody in the community. Discussion is still taking place and much work has to be done to sort out our proposals, in particular those put forward by purely vested interests from whichever side of the community they may have come. It is very interesting because, having listened to a number of those submissions, I noted that there were many points of view which were obviously vested. It is very important that we sort those out and arrive at a policy that is most beneficial to all parties concerned.

The Doody report recommended the setting up of a single insurer and a commission to oversee its operation. I have a problem with that particular point of view. I do not favour a single insurer but rather a number of insurers although perhaps not as many as we have currently. There have been wide and varying views put forward on this proposal and doubtless much debate will continue before it is resolved.

Another area of special interest, particularly to our legal friends, is the proposal to eliminate the common law provisions, in particular the lump sum payment, and perhaps introduce regular payments on the basis of an assessment of the injury. Many people are critical of the insurance industry of course. They say that they have been making huge rip-offs over the years. But let me point something out. Take, for example, a claim made under common law which would take at least 5 years to come before the courts and be settled. There are many problems with regard to this issue because the person, as was quite correctly pointed out by the member for Nhulunbuy, has to receive social security benefits until the claim is settled and may experience considerable hardship during that period. There is perhaps quite a strong argument to do away with that lump sum provision and introduce a regular

payment assessed on the type of injury incurred. Let me also point out that, if an insurer takes out a policy in January and an injury is incurred later in the year, then when that comes to court - in say 1990 - the dollars applicable to that claim will be assessed on 1990 dollars and not on the 1985 dollars with which the person taking out the policy paid his premiums. If government legislates to change the provisions under the act between January when the policy was taken out and later in the year when the hypothetical injury occurred, then the insurer is obliged finally to pay out under the conditions of the new legislation. Thus, the insurer can lose out all the way along the line. There are strong arguments for both of these points of view and I do not doubt that there will be much discussion before they are finally settled.

It has been proposed that a scheme which allows for payments to commence immediately after being assessed by an independent commission could perhaps be the right way to go. It is also imperative that all employers participate in any such future scheme. We must not allow, as has happened in the past, some employers to avoid their obligations. This is to the disadvantage of their employees and to the cost of other employers who are paying their premiums based on the cost of claims. I believe inspectors should have the right to demand employers to provide proof of their participation in the workers' compensation scheme. Having said that, I also believe that the medical profession must be aware of its obligations. It has a responsibility to recognise those who wish to take advantage of the system. Malingerers who are supported unnecessarily by worker's compensation schemes contribute considerably to the increasing costs of the existing schemes.

I am pleased with the progress made to date and I am confident that our approach of seeking input from the community will pay dividends. I support the Chief Minister's earlier comment when he indicated that his government's intention to conduct wide and full discussion with all interested parties will continue. It is most important that, when legislation is introduced, we do in fact get it right.

Debate adjourned.

STATUS OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 84)

Continued from 21 August 1985.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, my first reaction on reading the proposed amendment to the Status of Children Act was one of horror. On going through it and talking to various people who knew a lot more about what was going on in the areas of artificial insemination by donor and in vitro fertilisation, I have come to recognise the need for the amendments that are proposed. While we are not here to debate the rights and the wrongs of AID and IVF, I must say that the introduction of unnatural human intervention in the conception of life may make a mockery of many of our existing laws in the future.

The Leader of the Opposition would have us separate laws and morality. I wonder why we should separate morality from the law. I would think that our laws ought to be based on morality. I can well understand the desire of men and women to have children. From a humanistic point of view, AID and IVF are the greatest breakthroughs yet in medical science for couples who are unable to conceive children by natural means.

This aside, there are still many unanswered questions on the legal status of the parents and of the children born of these procedures and the eventual psychological effect on children when they discover the means of their conception. I think it can be compared to children who are adopted and their need to find out their parentage later in life. So many go looking for their parents. I have been aware of many of these people over the years, particularly young part-Aboriginal people who were taken away from their parents at a very young age and placed in missions. So many of them have gone looking for their parents at a later date. The effect that that has had on them is truly traumatic. In the case of children born of IVF and AID, it will be even greater. I do not think that we taking that sufficiently into account.

Since the procedures do exist, are legal and are taking place at an ever increasing rate, I support the view of this proposed legislation that consenting married couples who decide to use one of these procedures should be the legal parents of the child who ensues from that decision and procedure. Persons who donate genetic material for this purpose should have no claim or responsibility for the child who ensues. I read a piece in The Australian of 4 April which said that, in the United States, at least 2 donors of semen have gone to court to establish visitation rights to children they created with their sperm. In 1983 in California, a man won weekly visitation rights to a 3-year-old conceived with his sperm. The mother, a registered nurse, had performed the insemination herself, using as a donor a man that one of her friends recruited. There are many problems associated with that, not the least being the interests of the child. I do not think that is taken into consideration enough. The child in that particular case will be at a loss in the future to understand the background to all of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was a bit disconcerted by some of the comments made by the minister in his second-reading speech. I thought some words used were a little out of place. For instance, the minister said: 'Where the husband does not consent to a fertilisation procedure, 2 approaches are adopted. Proposed section 5C will provide that, in respect of an ovum, the woman who gives birth will always be deemed the mother. The husband's consent is irrelevant'. To me that is a very poor choice of words. I understand what was meant, or I think I do. But the husband's consent can never be irrelevant - not ever. If it was irrelevant, the stable husband/wife relationship does not exist and, therefore, the procedure should never be carried out.

The minister went on to say that 'on a practical level, under present Australian guidelines, an ovum implantation cannot be carried out without the husband's consent'. Do the 2 statements taken together mean that the morality of our laws may yet degenerate further? Are we writing laws today to accommodate further degeneration or are we merely covering the possibility that some irresponsible surgeon or person may carry out an illegal AID or IVF implant?

I have become more aware of why that has been said. Until very recently, I did not think that these things were going on behind the scene. Perhaps I am fairly naive. I thought that certainly IVF was still happening within the surgery and being carried out by qualified people. In the case of AID, as we saw from that report in The Australian of 4 April, people are practising these procedures on themselves. For that reason, I can understand what the minister is saying. But I think that we are in fact writing laws today to accommodate degeneration of our laws in the future.

I see no reason why we should make laws to cover this possibility unless we are anticipating an early reversal of present guidelines. Is it going to be possible in the foreseeable future for a woman who wants to have a baby without coming into physical contact with the male of the species to front up to the local IVF or AID clinic and have the job done clinically? I suspect that is on the way. We are getting to the point where we must provide these laws to protect the child but, by doing so, we are making it easier for the practice to be abused. It will redirect the expectations of people from what is truly a moral situation to something that is less than a moral situation.

We have problems enough now coping with the cost of single supporting parents' benefits. Recent figures quoted to me indicate that the $45m supporting parents' benefit of 1972 has grown to an enormous $1200m today. That is more than the Northern Territory's entire budget. If we allow this genetic manipulation to go on at this rate, there is doubt that it could consume the entire Australian economy, and well before the year 2038. I do not know how we will ever prevent people from carrying out these procedures on themselves. I do not think that is possible. However, wherever anybody is caught doing that, I think there must be some pretty horrific penalties. It is imperative that children born of these procedures are protected by the same laws that protect you and me, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is just as imperative that the children born of these procedures are born to stable parents who want children but cannot conceive a child through natural intercourse. However, this technology is advancing at such a rate that this is being overlooked.

I have some photocopies from the newsletter of the Institute of Family Studies. I was interested in a couple of things in an article on genetic engineering - manipulation is probably more like it:

> 'Research which is closely following developments in the area of animal husbandry where further reproductive technology is already being applied is currently being undertaken in the following areas:
>
> twinnings - splitting the embryo into two, implanting one embryo and freezing the other, identical twin embryo for implantation later;
>
> cloning - the asexual reproduction of an individual from a donor body cell which results in the birth of a child identical with the donor;
>
> artificial womb - attaching the embryo to another part of the body such as the stomach which theoretically could lead to men and transsexuals undergoing pregnancy;
>
> ectogenesis which involves the growth of a foetus outside the human body in the laboratory without the need of a womb at any time;
>
> genetic engineering - the alteration of the chromosome structure of cells from which breeding takes place in an attempt to control the characteristics of the offspring; and
>
> sex predetermination which is already occurring on a widespread basis in some countries'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a question was put to a number of groups which are carrying out these procedures on what was the purpose of reproductive technology:

> 'The following are some of the goals and objectives of programs researching and applying reproductive technology which have been put forward:
>
> > to provide a service to infertile couples or individuals by enabling them to parent a child who is not the genetic child of one or both of them;
> >
> > to provide a genetic service to couples or individuals who are seeking to have children with predetermined intellectual, physical or gender characteristics or to avoid having children with hereditary or genetic defects, such a service could include genetic manipulation, sex preselection, selection on the basis of intelligence, physical prowess etc; and
> >
> > to create artificial wombs thus freeing the woman from the rigours and demands of childbirth. This technique could also be used to enable men to give birth'.

The procedures should not be available to just anyone off the street. Couples should be thoroughly screened as they are for adoption and only persons who have shown a commitment to marriage in the actual sense - and I do not include de factos in that - should be considered eligible and even then their stability in marriage should be under serious scrutiny as it is for adoption.

With these comments, I support those parts of the bill that place legal parenthood and responsibility on the woman who bears the child and her spouse. I seek a commitment from the minister and from this government that there will be total opposition to any moves either federally or at a state level to allow a woman to have these procedures practised on her, either as a single person or without the consent of her legal husband, and that every effort will be taken to ensure that future parents of AID or IVF children are stable and secure in their marriage.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on this bill because it has certainly given me some food for thought. There have been a number of issues ancillary to this particular bill that I think are germane to this debate. In many respects, my views are related to those of the honourable member for Victoria River but, in some respects, they are different. I would like to take a little of the Assembly's time to put those views on record.

Let us be quite clear at the start that I very much welcome this bill which amends the Status of Children Act. It is worth pointing out that the Status of Children Bill itself was very welcome because it provided a full legal status for the offspring of de facto marriages and also for the offspring of traditional Aboriginal marriages. It is of interest that in the community's mind nobody would deny full legal status to the offspring of such relationships. In that debate, much was made of the common law status of the issue of de facto relationships. It was mentioned in the context of that debate that, under common law, such offspring were referred to as 'filius nullius', which is a smart Latin phrase for bastards. It certainly inspired

some oratory that such offspring should be allowed full legal rights and a number of people waxed lyrical on that particular matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that the central issue in this debate, and which is quite non-contentious, is that full legal rights should be available to the issue of in vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination by donor. I do not think there is doubt in anybody's mind that this bill in that respect is non-contentious. What is contentious, and what the member for Victoria River has quite rightly raised, is the patterns of human coupling that the bill envisages. I believe that is a right and proper matter for this debate. Reference was made by both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business that law and morality should be kept entirely separate. I do not happen to share that view. I refer to morality in the wider sense, not the restricted sense of sexual morality but, in the sense of the shared views and attitudes that hold society together. Of course our laws have to reflect those common shared views and attitudes! It so happens that those common shared views and attitudes are undergoing considerable change. Perhaps before we examine the morality of IVF and AID, we should look at the changes in relationships between people.

Historically, any children born out of wedlock were regarded as having no legal rights. Until 30 or 40 years ago, de facto relationships were generally frowned upon and considerable stigma attached to the offspring of those relationships. Now there has been a change so that some people feel that a relationship between a man and a woman is somehow more precious, more loving, if it is not dignified by a civil ceremony or a religious ceremony that accords with vows made under the marriage act. So be it. I have personal views about that but I do not have public views about that one way or the other. I do not think that that is important. It seems to me that where we really do have a responsibility to provide some sort of consensus about these matters is in the issue that was raised by the member for Victoria River: single people bearing children, both generally and by artificial means.

I think that whether a relationship between a man and a woman is a de facto relationship or a legal relationship is not of such importance as a relationship between those 2 people that results in children. I believe that there is inadequate consideration of the responsibility of people who are bearing children to society at large. In case it be thought that I am somehow seeking to discriminate against women, I believe that the technological change that we are in the middle of now means that we will have to take some pretty tough decisions. As the honourable member pointed out, it will be quite possible for single men to have children. It will be quite possible in 10 or 15 years perhaps for children to be conceived and grown completely outside the human body.

I think that, in the context of this debate, it is right and proper to make some clear statements about what is acceptable and what is not. I find it interesting that we have a bill before the Assembly that deals with the legal rights of the issue of IVF and AID but, in fact, these are only guidelines as to who is eligible to use these particular procedures. We were advised in the second-reading speech of the Attorney-General that there has been a Standing Committee of Attorneys-General considering these issues for some 7 or 8 years now. I find that surprising. I do not pretend to be quite au fait with all the aspects of the debate.

A report in the United Kingdom discussed the regulation of the use of IVF and AID. It seems to me that we are shutting the gate after the horse has

bolted because I would have thought that there should be some legal regulation of who is able to use these procedures. I am rather surprised that this is subject only to guidelines. The minister said in his second-reading speech that there are guidelines indicating that women are to use these procedures only with the consent with their partners. That is very contentious. I am sure that there would be a considerable body of opinion in the community that holds that people should be free to bear children if the technological processes are there to enable that. I am afraid that I am entirely unable to go along with that particular idea. Let me give you an example of what the bill envisages. In proposed new section 5A(2), the bill says:

> 'A reference in this part to the husband or wife of a person - (a) is, where the person is living with another person of the opposite sex as his or her spouse on a bona fide domestic basis although not married to the other person, a reference to that other person; and (b) does not, in that case, include a reference to the spouse, if any, to whom the person is lawfully married...'.

Perhaps I have not construed this properly but I presume that that refers to somebody who has a legal marriage, then sets up a de facto relationship with somebody else and, while the original marriage is still legally applying, the 2 people in the de facto relationship decide to have a child. Maybe it is a quaint nineteen century morality that I suffer from, but I find it really quite surprising that the law envisages people bearing children under those circumstances. I am surprised that the law envisages single people bearing children in this way.

I want to pick up a point made by the member for Victoria River in relation to supporting parent payments and suggest what legally ought to be appropriate. I have no problem with supporting parent payments being given to people who find themselves, through no fault of their own, in a situation where they are forced to rely on the state to support their children. If people are in a relationship where they intend to have children and to nurture them and for some reason the relationship disintegrates, the state has a responsibility to ensure that the children do not suffer. What bothers me is the possibility of people bearing children with the expectation that the state will support them. I have real misgivings about that.

I know that people have talked, for example, about marriage and de facto relationships. I personally think, Mr Deputy Speaker, that some sort of legal commitment should be necessary on the part of 2 people when they decide to bear and nurture children. I do not believe, except in cases where couples are unable to maintain a relationship, that the state should bear the cost of nurturing those children. I want to put that on the record because there is a sort of a libertarian view, which I just do not happen to share, that frees people from personal responsibility as far as nurturing children is concerned.

I could speak about this for considerably longer but I will not. I will sum up by saying once again that I very much welcome this particular bill providing for the legal rights of the results of IVF and AID to be protected. I believe, however, that the parliamentary and legal institutions of this country have to give a little bit more thought to ways of ensuring that the state does not have to bear the full responsibility in economic terms for nurturing children.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not often that I agree with the member for MacDonnell but I did agree with some of his

remarks in the latter part of his speech when he deprecated reproduction by single parents. I think he was talking about single mothers and not single fathers.

Mr Bell: Single fathers will be coming soon, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, I agree with you. Single fathers will be coming soon and I find that idea particularly abhorrent. They are the sort of people whom you take up the paddock and make arrangements for.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the males in the community should realise how much they are supporting this enormous tax burden of supporting parents. I do not think many people have any idea of how much it is costing the taxpayer in general. Many of the good family people, who are supporting their families, do not realise how much they are being put upon. The single mothers bring up their children but the blokes who father those kids just have their bit of fun and shoot through. The other chaps in the community are left to bear the cost.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I consider that this bill treats the symptoms and not the disease, but if I had had the misfortune not to have the number of children I have had, I would have been in there trying to have babies in the same way. But it has reached proportions in the community where common sense has flown out the window. Somewhere, somebody with some common sense must consider the situation - somebody with both feet on the ground.

The bill aims to legitimise children born from AID and IVF. I have grave reservations that the correct way to do this is through this legislation. I have been partly convinced and I understand that this is as far as we go. People who have a more intricate knowledge of the subject agree that it is correct to legitimise children born in such a way, but it only treats the symptoms and not the disease. It is too facile to say that this legislation is the end of the matter; it is not the end of the matter for Australia and nor for the Northern Territory.

The whole subject of artificial commencement of life has been under extensive moral and legal scrutiny ever since scientists outstripped the legal profession's constraints. I am not voicing any moral scruples against the idea of AID or IVF as such. I agree with it in the animal world. Great benefits accrue from breeding animals this way. But, we are talking about human life. I do not think I am speaking in a soppy sentimental way. As scientific manipulation continues, what is to stop single males bringing forth human life? That would be grossly unnatural and completely abhorrent. It is bad enough when single females do it. I consider that every baby born into the world should have 2 parents, one of either sex. There are 2 sexes in the world, male and female. In any program of AID and IVF, the least a baby can expect is both parents to be around. I believe there should be as much scrutiny of home life as there is for adoption.

This legislation seeks to give babies born as a result of artificial procedures the same legal rights as babies born naturally to married couples and to relieve the donors of semen and ovum of the social responsibility of parenthood. This social responsibility attaches to the social parents. At the moment, we have no AID and IVF programs in the Northern Territory so this legislation is directed only to those babies born this way in the states. In his second-reading speech, the minister said that it applies to babies born either to single parents or married couples. In the same breath, he said that these AID and IVF programs are available only to married people in the states. Other members have spoken on this so I will not elaborate.

The legislation then refers to any baby born to a single parent, male or female. I do not think this is the time and place to refer to these unnatural and abhorrent practices. That some single females become pregnant artificially without a male being present is bad enough but the prospect of a male giving birth by caesarean section is disgusting. Suffice it to say that these individuals are so unnatural that, in my view, they should be taken up the paddock and dealt with. It is no good saying that these people are sick and they should be counselled. That is a waste of time. It is a waste of my tax money and everybody else's tax money. Social welfare payments to help them get over their problem will not do them any good. We would be a lot better off without them. There are lots of normal people who are happily bringing children into the world. There are probably enough people in the world but I cannot speak because I had 6 children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, single parents who want babies only want them for selfish reasons. I really cannot understand how they could be considering the welfare of the human being whom they are bringing into the world. They consider that this little baby that they give birth to is something that is nice and soft and cuddly, something that they can love, something that will love them and will be dependent on them and something that they can nurture. The usual reason they offer as to why they want the baby is that their parents rejected them when they were little and did not love them. However, they forget that the baby will grow up to be an adult. With only one parent, it will live a completely unnatural way of life. I am not talking about the parent who, by force of circumstances beyond her control, must rear a family. I am talking about the people who do it by choice. It is usually young girls. In view of the figures mentioned by the member for Victoria River on what the supporting mothers' benefits are costing the community, I feel the community just cannot stand this great cost which is increasing every year. I believe severe restrictions must be put on this type of thing.

We are passing this legislation with the best purpose in mind: to legitimise the children born this way, probably with the old Biblical truism at the back of our minds that the sins of the parents should not be visited on the children. I would like to pose a question. If the babies born in this way were not legitimised as we intend by this legislation, would the single parents still have them? I think that it would put a stop to it in some ways.

The whole question of artificial insemination in humans has been debated for some time. It is usually the middle-aged and elderly celibate clerics who have a lot to say about it but they cannot seem to offer any realistic guidelines to the community about the practice. I think it is more than time that ordinary people made ordinary decisions because we are talking about ordinary people - we are not talking about these middle-aged and elderly celibate clerics. I think the voice of ordinary people must be heard. Somewhere along the line, someone must make some strong and probably very unpopular decisions. Until now, I have heard far too many male voices discussing this matter. I think it is more than time that women had more to say about it. I am talking about young women, older women, middle-aged women and women with different political views. The subject will be talked about for some time but the end must be in sight somewhere. We cannot keep talking about it forever because, if we do, laws will not be made in the way we believe the community wants. Science will outstrip us once again.

A point that I would like to make before I finish, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that prospective single parents of both sexes are saying that there must be no discrimination if they want to become parents by birthing. Increasingly,

males are saying that there must be no discrimination between the sexes. What they are forgetting is that, by bringing this baby into the world, they are actively discriminating against the baby because the baby will not grow up in a normal way. We must return to the happy, normal way of family life. If we bring a life into the world, we should realise it is not just a transient bolster to self-esteem for a selfish parent but a human being who must have a normal female and a normal male parent if we as a country are not to go down the path to self-destruction.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker...

Mr B. Collins: We expect at least 30 minutes out of you, Denis.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: If you want me to, I am sure there is enough to speak for 30 minutes and a darn sight longer, but I will endeavour to be relatively brief.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think this bill faces up to reality. I hear people saying that somehow we should be able to stop single people from having children. I do not think that any law we make will do that. The honourable member for MacDonnell expressed concern at the social cost of single parents and it was interesting and pleasing to hear him express a concern in that difficult area. I am sure that everyone would agree that somehow we have to try to address the problem. I believe that very few of those people would be having children through the rather extraordinary processes of AID and IVF. In my own neighbourhood, I know a family which has 3 girls. One married and had a baby but the marriage broke up. Being entitled under Territory conditions to housing, she was allocated a house. She had another man friend stay with her and another child resulted. He shot through. It happened again. The other 2 girls are in much the same situation in that they are single parents. The fact that housing is available is in many ways quite an inducement to those people. It may be a fairly cosy arrangement because, out of kindness and no doubt with the best intentions, we provide for such people. When this single housing policy was introduced, the main thing in people's minds was the welfare of the poor girl whose husband does the dirty on her and shoots through. But now it is becoming a racket. I have said many times that we try to do something for the best possible motives, but the public reaction is often rather astounding. Here is a case in point, and I was pleased that the member for MacDonnell raised this matter today. It is a thorny question. It is good to be able to support him occasionally because very seldom do he and I see eye to eye.

It is a fairly complex issue overall, but this particular bill is trying to clarify the status in the Territory of the child who results from an AID or an IVF procedure. If it were done outside the Territory, I suggest that would mean that the child and its parents, or whatever we might call them, should leave the Territory. Of course, Territory law no longer applies. There will be some need for the Attorneys-General and health ministers to continue to get together. They have been getting together for a long time wrestling with these problems.

The bill is quite clear on the maternity issue. The woman who bears the child within her body and gives birth to it is declared the mother whether she produced the ovum or whether it has been donated by someone else. The only area of contention may be that of surrogacy, where a woman can produce ova but, for one reason or another, is not able to keep and bear a child in the normal way. I dare say those cases will be very few, but there will be some.

Most of us have agreed it is a reasonable proposition that the woman who actually bears the child is the mother.

In the legislation, paternity is more complex. In a common law marriage or a de facto marriage, if the husband of the relationship consents to the procedure, then he is the father according to law. There is a procedure which I read about many years ago regarding children born through AID in which the unknown donor of the semen was chosen so the blood group was the same as that of the father. Blood tests could not then distinguish who the father was. The semen was also taken from the father and mixed with that of the donor so that nobody could ever be sure whether the actual father did or did not produce the child, and that was accepted. This occurred in the United States, and it was accepted that the husband was indeed the father of the child. That is simply a technique which I think helps to overcome some of the difficulties. There is a presumption in this field that the father or the husband has given consent and this can be rebutted. I wonder whether it would not be wise, to prevent argument afterwards, to provide for certification that the husband has consented to this particular procedure. It will be pretty important to the child. If the husband afterwards says that he did not consent to it, who would you register as the father? I think certification would help to stop a considerable amount of argument in such cases.

An unmarried woman may go through one of these procedures. It is suggested that it is not legal, but there are a hell of a lot of things which are not legal but which are occurring anyway. It will happen. A married person may go through such a procedure without consent. The donor of the semen has no rights and no responsibility towards the declared father or the child except where - and this is becoming pretty rare - the donor of the semen eventually becomes the husband of the mother. I think in most of the medical setups the donor probably will not be known to the woman. The chances of their coming together and setting up a relationship are fairly unlikely but, if it is done outside of that system, maybe the donor of the semen will be known to the woman. Maybe then it could happen. There is no real problem there but it seems to me that we would be chasing a pretty fine line of difficulty.

Just coming back to the member for MacDonnell's point, I remember back in my days at the University of Adelaide, there was a debating society. The topics would be advertised around the building and one which tickled me as being a topic of some mirth was: 'Should unmarried crabs have little nippers?' It seemed quite funny in those days. When you get down to the nitty gritty of it and its effect upon society, there is a particularly high social cost which, if it continues, will be extremely expensive. I am old fashioned enough to agree with the member for Koolpinyah that the ideal situation for a child is for it to have both parents. I still have both of mine although they are getting on in life. I know the support and benefit that one obtains from having both parents. I am the youngest in our family. Dad is heading towards 81 and mum is heading towards 79. It is great to have them still around; I have been extremely fortunate. Not to have both parents from the start of life is to start well behind the 8-ball.

Public figures like Germaine Greer have a fair bit to answer for because they have encouraged women to do their own thing and have their own children without the support of a husband. It was interesting to read that that same woman said recently that it really was not all that much fun because she had to win the bread and raise the children and that was an unnecessary burden. Recently, Martina Navratilova was reported in the NT News as saying that she

would like to have a child and would like to pick some ice hockey hero from Canada to be the father. I do not know what he had to say about it. I do not know how other people would feel but certainly I would feel very offended in such a situation.

Mr B. Collins: Ah, she'd probably talk you round.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I don't think it is likely that would happen, Bob, so it is purely hypothetical.

The bill has something to do with the Territory and with the status of children. It clarifies certain issues but I do not believe it clarifies them all, particularly for the woman who has not had the consent of the husband and there is no named father in the process. I suppose it is the age-old problem of a woman having a baby and not knowing who the father is. We have tried to address some of the real problems of the real world, and a very imperfect world at that.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, there have been some interesting comments on this bill. A few days before its introduction to the Assembly, I took the liberty of sending copies of this legislation to 15 of the Territory's church leaders and asked if they would give me their views on the matter. I received a number of replies. It seems that they concentrate primarily on an issue which was raised by a couple of honourable members today: de facto relationships. From my recollection, none of the church leaders rejected the intention of legalising an existing situation and clarifying the status of a child born under procedures available in this country today. I do not think that very many reasonable people would argue against that general thrust. Since some honourable members have concentrated on this very question, I thought I would discuss it a little further.

The member for MacDonnell was correct in his interpretation of proposed section 5A(2) which is a definition of how to read 'husband' and 'married woman' in relation to the rest of the bill. The situation does arise wherein a couple is living in a de facto relationship on a bona fide domestic basis although one or even both parties may in fact be married to other parties. I am advised a couple in that situation can have these medical procedures undertaken in Australia today and obviously give birth to a child. What this act is trying to do is to come to grips with the problems of the child. Although the mind can conjure up some inequities if one wants to think all the relationships through, one still comes back to the point that we are trying to address the rights of the child. I am advised that the legislation in those states that have followed this route have treated it in the same way.

I will read a paragraph from 1 of the letters that the church leaders sent to me. It perhaps covers the subject as far as the general public would be concerned:

> 'Further, it is about time we had some legislative tidy-up on such words as "husband" and "marriage". As a parish priest, I have had requests such as "my wife and I want to be married". My response was: "If she is your wife, then marriage is irrelevant". I would seek clarification of, and the legislative meaning of, "a bona fide domestic basis". If that means anything other than a legal marriage, then to me it is unacceptable. I do not believe that in vitro fertilisation should be available to de facto relationships and that that should be clearly spelt out in legislation to control its use'.

As honourable members will be aware, this legislation is not controlling the application of medical practices, but dealing solely with status. My response to that particular paragraph was:

> 'The phrase "a bona fide domestic basis" does refer to a relationship other than marriage. It is included to embrace what is commonly termed a de facto relationship. The legislation has been drafted to embrace such couples becoming parents of children by means of AID or IVF because: (1) the AID and IVF programs are available to de facto couples in all the states which have programs; (2) the legislation in all other states extends to such couples; and (3) there is ample precedent for legislative recognition of such relationships in other Territory legislation such as fatal accidents legislation and testators family maintenance legislation'.

Honourable members will see that the reaction I received from outside was similar to that in the Assembly and that concern is focused on who is to be allowed to undergo these medical procedures and produce children.

I propose that the bill will proceed in its present form for the reasons I mentioned although I would be a brave man if I were to say that it will answer all the problems of the future. I could not disagree with a word that the member for Victoria River said. I can say to him here that, during my term as Attorney-General, I will do my best to keep abreast of this subject as it is dealt with by Standing Committee of Attorneys-General from time to time and bring back to my party the moral issues that will arise from time to time.

I also worry as to where we are all going in this matter. The mind can conjure up frightening consequences of this manipulation that may occur in the future or indeed of what might be being done today, particularly in countries outside the western world. At least we think that the various freedoms that we have enable us to keep somewhat of an eye on what people are doing in the laboratories. I say 'somewhat' because there is always suspicion about how far they are ahead of what we know. I am sure we know a heck of a lot more about what is happening in Australia than the citizens of some other countries in the world know of what is happening in their laboratories. Without that check and community debate, the scientists and doctors working in these fields are free to go as far and as fast as they like. I think that is pretty frightening because we are all part of an ever-shrinking world that we have to share together.

Even in Australia, I worry about things like the social acceptance of homosexuals to be very open in their relationships. For example, the ABC's housing policy caused a furore last year. The ABC decided that couples of the same sex who claimed to be in a de facto relationship were allowed housing entitlements the same as a married couple. There was some fuss down south when that occurred. I am not even sure that it was followed through. I did not hear that it was ever reversed. Of course, once 2 males or 2 females go to their employer - in this case a government statutory authority - and say they have a cosy relationship, think each other terrific and would like to be granted housing that is available for married people, it can become the norm. It can extend to other areas of government, to the private sector and, before you know it, some trendy state will pass legislation to allow lawful marriages of such people. That worries me. That trend exists today in Australia.

I am concerned at where that is taking us because there is a connection between that sort of recognition in policy etc and the sort of frightening

things we hear of today such as the possibility or the reality of a male body being used to create a human being. The entire subject requires considerable community debate and deep thought. That is happening in fits and starts. The more of it that takes place, the better because we really have to come to grips with these questions.

The member for Koolpinyah said that we must be careful otherwise science will outstrip us and we will be chasing behind it to legislate once again. I am afraid that science has already well outstripped us. Today we are legislating behind the field, filling up the holes and legalising the status of the products of modern technology and medicine. I am sure we are well behind what is happening in the research areas. I think that time and time again legislators will be patching up holes and sorting out the relationships in a legal sense. As legislators, we must somehow get in front of the whole race and set some rules and enforce them, even if it means burning a few laboratories. I guess that will get me a few arrows but, unless we get in front of it, we will continue to follow it.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (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.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, coming to work early in the morning over the last few days, I have picked up hitchhikers on an almost regular basis. They are workers on the site of a very significant hotel in Darwin which is obviously nearing completion: the great rock candy mountain in Mitchell Street. I have been right through the building in detail with the member for Millner and I have no doubt that eventually it will be an impressive and, I dare say, luxurious hotel which will add greatly to the tourist facilities of Darwin but I must go on record as saying that it looks terrible. I think it must be one of the ugliest public buildings I have ever seen in my life. I cannot make up my mind whether it looks like a railway station or the entrance to Luna Park. Every time I walk in there, I expect to see a roller coaster. Duck egg blue and pink are definitely not my favourite colours.

When we did our inspection, we were presented with a glossy catalogue of the Beaufort hotels around the world. Beaufort certainly has some beautiful hotels. When we were looking at it here in the Legislative Assembly, we came across the artist's impression of the Beaufort hotel in Darwin. I am afraid to say that the artist's dream has come true. The finished product really will look exactly as it looks in the book - horrible. If the pink dome cannot be lifted off the roof, perhaps next time it needs a paint job the owners could paint it some colour other than pink. It might improve it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the conservative parties in Australia at the moment seem to be having some difficulty coping with the federal budget. Indeed, it is perfectly true that yesterday in the parliament, at the very first opportunity after the budget was brought down, the opposition was able to ask

just 3 questions on the budget in question time. Indeed, the Treasurer was on his feet urging the other side to ask some more questions and it failed to do so. I heard some note of that on ABC TV last night. There was a voice piece from the Treasurer saying to the people on the other side of the House that, so far as trusting them with the budget was concerned, he would not trust them with a jam jar full of threepenny bits.

One of the pieces of rhetoric which conservative parties everywhere in the world now seem to be getting into in terms of trying to establish a philosophically different approach to budget matters is the question of privatisation. It has become a real buzz word in conservative parties around the world - the government of Great Britain and so on. Indeed, my own view is that there are many areas of public enterprise where so-called privatisation could occur to the benefit of everyone. I heard some mention of this in a speech made recently by the former Public Service Commissioner for the Northern Territory. It is not good enough to grab this buzz word and simply accept on face value that every public enterprise will automatically deliver improved services. Indeed, the very concept of privatisation contains some real problems for the Northern Territory and for all other isolated areas of Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, the conservative parties are floundering in their attempts to find an issue that they can win on and this issue certainly seems to be one that they have latched onto. Privatisation is being touted currently by the federal opposition as a panacea for all of Australia's economic ills. It is being promoted as a quick way to solve all our problems. The solutions to Australia's economic problems lie in the sort of economic policies that the Australian Labor Party has introduced in its last 3 budgets and in policies such as those which led to sensible deregulation of the financial markets. These solutions deal with the dynamics of the economy.

The operations of the economy are the essential driving mechanisms. To give a layman's description, the engine of the Australian economy has not been running well over the past 7 or 8 years. While the ALP has been working on the pistons, the federal coalition has been discussing the colour of the paint job. That is what much of the debate on privatisation is about. If we look at the lists that appeared from the last Liberal Council meeting, we can see some of the targets: TAA, ANL, AUSSAT, the Health Insurance Commission, the Australian Industries Development Corporation, the Housing Loans Insurance Corporation, the Commonwealth Bank and the Pipeline Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer to a body which is not in this list but which is often mentioned: Telecom. Particular references are made to it because of what the British government has done. I now refer to the report of the inquiry into telecommunications services in Australia. Some of the significant findings of that study are: if Telecom is subject to competition it will have great difficulty in maintaining the substantial cross-subsidies inherent in a uniform pricing policy; trunk-call revenue cross-subsidises country revenue - significant profits derive from Telecom's major inter-capital city routes and they are applied to subsidise the local telephone networks; metropolitan services cross-subsidise country services; and customers close to exchanges cross-subsidise customers remote from exchanges. I believe that all these findings have significant implications for people living in the Territory, particularly those Territorians outside Darwin. I would very much like to know what the views of our federal member in the House of Representatives are on this problem. Telecom employees are sometimes maligned by our society but it is also worth noting comments made by the committee when it said:

> 'The committee is pleased to be able to acknowledge that Telecom, and the Postmaster General's Department before it, have established a telecommunications network that is recognised internationally as being well designed and soundly constructed. Australia is fortunate to have such a good infrastructure on which to provide the services of the future'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the people of the Territory should think very carefully before they are drawn into any cheap political campaign to dismantle Telecom and sell off this national asset.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would draw your attention to a recent paper published by the Australian Institute of Public Policy which advocated a $5000m reduction in Commonwealth government expenditure. The reason I mention it is because the Australian Institute of Public Policy is an organisation which is very closely aligned with the federal coalition and indeed its chief officers consist of people who were politically aligned with the coalition. The particular plan of privatisation and cutting $5000m off expenditure was designed by Mr Brian Buckley, who was a former adviser to Sir Phillip Lynch, one of Mr Fraser's failed treasurers. This wonderful plan has some significant points for the Territory government and its payments from the Commonwealth. Firstly, they recommend that funding for colleges of advanced education be cut by 5%, a potential loss to the Territory of $0.95m. Participation and equity programs are to be scrapped - a loss of $0.4m. Commonwealth-state housing is to be halved - a cost to the Territory of $9.75m. The NTEC operating subsidy is to be ended as soon as practicable - $120m lost to the Northern Territory. Tax-sharing payments are to be reduced by 2% - $11.2m lost to the Northern Territory. Roads funding is to be abolished - a loss to the Territory of $40m.

I stress again that this is an organisation which is recognised nationally as the think tank for the federal coalition. That list adds up to over $100m in a year, and it is close to $190m when you consider the full implications of the proposed cut in NTEC funds. That is on top of the May economic statement. Add to that the recommended abolition of the Australian Tourist Commission, cuts in airport expenditure, reductions to SBS and the introduction of tertiary fees which the federal government, despite Senator Walsh, has rejected. The list goes on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory cannot continue to be fooled by attacks on the federal Labor Party by the CLP government. The CLP is aligned politically to its conservative friends in Canberra, and I would like to hear the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and the federal member publicly reject these policies put forward by this organisation. The federal Treasurer said in the House of Representatives yesterday, in respect of the financial policies of the federal opposition: 'You're cheats, cheats, cheats and you've always been cheats, cheats, cheats'. That is what all supporters of this half-baked, privatisation, reduced-expenditure clique are. If the conservatives want to attack ALP policy, let us hear the real costs of their alternatives in terms of reduced services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what does concern me is the constant reference by the federal conservatives about the railway, their commitment to it and that they will address all of the ills that have been imposed on the Territory by the Labor government. The fact is - and the public record demonstrates it - that the federal Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Peacock, and his shadow Treasurer have consistently advocated that the one thing that they do not like

about the federal ALP's economic program is that it has not cut the deficit by nearly enough. The organisations that are recommending to the federal government are very closely aligned with the federal Liberal Party. Indeed, their research officers are former staff members of Liberal prime ministers and I am greatly concerned at the policies that may be applied to the Territory at some future date.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the problems with privatisation is that people tend to regard this so-called panacea as applying across the board. That very subject was raised at a major seminar held recently in Darwin. Mr Pope made an excellent speech which was both witty and informative on the comparisons between...

Mr D.W. Collins: It was excellent because he did not agree with you.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, I often disagree with things people say but I still give them credit. I disagreed with a number of the things that were said but I thought that it was a thoughtful and excellent address.

I also agreed with some of the things that Mr Pope had to say. I will repeat one of the points that he did make because it is worth repeating. It is a cheap shot to simply come up with this buzz word 'privatisation' and say that, of necessity, private enterprise will always do better than public enterprise. That snowball is starting to roll down the hill, as far as the federal coalition is concerned, in a way which worries me as a Territorian. I would like to obtain some statements from both the Northern Territory government and our federal member as to where they stand on it. We all know that the real cost of posting an airmail letter from Darwin to anywhere interstate in Australia is a great deal more than the price we pay for the stamp on it. That cost is subsidised by the enormous flow of mail between our major urban centres such as Melbourne and Sydney. We all know that the real costs of our trunk calls are greater than what we pay. As I said before, the detailed study that has been done on that indicates where the subsidies come from.

If we simply go along this road of privatisation, particularly in the area of the public facilities that I have mentioned, it could lead to very severe consequences for the Northern Territory indeed because private enterprise needs to make a profit. It is the question of trying to supply these essential services across a nation as large as ours with as few people as we have that makes it essential that some enterprises at least are maintained for the benefit of the Northern Territory and all other isolated areas in Australia.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, this afternoon I would like to pay tribute to 2 former residents of central Australia who died in recent weeks. The first was Bennett Benjamin Webb who was born at Arltunga in 1913 and died in Alice Springs last month. Bennett, together with his father, Bennett Webb senior, and his uncle, Joe Webb, moved in the early 1920s to White Gums which was a few miles south of the present Mount Riddock homestead. Later, they shifted to the present Mount Riddock homestead and went into partnership with a fellow called Louis Schaber.

After the death of Bennett's mother and father, who are buried on the property, and after World War II, the Webb brothers bought Schaber's share of the station. The 3 Webb brothers, Kilmet Northern Webb, who is still alive, Bennett Benjamin Webb and Quentin George Webb, then proceeded to improve the

station by adding many water sources - both by boring and building earth dams - and erecting many miles of fencing. Bennett Webb controlled the building up of the cattle breeds and he was one of the first to import Santa Gertrudis cattle into central Australia. Mount Riddock cattle always brought top prices at the Adelaide sales. On a number of occasions, Bennett sent beasts to the Southern Beef Carcass Competition and was always successful in beating competition in the south. He had a great knowledge of cattle and horses and very often passed on this knowledge and his experience to others in central Australia.

Bennett and his 2 brothers, Kil and Quentin, expanded the Mount Riddock holdings to take in Huckitta and Alcoota Stations, both of which adjoin Mount Riddock. They also bought Argadargada and Napperby Stations. On many occasions, Bennett Webb helped other people in central Australia get started in the pastoral industry by supplying stock and giving financial help. A handshake was all the security that he asked for.

He was a very well-read person who could hold his own when debating business matters, sports, politics and general knowledge. He had a very good memory. Bennett was also a very keen conservationist. He hated to see any form of wildlife destroyed. Bennett, his 2 brothers and the local policeman at Harts Range founded the Harts Range Racing Club in 1946 on Mount Riddock Station and it is one of the most popular and oldest bush racing clubs still in existence in the Northern Territory.

Over the past few years, the family have suffered many sad losses. Firstly, Bennett's brother Quentin was murdered on Huckitta Station and, last year, his son Bennett junior was accidentally killed when a vehicle overturned while he and Bennett were bull catching. Bennett senior was injured in this accident and it is obvious that this accident hastened his death.

Old Bennett was known by the old timers as 'Big Bullock'. The younger generation referred to him as 'Old Bennett' in an attempt to distinguish between him and his late son. He was a strong supporter of the need to construct and seal the Plenty Highway. It is ironical and sad that this road was just a few kilometres short of the gateway to the Riddock Homestead when he died last year. I would like to pay tribute to the work that Bennett did over many years in central Australia for the pastoral industry and extend my sympathy to his widow, Rhonda, and the surviving members of his family.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute to the late Mary Irene Ballagh who died in Alice Springs on 26 June this year. Born Mary Irene Passfield at Mount Nessing near Chelmsford, Essex, England, she emigrated to Perth, Australia, in 1955 after the death of her first husband, Geo Archer. She had been a youth employment officer in Chelmsford. From 1955 to 1956 she was employed in Perth as a welfare officer in a branch of the Red Cross. She applied for and was appointed to Alice Springs as the first woman welfare officer with the then Department of Native Affairs. Her office was headed by Mr Bill McCoy who still lives in the Old Timers' Home in central Australia.

Rene, as she was known, married Richard Ballagh in Alice Springs on 12 September 1959. Rene was a quiet but positive worker who was wholly dedicated to her work and put in very long hours to get to know the people with whom she dealt and their needs. She held this position from 1956 until she retired in 1977. Then she started to raise chickens south of Alice Springs in what was formerly the electorate of MacDonnell and is now

Flynn. Rene became an Australian citizen at a ceremony held in the council chambers in the old Hartley Street building on 9 September 1974.

She was a solid supporter of the central Australian children's holiday camp scheme from just after the scheme's inception in the early 1950s to its cessation in the late 1970s. I might point out that both Rene and her husband Dickie on many occasions gave up their own annual holidays to accompany these children from central Australia on holidays in various parts of Australia. This scheme catered for children from all creeds, coloured kids, and kids from all walks of life. They took up to 40 children each year from as far north as Elliott to O'Sullivans Beach just south of Adelaide. Rene was a camp mother for something like 10 years, supported by her husband Richard. She also found time in the early days of the youth centre to teach local youngsters ballroom dancing for which Rene held English ballroom dancing efficiency medals - the bronze, silver and gold.

As if this was not enough, Rene Ballagh was a dedicated worker for the Alice Springs pony club, holding the position of secretary-treasurer for many years, arranging training schools, fund raising and so on. This dedication brought her the first of the only 3 life memberships awarded by that club in its long history. Not many people are aware of the fact that Rene Ballagh organised the first steering committee to establish the old Ida Standley family kindergarten. Rene remained a well-loved friend of all the people whom she helped and worked with over the years, and she was still actively assisting several Aboriginal kids and part-Aboriginal families up to the time of her death on 26 January this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you could sum up Rene in a few words by saying she was dedicated, devoted and determined and had a quick sense of humour. Her support for her husband Richard in many of his activities both at work and in the social scene, in particular his work in the Central Australian Show Society, is well known. It is somewhat ironical and sad that one of the last official functions that they attended together was the central Australian show this year when His Honour the Administrator officially opened the Richard Ballagh stand and paid tribute to the long years of work Richard - or Dickie as I and many others have known him - had put into the Central Australian Show Society over many years. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am certain that I speak on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly who knew Rene Ballagh when I extend to Dick the sympathies of all members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in last year's budget debate, I mentioned a project in central Australia that I would speak on later. Unfortunately, it is almost 12 months since I first mentioned this project, but I would like to take it up very briefly in the time left to me tonight. I refer to the forestry project which is presently under way in central Australia. It was established by the Forestry Division of the Conservation Commission. The Forestry Division has established a 25 ha site south of Alice Springs adjacent to the show society premises. It has planted river red gums which will ultimately be cut and supplied for barbecues and campfires in central Australia. My figures indicate that, on the 25 ha site, there are 2000 trees per hectare and a total of 50 000 trees under irrigation. At Yulara, there is a smaller but similar project of 5 ha with 2500 trees per hectare, a total of 12 500 trees. These trees are watered, both in Alice Springs and at Yulara, from the sewerage or waste water scheme. The trial project in Alice Springs was commenced in 1980. By October 1983, these trees had reached an average height of 8.7 m. The tallest is 12 m. That is indeed a remarkable growth rate. It is estimated that the volume of wood they will be able to harvest will represent 10 m^3 per

year per hectare at an average age of 2.5 years. It is expected that the first commercial cuts will commence 6 years after commencement of the project. It was started in 1980 which means next year will see the first commercial cut. My advice is that the establishment costs were $3000 per hectare or $75 000 to set up this worthwhile and valuable project. Given the central Australian climate and soil conditions, the ever-increasing number of tourists in the Centre and our rapid growth rate, it is essential that projects such as this be maintained so that the native trees and shrubs in central Australia are not destroyed by ever-increasing numbers of people looking for firewood.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe the cost of this project is extremely low given its long-term value and the need to preserve our native trees in central Australia. I would urge members in the Centre to support this project which is coming up for review. I am not quite certain what the story is in the Top End but, in central Australia, it will be vital for both the tourist industry and our permanent residents. I would like to pay tribute to Peter Sandell and other members of the Forestry Division for the excellent work that they have done and I look forward to next year's first commercial cut of this project.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, for those members who have an interest in or have played trivial pursuit at some stage, I suggest that they remember the date 24 August 1985, this Saturday, and keep it indelibly in their minds because it will be one of the most significant dates in the history of Australia, particularly for people in the outback. This Saturday, of course, will see the launch of the space shuttle Discovery, carrying the AUSSAT K1 satellite into orbit for launching to geo-stationary orbit next Tuesday and Wednesday. This particular launch will have the same impact on the outback people of Australia, visually and audibly, as did Traeger's pedal wireless many years ago.

We have all heard for a number of years of the benefits that will accrue from AUSSAT. No doubt, members will have to put up with me speaking about it again next week when I address the report of the select committee. Tonight, I do not intend to talk broadly about that subject but about one of my fears on behalf of the people of the outback. It is in relation to the receiving equipment that they will have to use to gain the benefits from the satellite. On that theme, I refer to the statements that have been made over a number of years, and more particularly up to the beginning of this year, that anybody with $1000 or $1500 will be able to purchase the necessary equipment to receive all the massive audio and visual benefits that will accrue from the satellite. Unfortunately, this will not be the case and I was really disappointed to see that there was no mention of this in the federal budget. I refer particularly to the sales tax component on the TVROs, the TV receive-only units, the groundstation component for the reception of the signals.

Over the years that the federal government has been talking about these units, the cost that has been bandied around was $1000 to $1500. Until recently, that figure has been accepted as being the likely one. When the units came up for sale, and as recently as April this year, Minister Duffy was still referring to that figure. Unfortunately, Mr Duffy did not know or did not want to say that the federal government had approved sales tax on the units. No comment was made by the government, no publicity was released and it is only recently that we have found that sales tax will be applied on those units. The sales tax will be 20% on what they call the outdoor components and 32% on the indoor components of the reception equipment. This will have a significant impact. We are talking of $1000 and $1500 dishes but now the

signal has changed to a Mac-B format. Some of the suppliers have had an opportunity to see exactly where that places them in trying to produce the technical equipment necessary to use the format and in determining the problems connected with the different sizes of the dishes necessary to cope with the different zonal beams. It has been decided by the majority of manufacturers that they will standardise the HACBSS dish, the Homestead and Community Broadcast Satellite Service dish, into a 1.5 m dish.

It was interesting for me when I was in Sydney only 2 weeks ago attending the Isolated Childrens' Parents Association Conference to speak to 2 of the distributors, who will probably be the main distributors in Australia, about the prices that they have set for these units. I have a little brochure from a company called Videosat which is offering the 1.5 m dish and mounting hardware, a low noise converter, a Plessey Mac-B receiver and mobile stand for $2450 plus tax ex-warehouse. It is a far cry from $1000 to $1500 in place at your homestead out in the bush. Another company, Acesat, has an ex-warehouse price of $2308, and another unit is being suggested at around $2600 which may include freight. When I spoke about the freight component to the chap concerned in that company, he said that he had a standard freight component organised with a national carrying company which involved an additional $90 for each unit. When I challenged him with the possibility of ever transporting a unit ex-Sydney, by whatever method, to a station property somewhere in the Northern Territory - and I told him several places that he might have to put it - he shuddered. I asked him if I could get any other freight of identical weight sent up the same way for $90. He suddenly realised exactly what he was trying to achieve; he is going back to talk to the freight company again.

Let me come back to the sales tax for a moment. This sales tax component is 20% on the dish and outside material and 32.5% on the indoor material. This will add a considerable sum of money to that $2450. My very rough reckoning, by the time you add freight - and this would be to places reasonably close to the main transport corridors within the Northern Territory - indicates that you would be doing pretty well to get it here for $3000. It seems to me that the federal government has caught itself up in a problem. It has suggested that it is putting in a system which will have wide-ranging benefits for people in the bush and then, at the stroke of a pen, it has taken it away from them again.

Mr Duffy has suddenly realised that this is the case and he is now making noises about providing a subsidy scheme. This subsidy scheme, I presume, will work on the basis of a concessional rebate. Probably the only scheme he will be able to use is one based on the distance away from a major centre because noises have been made about a fortuitous discount for people in the city being able to buy these components if the sales tax is removed. Why should they have this fortuitous discount if they already receive radiated signals from other regional or city television and radio stations? I think that proposition is spurious. I believe that any concessional rebate system, by and large, costs more to administer than it actually saves. I believe the federal minister should bite the bullet and reduce the sales tax on these components.

It seems to me that it is iniquitous in many different ways. The federal government was trying to produce a system that would allow for easy and cheap communications to the outback. It is already making an enormous sum of money out of this $2450. Probably the only component in the unit that will be made in Australia is the antennae dish which will be either a fibreglass dish or

possibly a rolled metal dish. The remaining part of the equipment is highly technical and is being made under licence or being made overseas by Scientific Atlanta. The section of the dish that is being made in Australia will attract some form of tax for the federal government by way of payroll tax. On top of that, when the components arrive in Australia, there will be import and customs duties. The import and customs duties will be on electronic components used to make up the total package. On top of that, we have a sales tax on this unit which is supposed to be of benefit to the people in the bush. I think that the minister should readdress himself to the problems of people in the bush and remove the sales tax.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, it always astonishes me that the members opposite are so devoted to private enterprise and want to get rid of government subsidies etc but can always manage to argue for a government subsidy or a government tax on their particular pet projects. I say no more on that particular issue. I want to speak on my own pet parochial subject. I am after a bit of government action.

However, I would like to start with the new police concept of community policing. I would like to congratulate the police on the introduction of this concept. I must take some small credit for pushing them in that direction because, for the last 2 or 3 years, I have advocated loudly the concept of the neighbourhood watch. Although it has not taken up in detail my neighbourhood watch concept, I am pleased that it has gone to the concept of community policing which, as I understand it, involves dividing Darwin into 4 areas, appointing an inspector in charge of each area, giving that inspector a number staff and ensuring that that staff as much as possible works in the area and does not work across the whole of Darwin.

My electorate is already seeing the benefits of that. I now know the senior people responsible for my electorate area quite well. They had a meeting of the whole area. I think they impressed everybody who went to the meeting, and others whom they have dealt with in the community, with the enthusiasm that they have developed and with their ability to pick up the trouble spots in the zone. I guess every zone has trouble spots. Certainly, my zone has a number of trouble spots. I have been particularly pleased at the way that they have come to grips with some quite difficult problems. I will mention 2: the Beachfront Hotel and the Nightcliff Hotel. I think there are solutions in sight to the problems surrounding those 2 particular places. Other spots have caused problems in the zone and they are coming to grips with those. As well as that, they have shown a very real and active interest in what is going on in the area. I am sure that community policing will be a great success and I wish them well.

The second thing that I want to speak on is a frustrating matter in my electorate. Hopefully, it is capable of resolution by some action at ministerial level although it is hardly a thing that needs to be dealt with at ministerial level. On the corner of Nightcliff Road and Trower Road, there is a large park area. It is not exactly neglected but, with a little bit of thought from residents, government and the city council, it could be turned into a much more attractive area than it is at present. The Millner Territory Tidy Towns Group has expressed an interest in doing something with the park but we are frustrated at this stage because there are arguments at government department level as to whose responsibility it is.

I approached the Conservation Commission in May and I was assured by it that, on 1 July, the park area would be taken over by the Department of

Transport and Works because it borders a 307 road. When I rang the Department of Transport and Works on 2 or 3 July to congratulate it on its success and to ask it what it would do with this particular piece of land, it expressed some shock and horror and claimed ignorance of it. Ever since that date, there have been discussions between the Department of Transport and Works and the Conservation Commission, with each disclaiming any responsibility for the area. We are in this ridiculous position where, because of a failure at the administrative level in government departments to sort out who owns this particular piece of land, nothing can be done for its long-term improvement. I raise this matter tonight in the hope that the 2 ministers involved may be able to come to grips with it quickly so that we can sort out the ownership and discussions can start on how it can be improved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want also to speak about the question of dogs. I am sure all the Darwin urban members will join with me in expressing concern at what appears to be an increasing dog problem in the Darwin area. It has reached the stage in some parts of Darwin where it is quite impossible to walk down particular streets without being harassed by dogs, not necessarily bitten but harassed. Although I certainly do not wish to stop people owning dogs, I think we have reached a stage where stronger action is needed to ensure that owners become more responsible for their dogs. I understand that the Darwin City Council is looking at this problem and has had discussions with an expert from Mt Isa where I believe the problem was much worse a few years ago than it ever has been in Darwin. I am assured that Mt Isa now has its dog problem under control.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They had a lady dog catcher.

Mr SMITH: Having a lady dog catcher may have something to do with it.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It has.

Mr SMITH: More importantly, I think Mt Isa has come up with a comprehensive set of conditions which ensures that dog owners look after their dogs properly. One of the things we need to ensure is that all dogs are registered. We are all aware at present that a significant proportion of dogs in Darwin are not registered. We need to have stiffer penalties when dogs harass and bite people. In Mt Isa, the situation now is that, if a dog bites somebody in a public place, the dog is immediately destroyed. That may seem a harsh penalty but the effect is that owners take greater responsibility for their dogs and ensure that they are kept inside their yards. As well as that, my understanding is that, in Mt Isa, there are much stiffer penalties if the dog catcher manages to catch a dog and impounds it.

Unfortunate as it may be to advocate harsher penalties, only by the introduction of harsher penalties will we get to the nub of the problem. I hope that the government will lean on the city council to ensure that this matter is addressed before too many more people are bitten. I exclude politicians from that. I know it is a hazard of the job that politicians are bitten. I do not think other people going about their normal business should suffer the same experience that politicians suffer going about their business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my final point concerns the Gunn Point recreation area. I have been out there a couple of times in the last 2 years. I think it was last year that a 3-year development plan was presented to us in the Assembly. I would say that, unfortunate as it may be, it appears to me that this 3-year development program was a lot of hogwash. Many of the necessary and desirable

plans for the development of the Gunn Point area that were mentioned in the program have not been done. I think that is most unfortunate because, as people who live in Darwin know, we are fairly short on recreation areas close to Darwin suburban areas and this is one of the major recreation areas that could be developed quite effectively and would prove attractive to residents of Darwin rather than visitors to Darwin. It is with much regret that I note that the program has not been kept and I would urge the responsible minister, who is not here at present, to address himself to this particular issue and, hopefully, we will find more funds for the Gunn Point recreation area in the budget next Tuesday.

Mr COULTER (Berrimah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to address some of the issues raised by the member for Stuart in the adjournment debate last night in relation to the service charges which have been applied to Aboriginal communities. The subject was also mentioned by the members for Millner and Victoria River.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 4 June, the Chief Minister announced a range of financial measures designed to reduce the level of expenditure by the government, to raise revenue and to encourage the more economic use of resources. Honourable members will recall quite vividly the reasons which forced the government to announce this range of measures. One of the measures was the introduction of a charging system to be levied on people living in remote Aboriginal communities. This charge represents a contribution towards the provision of essential and general services and includes the provision of power, water and sewerage services. This charge is to recoup about $1m during the 1985-86 financial year.

Since the announcement of that decision, various statements have been made which question the policy of introducing any such charges, the amount to be recouped overall, the amounts that various individuals or communities will have to pay and the legality of the imposition of service charges on communities. This statement will address these questions and should remove any confusion which may have arisen in some communities about their liability to pay. The provision of essential services, such as power, water and sewerage, at remote Aboriginal communities will be funded by the government to the extent of approximately $30m during 1985-86. This does not include expenditure on capital works.

While most other residents of the Territory contribute in some way to the cost of provision of similar services, the majority of those who live on remote Aboriginal communities do not. I suggest that some contribution to the cost of services provided by government should be made by all who live in the Territory. Indeed, the Commonwealth specifically requires the Territory to extract a contribution from all the people of the Territory towards the costs of providing government services. The relatively high costs of providing services to remote communities and the limited capacity of many people who live on those communities to pay require that the government give particular attention to how the charge is imposed, the level at which it is set and the method by which it is collected. All of these matters have been given careful consideration by the government. The decision to recoup $1m and the method in which it is to be levied is, essentially, a first stage in a process which, in time, will result in all users of services in the Territory paying a reasonable proportion of the cost of the services they use.

At the moment, it is not possible for us to gauge accurately even the amount of electricity used by individuals, commercial enterprises and

government departments on remote Aboriginal communities, let alone those other less tangible services. The government has programmed work and action which will allow assessments to be made on services which can be metered. During the next 12 months, for instance, NTEC intends to have electricity meters installed on all premises whether private, commercial or government. With the installation of meters, it will be possible for the government and the community councils to determine just who uses the power and, therefore, who should pay. Power, however, is only one aspect of the range of essential services provided to communities.

Considerable expenditure is involved in the provision of water and sewerage services, the maintenance of airstrips, roads and barge landings and the funding of garbage services. All these services for remote communities represent a significant cost and therefore it is necessary to determine a method by which an equitable contribution towards these costs can be obtained from individual communities. As a measure of the cost of services, it was decided that the charge be based on the volume of fuel used to generate electricity in each community. A number of indices might have been used on which to base a charge for such a service.

When one index - population - is considered in concert with another index - the usage of fuel - and when the types of services and facilities provided are taken into account, a reasonable indication can be gained of the distribution and demand for services within a community. The amount of $1m is approximately 14.8% of the total fuel cost to NTEC to provide power services to remote Aboriginal communities. The $1m represents 3% of the estimated $30m to be provided during 1985-86 for essential and general services to these communities.

The formula has been devised so the recoupment of $1m may be distributed with the greatest degree of equity between the communities. The amount of fuel used to generate power to Aboriginals on remote communities varies according to the size of the community, the type of services available and the types of appliances used. Some sample assessments which have been carried out indicate that the level of use of power generated within some communities by houses occupied by Aboriginals is about 16% of the total power generated. Metering will soon provide us with an accurate assessment of power used. However, as mentioned previously, power is not the only service being provided. The amount of the contribution reflects that and should continue to do so.

It is necessary that the imposition of a charge on individuals not used to paying such a charge be phased in or be charged in such a way that the payment is made without it becoming an unbearable burden on individuals. My department took the first step towards the introduction of a fair and equitable charging system by carrying out an assessment of every community's needs and determining, on the basis of the primary industries, the level at which the charge for each particular community should be set. The contribution assessed for each community will be deducted from its town management and public utilities grant for that year. This grant is a subsidy which pays for essential and general services within the community. Representatives of all community councils which receive such subsidies have had the reasons for their deductions explained to them and have been advised that it is the government's very firm view that each community should recoup the amount of the deduction by the imposition of general service charges within the community.

With respect to some comments that have appeared in the press, I should mention that the use of bald figures for particular communities may lead to a wrong interpretation. In the case of Ali Curung, however, the fact rather than the interpretation is wrong. The member for Stuart stated that $47 000 was cut when in fact $35 000 of the community's contribution was actually cut, which is $12 000 or 25% less in that particular case. The onus is on the individual community to raise funds if the community wishes to maintain the standard of service. Many communities have already been involved in schemes designed to promote a responsible attitude within their group. An example of this is the 'chuck-in fund'. As I explained last night, you will not find that in any legal dictionary but it works in such communities.

During this first phase, on the basis of NTEC advice, the Department of Community Development will carry out the reassessments and adjustments necessary to ensure that the amount of a community's contribution reflects its fuel usage and the economies it is able to effect. It is hoped that the communities will take the initiative and encourage maximisation of resources, thereby decreasing the fuel budget and, of course, their contribution. In this way, it is likely that the government's aims to reduce expenditure and encourage economies could be achieved.

In each community which receives town management and public utilities funds, there is a community council. These councils are either properly incorporated local government bodies, that is community government councils, or they are incorporated pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Act. Over a period of time, these councils have been taking on - and it is the government's hope that they will continue to take on - increasing responsibility for decisions on local matters. It is important to the concept of self-determination to encourage these bodies to accept such responsibilities. It is also obvious that the organisation closest to the people will be in the best position to make decisions about the level at which a charge should be set and the method of its distribution throughout the community.

There has been some discussion about whether communities may legally charge for services. It is not my role to give legal advice to the community councils which are corporate bodies and should obtain their own independent advice if they feel the need. However, it might be useful for me to provide some background to allow honourable members to reach reasonable and informed conclusions.

The majority of councils on Aboriginal communities are incorporated pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Act. As a general rule, the objects and rules of these councils declare that all Aboriginals who have lived in the community for a particular period are members of the incorporated body. Basically, such bodies are able to impose such charges on their members as the rules of each particular body permit. I am aware that, in many cases, the rules of these councils do not address the question of levying charges. It should be possible, however, for such councils to amend their rules to allow the levying of charges.

There are also community government councils incorporated under the Local Government Act. These councils have the power to operate in accordance with their particular community government scheme. Depending on the nature and the basis of the charge which particular councils decide will best suit the needs of their particular community, it may be necessary for councils to amend their scheme or for the government to introduce appropriate regulations under the

Local Government Act. In either case, my department and the government will react quickly and positively to requests for action from community government councils in this regard.

I stress that it is necessary that Aboriginal communities themselves address the question of how best they may raise the contribution required in respect of the range of services which they receive. The government does not want to interfere in what level of charge is made and how it is distributed, but we stand ready to assist in any practical way to ensure that councils, of whatever status, are able to charge and collect revenue related to the provision of services.

Some questions raised have dealt with the matter of apparent lack of equity in saying to the communities that they may charge service fees against Aboriginals and commercial enterprises but they may not charge the government departments. It is clear that the contribution sought during 1985-86 phase 1 is a small percentage of the total costs of the service provided. The charge is based on fuel used and approximates some 15% of NTEC's cost to provide fuel for electricity. Obviously, the cost of providing electricity for government usage has not been included in the assessment of the charge during phase 1.

Prior to phase 2, it is intended to install meters on all new electrical installations in remote communities. All commercial organisations and domestic users, as well as government facilities and staff accommodation will be provided with meters. In phase 2, NTEC will seek to extend community council contracts to have councils act as agents to recover the revenue from metered electricity supplies. Appropriate pensioners' concessions will be available and suitable tariff scales will be settled for electricity consumption. The formula used to calculate the contribution from communities will be adjusted to account for changing circumstances.

I am perfectly well aware that the payment of charges is not an activity welcomed by many people - ask the honourable member for Koolpinyah. Attempts have been made by members of the opposition and others to frustrate the government's efforts to seek an equitable contribution to the cost of services provided to remote communities, mainly by raising pedantic legal points. However, it has become absolutely necessary that people contribute to the cost of services which they receive. I conclude by reiterating that the current exercise is only an interim measure. It will account for a contribution of 14.8% of the estimated $6.7m cost for powerhouse fuel which, in turn, is only 3% of the estimated $30m cost of providing essential services to remote communities in the 1985-86 financial year.

It is intended that meters will have been installed in respect of all users of electricity by 1 July 1986 and discussions will have been held with communities about the arrangements necessary to have the meters read and the moneys collected and accounted for. The government will continue to base its calculations on ensuring a fair and equitable contribution from all Territorians using the user-pays principle and bearing in mind the limited ability of certain sectors of the community to pay. The system to be introduced will be simple, straightforward and efficient and will place a fair measure of responsibility on everyone who uses the services the government provides.

Yesterday evening, the member for Stuart spoke about this at some length. The facts are as stated in the Chief Minister's mini-budget speech on 4 June this year. The Chief Minister stated that a simplified charging system for

power would be introduced and a charge which represents a contribution towards the cost of providing all these services has been decided at 3% of the total $30m which is allowed for town management and public utilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in an interjection yesterday, I was called a racist. I would like to point out in the dying minutes of this adjournment debate that I am talking about an equitable service across the community. I referred to some social security payment figures yesterday. If you were an unemployed Aboriginal person living in a town, you would have to contribute to electricity costs, and the rate of unemployment benefits available to communities is quite staggering. In Hermannsburg alone, $31 000 is paid out in unemployment benefits. In fact, the fortnightly cheque for all pensions - and I am not denying old-age pensioners or any Australians access to those pensions - totals $47 000. The member for Stuart pointed out that, in Ali Curung, $13 600 is paid out in unemployment benefits and the total fortnightly cheque is $28 000. I am pointing this out to demonstrate that there is an inequitable system operating at present. Maningrida receives $39 296 in unemployment benefits. I am trying to get a fair deal for all Territorians.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Millner made some remarks about the increasing dog population in the suburbs of Darwin. I feel that this could be dealt with quite easily with the application of a bit of common sense. It is counterproductive to increase registration fees because those people who look after their dogs also restrain them from wandering. People who do not look after their dogs leave them to roam the streets and cause a nuisance. One of my daughters lives in town. She and her neighbours had occasion to complain about a particular dog that roams at will through the streets causing a nuisance. Fortunately for the neighbours, although probably unfortunately for the owners, the dog met a sticky end one day when it was on the road and a vehicle came past. I can understand the distress caused to people on occasions by straying dogs and dogs that cause a nuisance. I believe that stronger action should be taken and more teeth must be given to the city council inspectors or dog catchers. Perhaps that can be effected by regulation or amendments to the Dog Act. I have not given that a great deal of thought but I feel certain something can be done. As I indicated by way of interjection when the member for Millner was speaking, the current dog catcher in Mt Isa is a woman and she has caught more dogs than her predecessors did.

An unfortunate incident occurred at East Point Reserve recently which resulted in the death of several wallabies. There were cartoons in the newspaper and it was said that the city council inspectors were going out after killer dogs. Mr Deputy Speaker, without any hesitation, I would say that the dogs involved were not killer dogs. They would be normal family pets. If any 2 ordinary family pet dogs, the kind that everyone pats on the head, get together and chase something, they behave quite differently. Several of them will form into a ravening pack. They will chase anything they can and kill it. Wallabies would not stand a chance against a pack of 9 dogs. However, I do not think that the dogs that the inspectors are looking for are savage. They will find that they are ordinary family pets whose owners do not look after them.

It has been my experience that half of the people who have dogs should not have them. Probably the same could be said of people who have children. How many times have you driven down the street and seen little toddlers out on

the road and no sign of their parents? They seem to rely on the goodwill of the motoring public to protect their children. One also sees little children in dangerous situations in other places whose parents are negligent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I asked a question of the Minister for Transport and Works yesterday morning but, unfortunately, did not phrase my question correctly and I did not have an opportunity today to put it again. I was rather concerned about an advertisement I had seen on a government bus which displayed the figure of a young woman, in a horizontal position, extolling the virtues of banking with National Australia Bank. You could say I am a feminist in a way, but I am not one of those rabid feminists. I still believe in a few old-fashioned things. You could probably say that I am an old-fashioned girl in many ways. I did not have any objection to the picture of this young female displaying whatever she was displaying on the side of the bus, extolling the virtues of banking with National Australia Bank - which, by the way, is the bank where I deposit my few dollars. However, I have written to the bank about this matter and I hope to receive an interesting reply.

I have no objection to the display of young female bodies, clothed, unclothed or semi-clothed, in advertisements. What I object to is that it is only the bodies of women that are used in this way. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would have to be blind in one eye and unable to see out of the other not to see the implication of this advertisement. It is directed at blokes. The implication is that, if you bank with National Australia Bank, no matter what your age, you will get a young girl like that. You will see a young girl like that at the bank.

Members interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Now you just be quiet and listen to me, honourable members.

You will somehow get the advantage of acquaintance or otherwise of this young girl. That may be okay as far as it goes but 2 important points are neglected in this observation. Firstly, a little bit of equality must come into this. If it is okay for blokes to look at the reclining figure of this young girl, I want to look at the reclining figure of a young bloke at the other side of the bus. Secondly, what this bank has also neglected to consider, as I pointed out to it, is that most of the money in Australia is under the control of women. If that bank hopes to attract the money of women or to continue to hold the money of women, it must apply rather more equality to the content of its advertising. I do not really have any objection per se to the bodies of females being used for advertising purposes. All I want to see is a bit of equality in this advertising. We all sell ourselves in one way or another; we sell our minds, our speech, our bodies, parts of ourselves and our talents.

While I am on this subject, I complained about another advertisement which I thought did not act in the best interests of equality. It was publicised by the casino though I do not know whether it was under the old operators or the new operators. It also showed a young semi-clothed female form and advertised the virtues of going to stay, or lose money or win money at the casino. She had a nice body. The advertisement was tastefully displayed. What I objected to was that the same old implication was there: go to the casino and this is what you will get. Again, what was there to attract women to the casino? Nothing, despite the fact that women control most of the money in Australia, one way or another. Equality must come into advertising.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, if the problems in my electorate and the Aboriginal communities therein consisted solely of savage dogs and sexist advertising, it would not bother me too much. The contribution the Minister for Community Development made to the debate tonight about service charges on Aboriginal communities in my electorate or elsewhere was somewhat less than cogent. I have had correspondence over 2 or 3 years now about this particular matter with both him and his predecessor. I will mention that a little bit later. However, before I do that, I would like to pick up a couple of comments he made.

The first was his comment about people in remote Aboriginal communities contributing to the cost of services provided on those communities. The minister said that people in remote Aboriginal communities should contribute. I resent that he should mention that and suggest that people do not want to contribute. At no stage, have either I or the member for Stuart suggested that people should not contribute. I have said consistently and publicly, verbally and through press releases, that people in Aboriginal communities should pay according to their capacity to do so. Their capacity to do so, of course, is considerably reduced for reasons that are not within their control and for reasons that have been discussed elsewhere, and at other times in this Assembly. Let's just clear out of the road the furphy that Aboriginal people do not want to contribute or that the opposition is trying to argue they should not contribute under any circumstances. That is absolute nonsense!

Another point that the Minister for Community Development raised this evening was that there was no legal problem with Aboriginal councils collecting this money. He suggested that it should be possible to amend the rules of incorporation under which they are constituted. All I say to that is that they really have very little time to do so.

The third point I wish to mention was his pious statement that metering would soon provide us with an accurate estimate of power used. I think that was what he said. I have had lengthy correspondence with both the current minister and previous ministers of Community Development on this particular subject. In May last year, I corresponded with the minister. I said that I had a number of inquiries in relation to the placement of electricity meters and water meters on Aboriginal communities in my electorate. In my letter, I went on to say that he would be aware that, in the past, there has been little or no metering for such services on Aboriginal communities:

> 'It is therefore a matter of some concern to me and my constituents that meters are to be placed on some or all facilities in some or all Aboriginal communities. I am writing therefore to discover what the policy of your department is in this regard and what the justification for that policy is'.

That was in May last year. In June last year, I had a reply from the Minister for Community Development - the member for Sanderson was the then incumbent - who said that the meters had been installed in order that the major users of power and water could be identified and their usage monitored. I quote:

> 'It has been necessary to do this for forward planning purposes and in particular to assist with assessment leading to the upgrading of water and electricity supplies which you will be aware is an ongoing matter and of interest to the Department of Transport and Works'.

In February this year, I wrote to the new minister and I enclosed copies of the correspondence I had had with his predecessor. I raised these questions with him. I asked which communities in my electorate had had water and electricity meters installed. I asked what impact there had been on this program by the Northern Territory Electricity Commission taking over responsibility for providing power on Aboriginal communities. I pointed out that his predecessor justified this expenditure on the basis of forward planning purposes and I asked him what these forward planning purposes were. I added that I was not suggesting that there should not be accounting of the consumption of water or electricity on Aboriginal communities but I pointed out that this had hitherto been done on a holistic basis and I could see no reason for departing from that practice.

In reply, the Minister for Community Development made some very interesting statements. He pointed out to me, and I am quoting from his letter: 'No meters have been attached to private Aboriginal dwellings in any community'. He went on to say:

> 'I am aware the presence of meters on Aboriginal communities has created considerable speculation as to the motives that lay behind such a development. It is not expected that, in the short term, power or water consumption data will be of significant use. The consumption profiles collected will, over time, enable comparison with a range of other variables such as population statistics to assist in determining likely future demands. Considering project completion only occurred a matter of weeks ago, I would suspect that it will be some time before sufficient data is collected to enable meaningful conclusions to be drawn. In the meantime, costs will continue to be calculated on the more usual holistic basis'.

That suggests a rather different scenario because what do you think the date on that letter was? The date on that letter, Mr Deputy Speaker, was 29 March this year. Yet we hear the minister getting up in this Assembly, a mere 5 months later, attempting to justify this as a government strategy. He has misled me as a member and he has misled my constituents. He is attempting to make life very difficult for my constituents and I bitterly resent it.

As I have said, I have no problem and neither do the people in my electorate have any problem, with paying for services, provided it is done in some reasoned, measured fashion. There is bitter resentment around my electorate because there is no possibility that those communities can decide on an equitable basis of raising those amounts. The government has put the cart before the horse and said: 'We are going to get $1m from Aboriginal communities. If they don't pay, we will rip it off their budgets and that will be it'. I really do not think that is acceptable.

I am pleased the Minister for Community Development has returned because he is the bloke who has been talking about employment! The savage cutbacks that have been administered by his department in communities in my electorate are seriously cutting back employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Let us take Hermannsburg as an example. The information I have had from Hermannsburg is that there has been a decrease in wage-funding in real terms and there is real concern by the Ntarria Council that there will be no equitable system of raising the money for service charges that have been so hastily demanded of it. In the case of Haasts Bluff also, jobs have been knocked back willy-nilly with no consultation with the communities. There has

been a decrease in the amount of money that has come into those communities through essential services contracts. In relation to Haasts Bluff, it is doubtful whether the essential services contracts will provide sufficient money for the essential services that they are supposed to provide. Again, they have no equitable way of working out how they are going to collect those service charges.

Similarly, at Docker River, there has been a real decrease of 3% in funds available for employment there. In terms of allocations for administrative expenses, there has been a decrease in real terms of 30% over several of the areas. I have received representations from that particular council saying that it is unable to receive public money for unmetered service charges precisely because they are unmetered. At Finke in my electorate, there is deep concern about the method of collecting those service charges. You will note, Mr Deputy Speaker, that none of these communities are objecting per se to collecting service charges. They bitterly resent having it dumped on them when they have no equitable way of determining how it can be done. I have suggested to many of the communities in my electorate that it is about time representatives of the Northern Territory government sat down with them in the hope that some more equitable arrangement can be worked out.

I hasten to add that many communities have made attempts to collect these funds, but the majority of them have found it difficult. Listen to this comment from the Chairman of the Aputula Community Council at Finke: 'While it is good for people to pay for services provided, we are worried that NTEC has left it up to us to collect its money'. That does not indicate to me any reluctance on the part of Aboriginal communities to pay for services, according to their capacity to do so, but it is extraordinary how the Northern Territory government has summarily demanded these sums of money when the communities involved have no way of deciding how they can collect them equitably.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, just north of the Northern Territory lies the Republic of Indonesia. On 17 August, the republic celebrated 40 years of independence. It is called 'Proclamarsi Day'. As most members will realise, Indonesia was formerly known as the Dutch East Indies. For several hundred years, it was controlled by the Dutch. It consists of many thousands of islands spread from Sumatra in the west to Irian Jaya in the east and from Kalimantan, formerly known as Borneo, to Sulawesi, formerly known as the Celebes, in the north, to Flores Timor and the Tanimbar Islands in the south.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a vast area. It incorporates a multitude of cultures and religions. Indonesia is a country of which we are acutely aware and so we should be. It is our nearest northern neighbour, about which most of us know very little. That is a great shame. This lack of knowledge and understanding is regrettable but understandable because of poor communications that have existed in the past. I am pleased to note that, in recent times, this lack of communication has been disappearing. There is a growing exchange between our 2 peoples through tourism, exchanges of trade delegations and indeed the Darwin to Ambon yacht race. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you realise that the closest Indonesian islands are about 100 miles north of Melville Island? That is not very far; you can fly there in an hour. You can sail there in 24 hours in a sailing boat and, if you paddled a canoe, it would take about 3 days. Do you also realise, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the population of the Republic of Indonesia is 160 million people? That makes me feel a little bit

inadequate when we think of the size of the continent of Australia and the fact that we have 15-odd million people in the whole of this vast area of ours.

Mr Deputy Speaker, after learning of these facts, you will no doubt quickly realise the immense potential for trade for the Northern Territory. We are right on the doorstep of an enormous market and as yet we have not tapped it. I fully understand that there have been problems in the past but I also realise that we have developed markets in Brunei and Sarawak and other places in South-east Asia. To date we have neglected the markets closest to us. Nevertheless, I believe we are developing an improving relationship with our closest northern neighbour and we should take advantage of that relationship through trade, exchange and tourism.

Recently, I had the fortune to sail to Ambon as a crew member of a yacht participating in the Darwin to Ambon yacht race. This year, 26 yachts participated in that race and that is a considerable number in anybody's terms. It is the greatest number of yachts that has sailed there. I think we started in 1976 with about 6 yachts and there were 26 this year. This meant an influx of approximately 150 people, tourists if you like, descending upon Ambon at the one time. One might say that, when compared with the influx of tourists into Bali, that is not very many at all, but for Ambon it is an awful lot of people because Ambon is way off the tourist track and sees very few visitors of European origin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I was in Ambon, I made official calls on behalf of the Northern Territory government on the Governor of the Malaka region, His Excellency Mr Hassan Selemat. As well, I called on the Chief Secretary, Mr Jacob Soukotta. I also represented the Northern Territory government at the official presentation night which was attended by approximately 300 people. Half of these people were Indonesian officials and their wives. They included all the senior government officers, the military and local government representatives.

The Darwin to Ambon yacht race has developed into a major international event and is attracting much attention in Indonesia. In fact, this year there would have been 18 to 20 yachts from America and Europe and certainly a number from the southern parts of Australia and some from Nhulunbuy as well. In fact, there was a wonderful yacht called Evergreen from Nhulunbuy. I am told it won the Sydney to Hobart race in the 1950s and was only pipped at the post at Ambon by a New Zealand yacht called Sirocco. I can assure the member for Nhulunbuy that the fellows aboard that yacht really enjoyed themselves. They sailed on to Banda and down to Koepang and perhaps may or may not arrive back in Nhulunbuy. I would not blame them if they continued on because it is really a beautiful archipelago.

This yacht race has been held for 9 years now and has developed very good relationships indeed with the people of Ambon. This was confirmed by the presence in Ambon this year of Admiral Sentosa, representing the Indonesian Water Sports Association. Admiral Sentosa travelled from Jakarta especially to hold discussions with the members of the Darwin Sailing Club who made up the Darwin to Ambon yacht race committee. I was invited to participate in those discussions and it soon became apparent that the Indonesians were very keen to foster improved relationships with Australia and with the Northern Territory in particular.

During my discussions with the Governor and Chief Secretary, we discussed a range of issues. From this came agreement that we would work towards developing improved relationships in a number of ways. These include student exchanges, student teacher exchanges, sporting exchanges, 2-way tourism and an exchange of trade delegations. In fact, they are very keen to have their delegation visit Darwin for our Trade Expo next year. The potential for all of these is considerable. I was very pleased to learn since my return that the Department of Education has already negotiated an expanded program of student teacher exchange with Indonesia, which I understand will include Ambon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be reporting to the Chief Minister, when I can get an appointment to see him, regarding my discussions with the Ambonese officials. I will be making recommendations to him regarding the proposals I mentioned earlier. I will also point out to the Chief Minister that there is a large ply and timber mill located on Ambon. In fact, there are 13 such mills within the Malaka region. When one considers that Ambon is only 550 nautical miles from Darwin, it is easy to work out the savings in freight costs. If we could purchase our ply and sawn timber from that source instead of our present supplier, one can imagine the reduction in building costs in the Northern Territory. I recommend that the Northern Territory government take advantage of this opportunity and work towards implementing the exchanges I have suggested.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 2 matters I wish to speak about this evening. One is a tale of woe from my electorate and concerns my constituents of both cultures. The sad fact is that a large number of Aboriginal people have appeared or are due shortly to appear before our court on charges related to petrol sniffing. Police have suggested that 63 of a total of 89 people to appear have been involved in crime related to petrol-sniffing. Much has been said about the difficulty of mixing cultures and the statistics from the court brought that home to me most graphically. The thing that seized my attention was seeing a number of petrol-sniffers in court. I have seen a number of people in court over the years and people inevitably hear what the charges are but it takes a little bit of inquiry to find out how they are related.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in my constituency, the ages of petrol-sniffers vary from 13 through to 20. It is remarkable to see an 18-year-old habitual petrol-sniffer. They look like children because their growth is remarkably curtailed. In fact, there was one defendant who was successfully defended on the basis that dentist's impressions of his teeth indicated that the person was not 19 but 15. I would not claim to have full knowledge of how these matters are to be solved. However, I must say that the degradation and the limits to which my Aboriginal constituents are being stressed by this very severe problem must be brought to the notice of this Assembly.

This issue also causes a number of cross-cultural problems within my electorate. Young people under the influence of petrol inevitably do things which are socially unacceptable. They steal motor vehicles, they damage property and, in other ways, they fail to contribute to harmonious relationships between these 2 vastly different cultures within my electorate. Indeed, recently - and it troubles me to say this - the incidence of petrol-sniffing in my electorate has done much to damage the otherwise good race relationships. I would not pretend to be the fount of all knowledge in these matters but I hope that the Department of Community Development and government instrumentalities - and I appreciate that there is a Senate inquiry

under way at the moment - have noted this extremely serious problem. It concerns not only those people who are indirectly affected, those who end up with damaged property, those who may suffer some physical violence because of the problem, but also the children who are being destroyed daily by this habit. It is not a new phenomenon but, in my electorate, it is a developing phenomenon. It has been developing for some time but it has reached a very crucial stage.

To give those people who have not visited my electorate some idea of the difficulties of mixing cultures, I think it is worth outlining the population mix of the Nhulunbuy electorate. There is an extremely affluent European population which is largely cosmopolitan. They tend to come from not only different parts of Australia but different parts of the world. Their stay in Nhulunbuy is generally limited to 3 or 4 years, sometimes longer. I have been there for 15 years but generally people stay for a much shorter period. Generally, they are extremely well educated. That does not hold across the board but they tend to be persons involved in technical fields who have skilled jobs. Their general concept of Nhulunbuy is that it is not home; it is a place to live for a few years until they see fit to leave.

It must be said that that section of my constituency by and large has little understanding of the incredible changes that are being forced upon the Aboriginal people. On the other hand, of my Aboriginal constituents, a number of the younger people speak English but there are many who speak little or no English. In English, they are illiterate in the true sense of the word. Their Aboriginality must be seen to be understood. They are persons who are very attached to their origins, to their heritage and to their culture. They are being thrust into a world that is changing at a rate that I find very difficult to cope with sometimes.

Those are the human dimensions of my electorate which, on a daily basis, inevitably cause stress. The European laws that we pass in this Assembly are being slowly understood by my Aboriginal constituents. Their application to their culture is less understood. The means by which parents can control children has yet to be developed. Hence, we have these enormous problems, particularly with petrol sniffing. Those are some of the sadder realities of my electorate.

On a brighter note, the union picnic weekend which was held in the first weekend of August was successful. Indeed, the member for Wagaman and several other NT and federal parliamentarians were there on the weekend. I assume that they enjoyed themselves. I always enjoy the weekend. I would invite all other members to come over and enjoy what Nhulunbuy can offer on that weekend. Certainly, it is most successful. I am told it offers the best pro/am golf tournament in the Territory. It certainly offered the only north Australian surfing finals. We beat Darwin this year for the first time. All in all, it was a very successful weekend.

Continuing in the sporting vein, racing has interested me for a number of years now. I was pleased to hear the Chief Minister congratulate and generally praise the Darwin Turf Club this morning for its recent very successful cup carnival. The entire carnival brings a huge influx of visitors into the Northern Territory. However, I must say that I have heard many complaints. Many people have spoken to me about the inadequacies of the facilities at the Darwin Turf Club. Of all the things that Darwin has to offer, besides politicians and public servants, a genuine earner for this town would have to be the Darwin Turf Club Carnival. The number of visitors who

occupy hotel rooms, gamble at the casino, eat at restaurants and generally put money into this community is simply amazing. It would have to be the principal source of income that Darwin has. Therefore, it was distressing to me to hear of these complaints. I was not here but I have to assume that they were genuine complaints because there were so many of them. They related to the facilities that the Darwin Turf Club was able to offer.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: There was nothing wrong with them.

Mr Dale: Absolute garbage!

Mr LEO: I must say that that surprises me. I was told that there were portable toilets, that the car-parking facilities were completely inadequate and that the bookmakers were crammed into the area. Those complaints did not come from anybody at the Darwin Turf Club. They came from the people who were there.

Mr Dale: I was there.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I was there and I did not see any of that.

Mr LEO: It was a very crowded and congested event.

Mr Dale: So was Melbourne Cup day, grand final day and open day at the giggle palace. Why don't you go there?

Mr LEO: If somebody else says I am wrong, I am prepared to cop it. However, I have listened also to a number of complaints on the radio. The number of press reports about the congestion at the Darwin Turf Club means that some of it must be true.

Given the relevance of the Darwin Turf Club Carnival to the Darwin economy, I would hope that, in capital terms, the Territory government sees fit to support the extension and development of facilities at the Darwin Turf Club. This could be easily repaid out of the development fund which the TAB has as part of its makeup. However, I am led to believe that it requires an immediate capital expenditure with repayment over a longer period of time. The amount of money that would be required to provide more acceptable facilities for visitors, I can only speculate upon. That would do no justice to what is required. However, in terms of money generated for Darwin, it would be far more worth while than some of the Mickey Mouse projects that the NT government has poured money into in this town. It is certainly true that, of all the potential income earners that Darwin has, the Darwin Cup Carnival is the most significant. I came here the Tuesday after that event and it was impossible to obtain motel accommodation in this town. Darwin was absolutely booked out.

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in the adjournment debate this afternoon on a matter that is most serious. I wish to address an article that appears on the front page of today's NT News. The article is headlined: 'Police: Why Did Union Counts Go?' The imputation in the article - and it is amplified in the editorial in the same issue - is that 3 Ministers of the Crown - myself, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Ports and Fisheries - have conspired with the Commissioner of Police to ensure that charges against the unionists involved in the Rooney barge dispute were

not proceeded with. The article refers to quotes by Mr Alex Carolan of the Police Association and Mr Shayne Coyne of the Northern Territory Confederation of Industry and Commerce about the propriety of government interference in the legal process. Neither myself nor my colleagues were contacted personally by the Northern Territory News to establish the veracity of today's allegations.

The allegations in this article strike at the very heart of the Northern Territory's political and legal system. At this stage, I would like to make it clear that neither myself, my ministers, the Commissioner of Police nor the Solicitor General have been involved in a conspiracy. The allegations are false. I have been advised formally by the Commissioner of Police that he withdrew the charges relating to these offences. I have asked the Commissioner of Police why these charges were withdrawn. I received an explanation and I am completely satisfied.

I have been advised by the Commissioner of Police and the Solicitor General that, in the ordinary course of the administration of justice, charges against persons are often withdrawn and that it is not the practice to disclose reasons publicly. They each have a discretion which can be exercised under a number of circumstances but it is a discretion which is never exercised by taking into account political influence.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about a problem which I doubt many people know about. It is a problem that is very important as far as the people in the eastern part of my electorate are concerned. I refer to gidgee poisoning.

The first point I would like to make is that it is not clear what causes gidgee poisoning. We do know that a poison called 1080 occurs in the leaves of the Acacia georginea. Specifically, it is the gidgee that grows around the Georgina River. That particular poisoning has created havoc amongst the cattle industry in the eastern part of my electorate and in the western part of Queensland ever since the industry started. There is, however, a possibility which I would like to raise and that is that it is not the poison gidgee on its own which is creating this problem. Various studies have lately raised the possibility that some of these poisons require what is called a detonator. It is a combination of another type of chemical, such as 1080, with the feed in the stomach of ruminant animals which causes the catalyst for poisoning to occur. It is interesting that it is ruminant animals only which are being affected by this because we have to consider also why the poison gidgee itself built up its defence mechanism over time. What animals existed before the cattle industry started and from which the gidgee needed to protect itself?

However, I would like to advance a few of the theories that have been raised. One was that different varieties of water actually provided this detonator. There was the old theory that only the flowering gidgee would create this poison. However, we know now that the pod of the gidgee, in fact, contains far more of this poison than the flower does. The old story was that a problem arose with gidgee only in bad seasons when all the grass had been eaten out and the cattle started to eat the gidgee. However, that has been found to be incorrect. We found on further observation that cattle can drop like flies even when there is good Mitchell grass available. We know that there is a statistical increase in the number of deaths during a long dry season. I would like first of all to raise the possibility that the green feed acts as a suppressant on whatever the detonator is or that the detonator may be present only in very small quantities during good seasons rather than the actual gidgee on its own being the problem.

I would like to give members some idea of the extent of this problem. Argadargada is an example. In the 1982-83 summer, before there were some late April rains right through the area, Argadargada was hit very severely by this. There were 600-650 head of cattle actually carted away from watering points during that one season. You can imagine what that does to the economics of a property. Given that those were only carted away from the watering points, we estimate that over 1000 head were killed by gidgee poison during that season. If you take an average price even as low as $200, that is $200 000 which that property lost. I would like members to think about this when talking about what we are going to do about it. They did not send any cattle away that year. However, they branded 50 fewer calves than they branded the year before even though they had sent no cattle away that year.

There is another story that young calves and weaners are not affected, that it is only the old steers that are affected by gidgee. Any cattle owner will tell you that that is not true, that you will find calves and weaners also affected by gidgee. One of the properties that is mainly affected is Lake Nash. The whole southern area of Lake Nash is basically off limits. It is not used because the gidgee is so extensive through that area. Argadargada is another. Manners Creek is a bad one.

Mr Vale: Tobermorey.

Mr EDE: Tobermorey is very bad.

There has also been an outbreak at Lucy Creek. Ooratippra and Atula have copped it at various times. When we talk about poison gidgee country, we are not talking in the same terms as we used to talk about the brigalow country in Queensland. That was low-carrying-capacity country. It was too thick and it did not have a great deal of grassing through it until such time as the brigalow clearing program occurred. Gidgee country is actually some of the best country available because, underneath the gidgee, there are very good grasses. As long as the gidgee is not putting the poison in, there is extremely high carrying-capacity right through that country. In fact, it has been estimated that, if we could get rid of the gidgee problem, we could double the carrying-capacity of those properties. We are talking about approximately an extra 20 000 head being carried.

Mr Coulter: What are you going to do with them? We have no abattoirs.

Mr EDE: That is the side of the problem that we are talking about. This is not a thing that the Northern Territory government can shrug its shoulders over and say that that is life. It is a major industry in my electorate and a major industry for the Territory. If we could double the carrying capacity of those properties, it is well worth trying to find some solution to the gidgee problem.

There have been proposals. Some of the properties are saying that they will have to go down this path, as there is no other way to go. The old one is that you fence the very bad stands and then bulldoze the rest. That takes me back to when some work was done on poison gidgee close to 25 years ago. In one area, they bulldozed the gidgee and fenced if off. The problem is that now, 25 years later, the gidgee has come back. It suckered right through that country and it has the problem that no grass is growing underneath it. Previously it had good grass underneath it. It is taking over the whole area and that area is becoming completely unusable. While we can gain ourselves about a 20-year span with a fair bit of capital input into fencing and bulldozing, we will still end up losing all that country 20 years later.

It is not just a problem with the Northern Territory, and I am not for a moment suggesting it is something which the Northern Territory should take on alone. There would be at least as large an area in Queensland which also has this problem because it occurs down both sides of the Georgina. As you know, the Georgina is a very good cattle area.

What needs to be done now, given that there have been quite tremendous advances in knowledge about the chemical makeup of Australian flora over the last 25 years since the last work on gidgee, is for the minister to authorise a review of the literature to try to find out something about the particular poisons that are actually affecting the cattle. You will find some very interesting material that has resulted from research in Western Australia recently with the resistances built up to 1080 by some of the native fauna, and some of the ways that they have found to actually use 1080 to control the feral animals.

If we could organise a review and obtain a few pointers on whether these detonators are causing the damage, Queensland and ourselves could approach the federal government and CSIRO. Much of the early work was done by federal departments. I think that we could find a way to increase the carrying-capacity of all that area. It would double the capacity and give us a fairly substantial increase in our ability to turn off cattle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, because we do not have a great deal of time in question time to raise points, I would like to close by mentioning to the Minister for Community Development a couple of problems with Bonya which is slightly west of the area that we are talking about. Bonya has a bore which is producing very good supplies of water on test. However, that bore has not yet been equipped. The community is still borrowing water from the people at Baikal. The people have been very cooperative and are quite happy to continue so long as it is only drinking water. As I have said many times before, what we need in the communities is not just drinking water. We need water for washing, and water for personal consumption which will take us above that 20 L per person per day level that we are talking about. I hope that the minister will be able to expedite that.

He may also be able to explain something which really sticks in my craw when I visit communities. In Bonya, I found that, whilst there was a commitment in the 1984-85 budget for 6 temporary shelters to be constructed, a couple of months ago they were still on the ground. The community asked to build them itself. However, it did not have the expertise to build them and it was to employ a contractor to build them. The contractor just dumped these 6 pre-fab temporary shelters in those communities. They still have not been built and I think that is something which could be addressed in the very near future so that we could at least solve a couple of problems at Bonya.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot resist the opportunity to respond to the member for Stuart on the question of gidgee poisoning. For the information of members, much of this is in fact confirmation of the situation outlined by the honourable member but perhaps in some more specific detail.

This problem is largely confined to the north-east Alice Springs district and adjacent Queensland stations in the region of the Georgina River and its tributaries. The poisoning is caused in cattle and other ruminants which eat the leaves and fruit of a particular species of gidgee which is restricted to the Georgina River area. The tree, Acacia georginea, has long been known to

cause poisoning but it was not until about 1960 that the chemist, Dr Ray Murray, isolated the toxin. The toxin proved to be sodium fluoro-acetate which is commonly known as 1080, a poison used to kill vermin, including the dingo. The toxin is concentrated by the gidgee tree and, while the seeds and new shoots are the most toxic, the leaves are also highly toxic. All these parts of the plant are eaten by cattle and other ruminants.

Gidgee poisoning is worst in the NT at Argadargada, Lake Nash, Georgina, Manners Creek, Marqua and Tobermorey stations. It is worse towards the end of the year when alternative feed is becoming scarce or in drought years. Heavy losses can be experienced in these circumstances if cattle are mustered or worked.

Fluoro-acetate has a variable but high toxicity in most species and there is no known antidote or preventative treatment. The toxin causes damage to the heart by killing heart muscles, causing either a heart attack or, in smaller doses, death of some heart muscle which weakens the heart function making it more prone to a heart attack. Stress, such as mustering or even a large drink of water, can induce a heart attack and death and, in bad years, many dead animals can be found around watering points. The only preventative measure which can be taken on stations with significant amounts of gidgee is to exclude those areas by fencing or by scrub pulling and killing suckers as Sam Calder attempted to do when he managed Argadargada in the early 1960s.

Mr Ede: Yes, have a look at it now.

Mr HATTON: The problem can be minimised by leaving cattle completely alone when deaths are noted and not working them in poison country until there has been a significant growth of other feed after rain. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that at present no research is being carried out by either the Department of Primary Production or the Commonwealth into the gidgee poisoning problem. I have been approached over the last month or so by the member for Braitling on this issue. He wanted joint research undertaken by CSIRO and the Department of Primary Production into the matter. I should add that any such research would and should include the Queensland government. I take that on board.

However, our research programs are now being determined in consultation with the industry. The matter will be brought to the industry consultative committees that are being established for them to determine research priorities. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will appreciate that we do not have unlimited funds for research and it would be a matter that would need to be sorted out in conjunction with industry, as will be our practice in the future.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am conscious of the hour and I will attempt to be brief. I will start by commending to some small degree the federal government's budget in relation to its identification of the need to provide assistance to the young people of Australia in an attempt to find meaningful and productive long-term employment. The federal government's budget which was brought down on Tuesday night did not contain any major dramas or traumas and, as has been mentioned several times, that was probably because it was half a budget.

Youth policies outlined therein were based on a number of reports that had been put to the federal government. These outlined a general program covering 4 areas of youth policy: training and employment; income support; education

services; and other support services. The federal government claims that, through those programs, it will spend an extra $70m this year and has committed $190m for 1986-87. I have no hesitation in putting on record that I have no problem with that expenditure as it is proposed. I wish my comments to be taken in perspective and with that background.

There is no doubt that the despair of the young unemployed is something of which we should all be conscious and pay some attention to. Concerns exist in relation to young people being ill-equipped educationally in areas to keep up with the changing workplace. Other concerns relate to the future of Australia and the appropriate integration of these young people into the overall community. However, I should say now that it is futile for governments to fabricate temporary, artificial and non-productive jobs, just as it would be counterproductive to raise unemployment conditions to a level that acts as a disincentive to young people gaining meaningful employment.

Having praised the federal government to some small degree, let me indicate some areas in which I have personal concerns in regard to the proposed policies and, in some cases, to the existing policies. Firstly, in the training area, the proposed scheme ought to ensure participation of industry. With the involvement of private industry, the scheme has some chance of success. I am convinced that the scheme will be successful if, and only if, there is proper coordination. What the federal government seems to be suggesting is that employers will carry virtually the total bag of ensuring the proper training and integration into their workplace. To some degree, that has some merit. After all, it is the employers who ought to know what they want specifically from potential employees. Experience has shown this to be so.

Recently in Alice Springs, a program involving some 11 young people was directed specifically, over a period of 12 weeks, at training young people in relation to the sale of spare parts. That need was identified by the community itself. A training program was derived based on those needs and, as I understand it, the program was 100% successful. It was successful not only because it addressed the needs of the industry itself but, more importantly, because it relied very heavily on the involvement of a competent coordinator. I understand that some concern exists within the industries' training areas that the federal program will not involve such coordination.

Income support relies on so-called rationalisation in that it will apply regardless of whether young people are at secondary school, tertiary education facilities or unemployed. There will be a phasing-in of a program that will bring all young people into the same line. They will receive similar unemployment cheques, or whatever you might like to call them, regardless of whether or not they are at school. I have no major problem with that principle but the federal government claims that it is a program which 'will aim to ensure that young people entering the labour market are better prepared and have the skills and qualifications necessary for economic independence'. The federal government therefore seeks to 'encourage young people to remain in education and training, particularly in circumstances where worthwhile employment opportunities are not available to them'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would issue some words of caution to the federal government in its implementation of this program. We have until 1987 before the majority of it comes into play. The government will need to make some realistic assessment of the impact of this in a number of areas; for example, educational systems and the load that will be placed on schools and other

institutions by what they see as higher retentions. I have no argument with higher retentions at high schools if they lead to a productive end, but we must not keep kids at school just for the sake of keeping them at school. There needs to be a realistic assessment of the actual benefits to the students themselves.

When they have finished this additional period at high school, will there be jobs for them that they have the capacity to fill? I am not saying there will not be but the government will need to ensure that the programs are tailored to meet these needs. Will they have the opportunity to attend a tertiary facility? Are we going to educate them to matriculation level and find that the federal government will impose fees again on universities, as it has flagged that it will do? To me it would seem to be fairly futile to take people who, under normal circumstances, cannot afford to stay at school, keep them there, and then impose the heavy burden of university fees on them after they have finished their high school education.

Will we produce more workers out of a scheme that simply pays kids to stay at school? I guess one way to assess the value of the proposal may be to look at some of the existing schemes that are in operation in this country. There are a number of these and I will outline them very briefly. The federal government has a secondary allowance scheme which, subject to a means test, allows all students at Years 11 and 12 to receive an annual payment of up to $1064 per annum. Of course to obtain that amount would mean that the parent or parents would be on an extremely low income. Implementation of that scheme is subject to the student being progressively assessed for performance and attendance.

The second scheme, for want of a better term, is the federal ABSEC funding which applies in a number of areas. The first one I will mention is Years 8 to 10; that is, at the lower grades in high school. I have no problem with this scheme. I think that it is great to encourage all disadvantaged people to better themselves and reach the optimum of their educational capacity. Naturally enough, a means test is not applied to this scheme but I guess some people question whether wealthy Aboriginal persons - and there are many Aboriginal people who have very high incomes, particularly in urban areas - should be given any different treatment to non-Aboriginals. However, that is a minor point and I do not want to dwell on it.

The urban scheme allows for payment of some $418 per annum and $1.50 per week plus books, fares and clothing allowances. It works basically on the principle that all costs will be met for the student to attend school. It applies to non-urban students in Years 8 to 10. In addition, students are paid school fees or, if they go to a private school, boarding fees, plus air fares. Once again, I guess I do not have a real problem with that but, of course, alongside them are poor kids, particularly from remote areas, who are heading off to the same schools under the Isolated Children's Allowance Scheme which is means tested, naturally enough. Under that scheme, fees are not paid and air fares are not available. In fact, the Northern Territory is left to pick up the tab there, which we do gladly because we believe that all young Territorians deserve the opportunity for improved education.

The senior ABSEC scheme, Years 11 and 12, has a higher rate per annum. I think $597 per annum and $6 per fortnight is paid to students. However, once again, there is no real assessment of the performance or attendance even of Aboriginal students. I say that knowing that there is a criterion that, if Aboriginal students fail to attend for 12 consecutive days, their subsidy is

withdrawn. That relates to those who have not been prepaid in bulk. I am told by high school liaison people that, in some cases, students who are wise to the system miss 11 days, attend for 1, miss 11 again and attend 1 and so on. Certainly that cannot work in their own best interests and I would like to see the government assess the value of paying taxpayers' dollars in those areas. More importantly, I would like it to develop a scheme that will encourage these young people to stay at school so that they have a chance to improve themselves.

In addition, the Northern Territory has a secondary allowance scheme which is subject to a means test. It is open to all students in Years 8 to 10 and is designed to cover that block that is not covered by the federal government. We seem to have to keep filling in the gaps. In that scheme, $240 per annum is paid to students, subject to a performance and attendance assessment. I believe all schemes should be monitored in some way, even if it is only on an attendance basis. In relation to ABSEC schemes, some check should be made that the dollars actually serve the intended purpose which is to educate those young people. That is extremely important because many allegations have been made over the years, despite the presence of Aboriginal Liaison Officers who supposedly check what happens in the field. No system like that will expose all of the problems but I would suggest that the federal government pay some attention to that area. To conclude, I would like to see all students receive equal treatment basically.

The federal government's increase in unemployment benefits is another area that needs to be carefully assessed and monitored. I am aware of a number of specific cases relating to families. For example, I know a couple with 5 children who lived in rented premises. I attempted to assist them and, in fact, they have declined jobs which paid $300 per week on the basis that social security payments to them amounted to almost that amount. In addition, when you take into account the Medicare payment that is made on their behalf, and the housing rebate schemes and other concessions, it is no wonder that the guy would prefer to stay home for 40 hours a week and talk to his wife or whatever. Such a system has to have some problems. I do not know if that equation applies to young people. I hope it does not, but certainly that is an area that the government ought to be monitoring in order to assess whether people are being encouraged to find gainful employment or encouraged to stay at home.

I would like to conclude on a pet subject of mine, and that is aged people. When we looked at the Territory budget, I was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition invited critical comment. Once again, pensioners received nil. All they received was the normal November indexation and no increase in supplementary income allowance. What do you think our senior citizens think when they see that 18-year-olds, not living at home, are to get an extra $13 per week? Single parents are to get an extra $2, and probably that is all fair enough and I am not arguing about that. But how do you think those senior citizens who have contributed to the development of the Northern Territory and of Australia would feel when, at a time when they ought to be sitting back and enjoying the benefits of the development of this country, they are now to see younger people who are more able to obtain work, not only receiving greater increases in benefits but additional income allowances? The income allowance for pensioners has not been raised even by $1. But young people can earn an extra $30 a week on top of their benefits. Is it fair? On

behalf of oldies, I say to the federal government: 'Let's get fair dinkum and address ourselves to looking after the senior citizens in this country who deserve far better treatment'.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Alice Springs Abattoir

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 513 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to the Alice Springs abattoir. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

'To the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth that the Alice Springs abattoirs, situated on Smith Street, Alice Springs, at this point in time, and for the second consecutive year, remains non-operational. This has been because of the lack of expertise and the inexperience of previous and proposed operators to compete against other abattoirs operating in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, we ask this Assembly to request the Chief Minister to honour his commitment made to workers at the abattoirs and the business community of Alice Springs, and get the abattoirs working by installing an experienced, competent and financially secure group or individual to operate the abattoirs under a tally system. The Alice Springs abattoirs has the potential to become the biggest in the Territory. The Alice Springs abattoirs working at full capacity will bring to a halt the thousands and thousands of cattle leaving the Territory for processing interstate. The Alice Springs abattoirs operating at capacity would ensure that finance by way of wages and employment by kindred industries would enhance the way of life for the workers and the business community of Alice Springs in the first instance and the Territory as a whole. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray'.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Senator Bernie Kilgariff

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Senator Bernie Kilgariff from the federal parliament. On your behalf, I would like to welcome the senator to the Chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

MESSAGE FROM ACTING ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: I have received the following message from His Honour the Acting Administrator. It is message No 3:

'I, James Henry Muirhead, the Acting Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, pursuant to section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to appropriate certain sums out of the consolidated fund for the service of the year ended 30 June 1986'.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1985-86
(Serial 137)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

In doing so, Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present the Northern Territory budget for 1985-86. In many ways, the shaping of this year's budget has been a more challenging task than in any year since self-government. Honourable members are aware of the severe budgetary constraints that the Commonwealth government has imposed on the states and the Northern Territory and, in fairness, on itself. These constraints have seen a far lower level of Commonwealth assistance for this financial year than Territorians might have expected.

Mr Speaker, honourable members will also recall the spending cuts in the federal mini-budget in May this year and the disproportionate burden those reductions placed on Territorians. The federal Labor government's vindictive cuts saw a 50% decrease in the operating subsidy for NTEC. Not long afterwards, at the Premiers Conference, we saw a reduction in the general revenue-sharing formula in the Memorandum of Understanding, and also a reduction in the base level assistance used to determine Commonwealth funding for 1985-86. These cuts cost Territorians at least $52m.

Mr Speaker, my government responded decisively in June with the production of a mini-budget of its own for 1985-86. As a result of these belt-tightening measures, taxes and charges in the Territory have been brought more into line with those of the states and should end, once and for all, claims that Territorians are not making a reasonable revenue-raising effort. I would like to commend Territorians for the spirit with which they have accepted those added charges. At the time of taking those difficult decisions, I foreshadowed that Territorians would welcome this year's budget and I am happy to announce that there will be no new increased taxes or charges this year. Thanks to those difficult decisions, I am now able to present a budget which will strengthen the Territory's long-term economic viability and growth. It is a budget which maintains essential programs and provides for important new initiatives. I see 1985-86 as the year to put the past behind us and look afresh at what must be done to develop the Territory and to make it an even better place in which to live. That, Mr Speaker, is what we have done in this budget. The budget strategy this year has a dual theme in order to achieve long-term economic viability and growth. Firstly, there is selective injection of additional resources into key areas and, secondly, a restructuring of financial arrangements to allow more efficient and effective spending of taxpayers' money.

The economic outlook: As in previous years, the Territory experienced a high level of economic growth in 1984-85. In the 12 months to June 1985 the population rose by over 3%, to about 143 000 people. This represented a continued growth well above that of any other state or territory and was some 3 times the national average. Government policies have promoted employment opportunities, created jobs and have been designed to increase economic activity.

In 1984-85, employment grew by over 10% with the major growth occurring in the past 6 months. During the year, as measured to March 1985, employment in

the private sector increased by 18% while the public sector share of employment continued its downward trend. The Territory's main industry, mining, increased the total value of mineral production to $872m - a real increase of some 15% in the year. This was in spite of federal government policies on uranium exports. Had we been given the opportunity to open our 2 new uranium mines at the same time Roxby Downs was given its green light, our mineral production would have touched $1000m in this period. Mr Speaker, the Territory's major growth industry during 1984-85 was, as expected, tourism, which recorded increases of over 20% in both takings and activity.

The housing industry also expanded during the year. In the 12 months to the end of March 1985, the number of new dwellings commenced in the Northern Territory increased by 15% to 2730, and the value of these dwellings was $130m. Over this same period, $156m was spent on commercial buildings, and this was an increase of over 50% on the previous year, another indicator of significant growth.

Prospects for 1985-86: The government is committed to expanding the Territory economy, particularly in terms of job-creation in the private sector. Population growth is expected to continue at some 3% per annum, with significant growth in Katherine and Alice Springs and a slowing of the growth rate in the Darwin area. The high growth in Katherine in 1985-86 is partly due to developments at Tindal. I am delighted to see the Commonwealth government budget confirm that Tindal will proceed by its allocation of $28m to this project. It is difficult to overestimate the effects of Tindal on Katherine. Ultimately, the population of Katherine will double, securing its position as the third largest centre in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, as you would already know, Katherine is poised to become the Territory's major source of food production.

Economic growth can be affected favourably by prudent economic expenditure and initiatives. The Territory economy will be stimulated by the 2% real expansion of our government's capital works expenditure to $189m during 1985-86. If we include NTEC's capital works, total capital works expenditure will rise to $254m in this period. This expansion is in contrast to a projected decline in capital expenditure by governments elsewhere in Australia. A notable aspect of the Territory's program is the construction of the Channel Island Power-station. We have been able to achieve this expansion despite federal government cutbacks to our funding.

The building industry is expecting a continued high level of activity, particularly in Katherine and Alice Springs. In addition to providing a steady supply of land in Darwin, there will be a significant increase in land turn-off in Katherine and Alice Springs to satisfy the high demand in those areas.

Mr Speaker, prospects for the mining industry are also sound with expansions expected in certain sections of the industry, particularly the gold mining industry. Unfortunately, investment in the exploration area during 1985-86 is expected to continue to decline because of the cumulative effect of the Commonwealth's uranium and land rights policies. However, the picture is much brighter in relation to offshore oil and gas. The Jabiru oilfield development is expected to come on stream in 1985-86 and, with Darwin as the main staging base, this will bring substantial benefit to the Territory. While most of the oil will be exported, equipment will be fabricated in Darwin and all base operations conducted from here.

As for gas, I wish to announce that the Northern Territory government will be formally establishing a task force to supervise the investigation and assessment of the Bonaparte Gulf gas reserves and the potential for the Northern Territory to sell these reserves into the Asian market in the mid-1990s. This potential project will have an ultimate cost of $3000m, an investigation and assessment period of at least 3 years and will take 7 years to complete once work starts. Mr Speaker, $240 000 has been set aside in this budget for the Minister for Mines and Energy to set up the working group which will involve government and private industry personnel to realise the Northern Territory's gas potential and turn it into market share. The committee's role will be ongoing for 3 years.

Tourism is continuing to prove itself a dynamic and successful industry in the Northern Territory and it is growing at an even better rate than in previous years, and this should continue during 1985-86. Once again, my government is directing considerable energy towards this sector to ensure its success. The Territory economy and, therefore, all Territorians are benefiting from the success of this industry.

The devaluation of the Australian dollar over the past 6 months opens up export opportunities. The government has taken a number of initiatives to foster development of Asian markets. These include our policies on mineral exploration and mining, the establishment of the trade development zone, the establishment of tourism offices overseas and the promotion of agricultural and horticultural export industries. A major cloud on this horizon continues to be transport, notably lack of air freight space and inadequate scheduled passenger flights to neighbouring countries. We have initiated talks on these matters with a view to establishing regular freight services for our primary producers.

I turn now to the specifics of the budget. Once again, the Territory has managed to balance its books. Total appropriations amount to $1136m. Although this is a 5.5% increase on the previous year in money terms, the increase is 2.5 percentage points below the rate of inflation predicted for the coming year by the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, last Tuesday. Honourable members should bear in mind that this figure does not include certain spending by authorities such as NTEC on the Channel Island Power-station. However, while exercising this tight rein on expenditure, the government has still been able to provide funds for a wide range of new initiatives. I wish now to move to some of the key elements in the 1985-86 budget. I will deal first with economic services.

Tourism: Nobody now underestimates the importance of tourism to the Northern Territory. Government initiatives have seen this fledgling industry spring from nowhere to become second only to mining in our economy. The key to our success in promoting tourism in the Northern Territory is undoubtedly the Yulara project. Much has been said in this Chamber about the financial exposure we face as a result of this bold initiative. I will outline today how we will reduce the extent of that exposure. Let me review briefly the history of our efforts to provide services for our world-renowned tourist attraction at Uluru.

Government commitment to the replacement of substandard accommodation and facilities at the Uluru National Park extends back well before self-government. In 1982, the entire responsibility for building the resort was placed in the hands of the Yulara Development Company in which the Territory Insurance Office had the substantial beneficial interest. The

Northern Territory government maintains its commitment to ensuring the financial capacity of that company to reach its objectives. The project is now complete and has moved into its operational phase. Expert consulting advice received at the outset indicated that returns from the hotels in particular would be sufficient to cover all costs at Yulara, including servicing of the massive capital investment involved. Any direct government financial support was projected to be recovered in the longer term.

A number of factors have emerged which have changed the assumption used in these original projections. The primary one is Australia's very high real interest rates. Another is the failure of the federal government to honour its commitment to provide a new international airport in Darwin, which has resulted in a catastrophic setback to our strategies for marketing the Territory as an international tourist destination and to the viability of our major tourist assets. Further, the federal government's failure to improve facilities at Alice Springs airport has affected the tourist industry so much that we are prepared to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth to ensure the financial survival of our central Australian tourist infrastructure. It is becoming increasingly clear that hotel profits at the Yulara project will not provide sufficient surplus to service the investments outside the hotels themselves. On that basis, the magnitude of our direct support payments will remain large. Consequently, certain principles have been settled to ensure Yulara becomes a profitable entity in its own right.

Mr Speaker, the first principle is that, in common with any other town in the Territory, infrastructure of a governmental character will be owned directly by the government and charged in the normal way so that the commercial elements can compete for business on the same basis as they do elsewhere. The second principle is that the major hotel operators will adjust their standards, and therefore their cost structures, to ensure the highest possible occupancy levels. The third principle is that greater coordination in marketing of Yulara will be achieved with the cooperation of the hotel operators, the Tourist Commission, the airlines and other operators in the travel industry. The fourth principle is that efforts should be made to encourage visitors to extend their stay at Yulara.

Turning then to the first principle, the Territory government will adopt its usual direct responsibility for providing essential service infrastructure just as in any other Territory town. We have decided, therefore, to relieve the project of all costs associated with water, sewerage and general housing. To effect this, we will purchase those non-commercial elements from the Yulara Development Company. The cost, which is reflected in this budget, for water and sewerage will be in the order of $5.5m and, for housing, $14.2m. This represents the cost to the Yulara Development Company of constructing those assets. This sort of expenditure, while large in the first instance, will see a reduction in debt to be serviced by the company and, consequently, savings for the government in its supporting contributions for the project in the long term.

Mr Speaker, as to the second principle on readjustment of facilities to meet market demands, I have initiated discussions with Sheraton executives both here and in the USA and we appreciate the cooperation they have already shown.

On the third point, marketing, we have begun a concentrated review of our activities. This study will embrace not only Yulara but other major hotel developments in the Territory.

The fourth principle will see a change of complexion of the project aimed at lengthening the average stay of visitors. The government has commissioned a report which makes certain recommendations in this regard and we will also be drawing upon international resort experience.

My government is determined to see that Yulara is soundly and commercially established as a critical element of our tourism drive. Its success will improve the tempo of business activity throughout the Territory. The main thrust of these changes is to put the provision of essential services on a similar footing to that of other Territory towns.

On the broad tourism front, Tourist Commission funding remains at a high level. In 1984-85, staff numbers were increased consistent with the government's high profile in the national and international tourist scene. The commission undertook a major one-off promotional campaign. In 1985-86, staff numbers are to be maintained, and funding for ongoing activities is to be $1m more in real terms than in 1983-84. The very high level of expenditure on tourism will continue to foster growth in the tourist industry and keep us on track for our target of one million tourists in the Territory by 1994.

Trade development zone: Last year, it was announced that the Territory would investigate the possibility of creating a trade development zone and some funds were provided for this purpose. These investigations have now been largely completed and we are at the stage where real work on creating the zone can begin. $2.7m will be spent on the zone in 1985-86, $2m of which is of a capital nature. Significant additional expenditure will be required next year and, at this stage, it is hoped to have commercial operations on-site before December 1986.

Mining: The mining sector retains its key position in the Territory's economy. The recurrent budget allocations this year basically maintain the status quo, but there has been a change in the administrative arrangements and this is now reflected in the budget documents. Provision has been included for the use of privately-operated laboratories. In the short-to-medium term, this is expected to mean savings as well as a higher standard of service to the government and new job opportunities through the additional services now being offered to the private sector. Provision is being included in the capital works program to expand core storage areas in Darwin and Alice Springs at a total cost of $350 000, and dangerous goods storage will be possible in Alice Springs with the construction of a $175 000 facility.

Water resources: The Department of Mines and Energy budget includes new initiative funding of $250 000 to undertake specialist groundwater assessments at Wildman River where cashew nut experimentation is progressing, at White Gums in Alice Springs to facilitate the turnoff of residential allotments and at Kings Canyon to establish basic data on water supplies for a prospective tourist development.

Primary production: This remains one of the Territory's key growth areas. The budget provides for an 18% increase in 1985-86, most of which is attributable to an expansion of the bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, involving additional expenditure of over $3m. 1985-86 is one of the peak expenditure years in the overall eradication campaign and this strategy will enable the target of eradication by 1992 to be achieved. There is also a significant number of more modest new initiatives which should result in greater economic activity in this sector. These include $65 000 for a new cashew nut development project, $40 000 for the provision of a clean

nursery scheme, $150 000 for an expansion of mimosa control activities and $130 000 to establish a viable weeds control unit in the southern region of the Northern Territory.

Fisheries: This government is committed to the development of the fishing industry and maximising its benefits to the Territory economy. The Department of Ports and Fisheries was created in December 1984 to focus the government's efforts towards fisheries development, and an increase of 33% in the 1985-86 budget to $2.8m reflects this emphasis. The funding includes an allocation for consultants to complete fisheries infrastructure planning. My government will be considering specific initiatives for fishing industry projects during the year. Programs to provide facilities and services for operators in the fishing industry should see Darwin become the major port in northern Australia for servicing fishing fleets. Vessel lay-up areas, handling and processing facilities, cold storage and vessel servicing establishments are all essential in this program, and my government will be working with private sector interests to ensure appropriate facilities are available.

In addition, the Department of Ports and Fisheries will focus its attention on development markets for the Territory's fish products. The aquaculture industry also holds significant growth prospects, and the department will be working with private developers to facilitate technology transfer, the availability of land and water, and the training of new participants. A proposal to develop a cannery for agricultural and fish products is being actively pursued jointly by the Northern Territory Development Corporation and the departments immediately concerned.

I turn now to social issues. There is good news for the youth of the Northern Territory in 2 significant new programs worth $678 000 run by the Northern Territory Police. The first is a school-based community policing program introduced to counter juvenile crime. A pilot program began in September 1984 whereby the Northern Territory Police stationed a constable at Casuarina High School with the purpose of developing good school, community and police relationships. The scheme proved very successful and there has been a significant reduction in criminal damage and break-ins at the school. There has also been a perceptible and improved change in attitudes towards law and order issues and the police generally. A total of $468 000 has been included in the 1985-86 budget to employ some 10 police constables and 3 support staff to extend this program to other schools.

The other major initiative in police expenditures is the full implementation of the Junior Police Rangers Program. The purpose of this program is to encourage leadership qualities in young people and enable them to acquire skills in public safety amongst others. The rangers will receive training in areas such as boating and firearms safety, fire control, flora and fauna, conservation and multi-cultural and multi-racial understanding. It is estimated that spending on this program in the 1985-86 year will be $210 000.

Mr Speaker, a significant new program has begun under the joint management of the Departments of Education and Health. Health and leadership camps for year 11 students are to be held in all major centres in the Territory at an estimated cost of $40 000. In fact, Mr Speaker, the first camp was held only last weekend just outside Darwin.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme will continue in 1985-86 at an estimated cost of $85 000. This scheme is designed to encourage young people to use their initiative and skills to promote good citizenship. The

Department of Education has a special provision of $120 000 for a special sports education events program which will send teams of Territory youngsters to national and international sporting events.

Appropriations to the new Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs have been increased by 14% to $4.7m. The grants-in-aid scheme for youth, sport and recreation organisations will be expanded. It is also intended to commence courses in areas of practical benefit to youth activities, including aspects such as the conduct of meetings, fund raising and how to seek information on services and facilities. This program is an outcome of the discussions with young people during the International Youth Year and the first course should commence in early 1986.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Community Development is heavily involved in youth matters, particularly through its welfare arm. I have mentioned elsewhere in this speech some of the expansions in the welfare area, many of which affect youth. However, I want to highlight a particular new program which is specifically aimed at the Territory's youth.

This year's budget provides for a pilot Youth Mentor Program. Under this program, adults will spend time with children with behavioural problems, particularly those who are on the verge of being committed to institutional care. It is intended that the children will be taken on outings and involved in various activities where they will experience and hopefully develop more socially acceptable behavioural patterns. Results of the program will be assessed at the end of the year.

Also, the federal government has provided $30 000 to undertake a study of youth issues at Palmerston. The purpose of the study is to determine the needs of youth in that rapidly-growing centre and to make recommendations on programs that can be implemented to satisfy these needs.

School leavers: In this International Year of Youth, it is appropriate that I spend some time highlighting this government's efforts in helping young Territorians in regard to their employment prospects. This year's budget will provide for a number of new programs in addition to the maintenance of existing programs for youth. The Territory will fund a wide range of programs designed to provide our young people with employment skills and appropriate work attitudes. We have high school students undertaking initial programs in our technical and further education institutions and, throughout the Territory, we are funding preparation programs which are designed to enhance the prospects for employment of school leavers. The Territory government is examining ways to increase the number of trainees in this latter program. Financial support of $30 000 is being provided to the Bindi Centre in Alice Springs for vocational programs for disadvantaged youth.

The scholarship scheme run by the Department of Industry and Small Business for management training is to be expanded from the existing 8 positions to a total of 20 full-time study positions. The emphasis will be on the tourist industry and the trainees will have on-the-job experience by working in industry during semester breaks.

Approximately $1m will be spent on the successful apprentice training scheme. This provides training and travel costs for apprentices undertaking the TAFE component of their apprenticeship training, including support of the Group Apprenticeship Scheme run by the Master Builders Association.

The Conservation Commission also has a number of programs specifically designed for the youth of the Northern Territory. The Ranger Training Scheme is designed for young people with matriculation and offers a 4-year course in both field and office training. The trainees undertake tertiary studies in resource management. The commission provides technical and field training under the NESA scheme so that Aboriginal youth can acquire sufficient skills to be eligible to participate in the full Ranger Training Scheme. A further 5 places are available outside the NESA scheme for non-matriculated applicants who can move into the full Ranger Training Scheme once they demonstrate their capacity and aptitude.

About 30 new apprenticeships are created each year as apprentices complete their training in the Territory's major construction authorities, NTEC and the Department of Transport and Works. Both employ significant numbers of apprentices totalling over 170 at any point of time. I would like to emphasise that the apprenticeships and other opportunities I have detailed are available to young women as well as young men.

The federal budget, brought down last week, signalled the Commonwealth's intention to hold discussions with state and territory governments with a view to the remission of payroll tax and workers' compensation premiums for apprentices. The Territory is happy to participate in these talks because it should lead to better employment prospects for our young people.

Mr Speaker, we are working in close cooperation with the federal government on a range of federally-funded programs to provide basic skills, access, pre-employment and apprenticeship training. The Territory government will participate eagerly in the Commonwealth's proposed traineeship system for young people.

In the past, the government has made an effort to provide employment opportunities for school leavers and for students during the Christmas holiday period. The government has decided to continue with this policy and $250 000 has been included in the Treasurer's Advance to meet emerging costs. It is intended that smaller communities will also benefit from this program and specific amounts will be set aside for this purpose.

Women: The government has continued to give women and women's issues priority in this budget. All existing programs designed to enhance the status of women will continue, including the Women's Advisory Council and the Office of Equal Opportunity. To facilitate my continued involvement with equal opportunities, the Office of Equal Opportunity appropriations are now under my portfolio as Chief Minister. There has been some expansion of women's programs this year. The most significant is the commissioning of a special study of problems faced by women living in remote areas. $55 000 has been earmarked for the study which will survey women in mining and tourist towns, cattle stations and Aboriginal communities. It is expected that the information gained will be invaluable in deciding on strategies which will enable women in remote areas to play their rightful role in Territory society.

The Department of Health's budget allows $30 000 for an expansion of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre. An additional social worker will be employed to allow a 24-hour counselling service.

I would also remind honourable members of the undertaking I made earlier in the year to fill the gap left by the Commonwealth's cancellation after 31 December 1985 of payments for pre-schools. This will cost the Territory government an extra $170 000 in 1985-86 and $340 000 in a full financial year.

I am also pleased to see that the Commonwealth has made provision for a new program related to education for girls. While the details of this program have not been finalised, it is expected that it will be necessary for the Territory government to work closely in tandem with the Commonwealth in a concerted effort to highlight some of the problems that girls experience at school and provide solutions to some of those problems.

Sport: A most exciting new initiative to improve the overall sporting performances of Territorians is the introduction this year of a coaches-in-residence scheme. The scheme will enable sporting organisations to employ top-level coaches on short-term contracts to work with Territory coaches, players and juniors, as well as preparing teams for the nationals. The coaches-in-residence scheme will be operated by sporting organisations.

The capital works program includes the provision of $7.6m for stage 2 of the Marrara Sporting Complex. The funds will be used primarily to provide a grandstand in the main football stadium and will bring Territory facilities up to a standard similar to that of the states.

Health: Health expenditures are expected to rise by about 11% this year to $129m. The bulk of that increase is attributable to the maintenance of existing standards of service and reflects, in particular, the impact of the introduction of the 38-hour week for nurses and industrial staff. Nevertheless, there have been a number of new programs included in the 1985-86 allocations. These include $330 000 to open the fifth operating theatre at the Royal Darwin Hospital, $220 000 to open the Palmerston Health Centre and Dental Clinic, $226 000 as a part of the national campaign against drug abuse and $149 000 for the Parap Day Care Centre for the aged and disabled.

With Commonwealth financial assistance, a Territory-wide AIDS program will concentrate on public education, counselling, treatment and blood testing. Other communicable disease programs will also receive additional resources with a view to prevention, early identification and treatment of disease.

The government will also initiate additional psychiatric programs in major centres and will assist in the establishment of a psychiatric halfway house in Darwin.

1985-86 will see the commencement of the construction of the $3m 32-bed children's ward at the Katherine Hospital. I know, Mr Speaker, that you do not really have an interest in that, but that you would welcome it anyway. Moreover, the government has commissioned a further study of the viability of a private hospital in Darwin.

Finally, in relation to health matters, the 1985-86 budget reflects the devolution of certain health surveyor functions to local government. During 1984-85, offers were made to local government authorities and Alice Springs has accepted the offer. $149 000 has been allocated to the Alice Springs Town Council for this program. Negotiations are still being held with the Darwin City Council.

Police: Overall police operational expenditure is planned to increase by $665 000 this year, reflecting the initiatives for the Territory that I have already outlined. In capital works, there is an $800 000 provision for new cell block and station extensions at Tennant Creek. In addition, $100 000 has been allocated for the restoration of the historic Roper Bar Police Station and to provide some public facilities at the site.

Primary and secondary education: Education expenditures are planned to increase by $11.2m or 8.6%. Of this increase, $2m is for new and expanded programs. This budget allows for an additional 103 school-based staff because of increased student numbers, plus a further 43 staff to provide teachers in homeland centre schools already constructed or to be constructed during 1985-86. $120 000 has also been included in this year's budget for truancy officers.

Mr Speaker, $224 000 has been provided for the expansion of the pilot program to use the AUSSAT satellite. These funds will enable a studio to be equipped and trials to commence on developing education techniques appropriate to satellite technology.

To ensure greater consultation and involvement of Aboriginal communities in designing and constructing their schools, $950 000 will be provided directly to the communities.

As a result of the population growth in Palmerston, a new pre and primary school is to be constructed at Moulden at an estimated cost of $6m. In Katherine, a new pre-school, primary school and high school are to be constructed at a total cost of $18.5m to cater for the population increase resulting from the development of Tindal. The high school will include community facilities as well. In Darwin, a possible $4.5m has been allowed to cater for increased high school enrolments although the precise program of works to be undertaken will depend upon a final decision on the senior high schools strategy. Similarly, $1m has been set aside for expansion of high schools in Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, before moving on to discuss the specifics of tertiary education changes, it is appropriate that I highlight some of the administrative changes that have occurred and are now reflected in this budget. In essence, the budget documents now reflect the 2 fundamental classifications of tertiary education: advanced education and technical and further education. All appropriations for advanced education will be to the Northern Territory Council for Higher Education which has overall responsibility for advising the Minister for Education on advanced education matters. Similarly, in regard to technical and further education, all appropriations will be via the TAFE Advisory Council which performs substantially the same role regarding TAFE matters. This should improve resource allocation across the 2 sectors.

Advanced education: Total expenditure on advanced education is projected to rise by $1.2m or 16%. A new initiative is the provision for the establishment and costs of basic nurse education. At the Darwin Institute of Technology, it is intended that 30 Territorians will graduate each year from nurses' courses. The government is keen to expand this number and is examining methods to achieve this. A nursing studies facility has also been included in the 1985-86 capital works program at an estimated cost of $780 000.

The university: A glaring gap in the Territory's advanced education infrastructure is our lack of a university. In the light of the Commonwealth's refusal to accept any responsibility for providing university courses to Territory residents, and in particular to young Territorians matriculating from our high schools until 1991 at the earliest, the Territory government has decided to take the initiative on this vital piece of social and educational infrastructure. We are determined to halt the social,

intellectual and economic drain from our community resulting directly from the lack of a university. Mr Speaker, January 1987 has been targeted for the first intake of students of the Territory's proposed university. $200 000 has been appropriated in 1985-86 to accelerate planning. There may be further developments requiring expenditure during the year, and I will keep honourable members posted on those from time to time.

Technical and further education: Overall expenditure on TAFE is projected to increase by $3m or 11.5% reflecting the priority this government places on technical and further education. A large part of the increase is attributable to the full-year cost of courses already begun but with particular focus again on tourism and hospitality industries. Funding for these courses has been increased to $474 000.

Community services: The growing town of Palmerston has a high proportion of young families. The government has responded to its needs and will provide a house to the newly-elected Palmerston council for use by community organisations. The Housing Commission will offer accommodation to Family Day Care Incorporated for the establishment of a regional office in Palmerston to enable its work to be expanded.

As far as counselling services are concerned, the government is concerned at the failure of the federal government to provide marriage guidance services throughout the Territory and this has been of great concern. We want to ensure that this valuable service is available to all regions in the Territory where it is urgently needed. In this year's budget, the Territory government will help the Marriage Guidance Council to spread its services Territory wide, in addition to assisting the upgrading of its Darwin office. The Marriage Guidance Council is funded by the federal government and, unfortunately, on its present allocation cannot extend its services past the Darwin area without our help. Additionally, there is a desperate need for general counselling services in all major Territory centres. The government will be establishing over the next 3 years a comprehensive counselling service for all Territorians and $250 000 has been set aside in this year's budget to commence the program.

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

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister be granted an extension of time to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I turn now to welfare services. There has been a significant expansion in welfare expenditure in the 1985-86 budget. Eight new positions have been funded at a total cost of $234 000. These are concerned with statutory functions principally associated with the Community Welfare, Juvenile Justice and Adoption of Children Acts and are to support, maintain and improve the level of service in a range of community programs. A new office will be established in Palmerston to provide a full range of welfare services to the new town's growing population. It is intended that the new office will place increased emphasis on prevention of welfare problems by liaison with other government and non-government agencies.

Pensioner assistance: The other significant change in welfare spending is the increased provision for pensioner concessions. An extra $739 000 has been set aside in the budget to meet the higher costs from increased pensioner numbers and, more particularly, the impact of increased tariffs announced in

the June mini-budget. Pensioner concessions for electricity and bus fares are projected to rise substantially in 1985-86 accounting for most of the increase.

Correctional services: The new Department of Correctional Services was established during 1984-85. Following a review of the existing policies and practices and the publishing of the Apsey Report, provision is made for an additional 13 staff in 1985-86. They will help strengthen the corporate structure, expand the Prison Industry Program and increase probation and parole activities. The latter positions, in particular, are designed to expand the sentencing options available to the courts, reducing the need to send offenders to prison unless it is necessary.

Retirement village: In other parts of the world such as Arizona in the United States, the needs of retirees have been met by the development of retirement villages. The environment and climate of these places have been major considerations in marketing them successfully. I believe we have a great opportunity to promote Alice Springs as the ideal place for retiring Australians to spend their sunset years. The spectacularly successful Sun City in Phoenix Arizona is one example of how acceptable the idea is to elderly people. This budget provides $150 000 to establish a group to plan, design and organise the finance and construction of a new retirement community of ultimately 20 000 Australians in the Alice Springs region.

I turn to essential services. Electricity: Following the Commonwealth decision to cut the NTEC subsidy in half, substantial revisions have had to be made to NTEC's budget. The actual appropriations to the commission will decrease by 32%. However, expenditure by the commission is projected to increase significantly. Total operating expenditure is projected to rise by 8% to $138m this year, while capital expenditures are projected to rise by some $30m. This increase in capital works expenditure is largely to do with Channel Island. There has also been an increase in Channel Island Power-station requirements. General works are to be increased, particularly in Tennant Creek and Katherine where machinery is to be upgraded and converted to use gas at an overall cost of $24m. The Katherine expansion will cater for the substantial increase in electricity demand following the Commonwealth's decision to proceed with Tindal. In order to fund these increased expenditures while facing a reduced Commonwealth subsidy, operating revenues must rise by 25%. We have already announced earlier this year progressive tariff increases to make up some of the shortfall. In addition, there will be substantial use of semi-government borrowings to fund the majority of the capital works program and also to capitalise the deficit on operations.

Services to Aboriginal communities: This is a major area of thrust in this year's budget. It has been decided to lay the groundwork for Aboriginal communities to take much greater responsibility for identification of their needs and for design and construction and management of all essential services on their communities. Under current arrangements, there is a mix of responsibilities between the Departments of Transport and Works and Community Development, and the communities themselves.

It is now proposed, firstly, to place in the Department of Community Development full responsibility for the flow of funds to Aboriginal communities. This change is reflected in the budget documents. The second element of the changed administrative arrangements, which is not yet finalised, is for the communities themselves to accept far greater responsibility for the construction of assets and management of services. In

relation to recurrent services, each community will have the opportunity to decide its own priorities in the use of an overall allocation of funding provided by the government. Criteria are being developed to ensure an equitable distribution between communities according to need. In addition, communities will be able to bid for government funding of capital projects. Once granted, the funding will be made available to communities to enable them to carry out the construction of the facility in their own way. This could involve the use of labour from within the community, private contractors and consultants or, alternatively, the relevant agencies in the Northern Territory government on a fee-for-service basis.

It is hoped and expected that the revised administrative arrangements will achieve 2 basic goals: firstly, services and facilities will be provided in a cost-efficient manner to a standard desired by each community and, secondly, and equally importantly, the new administrative arrangements are a significant step forward in the process of self-management. Further, there should be a significant benefit from staff savings due to the removal of existing cumbersome procedures.

Water and sewerage: I have already announced earlier this year the proposed investigation into the pros and cons of establishing a water authority. All water and sewerage related expenditures in the Department of Transport and Works would transfer to any newly-created authority. At this stage, there are no substantial changes to ongoing operations but new works totalling $8.8m are proposed for 1985-86. Two major items are the augmentation of the sewerage treatment facilities and the water supply facilities in Alice Springs as a result of expansion in the town. This is the first stage of a major water and sewerage works in Alice Springs which will ultimately cost $12m.

Roads: Roads are one area where the emphasis has been on consolidation. The proposed new works program totals $42m and, when added to the works in progress of $26m, this produces one of the single most important areas of capital expenditure and employment in the Northern Territory. The expenditures are to be incurred in virtually every area of the Territory, and I would refer honourable members to Budget Paper No 5 for the specific details of the works in progress and the new works.

Housing: The housing industry is fundamental to the Northern Territory economy. As I mentioned earlier, commencements last year grew by 15%. Total expenditures by the Housing Commission will be just under $170m. Although this represents a 1% decrease on the previous year, there are, however, a number of significant offsetting adjustments since 1984-85. The expenditure on construction will remain at much the same level as in past years. Total acquisitions are up by nearly $11m, primarily as a result of the purchase of public housing assets at Yulara that I mentioned earlier. This increase is offset somewhat by a reduced provision for land acquisition. A special addition has also been made to the Housing Commission's program to enable its assets to be repaired and maintained at a reasonable level. Overall maintenance expenditures are up by $1.8m providing greater employment as well as maintaining the value of public housing stock.

Significant saving to the government has resulted from adjustments to the Home Loans Scheme. The changes introduced in 1984-85 have been successful in removing a significant burden from the budget. We estimate the government's contribution to the scheme will fall by $19m this year, but I am pleased that private finance has filled the gap with no noticeable deleterious effect on the housing market.

Land development: Land development costs show up in several areas of the budget, particularly in relation to the Housing Commission and the Transport and Works and Lands Departments. The most significant development in 1985-86 is the large injection of funds for subdivisional works in Alice Springs. In order to satisfy demand, an additional $8.2m for new works is programmed to commence in 1985-86 to hasten the turn-off of serviced land.

Honourable members will be aware that development leases have been issued for 4 stages of the proposed Larapinta Valley development. Stage 1 of the development is nearing completion and this will provide some 120 allotments in the old police paddock. The other 3 stages will provide a total of 700 allotments in the new Larapinta Valley area. Work has commenced on each stage and it is anticipated that the first allotments will be available early in 1986 whilst the total of 580 should be completed by February 1987. To meet this target, the government has approved the introduction of an item in the capital works program to construct stage 1 of the Mt John Valley access road to provide access to the subdivision.

In addition to these developments, the government is supporting the development of some 274 semi-rural residential blocks by private developers in the White Gums area. I expect turn-off of these allotments to occur during 1986. In all, this means that the government is actively pursuing the development of over 2000 residential allotments in Alice Springs and its environs in the next 2 years. This will go a long way towards overcoming the present shortage of serviced land. Nevertheless, the government views the ongoing development of Alice Springs as one of its major challenges. The draft structure plan was made available for public comment in June 1985, and the option canvassed is to take the population to 50 000.

The Department of Lands is preparing documents for the further release of 800 allotments in the final section of the Larapinta Valley development. In this, the department is investigating widening the involvement of the private sector by giving them the responsibility of constructing a major proportion of the headworks. This would be a major deviation from the existing policy and, if successful, would greatly reduce the necessity for the government to provide all headworks for private residential subdivisions out of its capital works program. However, as it is the government's aim to hold the price of land down to a level which young couples can reasonably afford, it is anticipated that this shift in approach could lead to a reduction in the price offered by the developers for the land. The Department of Lands has worked closely with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in the development of the projects. Negotiations are continuing and, if these are successful, a further 50 residential allotments should be available in the Larapinta Valley. Once all comments have been received, it is the government's intention to prepare firm development plans for Alice Springs to enable it to progress confidently into the 1990s.

Mr Speaker, honourable members should note the Palmerston Development Authority's expenditures have now been absorbed into the relevant departments, with most of the administrative costs going into the Department of Lands while the capital works costs are now shown under Transport and Works appropriations. As a part of the continuing process of developing Palmerston, new program items totalling $5.3m have been included in the 1985-86 capital works program.

Budget revenues: The revenue estimates for 1985-86 totalling $1136m are detailed in Budget Paper No 2. I indicated earlier that there are no

surprises in the Territory's internal revenue collection as most major changes reflect decisions announced in the June mini-budget. As a result of the mini-budget, there will be substantial rises in the Territory's revenues in the full year for 1985-86. Stamp duties will be up on 1984-85 collections by $7m. Payroll tax is up by $14m and tobacco licence fees up just over $3m.

Mining royalties also show a sharp movement upward. This results from additional ore sales overseas and the increased production of Mereenie oil. Overall Territory revenues in 1985-86 are projected to be 20% higher than in 1984-85. As a result, the Territory will be less mendicant on the Commonwealth than ever before. The proportion of budget revenues raised internally has risen from about 15% in 1984-85 to 17% in 1985-86, leaving Commonwealth sources providing 83% of budget revenues. Each year, the Territory moves closer to the situation in the states where about two-thirds of the funds are provided by the Commonwealth.

Had the Territory received the same rate of increase in Commonwealth funding as the Territory achieved in its own internal revenues, our financial position would have been appreciably better. As it was, Commonwealth funding increased by a modest 3% and this was, in fact, a decline of over 4% in real terms. These broad percentage movements in Commonwealth funding mask a number of significant changes to funding formulae. Alterations to the formulae include the elimination of the special purpose payment for debt servicing and its replacement with an addition to the tax-sharing entitlement at the same level and the transfer of $34m to general purpose capital funds previously funded from recurrent sources. It is therefore only meaningful to compare 1984-85 with 1985-86 on the basis of total Commonwealth payments to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the hallmark of the Country Liberal Party government's record of office has been financial responsibility. In 7 years of successful self-government, we have seen the Territory grow and develop well beyond expectations. The government has taken some hard decisions, where necessary, this year as a result of the federal Labor government's cutbacks to our funding. As a result, I am now able to present a budget for 1985-86 which imposes no new taxes or charges on the people of the Territory. Rather, the budget for 1985-86 will consolidate and strengthen economic activity in the Northern Territory whilst maintaining or improving all essential government services.

This budget will provide a springboard for growth in 1986-87. During that year, we will be able to look forward to high levels of expenditure on projects of the utmost importance to the continued development of the Northern Territory. Ministers will be giving greater detail on 1985-86 budgetary proposals relevant to their portfolios. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 144)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I received the following letter from the honourable Chief Minister:

'My Dear Speaker,

Notifiable Diseases Amendment Bill 1985 (Serial 144).

Pursuant to standing order 153, I request that you declare the above bill to be an urgent bill. The Australian Red Cross Society has advised the government that it would be unable to arrange for suitable insurance cover unless legislation is introduced in the Northern Territory to indemnify the Red Cross against suits connected with AIDS to require statements from intending blood donors with regard to AIDS and to impose a penalty for deliberately false statements in this regard. Lack of suitable insurance cover would cause the Red Cross to review its operations in the Territory and hardship to residents of the Territory would result.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Tuxworth'

Honourable members, I have considered the Chief Minister's request and, in accordance with standing order 153, I declare the Notifiable Diseases Amendment Bill (Serial 144) to be an urgent bill.

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

This amendment to the principal act is designed to clarify certain matters in relation to AIDS, the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Members are aware of the complexities of this disease and the problems of trying to control its spread. This government declared AIDS to be a notifiable disease as early as July 1983. By its very nature, AIDS will pose a series of legal problems. This bill addresses 2 of these. AIDS can be transmitted through AIDS virus infected blood transfusions. Consequently, the blood transfusion service must ensure that all blood supplied for transfusion has been properly tested to ensure that it is not contaminated. It could be argued that the common law duty of care should provide the necessary legal guidance.

Rapid progress is being made in the understanding of AIDS but public fear is such that the Australian Red Cross, which provides an Australia-wide blood transfusion service, cannot obtain adequate insurance cover without specific legislative coverage to provide indemnity against suits related to AIDS. It must be stressed that this legislation does not absolve the blood transfusion service from its duty of care. Rather, it provides specific guidelines as to what constitutes appropriate care. The proof that appropriate care was taken is thus clarified. Critical to the effectiveness of the screening of blood for possible AIDS virus is the statement made by the potential blood donor about his past medical history. This preliminary check enables the blood transfusion service to screen out all high-risk blood donors.

However, experience in other jurisdictions has shown that there are some AIDS sufferers who may maliciously attempt to spread the disease to other persons by donating blood. Section 154 of the Northern Territory Criminal Code provides that any person who makes any act or omission that causes serious danger, actual or potential, to the lives, health or safety of the

public, or to any member of it, is guilty of a crime. Current Northern Territory law provides a penalty for those who might knowingly make a false statement before donating blood.

There is a question of legal proof in charging a person under section 154 for a false blood transfusion declaration. A false declaration would not necessarily mean that a person was suffering from AIDS and deliberately ignored the danger. Consequently, specific provisions have been included in this bill whereby a person who knowingly makes a false declaration is guilty of a crime, whether or not he endangers another person. The form of the declaration may need to be changed from time to time as knowledge of the disease increases. Consequently, the bill provides that the declaration may be varied by the Administrator by notice in the Gazette. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Energy Pipelines Amendment Bill (Serial 140) passing through all stages during this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

ENERGY PIPELINES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 140)

Continued from 21 August 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition wholeheartedly supports this bill for the very simple reason that it is essential for the gas pipeline, a fact which the Minister for Mines and Energy so conveniently failed to bring to the attention of this Assembly when he introduced the bill. According to the honourable minister, this bill is all about introducing more workable provisions for the service of notices under the Energy Pipelines Act and, undoubtedly, the bill will achieve that result. However, let us not make any bones about the true purpose of this bill and the real reason why it must be passed as a matter of urgency.

More workable provisions for the service of notices are definitely important but not that urgent. To find the real reason for this bill, we have only to look at the validation provisions. This bill covers difficulties in service which may have been encountered prior to its amendment and it validates permits and licences which might have been threatened by technical failures on this basis but, in addition, this clause will validate any permit or licence notwithstanding that a requirement in respect of the elapsing of time before the granting of a permit or licence may not have been complied with. Those are the words. The requirement for the service of notice of an application on local councils and owners and occupiers does not require the elapsing of a set time before a licence is granted although that is a requirement in respect of a permit. What requires the elapsing of time is the provision that notice of a licence application must be published in the government gazette and newspapers. Under the act, the minister is empowered to grant a licence only when 28 days have elapsed since the last notice has been published. In the case of the gas pipeline licence application, notices appeared in the NT News on 5 June last. Hence the minister did not have the

power to grant the licence until at least 3 July. However, the pipeline licence was granted some days before that date - some days before the end of the financial year, in fact - for the purpose, I understand, of securing a tax advantage for the licensee.

Mr Speaker, let me state right from the outset that the opposition does not object to the licensee securing this particular tax advantage. Indeed, we support all reasonable moves to promote the project. Nonetheless, what is of great concern to me and my colleagues is that the licence has been granted illegally and that has placed such an important project in jeopardy.

Mr B. Collins: The minister was kind enough not to mention that.

Mr EDE: It was very carefully avoided in his second-reading speech.

This government, through its incompetence, has put at risk one of the most significant projects ever seen in the Territory. Rather than take some basic care with a project worth $380m, this government has got it off to a flying start by issuing the licence illegally. With a little foresight, validating provisions could have been introduced at the last sittings before the licence was granted. The government would have had no doubt of the opposition's support for this project and I challenge any member opposite to state otherwise. But, rather than own up to a mistake - and given the government's track record on mistakes, I understand its reluctance - it has issued the licence in contravention of its own legislation. In so doing, it has created a minefield of potential legal problems for the whole project. Surely it is not expecting too much that, of all development projects, the gas pipeline should have demanded some basic care and respect from the government. After all, the granting of the licence should have been a fairly straightforward step for the government. With this lot, what can we expect if any real problems do arise? The casino is an example that Territorians have much to fear. Perhaps that was the problem. This government got itself into such a mess with the casino interference that it cannot give its full attention to the basic features of other matters.

Mr Speaker, let us not be in any doubt as to the importance of the gas pipeline to Northern Territory development. It involves an indigenous source of fuel which guarantees security of supply to the Territory. It will encourage further exploration in central Australia and it is the cornerstone to development of the Bonaparte Gulf fields. If we cannot get it together for our own domestic pipeline, what hope is there for the dream of a national grid?

But the problem goes even further than that. There is more than just a threat of such loss to worry about. Given this situation, inevitably we must ask what further guarantees or indemnities have been offered to the participants in the pipeline deal to cover them against the costs of delays. Can the minister tell us how much cost is involved in one day's delay? My understanding is that there may be up to a $40m or $50m margin in the $380m cost estimate specifically to cover delays. One wonders what would have happened if the licence had been challenged in the courts. The licence is illegal; there could be no other finding. One must wonder what that would have done to the whole project.

Mr Speaker, we also wonder about the position of those constructing a pipeline under an illegal contract and the status of the mini-contracts that are involved. What is the position under federal legislation when the

Territory has committed an illegal act to assist in the avoidance of taxation provisions? Hopefully, these issues are only technicalities or possibilities which may never occur. But why are they even possibilities given that such an important project is involved? Issuing the licence should have been so simple. Why did the government muck up such a simple matter when so much was at stake?

Can the minister explain why the problem was not avoided before it existed? During the last sittings it was obvious that the licence could not be granted before the end of the financial year. Why was appropriate legislation not rushed through then? If we had done that, none of these problems would have existed. Why has the government's incompetence created a risk to something which is so important to the Territory?

You can bet, Mr Speaker, that these possibilities have been raised by the participants in the deal. You can bet that they would not have proceeded with this deal without some sort of insurance. I would ask the minister to advise this Assembly what indemnities were given for the participants to start major construction work on the basis of an illegal licence. Will we have to find out the answers bit by bit as happened with the casino and some other deals? It is no wonder that it took a month to obtain a reply from the minister when I sought to look at the pipeline documents. It is another deal about which the government has plenty to hide, even to the point where the minister has misled this Assembly.

We can assure the minister that we will give our full support to this bill in the hope that it can preserve the pipeline project. In return, can the minister assure all Territorians that this bill will remove all the risks which his incompetence has created? If so, how much has it cost us?

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there would not be one member of this Assembly who would have less reason to smile, as he always does, and to treat as nonsense matters raised by the opposition than the current Minister for Mines and Energy. If there has ever been a minister of this Assembly who has consistently demonstrated to this Assembly how little he knows about anything...

Mr Perron: He should be sacked.

Mr B. COLLINS: You should indeed be sacked. Mr Speaker, I am sure you remember that the honourable minister was telling this Assembly not so very long ago about the absurd proposition put forward by the opposition for the establishment of a Territory insurance office. I remember it well. It was the then honourable Treasurer who stood up with the same sneer on his face as he is wearing now - it has worn well over the years, I must admit - and told us all the reasons why that was such a nonsensical proposition: the Territory could not afford to have an insurance office of its own, it would not make any money, it would have no effect on third-party rates and it was the wrong sort of thing for the government to become involved in. The smile was wiped off his face shortly after that.

Who was it, Mr Speaker, who stood up as lead speaker and told the opposition in the Assembly what an absurd proposition it would be to have a TAB in the Northern Territory? I remember that debate very well. The minister then responsible for racing and gaming said we did not have radio facilities and we did not have sufficient people to make it viable. Of course, we now have a TAB in the Northern Territory.

I can understand why the government feels so sensitive and stupid about this. The fact is that, once again, the sneer will be wiped off the honourable minister's face in this debate because a project which I have described, and will continue to describe, as the most important economic project in the Northern Territory's history is illegal because this legislation has not yet received assent. This is outrageous and it should be a matter of protest against this so-called competent government with its sneering minister. I have grown accustomed to his sneer over the years and he will have his statements on contingent liabilities in relation to Yulara shoved down his throat before the end of this sittings too. Mr Speaker, if you had to pick one minister who has consistently been proven wrong over the years, the current minister for Mines and Energy would be that minister.

Mr Speaker, in response to his sneer and the surprised look, perhaps I could point out what the provisions are. The jackass on the backbench will have his opportunity to respond and I look forward to hearing him refute what I am about to say. Under section 13(5), the Energy Pipelines Act requires notice of an application for a licence to be published in the gazette or a daily newspaper. Section 15(1) provides: 'Where 28 days have elapsed since the last notice under section 13(5), the minister may, after considering all representations, grant a licence and give notice of the grant in the gazette'.

The notice of the application for the pipeline appeared in the NT News on 5 June. Hence, under the act, the minister did not have the power to grant the licence until at least 3 July. The Environment Centre, among other organisations, was asked by the Conservation Commission to expedite its response to the preliminary environmental report so the licence could be granted by 28 June for tax purposes. We appreciate only too well the reasons why that was done. What set off the bells was the wording of this legislation because, to me anyway, it was very familiar wording. The government has a great track record in this respect, and we had it canvassed again only this year - the good old retrospective validating legislation. It must have set some sort of record for that sort of legislation.

We had an example with the debate on the illegal appointment of the principal of the Darwin Institute of Technology. That was a laughable debate too in which the smiles were wiped off the faces of those opposite when the opposition pointed out that, despite their objections in this Assembly, it would be essential, in order to regulate the appointment of the principal of the DIT, that it introduce validating legislation. Having denied that, it introduced the bill only a few days later in the Legislative Assembly, confirming the fact that it had made an illegal appointment and had breached its own Education Act in appointing the principal of the Darwin Institute of Technology. The government indeed has a sorry record in terms of rectifying the effects of hasty decisions that it has made on important issues.

I would refer some of the cackling members opposite, who I dare say have not even read the bill, to clause 4. If you have some sense of deja vu, honourable Minister for Mines and Energy, perhaps you would like to pay some attention to it too:

> 'For the avoidance of doubt, a permit or licence granted under the principal act, before the commencement of this act, is declared to have been validly granted, notwithstanding that a requirement under the principal act in respect of the service of a notice on the occupier or owner of land or the elapsing of time before the granting of a permit or licence may not have been complied with'.

Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the pipeline, as it has consistently supported it, despite the public statements made on television by the Chief Minister and others. I have no doubt that the honourable minister will now get to his feet to refute the charges that have been laid against this government by the opposition. I am prepared, as I am always prepared, to have demonstrated to us that our interpretation of the Northern Territory's law is wrong. As a result of the fact that we are not objecting to the pipeline, that we welcome the issuing of the licence and that we are supporting this bill, I dare say that the minister will have no option but to address himself to the single point of objection that we have so far raised because it is the only point of objection. I would ask the honourable minister...

Mr Palmer: The...

Mr B. COLLINS: The honourable member for the Marrara Hotel on the backbench has made no contribution to this sittings at all. I dare say he will make one now and I look forward to hearing his interpretation of the Energy Pipelines Act.

Mr Speaker, so far as the Minister for Mines and Energy is concerned, he will have previous statements in respect of concerns raised by the opposition about contingent liabilities entered into by the Northern Territory government shoved down his throat during this sittings of the Legislative Assembly - not that that will stop him sneering as he always does. I look to his pointing out to the opposition why it was necessary to incorporate clause 4 in this bill if our argument is incorrect that the licence was and still is illegal. Why is it necessary to have a validating retrospective clause included in this legislation?

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): I seek leave to move a motion that the bill be read a third time forthwith.

Leave denied.

In committee:

Mr Chairman: The question is that the bill be taken as a whole and agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I have no objection to having this bill taken as a whole but I do take considerable exception to the consistent contempt with which this Assembly is treated by the minister responsible for this legislation. We are supposed to give our imprimatur to this legislation which, as far as he is concerned, is sight unseen! It simply cannot be allowed to continue without some objection being made. In the committee stage of this bill - which I dare say the honourable minister will agree is the appropriate stage for dealing with questions of detail - I ask that he address the question that he deliberately ignored. Could the minister advise the committee of the reasons why a retrospective validating clause, clause 4, is included in the legislation? I give the opportunity to the minister, while he is doing that, to examine the arguments that have just been put by the member for Stuart and myself. I ask him to demonstrate the falsity of the charges that we have laid: that the Northern Territory minister has breached his own legislation and that he has placed the pipeline project in an extremely difficult position. I ask him to demonstrate that the charges we have laid

are false. If he cannot do so, if he continues to hold his position and to treat the Assembly with contempt, Mr Chairman, he is not entitled to receive the support of this committee for his legislation.

I ask again for an explanation of the validity or otherwise of the argument that we have just put and the necessity for a retrospectively validating clause to be placed in this legislation. We were given no explanation whatsoever in the minister's second-reading speech.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, like many members of this committee, I am becoming tired of some of the antics of the Leader of the Opposition. He seeks respect, but never gives much of it himself. I do not think he deserves much either. If he cares to refer to my second-reading speech, there is an explanation for retrospectivity. There was no attempt by the government to hide it. It is a short bill which has been on the table for several days. If honourable members opposite cannot grasp what the government is attempting to do here, I suggest they refer to my second-reading speech once again.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I ask for a third time the question which the minister has still refused to answer. We know that the bill before the Assembly is irrelevant, other than for the clause to which we have just referred. The charge being laid by the opposition deserves to be treated seriously, particularly by the responsible minister. The charge that we are laying is that the pipeline licence was granted illegally by the government. That is simple enough, Mr Chairman, to get through the head of the responsible minister. It is hardly a frivolous matter!

We were forewarned of it. We believe it was done for tax reasons. We have no objection to the motives behind it. The licence was granted before the end of the financial year and before the end of the 28-day period required by the legislation after the publication of the application in the newspaper had elapsed. I have read out the relevant section of the legislation for which the minister is responsible. Despite his assertions to the contrary, he made no mention of this most pertinent fact in his second-reading speech. It was only when I read the very familiar wording of retrospective validation in the last clause that I went beyond the second-reading speech of the minister to examine why it would be necessary to introduce validating retrospective legislation.

If the honourable minister seriously proposes that this is not the role of the opposition in this Assembly, when such unwelcome legislation is brought before it, he should think again. We all know that, on occasion, it is necessary to introduce retrospectively validating legislation, but it is undesirable and no one wants to defend it. It is not a common procedure. Governments only resort to it on very rare occasions and it requires examination. Because there was no mention in the second-reading speech of the necessity for such legislation, our conclusion was that the issuing of the licence did not comply with Northern Territory law and that it was a breach of the act. I think we have demonstrated our point fairly comprehensively. We are prepared to be told we are wrong. That is the very purpose of the committee stage of a debate on any legislation. I was appalled at the actions of the minister simply to keep his seat while this was being debated and to refuse to answer the question at all. Despite his contribution now in the committee stage, he has still refused to answer the question.

For the third time, it is the assertion of the opposition that the government has been responsible for illegally issuing the licence for the

pipeline agreement. It has not complied with its own legislation in so doing and, therefore, before assent is received to this legislation, that agreement is illegal. The licence on which it was issued was illegally issued. Therefore, it was necessary for the government to introduce the retrospective validating legislation contained in clause 4. I ask him for the third time: are the charges laid by the opposition true or false, has the Northern Territory law been breached and, if not, why is it necessary to have a retrospectively validating clause in the legislation we are currently considering?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition let me try to explain one word at a time. If these amendments are not enacted, some doubt may linger as to the validity of existing pipeline licences. On the best advice available, there is no other way to ensure totally that future pipeline licences will be validly issued. That situation would thwart the purpose of the act and clearly be unacceptable. It is for that reason the government has had the current amendments drafted.

Mr B. Collins: That is not the argument that I am putting.

Mr PERRON: It is in the second-reading speech. The Leader of the Opposition has been going on and on, in his usual pedantic, child-like manner, about why this legislation should contain a validating clause. We have made no secret of its containing a validating clause. The bill has 4 clauses; we did not try to bury a validating clause somewhere in the middle of a vast bill. It was clearly explained in the second-reading speech that it will remove any possible legal doubt about the validity of licences issued. There was literally an army of lawyers involved in the signing of the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline agreement, all of whom were satisfied at the time that the actions that they were taking on behalf of their clients in relation to this multi-million dollar project were satisfactory to them. This legislation will remove any legal doubt. The explanation was in the final paragraph of my second-reading speech. I implore honourable members to pay a little bit more attention in future.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the statement that the minister made in his second-reading speech was as follows: 'Legal opinion has recently been received that the wording of these provisions may contain a technical defect which, because of circumstances - for instance, in respect of a deceased or untraceable owner - might raise doubts on the ability of the minister to issue a licence'.

As I said, we are supporting this bill but at least we would expect the minister to have the courtesy to reply to our arguments. We were not happy with the way that he hid the...

Mr Perron: I what?

Mr EDE: ...references to it in his speech. The arrogance of this minister has been demonstrated many times previously. We all recall the way he treated the law in relation to sacred sites. Last week, he demonstrated his arrogance by his refusal to answer a question that I put to him on the mercury levels at Warrego Mine. He has demonstrated once again the fact that he has absolute contempt for this Assembly.

Mr Perron: Only for some of the members in it.

Mr EDE: He has absolute contempt for the Westminster system. He has absolute contempt for the laws of the Northern Territory. He has absolute contempt for the people of the Territory.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, the question still has not been answered. I think it must be answered by the minister. Perhaps he may choose to obtain some legal advice. Is it a fact that the current licences granted to the contractors to lay the pipeline are illegal? If the minister can tell us that, we will pass this legislation and resume the Assembly business. I have the second-reading speech here and there is no mention at all as to whether or not...

Mr Perron: It is removing doubt by validating licences.

Mr LEO: Can the minister tell us simply by answering 'yes' or 'no' whether the present licences are legal or illegal? Has the Northern Territory government committed a breach of the law? If he can say that there has been no breach of the law, I will be well and truly satisfied with that. If he cannot, then I must assume that he and his department have acted in an illegal manner.

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to without amendment.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask the question for the fourth time because the minister has not yet answered it. Just so the minister is in no lingering doubt that I have carefully read the second-reading speech, he did in fact say that the net effect of the proposed new section is simply to bring the provisions of the act into line with those of New South Wales. I quote him: 'The effect of the validating provisions is the same as if the New South Wales provisions had been in this act from the outset'. I say again that I do not deny that. What I am saying is that not only is that not the only effect that the clause has but it is the minor effect that the clause has.

As the minister responsible for this legislation and the issuing of the licence, I will ask him again. Under the Energy Pipelines Act, section 13(5) requires notice of the application for a licence to be published in the gazette and a daily newspaper. Section 15(1) provides that, 'where 28 days have elapsed since the last notice given under section 13(5), the minister may, after considering all representations, grant a licence and give notice of the grant in the gazette'. The notice of the application for the pipeline appeared in the NT News on 5 June, hence the minister did not have the power to grant the licence until at least 3 July. Was he in breach of the Energy Pipelines Act when he issued the licence and what date was the licence issued which complied with the legislation for which he is responsible?

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been particularly difficult for this side - and certainly, I would think, difficult for the minister - to follow what the opposition has been talking about. At least, it has now defined it for us. Quite clearly, the allegation is that the action is alleged to have been illegal as a result of a deficiency flowing from section 13(5) of the principal act. I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that, if he cannot keep his legislation up to date, he should get staff who can. The fact is that that subsection was amended by amendment No 58 of 1983 which changed 13(5) to 13(4), and that relates solely to the

service of notices on people who are difficult to find, such as dead people. The reality, therefore, is that the minister was completely at a loss to understand what on earth these idiots opposite were talking about.

Mr B. Collins: You weren't.

Mr ROBERTSON: You are trying to make the best of a bad job. Well done.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order! I am particularly disturbed that there is chatter across the floor of the Assembly and not through the Chair. It is a grave discourtesy both to the Chair and to the speaker on his feet. The honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, with respect to the particular comments about sections of the act that may have been amended prior to this particular bill coming before the Assembly, I am not in a position to respond off the cuff. However, since my electorate represents a fairly large area of the Northern Territory through which this particular pipeline will pass, it behoves me to comment on the fact that the financing of this Amadeus to Darwin pipeline has been the subject of what I understand to be the largest leverage leasing arrangement to date in this country. I am concerned about the matters that have been raised in this debate. Precisely because I have such a length of the pipeline within my electorate, I prepared for this debate. I looked at the bill. I was not in a position to study the principal act as well, but I read carefully the second-reading speech of the Minister for Mines and Energy. It was quite clear to me that there was absolutely no suggestion that the granting of the pipeline licence with this financial arrangement that was published so widely and received so much media attention was in fact illegal in this way. I am deeply concerned about the way in which this bill has been introduced into this Assembly and I want to place that concern on record. We have heard an extraordinary diatribe. That was one of the poorest performances that I have ever seen from the Minister for Mines and Energy. His attitude to this debate has been certainly less than satisfactory. Certainly, he has not encouraged a free and open consideration of this particular question. His refusal to answer the questions raised by the member for Nhulunbuy and repeated requests from the shadow Minister for Mines and Energy and the Leader of the Opposition are indicative of the sort of attitude that we have come to expect from the honourable minister. For example, he berated the Leader of the Opposition for seeking respect when he does not give it when, in fact, all the Leader of the Opposition was seeking, in his customary trenchant fashion, was a reasonable explanation. I do not suppose we should be surprised by the attitude evinced by the Minister for Mines and Energy because his contempt for this institution and his contempt for anything but a grasping attitude to the affairs of this Assembly and affairs generally, be they personal or otherwise, are evident. Numerous are the occasions in which he has done it in this particular Assembly. The member for Stuart raised the attitude he has adopted to sacred sites legislation which are indicative of the same attitude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I merely wish to place on record in this third-reading debate, my disappointment and disgust at a thoroughly inept parliamentary performance.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, some of the smoke has cleared from this room as a result of the Special Minister for Constitutional Development enlightening the Assembly that the Leader of Opposition was throwing his tantrum because he had the wrong act in front of him. Clearly,

there is some doubt about the validity of licences otherwise this legislation would not be before the Assembly. That is exactly what I said in my second-reading speech - that the government reluctantly felt a need to introduce retrospective legislation. There was nothing secret about what we were doing even though there was something unfortunate about it. Like all governments, this government reluctantly introduces legislation which has retrospective effect. We introduced it last week so that it would be before the Assembly for as long as possible. As a result, honourable members opposite had time to peruse it carefully and find out exactly what the government was on about. Instead, the Leader of the Opposition chose to try to spew over us all with his usual personal tirade. All he did was put his foot in his mouth by reading from an unamended copy of the act.

Bill read a third time.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 109)

Continued from 22 August 1985.

In committee:

Mr Chairman: The question is that the bill stand as printed.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 38.1.

The amendment seeks to correct ambiguities introduced when changes were made to the Payroll Tax Act at the June sittings this year. The amendment is intended to make it clear that the higher of 2 tax rates is payable on the total wages payable where that total exceeds the cut-off figure and not simply as a marginal rate. It is believed that the provision would be interpreted in this manner under the existing wording but it is considered advisable to err on the side of caution. The amendment is a somewhat technical matter, as many of the provisions of the Payroll Tax Act are. The legal people have indicated that this requires complete clarification and we have sought that the matter be dealt with by amendment to this act rather than by introducing separate legislation or setting it to one side until such time as a new Statute Law Revision Bill is prepared.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, it behoves us all to pay more attention to Statute Law Revision Bills than we tend to do. It is a practical impossibility, however, because of the long hours necessary to keep on top of the numerous legislative changes that are introduced under the aegis of statute law revision. One classic example occurred 10 minutes ago where the amendment to the piece of legislation that was under discussion was introduced in 1983 under statute law revision legislation. Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for so comprehensively and accurately pointing out that fact to us. He is an example to us all, and particularly to some of us.

The reason I rise is because I am very pleased to discover, having spoken to the government's advisers, that we are soon to have a computerised system covering updates to legislation. As all honourable members would know, most legal firms which are heavily involved in litigation employ people virtually full time on the updating of legislation. It is every lawyer's nightmare to find himself occasionally going into court depending on a statute which has been altered by subsequent legislation but which was not updated because of

the quite considerable clerical work involved, particularly in relation to statute law revision. I have just been advised that the government is in possession of a system to computerise these changes that will be coming on line before the end of the year. Thus, with respect to any relevant legislation, we will no longer have to refer to the often very confusing system of cut and paste. In the case I have been talking about, the copy of the legislation that the advisers had, although perhaps legible to them, certainly was illegible to me in terms of the marginal notes referring to that small amendment introduced in 1983. It will be possible, by reference to a computer, to obtain the precise position of all legislation in the Northern Territory at the touch of a button. I am sure that will come not just as a relief to members of the Assembly but to the entire legal profession in the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I too welcome the changes being made by the Statute Law Revision Bill, but I would just like to point out that the whole point of my original question about the bill has not been answered at all. It has been completely disregarded.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTION

Noting of Ministerial Statement on Strehlow Collection

Continued from 22 August 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I had intended to go into a fair bit of detail on what I hope to see for the Strehlow Collection in the future. However, after listening to the debate, particularly the comments made by the member for MacDonnell, I find that, as far as it is possible at this stage, they have been covered, particularly given the somewhat delicate stage of negotiations.

Without choking on it or anything, I commend the Minister for Community Development for the actions he has taken so far. I would hope, as the minister has indicated, that no financial reimbursements will occur relating to the tjurrunga themselves. I would also hope that the next couple of steps in the whole process of organising the final disposition of the Strehlow Collection will be carried out in the correct manner. I hope that, over the ensuing months, I will have the opportunity to follow what is going on with the collection. The honourable minister can be assured that I will be doing so with great interest. To date, things seem to have gone reasonably well. It is an example of cooperation between the federal and Territory governments which I would like to see in some other spheres. That is all I wish to say at this stage.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the ministerial statement on the Strehlow Collection and to take this opportunity to congratulate the minister, in particular, and the Northern Territory government in having had this most valuable collection returned to the Northern Territory. It is, of course, an operation which may have never been needed had it not been for the threatening actions of the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, and others.

Mr Speaker, looking around the Assembly last week when I was considering speaking to this statement, I thought that, of all of the members here, I am probably one of the most fortunate in that I met Professor Strehlow on a number of occasions in Adelaide and Alice Springs in the 1960s and then again in the mid-1970s, shortly before his death. I spent many hours in discussion with him on Aboriginal affairs and other related issues. Also, I was very fortunate indeed in having viewed most of the Strehlow Collection, both the tjurrunga and all of the tapes and recordings that Professor Strehlow made over a long period of time in central Australia. Whilst I am not fully aware of the contents of the Strehlow Collection now assembled in Darwin, I would think that at least some of it is what I saw in South Australia many years ago. I also believe that the contents of the collection may well cause a complete reappraisal of land claims in certain areas of central Australia because, as all of us know, Professor Strehlow was head and shoulders above anyone else in relation to land issues pertaining to Aboriginals in central Australia.

Mr Speaker, I am not an expert on Aboriginal affairs - far from it. However, during the past 20 odd years in central Australia, I have learned a little bit about Aboriginals and their culture from my association with them in a sporting, business and social sense. More insight into the detailed legal and social structure can be gained from quoting from the Finke River Mission document pertaining to Aboriginal land. The document is a summary statement that the Finke River Mission prepared in 1975 or 1976 when it was translating the contents of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act for Aboriginal residents right across central Australia who came in contact with the Finke River Mission people. I do this so that honourable members may understand the relationship of Aboriginals to their land or their tjurrunga and to emphasise the fact that the tjurrunga were given to Professor Strehlow and that, under Aboriginal law, were the absolute property of Professor Strehlow. He was not merely a custodian. This document runs into 3 pages but I believe it is very pertinent to this debate. I would like to read at least part of it out:

> 'Every group of traditional Aboriginal land owners in Central Australia to whom the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Bill 1976 was verbally translated was surprised and angered to find that it did not meet their expectations. Ever since the land rights issue was first raised, not by themselves but by people from other places, they had taken it for granted that land rights would mean the recognition by the government of the existing traditional owners of the land in accordance with the traditional Aboriginal system under which particular descent groups of people belong to particular tracts of land. They can understand and appreciate the good intentions of the government in granting Aboriginal title to their land in a way that would be fair to all Aborigines, traditional as well as non-traditional. However, they cannot accept the proposed legislation since it is based on the white Australian concepts that do not in any way accord with traditional Aboriginal concepts of land ownership. They can see that the bill could make sense in white Australian terms and that the many safeguards that have been incorporated into it would operate as real safeguards in white Australian society. However, in terms of their own principles of land ownership, which still operate very strongly, they see the bill as being unfair to traditional landowners in that they are not given sufficient recognition and they do not have their own authority sufficiently acknowledged and protected. In fact, they feel that this proposed legislation would not give them back control of their

land. It would in effect take it away from them and give it to someone else. The Aboriginal organisations that the bill proposes to establish, particularly the land trusts and the land councils, are seen as being quite inappropriate and unworkable in traditional Aboriginal terms. They assert that the proposed legislation, if enacted, would produce deep resentment on the part of traditional landowners, tensions and conflict between Aboriginals themselves as well as between Aboriginals and white Australians. The serious consequences of the abovementioned resentment, tensions and conflict can be appreciated more fully when the submissions of various Aboriginals are read'.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to recommend that these documents be obtained by the members of the Assembly to read in detail because they elaborate in complete and clear detail the relationship between Aboriginals, their association with the land and the tjurrunga in the Strehlow Collection. I will continue to quote from this summary statement:

'Traditional land ownership in central Australia cannot be understood except in relationship to principles of kinship on the one hand and tjurrunga on the other. The most important kin group in relation to land ownership is the patrilineal descent group, made up of people descended from a prominent male ancestor, through the male line. Each patrilineal descent group belongs to a particular tract of land and its members are called the Pmarakutwia (people belonging to the land, the landowners) for that particular area of land. A clearly defined system of leadership, and one recognised leader, exists within each of these groups. The female descendants from the male line are part of the patrilineal landowning group, but only the fully initiated males are taught the secret knowledge relating to the land and its tjurrunga. The children from the females in the group belong to different landowning groups, following descent through their respective male lines. However, male descendants from women belonging to the landowning group are Kutungula (custodians or managers of the tjurrunga, and so also the land) for that group. People have links with other tracts of land through other descent lines (e.g. mother's mother or father's mother) but it is only in relation to fathers and father's father's country that traditional ownership rightfully exists.

Inextricably linked with each particular tract of land are particular tjurrunga, in such a way that ownership of a tjurrunga necessarily means ownership of the land, and vice versa. The tjurrunga are not merely the sacred objects but are also, more importantly, the sites, the myths, the songs, designs and ceremonies that are connected with particular totemic ancestors whose travellings, actions and places of abode are related in the myths and song cycles. The travel routes followed by the totemic ancestors and recorded in the tjurrunga pass through successive tracts owned by various distinct landowning groups. The points at which the tjurrunga passed from one tract of country to another are recorded in the tjurrunga as pmirra arrkngirta (boundary points), and in this way the areas of land are defined. The songs, myths and ceremonies within these areas are the exclusive property of the people of that land.

Aborigines assert that the principles applying to land and tjurrunga ownership are fundamental to Aboriginal "law" and are rigorously

adhered to still today. The penalties for infringement in relation to land and tjurrunga are very severe, including the death penalty. Only actual landowners, together with the Kutungula (custodians or managers) are regarded as having legitimate authority and control in relation to the particular tract of land and the tjurrunga associated with it. Any failure to acknowledge this authority, and any attempt to supplant it, is regarded as a serious offence, and if persisted in can become a capital offence'.

Mr Speaker, I read that out to let honourable members know briefly of the relationship of the Aboriginals and the tjurrunga and the land and the relationship between that and the Strehlow Collection. The Finke River Mission translations, which were done in 1976, should be made compulsory reading. Because they constitute a bulky set of documents, which is quite beyond the financial resources of an organisation such as the Finke River Mission or any other Aboriginal organisation for that matter to print, it may well be pertinent for the Northern Territory government to have a look at that set of documents with a view to having them printed in a more concise and more easily handled form.

Mr Speaker, it must be realised that not only did Aboriginal men give their tjurrunga to Strehlow but, with the tjurrunga, passed on to him that information pertaining to the law of their land represented by the tjurrunga. This information will play a very major role in the years to come in validating land claims or verifying claimants in the areas in central Australia. Professor Strehlow's knowledge of Aboriginals and the laws in central Australia was above reproach. He was an expert in his own lifetime and it is a tragedy to see some boys, as the Aboriginal men refer to them, attempting to undo a lifetime's work.

I said that I knew Professor Strehlow and met with him on a number of occasions but let me now quote from a document prepared by a person who knew Professor Strehlow much better than I did and who was, in my opinion, also an expert on Aboriginals in central Australia and the laws and their language. I will quote from a document prepared by Pastor Paul Albrecht. I passed on to him the minister's statement, and the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, so that he could put on paper some comments pertaining to it. I quote:

'(1) The first fact which needs to be appreciated and accepted is that, according to Aboriginal law, the material in question was the absolute property of Professor Strehlow and, therefore, it was his to dispose of entirely as he saw fit.

(2) I base this on Strehlow's own statements to me corroborated by statements made to me by men who had given material to Professor Strehlow'.

I might add that, in the late 1960s, I met a number of those men in the Hermannsburg area and they confirmed what Paul Albrecht said: the tjurrunga and information given to Professor Strehlow were actually given to him; they were not placed in his custody.

'(3) Interestingly enough, the first people to challenge Strehlow's ownership rights to the material he had collected were men who, in Aboriginal terms, were mere boys. As such, they had no right even to talk about tjurrunga, let alone challenge Strehlow's rights of ownership.

(4) To this point in time, I have not heard one Aboriginal, who still knows something of the traditional laws of tjurrunga ownership and transfer, dispute the fact that the material in question was Strehlow's.

(5) There is no basis in Aboriginal Law to suggest that Strehlow was made a custodian by the old men who passed their knowledge to Strehlow. If he had been a custodian, he would have been known as a kutungula and then should have received gifts from the owners. In the current debate, I have not heard any of the so-called owners come forward and say they gave Strehlow gifts, as Aboriginal law dictates, in return for his custodial work.

(6) In Aboriginal terms, none of the material in question ever belonged to the Aboriginal people or the Arrarnta people. It belonged to groups and individuals.

(7) Strehlow, to my knowledge, only collected material which was offered to him. It was the old men who requested him to come so that they could pass on to him their knowledge. One of Strehlow's regrets was that a lot of material was lost because he had neither the time nor the money to take up all the offers made to him.

(8) Given this method of operation, if Strehlow had acted wrongly, if he had not correctly followed Aboriginal law as it related to the transfer of tjurrunga, if he had not paid the correct tjauwerrilya (gifts), then invitations would have ceased immediately.

(9) In Aboriginal societies, the transfer of knowledge into the secret/sacred area is never free. It always has to be paid for. From Strehlow's own statements, corroborated by men who gave him material, Strehlow paid generously for the material given to him. Furthermore, I know that, at Christmas time, he would always send monetary gifts to his informants and or their wives while both he and they were still alive.

(10) Strehlow's knowledge of Aboriginal law was a byword among the old men who had had dealings with him. I was told that, on one occasion, after the old men had passed on the tjurrunga, Strehlow then showed them his, complete with ground painting, song and decoration.

(11) The primary reason for the old men giving their secret knowledge to Strehlow can be illustrated by this happening, related to me by Strehlow long before there was any dispute about his collection. During one of his last trips, Strehlow was camped south of the Amoonguna Settlement, taping, filming and otherwise recording the information being given to him by some old men, one of whom was Bob. At that time, Bob had a son working at the settlement. Bob invited his son to come and see the material he was passing on to Strehlow. His reply was: "I have finished with that rubbish", or words to that effect. It was largely this kind of attitude which prompted some of the old men to pass their secrets on to Strehlow, not for the future benefit of their sons, as is now alleged, but so that white people might some day have some understanding of their religion and the culture to which it gave rise.

(12) The only stipulation the old men ever placed on the material which they gave Strehlow was that Strehlow was to make none of this available until after their death. This stipulation Strehlow kept'.

Mr Speaker, when I read out point 11, I quoted just one Christian name; I deleted the surnames of both the father and the son. I would point out that I did that deliberately. However, that man referred to in this paper was, for a number of years, a leading light in the land council in central Australia. I emphasise also that it is not the present Chairman of the Central Land Council, Stan Scrutton.

Mr Speaker, the limited attempt to denigrate the life's work of Professor Strehlow is a sad reflection on human nature. I would like to place on record my tribute to a man who devoted his life to collecting and recording the laws, religion and culture of Aboriginals in central Australia so that future generations of Australians would be able to understand at least a little of what occurred in central Australia many years ago.

In conclusion, I again congratulate the Minister for Community Development for obtaining the Strehlow Collection, and I believe that the government now faces a most difficult test in deciding on a final home for this collection. This must be done with great care, lest more disruption to Aboriginal law and culture is caused.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members from both sides of the Assembly for the kind words and support that they have offered during this debate about the efforts of the Northern Territory government to return the Strehlow Collection to its rightful place in the Northern Territory of Australia. I guess that there are not too many members in this Assembly who have been affected by the Strehlow Collection as I have. In my dealings with the Strehlow Collection, which first began in December last year, I have become heavily involved in the history and the legend of the collection and I have read deeply the facts and circumstances surrounding it. One cannot help but be drawn into the collection itself, what the collection is, the history behind its assembly and of course the late Professor Ted Strehlow himself and the way in which he went about collecting the information and the history in this particular matter.

The controversy that has surrounded the return of the collection in terms of any ex gratia payment to the widow of Professor Ted Strehlow I think needs some explanation. There has been no exchange of money in this case. The opposition has suggested that there should be no payment for the tjurrunga etc. I have always said that it is unacceptable for us to be buying back our own history. However, there is much personal material within the collection, in particular Professor Strehlow's notebooks, his diaries and the genealogy chart that he developed. They are the interpretation of many of the pieces that he has collected and a whole range of information which, as the honourable member for Braitling suggested, relate to the identification of land and ceremonies to be held within those particular areas. There has also been speculation as to just what is in the Strehlow Collection. People talk about the Strehlow Collection but there are not too many people who know just what the Strehlow Collection really is. I believe it will take years to document thoroughly and research the material known as the Strehlow Collection. But I can tell honourable members that it goes from as far afield as Coober Pedy to Arnhem Land and from Queensland to Western Australia. It traverses a large area. It is interesting to note that Professor Strehlow was in fact dragged by a camel at Kintore in the late 1940s. He was travelling

through that area on camels and he traversed a great deal of the Northern Territory by camel.

The identification of just what the Strehlow Collection is will take years to unravel and we cannot do that without Professor Strehlow's notes, diaries and work sheets. It is intended that we assemble the whole collection together to offer an opportunity to carry out research at a location yet to be decided. It will provide research scientists and anthropologists with basic material to determine the content of Aboriginal history over a long period. It is not something that we will resolve overnight. I agree in some ways with the members for MacDonnell and Stuart that, in fact, it will not be the crown jewels; it may be a Pandora's box. The member for MacDonnell has pointed out the delicacy of the next stage of negotiations which includes the identification of the parts, to whom they belong, where they come from etc.

Mr D.W. Collins: They come from Australia.

Mr COULTER: It is not easy. The honourable member has interjected, quite rightly, that it belongs to Australia. I would also like to bring other members' attention to the lost pieces that I am still trying to find and have returned to the Northern Territory. As members will be aware, there are a number of visiting - and I use the word loosely - anthropologists who moved through the Northern Territory in the early parts of this century and removed from the Northern Territory the heritage and the artifacts of many of the first Australians. I intend to have as many of those pieces as I possibly can returned to the Northern Territory. I have spoken at some length on that, Mr Speaker. These materials, which belong to the Northern Territory, are presently locked in various museums around the world and Australia, perhaps even in some garages and houses. It is my intention to have them returned to a research organisation such as I have envisaged for the Strehlow Collection so that they can all be assembled. It will allow us to have a complete history of the Northern Territory Aboriginals who have so much to offer us in terms of living in this part of Australia. An example is some of the tropical medicines which were available. Indeed, the Minister for Health will soon be establishing a project to look at Aboriginal medicines, including the Aboriginal style of life and how they survived in the Northern Territory for almost 40 000 years. It is a secret that I am certainly interested in uncovering. There is just so much for us to learn by research into these matters.

Mr Speaker, the trip to Canada drew some attention from various people. I have described in this Assembly my frustrations in trying to enter into negotiations and the necessity for that particular exercise. I note that the member for MacDonnell has suggested that that trip was essential. I thank him for that.

I intend to speak with Professor David Turner next week on the future of the collection. Professor Turner has been involved with the identification of the Strehlow Collection and I will be seeking his advice on future directions. I would like to point out at this stage that the collection does not belong to any land council or any group of people as such - the underwater basket weaving team from Finke or whomever. The people who can be identified as owning any part of the collection can be identified only through the collection itself. There is no call for any other group or body to claim ownership of the collection.

Professor Strehlow was a meticulous researcher. I have seen some of the genealogy charts which he developed and they are tremendously detailed. They give the family trees for Aborigines in various areas in immense detail. His notebooks, some written in German and some in English, are very complicated but extremely precise. He was a very pedantic researcher and, given time, we will be able to unlock the secrets of the collection and have them well documented for the first Australians who may have lost their traditions through various means including perhaps the encroachment of civilisation upon their land. We may be able to give back some of the history that is locked in the Strehlow Collection.

Mr Speaker, I realise that the exercise is not over yet. There is a long way to go in terms of the negotiations and the second phase that I am about to enter. I would like to thank the member for MacDonnell for his bipartisan support. It will need the skill of a neurosurgeon to enable people to sit round the table and arrive at the best means of housing the Strehlow Collection. I believe that Mrs Strehlow's role in these negotiations and her involvement with the collection are essential. She has spent about 20 years on this particular project. She has undertaken anthropology studies in Toronto and I can tell honourable members that she was extremely successful there because of her background knowledge. I believe that she has the ability to provide much of the information that is required to enable the research facility to examine the material.

The question of the collection being in the hands of a woman has also been addressed in the heads of agreement that I have signed with Mrs Strehlow. It states that a male anthropologist and a male associate anthropologist are to be appointed to handle those parts of the collection which should not be under the control of a woman. I do not know how we are going to get on with the equal opportunities people when we are being so specific about a female not having anything to do with it. These issues have yet to be addressed, Mr Speaker.

I would like to conclude by saying that being involved in the exercise of having the Strehlow Collection returned has affected me very deeply. Like the member for MacDonnell, I recommend the book 'Aboriginal Artifacts and Anguish'. There are many others including 'Journey to Horseshoe Bend'. They show what kind of people entered into central Australia back as far as 1890 when Charles Strehlow ventured out to Hermannsburg. They were remarkable men and the way that they went about their business of bringing civilisation into the central Australian region and carrying out research has left us with a priceless legacy. It deserves the full cooperation of all those bodies concerned to ensure that this history is not lost. It is history that the rest of the world would enjoy learning about, and which can give us a greater appreciation of the Aboriginal people themselves and how they went about living in the Northern Territory. I look forward to the next episode of this venture with great enthusiasm. I hope that reasonable negotiations can continue and that this project is allowed to proceed forthwith.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MOTION

Noting of Ministerial Statement on Uluru-Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park Management and Control

Continued from 6 June 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there is not a great deal more to cover in this area. Once again, the member for MacDonnell has done very well.

I would like to raise 1 or 2 points for the record. One is my disgust at seeing a certain sticker opposing the transfer of Uluru. I do not know whether it was sold or given away free through various CLP stalls over the period of the show, but I have also seen it portrayed in this Assembly on the bags of a certain minister. I do not think that it shows a very positive attitude towards what he is trying to achieve. I would remind him of some of the statements that were made by the then minister, Senator Fred Chaney, who was quite a reasonable CLP minister. I will read them into Hansard. The comments were made on 7 April 1979:

> 'The delegation explained to Senator Chaney the course of events over the last few years, including discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Service on why a claim had not been lodged until January 1979. They described the strength of the Aboriginal attachment to Ayers Rock and the Olgas which they said should be acknowledged by formal title to the land vested in them. Stressing that there was no desire to stop tourism, it was accepted by them that Ayers Rock, in particular, was important to all Australians. Their proposal was that the land should remain a national park for the benefit of all Australians. As has already been broadly agreed with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, traditional owners would continue to have the right to live at Ayers Rock and to hunt and carry out traditional activities. Senator Chaney, at that stage, said he would be putting these matters before his government and, in addition, he would be in touch with the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Mr Paul Everingham, who said his government was anxious to be involved in finding a solution acceptable to all parties. Mr Everingham said that he would like to put a proposal to the traditional owners and the Central Land council with respect to Ayers Rock which he thought might meet their requirements'.

I would also point out some of the other public statements that demonstrate the hypocrisy of the current federal opposition and some of the statements made by the members opposite. In the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on 13 June 1980, the then Chief Minister, Mr Everingham, said:

> 'The Northern Territory government has been attempting to negotiate with the Aboriginal people through the Central Land Council in respect of Uluru National Park exactly the same arrangements for the last 12 months as we are now negotiating with the Northern Land Council in respect of the Cobourg Peninsula'.

In a press statement, dated 2 June 1982, the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Ian Wilson, said:

> 'The proposal will also provide for the recognition of prior ownership by Aboriginals of the Uluru-Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park by way of the grant of title to Aboriginal trustees and for the area to be declared and managed as a national park'.

In his address to the National Press Club on 28 July 1982, the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Mr Paul Everingham, said:

'The Territory government will give title to Uluru National Park, including Ayers Rock and Mount Olga, and make an arrangement whereby it continues to be a national park administered jointly by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the traditional owners'.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, in those statements there is some hedging between the position of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, the statements were consistent in that they agreed with the transfer, and I applaud the people who made those statements. However, it is unfortunate that I have seen attempts at various times by some members opposite and their counterparts in the federal opposition to utilise this particular debate as one which has the potential to split Australians. To that end, they have deliberately peddled lies, half truths and distortions which, at no time, have done anything towards trying to find an equitable solution.

I applaud the action of the federal government the other day in passing the act which will enable the transfers to the traditional owners. I will take great pleasure in attending the handover which, I believe, will be in late October. I have heard that the Governor-General has offered to carry out the handover of titles to the traditional owners. I applaud him for that.

Mr Speaker, that is all I wish to say on the transfer at this time. I hope that the government will work in a constructive way towards finding a solution which will be acceptable to the traditional owners, who will be the legal owners, and taking into account the very real needs of the tourist industry and the needs of the Northern Territory and federal governments.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I have some very real concerns about the present grab by the federal government of a feature such as Ayers Rock.

Mr Bell: They have title now. They are giving it away, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: Okay, but if we were a state, we would have had a chance of having ownership of Ayers Rock. Under these terms, there is no chance that the Territory will in time gain control of Ayers Rock in the same way as it controls other land in the Territory apart from Aboriginal land. I can see the concerns of the Territory government in the terms that have been imposed on the Conservation Commission in the grab by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to take responsibility for the management of the park and control of Conservation Commission officers. I could not see that any minister could accept that sort of control over officers of his department. I would be very surprised if a minister of any state or territory would accept that.

I personally do not know whether the people who are to have title of Ayers Rock are the real traditional owners. I do know, however, that it is not uncommon for land that has been granted to Aboriginals to have been given to the wrong people. In fact, there is an area very close to Darwin where I firmly believe this has happened and I suspect it could also happen at Ayers Rock. Land was given to a group to whom it did not belong by the present Minister for Aboriginal Affairs against the advice of the commissioner.

I could imagine what would happen if the federal government attempted to impose this sort of regulation on a state government. If it decided that it

would take over control of Mount Kosciusko in New South Wales or the Twelve Apostles in Victoria, there would be one hell of a scream. I certainly cannot agree with its proposals; I think the move is wrong. It is unfortunate that it comes at this time when we are trying to approach statehood, when we are trying to look at some sort of ground where we can come to agreement with the federal government on land tenure and on so many issues over which it currently has control. I am not so upset with the grant but rather with the attempt to seize total control and oust the Territory from that area. I support the minister's statement.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the minister's statement on the management and control of Uluru, I do so with some feeling. The thoughts of the honourable member for Victoria River are my thoughts also on the matter. I feel very strongly, together with all Territorians no matter what their colour, that this land belongs to everybody. It does not belong to one section of the community. Mr Speaker, the previous Chief Minister promised in several statements that control of Uluru would be given to Aboriginals. However, he stressed that - and everyone on this side would reiterate his statements - it was to be administered and granted under Northern Territory law and not under federal law. That shows that our Country Liberal Party and our government did not believe that the Aboriginals should be completely alienated from Uluru, but that it had to be administered under our law. The government keeps stressing that but nobody in Canberra seems to pay any attention, especially Professor Ovington.

As a glowing example of working directly with Aboriginal people, we have the Gurig National Park. That is an example of how the Northern Territory government, through the Conservation Commission, can work directly with Aboriginals. The Aboriginals have a sense of involvement with that park. They sit on the board together with Conservation Commission officers. They work directly on the day-to-day management of the park, not only for Aboriginals and not under federal law. It is under Northern Territory law. Aboriginals are involved in the management of their park at Cobourg Peninsula. They are also encouraging their people who had been traditionally associated with that place in previous generations to come and live there. They have a means of earning quite a substantial income from royalties from professional hunters in that park. All I can say is that it is a great pity that federal government members and officers connected with national parks do not visit Gurig National Park to see how things are done properly.

I think the Minister for Conservation has said - and it was very important when I was Minister for Conservation - that it is very difficult for officers of the Conservation Commission to work on lower salary scales under the direct control of that little person in Canberra, Professor Ovington. If anybody knows how to run national parks in the Northern Territory, it is the Conservation Commission rangers. I think that is recognised by state conservation commissions and it is also recognised, albeit privately, by federal park rangers in other places. This situation should definitely be righted after the next election. As the number of people in the community increases, I feel that the federal Labor government will not continue to hold sway.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I could not let this opportunity go by without making a contribution to this debate. I believe that the main issue during the Northern Territory 1983 election was the announcement by the federal Labor government that it intended to hand over ownership of Ayers Rock, or Uluru, to the Aboriginals. It was a very emotional issue at the time

and the electors of the Northern Territory expressed their strong support for this government's opposition to that action. They supported overwhelmingly the Northern Territory government and its policy of bringing Uluru National Park under its control and making it available to all Australians.

I was surprised to hear recently that the Leader of the Opposition had claimed that another Territory election would be called on the issue. I believe that he must have a phobia about this particular matter. He is terrified that in fact it might happen because, if it did, he would cop a walloping once again. In fact, he spends most of his time these days disagreeing with the actions of his federal masters. He must be very embarrassed indeed right at the moment.

He has raised this in order to cloud the real issue which is Labor's decision to put Uluru in federal hands forever rather than where it truly belongs - under the control of the Northern Territory government. The federal Labor government and its conspirators - ministers Cohen, Holding, the Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly and the ANPWS Director, Professor Ovington - have now gone out of their way to discredit our Conservation Commission which has done so much to develop Uluru National Park and all the other parks within the Northern Territory. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment it on its efforts. It must be very frustrating for it to have to work under the direction of Professor Ovington and see all of its good work go down the drain.

I believe that the federal government's actions are a national disgrace. Uluru National Park should and must become the responsibility of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. This government will certainly be working towards having that occur in the future.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. In June when discussing Uluru, the member for MacDonnell went on at some length, as only he can do, to explain the great significance Ayers Rock holds for Aboriginal people, something which I do not think any of us here would doubt. As an afterthought - one of those afterthoughts about which I wonder whether he really has much sincerity - he said: '...as indeed it is to every Australian'. He indicated that somewhere along the line the rest of us might just have some interest in Ayers Rock.

At that particular time, I interjected. I am not sure whether it was recorded in Hansard. Unless a member invites an interjection or responds to one, it is not recorded. I called out: 'Every Australian's dreamtime'. I emphasise that Ayers rock is significant to every one of us, whether Aboriginal or white.

Mr Bell:... racist.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Now we hear the term 'racist'. That is just an old catchcry which will not wear with me. It is a load of nonsense. Ayers Rock is of significance to all Australians. I believe that the slogan that Centre 2000 put on that particular sticker, which is a beautiful sticker, actually came from an Aboriginal person. It is good to think that there are many Aboriginal people in the community who can appreciate that Ayers Rock is of significance to all Australians.

I support the minister's statement on Uluru. It is part of the Territory and it must be under the control of the elected representatives of this part

of the country. The day is not too far off when that will indeed happen. I do not believe that any person in this government would deny the significance of the input that Aboriginal people could and would have in relation to the control of that particular area. They are Australians, as we are. It is every Australian's dreamtime; it is of significance to all of us. In the future, this government will respect that significance.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, a number of opposition speakers have already spoken on this matter. Because the issues themselves are simple, there is no need to be verbose on this issue. It is necessary only to be brief.

It is interesting comparing the public statements made by the members of the government opposite with some of the written evidence that is available in respect of the question of Aboriginal ownership of Ayers Rock - not whether it is Commonwealth title or Territory title, but the very concept of Aboriginal ownership of Ayers Rock. As we all know, the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory suggested that very thing to the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, previously. Indeed I know that communications between the Northern Territory government and the federal government also spoke about the desirability of Aboriginal people obtaining some financial benefit from the growing tourist trade into Ayers Rock.

The record of this government in respect of Ayers Rock has been one of duplicity and outright lies in terms of the public statements that have been made. It is not a record that any government of any political persuasion could be proud of. We all know that it will not stand up to very close examination when the history of this affair is written. What stands out in my mind only too well are the events leading up to the 1983 election. The then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory produced a trumped-up telex - a telex that was exposed as being fraudulent within 24 hours of its reception - from an organisation responsible for the financing of Yulara Village. It was designed deliberately to put the fear of God into people that the moves that were being made at that time in respect of the ownership of Ayers Rock would prejudice the financing of Yulara Village. We all know that the government, under its then Chief Minister, unnecessarily and dramatically called off the official opening of Yulara Village for no good reason whatever. It was an attempt to demonstrate in some dramatic fashion that the financing arrangements in respect of Ayers Rock would be prejudiced. As we know, they were never in question. Indeed, it forced the parent company into the embarrassing position of having to disown that disgraceful piece of political chicanery by this government.

However, it had the desired effect. It was delivered at the start of a 2-week election campaign which featured Ayers Rock throughout rather than the CLP. Interestingly enough, the slogans - and I remember them well - featured Ayers Rock with this message on its side: 'Vote 1 Everingham'. One is not likely to forget a campaign that was based on such total lies, deceit and falsehoods as that one was.

Mr Perron: Look at the results.

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, the results are there for everyone to see. Even in a business which reeks duplicity and which almost ruins people permanently from undertaking an honest occupation, it was sad to find a campaign that was so blatantly dishonest as that one. It forced the parent company into the embarrassing position of having to disown that telex within 24 hours. I am

sure that honourable members will recall that the telex was such a blatant piece of trumped-up nonsense that it even had a message attached to the bottom, and obviously not designed to be part of the original telex message, saying to the recipient: 'Hope this is the form of words that suits your purposes because we had to throw this together at your request in rather a hurry'. That was the opening shot in the politicisation of the question of Ayers Rock and what has been a long campaign since. Indeed, the then Chief Minister did not like to be reminded in the Legislative Assembly of correspondence between himself and the Prime Minister on the question of Aboriginal title to Ayers Rock.

Mr Speaker, the facts are that the title to Ayers Rock will be in no way different to the title granted in Kakadu National Park. Whilst there may be very cogent political reasons for the Northern Territory government to object on principle, if it manages to possess any shreds of principle, to the ownership of Ayers Rock, palpable nonsense has been spread in respect of this meaning that Ayers Rock is being stolen from Australians. We have all heard the trite nonsense about its being the dreaming of all Australians.

As honourable members opposite know full well, Aboriginal title, if anything, is more symbolic than real. Indeed, the former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, used to go on at some length about the deficiencies attached to Aboriginal title. He was perfectly right in his view of that matter. The particular environment in which those comments were raised was in respect of Aboriginal title over pastoral leases. The former Chief Minister pointed out, quite correctly, that Aboriginal title over pastoral leases could be a severe financial disadvantage to the operators of the pastoral leases because the title was absolutely worthless to them in respect of their ability to raise bank finance. I see the honourable minister nodding agreement because he knows that I am right.

Mr Speaker, the vesting of title, apart from some ancillary matters - and I have said this in here many times - is more symbolic than real. It is nonsense to suggest that, by vesting Aboriginal title - not freehold title - in Ayers Rock that some entitlement is being stolen from Australians. The reality is that the ownership by Australians of Ayers Rock, like the ownership by Australians of Kakadu National Park, is unimpaired and their access to Ayers Rock, as their access to Kakadu National Park, is unimpaired.

Mr Manzie: Can they take a camera?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in relation to the nonsense about whether they can take a camera, could I refer the Assembly to one of the greater frauds perpetrated in respect of Ayers Rock. Could I suggest to the honourable member that he consult with his Minister for Conservation ...

Mr Finch: You have the wrong member again, Bob.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, when you have seen one, you have seen them all. I suggest he ask the minister for a briefing on the conditions applying to commercial filming in national parks around Australia and he will discover something very interesting indeed. He will discover that, in the Northern Territory, the conditions attached to commercial filming - and that is what we are talking about; we are not talking about tourists taking cameras into Ayers Rock, and he knows that full well ...

Mr Hatton: Charter flights.

Mr B. COLLINS: And charter flights.

I suggest that, instead of the honourable member speaking from profound ignorance, as is his wont, he look at the restrictions imposed by the Victorian National Parks Service, the New South Wales National Parks Service, the Queensland National Parks Service, the Western Australian National Parks Service - conditions that were there long before there were Labor governments in those states - and he will find that conditions are very onerous indeed for filming in national parks. Mr Speaker, from memory - and I have quoted the regulations in this Assembly on previous occasions - in Victoria, not only is it essential, for very obvious reasons if you stop and think about it for 10 seconds, for the companies involved to post an extremely substantial insurance bond before they are allowed in the park, but the Victorian National Parks Service also reserves the right to veto the contents of the film so produced. They see their national parks as being used to promote conservation and they will not allow them to be used for criticising the national parks service or for portraying in some public way an attack on conservation issues. By legislation, they reserve the right to veto ...

Mr Dondas: Censorship.

Mr B. COLLINS: Absolutely. To veto ...

Mr D.W. Collins: Should be exposed.

Mr B. COLLINS: Film always is otherwise it is not much good to anybody. Film is always exposed, but it also achieves something that the honourable member opposite has never achieved, and that is that it is also developed.

Turning to the subject of charter flights, look at the regulations in respect of charter flights, particularly helicopter charters, in national parks around Australia and you will find that the furphies that are continually pushed by the Northern Territory government are palpable nonsense. It is obvious that, when a park is heavily utilised by visitation such regulations are essential for the safety of all the users of the park.

In places like Africa where some of the great national parks of the world are situated, they have been forced, because of tourist pressure, to remove all tourist facilities from inside the national parks and place them outside. I have visited some of the major parks in Zambia. As a matter of absolute necessity for the preservation of one park from visitor pressure, they removed all of the tourist facilities from inside the park and provided leases for the operators on the perimeters of the park boundaries. When entering the park, you have to be accompanied by a park ranger. You are not allowed to go into the park unaccompanied and, under no circumstances, are you allowed to move off the tracks provided. So much for the trumped-up nonsense that has been pushed by this government - not just in respect of Ayers Rock, but in respect of Kakadu too. The former Chief Minister was the one responsible, with his nonsense about restrictions on helicopter flights in Kakadu National Park. I was particularly incensed about it. It is a demonstration of the rubbish pushed by people opposite.

Mr Speaker, is it feasible that, in a properly managed and highly reputed national park which has 80 000 visitors a year, people should be allowed to have unrestricted use of a helicopter with no controls at all about where it flies and where it lands? That very issue came up in relation to Kakadu National Park. An operator wanted to do that and the howls from the former

Chief Minister were very loud indeed. The regulations and restrictions referred to just a few moments ago as being so onerous in the Northern Territory are some of the least restrictive park management practices, not just in Australia but in the world. Unfortunately, the reality is that, as the years go on and as the visitor pressure increases on this invaluable and irreplaceable resource, those restrictions will have to increase.

I know, Mr Speaker, that people find it difficult. I am constantly receiving complaints about it. People do not like being forced to walk on the catwalks that are provided and they do not like being stopped by the barriers next to the rock art in Kakadu National Park. However, the interesting thing about Ayers Rock and Kakadu and restrictions and furphies about title is that the Northern Territory government never loses the opportunity, when commercially promoting those resources of Ayers Rock and Kakadu, to exploit the very thing it protests most about - that is, the Aboriginal aspects of both Ayers Rock and Kakadu National Park. If you visit the offices of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission in Singapore and in London, you will be told what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was told when he visited those offices. It is what all of the people who attended the tourism seminar opened by the Chief Minister in Kakadu National Park were told when he gave his keynote address. It is that, on professional advice, the key to the successful commercial exploitation of Ayers Rock and Kakadu National Parks in the Northern Territory is to sell the Aboriginal aspects of both those parks overseas. That is what people are interested in and what is unique about the Northern Territory.

As I have said before, if you go to a place like Fiji, you see it is far ahead of the Northern Territory in terms of visitor pressure because it is a rest and recreation area. People go there again and again, sometimes on a 12-monthly basis, to relax. Places like Kakadu, Ayers Rock, Victoria Falls in Africa and Yellowstone National Park tend to be places that people visit once, particularly those from overseas. The thing that attracts overseas visitors most about Ayers Rock and Kakadu are the Aboriginal aspects of the parks. If you doubt that, Mr Speaker, I would simply refer you to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission's overseas advertising campaign in respect of both those areas. Who can forget the first-class television advertising campaign that was mounted? It won prizes, and deservedly so! It showed Uluru and Kakadu with a background of Aboriginal music and features of Aboriginals superimposed on the screen above Ayers Rock. Who can forget the Northern Territory lottery ticket that featured Ayers Rock? Over Ayers Rock was superimposed the head of the major traditional owner of the rock, now deceased - Paddy Uluru. When it suits them, the Northern Territory government never ceases to emphasise the value to the Northern Territory of that aspect of both Uluru and Kakadu. It is a fact that Aboriginal title to Ayers Rock, the same title as Kakadu National Park is vested under, is the safest title in Australia as far as Australians generally are concerned. You cannot sell it; you cannot mortgage it. You cannot raise money on it. You cannot do anything with it.

A member: You can't land helicopters on it.

Mr B. COLLINS: Once again, we have this nonsense about helicopters. A number of brilliant suggestions like that have been made by people opposite who would like to place these resources under threat. We have had serious propositions to have chairlifts to the top of Ayers Rock! We have had propositions put to have rest and toilet facilities at the top of Ayers Rock. On one occasion when I took umbrage and said to the person that that would spoil the profile of Ayers Rock, he said, quite seriously: 'Oh, no. We would

excavate a hole in the top of Ayers Rock so that in fact those facilities would not be seen'. Who can forget the best of all - when the Australian Atomic Energy Commission brought out its expert? I remember his visit to the Northern Territory. Talk about red faces! Even the Minister for Mines and Energy, our now Chief Minister, was not game to stick his head up over that one. This expert on nuclear waste disposal, who had been brought out there at great expense to suggest the desirability of Australia as a repository, said that the very best location that he could find in terms of stable geological formations - and I see some heads nodding opposite so members obviously remember - was Ayers Rock. He said at his press conference in the Territory that this country could make a fortune out of Ayers Rock by drilling holes all the way through it and using it as a repository for nuclear waste! When we talk about restrictions, let us not get too carried away with how unrestricted our access to these priceless resources can be. If we do, we will then be in the same position of shortsighted gain for long-term loss which so many national parks around the world now find themselves in. In places like Yellowstone and some national parks in Japan, visitor pressure has almost destroyed the very attraction that the parks were created around in the beginning.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that Aboriginal title to Ayers Rock is something that will promote the attraction of that tourist destination world-wide. It poses a threat to absolutely no one.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I must say I agree substantially with just about everything the Leader of the Opposition has said. He is perfectly correct when he says that, under the title and plan of management which currently exist over Uluru and Kakadu, Australians have access. There is no argument with that. They have access in the same manner as Australians have access to parks in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. He is also perfectly correct that, in respect of just about every national park in this country, apart from recreation parks, various forms of permits are required in order to film, to land helicopters or to drive 4-wheel-drive vehicles in the park. He is perfectly correct when he says that Aboriginal people, in respect of our major parks, must play a most significant role. After all, as the Leader of the Opposition correctly points out, we feature them in our advertising and I think, by and large, with their approval. In fact, I could say that it is almost exclusively with their approval. It is perfectly reasonable to suggest to the government that every effort ought to be made - and clearly he implied that - to further Aboriginal involvement in national parks. I have agreed with him in just about everything he said: access, restrictions and Aboriginal participation.

The fundamental difference between the Australian Labor Party and the government is the matter of ownership of parks within the geopolitical borders. The fact is that, in each and every case where there is a restriction under a plan of management or under an act in relation to a park which is located in an Australian state, it is the laws of those states which determine those plans of management. It is the parliaments of those states within which parks are situated which are answerable for the effectiveness of such plans of management and such laws. It is the parliaments and the plans of management which give access, via the parliaments of those states, rightfully to the people of the whole of Australia: Aboriginal, Victorian, non-Aboriginal, New South Welshmen, Tasmanians - I do not care which. All have access to our national parks within the borders of this country. In every case, except for the Northern Territory, the laws in respect of the management of those places are made by the relevant state parliaments and not by a bunch of people in Canberra who do not even live in those states.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, most of what has to be said on this statement has been said. However, the outburst by the Leader of Government Business probably requires some response.

Mr Robertson: Let us hear you say firmly and finally that you do not believe the Territory should control land within its own borders. Say it, and I will post it to every elector in the Territory.

Mr LEO: Without getting into any great political debate, tomorrow we will be forming a committee to discuss statehood. Amongst other things, I am sure that committee will be discussing the constitution and power of the Territory in all aspects of its life. My feelings on this matter will be indicated within the forum of that committee. To start politicising it inevitably will do great harm to that very important debate on our future. Whilst I appreciate and to some degree accept what the Leader of Government Business has just enunciated, because he will be the chairman of this committee and history will record him as the father of our constitution, I would ask that, at least in this Assembly, he moderate his statements and his comments on those matters which will certainly affect that very important debate.

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had a number of speakers on this statement. Certainly, the opposition has failed to address the fundamental points that were made. The member for MacDonnell noted that I was actually referring in my statement to many of the problems being experienced at Uluru over administration and the non-performance by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service of the plan of management for that park. But his only comment on that was as follows:

> 'I find it coincidental in the extreme that the minister, who has been more than 6 months in his portfolio, only brings to the public attention now, or to the attention of the federal minister by way of correspondence, these matters that are of such great concern that they warrant a 25-page statement to the Assembly'.

I would have thought that it would have been fairly expeditious for a minister of only 6 months standing to go to the trouble of finding out what had been occurring in a particular park that is outside the ...

Mr Bell: A new member perhaps; a new minister no.

Mr HATTON: I happen to be both. I took the opportunity, when the information was available in a cohesive form, to advise the Assembly of that. I have taken the opportunity during the course of the year to bring these matters to the attention of the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment. I have received a reply in the form of deafening silence. Both have refused even to comment on the points that I have made. Both of those gentlemen have refused to make any comment, any response or any refutation of the points that I made in that statement. Those comments that I have made stand and are a condemnation of the performance of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in its administration of that park.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a fundamental point that I was making in respect of that statement, a matter which the opposition sought to avoid or gloss over. The member for Stuart welcomed the transfer of the title to Uluru National Park. I assume from his statements that he is referring purely to the transfer of Aboriginal title rather than the amendments that conjointly

occurred in respect of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act. If he bothers to read that act, he will find the extent to which the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has extended its power and influence. He will see the degree of control it will be exercising over the Uluru board of management, which is effectively no more than an advisory board to the director and the minister. He will see the extent to which the legislation has been amended to extend the empire of the ANPWS in the Northern Territory, without even the necessity of publicly advertising the fact that it can occur. That has been done by extending the borders beyond what I would describe as the region where they currently apply. This can now be done merely by regulation. It does not require even public advertising or public comment. There is no opportunity for the public of the Northern Territory even to know what is happening.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there has also been much comment on the issue of the new management arrangements proposed by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service so far as Uluru is concerned, including the moves that are being taken to remove effectively day-to-day control of that park from the hands of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. There has been much comment by the Leader of the Opposition asserting inconsistency and distortions from this side of the Assembly. He has also made the point that Aboriginal ownership and Aboriginal title over the area on the basis of leaseback would not prejudice access to that park so far as its operation as a national park is concerned.

Let me say, in respect of the Aboriginal people and their title over that park, that this government has not opposed Aboriginal title being given to the Aboriginal community at Uluru. It has consistently maintained that it would be more appropriate that such title should be given under Northern Territory legislation. This government has gone to the extent of saying that it would make that title inalienable under Northern Territory legislation.

Mr Bell: Hang on, we are all Australians.

Mr HATTON: On the basis of a ...

Mr Bell: Listen to what your backbenchers are saying.

Mr HATTON: You listen to what I am saying for a change.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that has been the position of the Northern Territory government. It has consistently been our position this year. The transfer would be on the basis of a leaseback arrangement so that it can continue to operate as a national park. The fundamental point of our disagreement with the federal government over this particular issue is not the issue of Aboriginal title over Ayers Rock: it is the fact that what is being imbedded is control and direction by the federal government under federal legislation, and operation by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to table a paper headed 'Uluru National Park Transfer of Title: Leaseback and Management Arrangements'. It describes briefly a series of correspondence and events dating back to 1958. They show an interesting history in respect of the operation of this particular park and demonstrate quite clearly the very different attitudes to these issues of title, control and park operation by the ALP and the coalition parties federally and the CLP in the Northern Territory.

The honourable member for MacDonnell made a particular point about sleight of hand occurring in 1976 when Uluru was removed from Aboriginal land and declared as a national park. I might point out to the honourable member, as a further history lesson, that in fact that park or reserve was taken out of the Aboriginal reserve and reserved under section 103 of the Crown Lands Ordinance, as it was then, on 23 January 1958. It was committed to the control of the Northern Territory Reserves Board on 14 March 1958. It continued to operate on that basis until the Whitlam government came to power. In 1973, it decided to expand into the field of environmental legislation. Its expansion into this field led to the takeover of the parks of the Northern Territory. It put those under the control of a new organisation called the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 1975, the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act was passed and the federal government stated publicly that its intention was to take over all parks and wildlife functions in the Territory. Cobourg was declared an international wetland without consultation with the Territory. It was declared and publicly advertised that Kakadu, Ayers Rock, Simpson's Gap and Katherine Gorge were to be made ANPWS parks.

Fortunately for the Northern Territory, the Whitlam government was voted out at the end of 1975 and, when the Fraser government came in, a process of consultation actually started. In the process of consultation with the then Majority Leader of the Northern Territory, Dr Goff Letts, that agreement was drastically modified into a different approach whereby only Uluru and Kakadu would be declared under the Commonwealth act, and they only on an interim basis. The other parks would remain with the Northern Territory Reserves Board and, subsequently, the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. Those parks were then declared on 24 May 1977.

In a telex dated 20 May 1977, Professor Ovington requested that the NT Reserves Board continue to undertake day-to-day management from the date of the proclamation of the park. On 25 May 1977, Professor Ovington sent a telex to the head of the Reserves Board, Mr Hare, which confirmed an agreement between the Ministers for the Northern Territory, the Environment, Housing and Community Development that the day-to-day management of the park would be by a commission to be established with the passage of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Ordinance and the management to be according to an agreed management plan.

From 1979, Mr Deputy Speaker, negotiations have been proceeding in respect of Uluru on the basis of title and leaseback between the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government and the Aboriginal people, particularly the Central Land Council. In the document that has been tabled, there is a letter from the CLC to the Chief Minister of that time dated 14 September 1979. It sought title to the park with leaseback under Commonwealth legislation. On 8 October 1981, and there had been negotiations in between, the CLC and the Pitjantjatjara telexed Mr Everingham. Whilst expressing concern over the call for the transfer of Uluru to the Northern Territory, they indicated they would be prepared to accept Northern Territory control provided the title was vested in the traditional owners. There was a series of correspondence on 3 June 1983 and 10 October 1983 where Mr Everingham wrote to Mr Hawke. He undertook to give inalienable, perpetual title under Territory law and to make provisions for the management under Territory control. He was seeking Commonwealth agreement. We are aware of that famous telex of 11 November 1983 when Mr Hawke advised Mr Everingham of the decision to transfer title under Commonwealth legislation to an Aboriginal land trust which was to be established, and of the subsequent events that perpetuated that in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us be very clear on the attitude of the previous federal government in so far as the eventual proposal for the transfer of the title to the Northern Territory is concerned. Make no bones about it, Mr Deputy Speaker, it was the federal government's intention that both Kakadu and Uluru would be returned. We look forward to the return of a coalition government in Canberra because it has since reaffirmed an undertaking that, when it returns to government, it will honour the undertakings of the previous coalition government and return the title to the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer now to the standing Interdepartmental Committee on Northern Territory Constitutional Development and the record of a meeting with Northern Territory officials on 20 July 1982. I quote from that particular document at item 2B, which refers to Uluru National Park. The chairman of that committee was a federal official:

> 'The chairman commenced discussion by saying that the Commonwealth objective in respect of Uluru remains as transferring ownership to the Territory while according a form of title to the traditional owners. It now appeared that Uluru had become tied up with the ALP package.
>
> Dr Letts spoke of the Memorandum of Understanding relating to the intermediate steps designed to advance NT management and control of the park, including full delegation pursuant to section 36 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act'.

I have referred, Mr Deputy Speaker, on many occasions and frequently in this particular statement, to the failure of the ANPWS to provide delegations and the consequential administrative chaos that has been created by that failure. The record continues:

> 'Although NT ownership of the park was the NT government's first priority, the intermediate steps mentioned should be taken if ownership was not to be transferred in the short term'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there was an intention by both the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth governments that the title would transfer and they were negotiating intermediate steps prior to that actually occurring. That was the basis for seeking the delegations and the proper formulation. It was also the basis of agreements that day-to-day management of Kakadu and Uluru would rest with the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. It shames me to say that the Fraser government reneged on the proposals in so far as Kakadu is concerned and we were saddled with a joint management arrangement that is highly unsatisfactory to the Northern Territory. We now have the Hawke government reneging on previous undertakings and trying to foist the same arrangement on to Uluru. The Northern Territory will not enter into another Kakadu arrangement. That should be made very clear and I have taken the time to stress that to the federal minister. It is totally unacceptable that we find our staff alienated from our service, as has been occurring at Kakadu. We entered into that agreement - and I am not going to back out on the agreement for Kakadu - but I am not going to enter into other agreements that further prejudice the good operation of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the proper role that should be carried out by way of agreements and the plan of management. As it currently exists, day-to-day management should rest with the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

Since I made this statement, Mr Deputy Speaker, events have shown quite clearly the extent to which the federal government and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will go to try to expand and extend their empire in the Northern Territory. It shames me to think that there are members of this Assembly who would support and praise that action, as some members of the opposition have done, either by direct statement or by failure to stand up for the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those are the issues at hand. The ANPWS has not been performing in the park. It has failed to carry out its responsibilities in respect of the park. It has failed to provide proper delegations to enable us to carry out our functions in the park. I have spoken during this sittings on problems that have arisen recently over Uluru and some wild accusations by the federal minister on that matter. I outlined also the extent to which we have been prepared to put our money where our mouth is at the park and we do a substantial amount.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if we look at the budget statements which are in front of us today, we find that the grand sum that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service provides to the Northern Territory government for Uluru is just over $400 000. We spend nearly as much in addition to that to make up the difference and to try to have the park operating properly under extremely difficult circumstances. We have rangers without proper authorisations, wardens certificates are not being issued, there is a failure to meet overhead costs and crazy administrative decisions. It is necessary to go to one person in Canberra for signature because he will not delegate but wants to centralise every decision in his own hands. That is why we have had problems with Uluru. Those are the reasons why we have had problems with things like commercial filming and other incidents at the park.

Unfortunately, the Aboriginal people have been caught in the middle of that fight because Professor Ovington will not delegate to allow the Northern Territory Conservation Commission to carry out its functions properly. The commission is prepared to accept the responsibility but it is not given the capacity due to the failure of ANWPS to carry out its own undertakings.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to raise several matters. I will commence by noting that the Minister for Lands has yet to give any satisfactory explanation of the points I raised at some length last week in respect of the Katherine east subdivision.

The first matter I wish to raise in this evening's adjournment relates to a question I asked of the Minister for Transport and Works. I hope that he will be somewhat more rapidly forthcoming than his colleague. I refer specifically to matter E778 that was reported by the Ombudsman in his case notes about complaints for the year 1983-84 that were tabled in this Assembly. A rather sad situation was described in those notes and I intend to read into the record much of these case notes and to ask some questions afterwards:

'The complainant allegedly received advice that application for charter and aerial work licences had been approved. Without waiting for confirmation in writing, he acquired an aircraft but, on his return to Darwin, he discovered a "mistake" had been made; his application had not been approved. He resubmitted the application but, before it could be considered, then engaged in allegedly illegal flights which made him possibly subject to prosecution for offences under various aviation acts. He was informed that his application could not be considered until legal action was finalised. He complained that an approach with a view to obtaining interim licences had been refused.

An investigation disclosed evidence indicating that an unfortunate series of events occurred prior to the complainant acquiring his aircraft. The advice on which he acted did not come directly from the department but through the minister's office; probably because of misinterpretation or a misunderstanding, the complainant was given incorrect advice. By then, he had acquired an aircraft and found himself in a position of having to pay for it; it was alleged he then engaged in work for which he was not licensed and became subject to prosecution. The director, acting on advice from the Licensing Review Committee, considered that he was unable to process the new application or grant an interim licence application until legal action was finalised.

The complainant appealed to the Chief Minister and received similar advice to that given by the director.

In my opinion, the complainant had acted somewhat impetuously from the beginning and had left the department with little alternative but to act in the manner it did. The complainant, in addition to operating without a Northern Territory licence, did not have the required Commonwealth Department of Aviation licences which were not obtained until several months after lodging of the second Northern Territory application.

I found that the department's actions had not been improper and the complainant was informed accordingly. He was advised that I had no power to investigate the actions of a minister. If he wished to pursue the question of the advice he allegedly received, it was suggested that he consult the minister'.

That is a matter of concern, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I am sure you accept that. I want to draw the attention of the Minister for Transport and Works particularly to the following statement in the Ombudsman's case notes: 'The advice on which he acted did not come directly from the department but through the minister's office; probably because of misinterpretation or a misunderstanding, the complainant was given incorrect advice'.

Can the honourable minister confirm that the incorrect advice was given to this air charter operator by the minister's office, presumably by the minister himself? I would like a clear statement from the honourable minister in that regard. Secondly, if there was a misinterpretation or misunderstanding on the part of the minister that caused the air charter operator concerned to suffer in the way that he did, has any compensation been provided to that particular operator? In this regard, I draw the minister's attention to the fact that the Ombudsman, quite properly, said that he had no power to investigate the

actions of a minister but he certainly left quite open the question of whether the minister's action had been improper. He made it quite clear that the department's actions had been quite proper but plainly it is a matter for this Assembly and for the honourable minister responsible to investigate that particular question and find a satisfactory answer to it. I look forward to hearing about it in the fullness of time.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is staffing at Gillen Primary School. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall that the honourable member for Sadadeen asked the Minister for Education a question about staffing and promotion positions at Gillen Primary School. Information that has come to me in that regard has been somewhat less than satisfactory, particularly in view of the honourable minister's response to that question last week. He suggested then that the administrative arrangements adopted with respect to promotion positions at Gillen Primary School had all been fair and above board. Let me place on the record of this Assembly that, on the basis of the facts that are available to me, that is not the case. I must admit that I am rather surprised that the 2 local members for the community served by Gillen Primary School have chosen to ignore the issue both within this Assembly and without it. I do not believe that they have placed on record any opinion in that regard. Presumably, their silence can be taken as acceptance of the actions taken.

Let me enlighten you, Mr Deputy Speaker, about the actions that were taken. The situation is that Gillen Primary School has had 4 band-2 teachers. For various reasons, it was staffed on that allocation. I understand that, strictly according to numbers, the school should have 3 band-2 teachers. The staff at that school and the parents were not happy about reducing that number from 4 to 3 but, if they were unhappy about that, they were extremely unhappy at having to do it at such short notice. I believe that, perhaps 2 hours before the end of the last semester, a telephone call was received at the school and it was told that it had to 'waste' 1 of the band-2 positions. It was not happy about it, as I have said, but it decided that, on the basis of allocations according to enrolments and attendance, it should accept it. Rather begrudgingly, on the basis that the last person appointed should be the first person to leave, it decided that 1 of the band-2 teachers should finish up.

However, that was not the end of the story. What the staff of that particular school found particularly depressing was that, on their return after the holidays, all of the band-2 teachers received notification that they would have to reapply for their jobs. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that you will agree that it is a sad state of affairs when, instead of taking action to provide a reasonable level of staff, the Department of Education first tells a school to reorganise itself in 2 hours and then, in complete contradiction, sends letters 4 weeks later to those very same people indicating that they have to reapply for their jobs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are real problems in providing quality education for Territory kids and for Territory families when actions which have serious effects on morale are carried out with no regard for the feelings of the people actually doing the job. Unlike the people who believe in 'administrationism', I have no doubt that the quality of education offered in Northern Territory schools depends on dedicated, qualified schoolteachers, and actions such as these militate seriously against their dedication and attack their morale. It must be a real kick in the teeth.

While I am on the issue of schools and the administration thereof, let me place on record my deep concern about the process of staffing schools on adjusted attendance. I have written to the Minister for Education about this issue and I hope he will take it on board. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be aware that there are difficulties in getting Aboriginal kids in the bush to go to school. Attendance does not always match enrolment. Quite clearly, our requirement is to get kids involved in schools as much as possible. One of our big challenges in the Territory is to provide meaningful, challenging, quality education for Aboriginal kids, the majority of whose parents have not been to school themselves, particularly those from bush communities which are more traditionally-oriented. They should not be denied adequate resources for education on that basis but that is precisely what is happening with this business of adjusted attendance.

Let me explain to you precisely what adjusted attendance is, Mr Deputy Speaker. Adjusted attendance means that, instead of staffing schools on the basis of the number of kids on the roll, they are staffed on the basis of attendance plus 10%. I am not suggesting that the Territory government should provide teachers for kids who are enrolled at 3 different schools; I think purging the rolls at regular intervals is an administratively responsible action. However, to accept failure, to accept that attendance will be so much lower than enrolment, and to staff schools on that basis, is quite discriminatory and I trust that the Minister for Education will recant.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a number of matters to raise. The first relates to Stott Terrace which has been of considerable concern to people in Alice Springs for some time, as is well known to the local members. Today, I received a phone call from a lady who runs a laundromat in Stott Terrace near the Repco building. Apparently, last night the Alice Springs Town Council, encouraged by the Department of Transport and Works, passed a motion that there would no longer be provision for parking in Stott Terrace. I am sure that many people will think that a useful thing although it is not a clear cut matter. I am informed that the Town Engineer advised councillors that the fact that there was parking there would tend to slow people up but that, if parking were removed, vehicles would travel more rapidly along the terrace. Thus, that advice goes 2 ways. However, I believe that road is to be taken back by the government. Surprise, surprise! This was passed last night and the Alice Springs Town Council erected the signs. They were erected in the early hours of this morning. The laundromat relies on people pulling up outside and unloading fairly hefty baskets of clothes, and the lady said that people have not stopped there all day. Clearly, in attempting to resolve some of our traffic problems in Alice Springs, a new problem has been created. I just bring it to the minister's attention.

Last week, I asked a question about payments to subcontractors by the people who are building the oil pipeline from Mereenie to Alice Springs. I had been approached by subcontractors who found that their payments were not coming as promised. There had been some delays. I am pleased to learn that that bubble seems to have been fixed and they are receiving their payments on a regular basis. I am not having a shot at the builders of this particular pipeline. However, after the unfortunate situation which occurred with the Alice Springs gas pipeline, where the builders went into liquidation and many people in Alice Springs had their fingers burnt, one can understand that these subcontractors may become a bit jittery. I just hope that that is taken on board. It is not the fault of the present group but of the previous group. When people have had their fingers burnt once, they do not want them burnt

again. I appreciate the minister's reply. I would not want the government to become involved in a business contract to the extent of telling people what to do. That is not the role of government as I see it. His advice, which I passed on to a number of people in Alice Springs, is that they should check out the ability of a company to pay before they involve themselves in any great debt. That has been accepted as sensible advice.

Again on the matter of intervention, a petition was presented this morning. I was given a copy of that petition 2 or 3 months ago now. A union person came to my office and we discussed it. He mentioned that the Chief Minister had made promises to oust the owners of the place. The Chief Minister denied that and I furiously doubted the claim. The government may express concern and may try to persuade but it is not in the business of telling people what they are to do nor how they are to run their particular businesses.

It is a matter of interest and concern that centralian beef is not being processed but I believe that, in the not-too-distant future, when things change regarding union power and when workers realise that they can secure a good deal for themselves, as happened at Mudginberri, it will be up and running again. It reminds me of a paper circulated in my electorate by the Sadadeen branch of the ALP which advocated that, because that area is opened up and there are many houses, there should be shops and other facilities. It virtually said that the government should build those facilities and staff them. As I pointed out in my newsletter to the people in the Sadadeen electorate, we have made provision for land which can be used only for that purpose but we are not in the business of telling people when to open the shops and exactly what shops to establish. That is something for the market to determine. The people to whom I have spoken freely agree with that.

One of the beaut things about this ALP letter was that everybody was invited to attend a meeting of the Sadadeen branch of the ALP to discuss the matter. I knew one lady who was very interested. I had forgotten to put it in my diary, otherwise I would have gone along myself. She went along and said that nobody else turned up; nobody came. Not one of its officers was there - not one of them. So much for its load of nonsense.

Another point of interest that I would like to raise cuts across a whole host of ministerial areas. The Territory has an asset which we have not capitalised on: Central Mount Stuart which is the geographical centre of Australia. It is near the town of Ti Tree. At the moment, it is accessible by a fairly rough track. I must confess that I have never been there but I have been reasonably close to it on occasion. Some of my friends camped there and climbed the hill. They enjoyed themselves immensely. I think it is a place which could be capitalised on in terms of tourism and conservation. No doubt, the Departments of Transport and Works and Lands would necessarily be involved. I would like to see a decent road put in there. A park should be created and a gas barbecue supplied. I am not sure whether water could be provided there; the Water Division might know where water is available. That would be useful. There should be maps and walking tracks to take people to the top of the hill. I envisage that it would be similar to Ayers Rock in that people would have special T-shirts and the like. Central Mount Stuart is the centre of Australia. It is something which the bicentennial group could become involved with. I think that idea is worth pursuing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was rung up by a friend who is on the council of Gillen Primary School. He told me that there was a message that 1 of the 4

band-2 teachers had to go because of falling attendance numbers. That was accepted. After some debate, it was agreed that the last one on would be the one to go. Later, all of those band-2 teachers received telegrams saying that they had to apply for their own jobs. That sent shock waves through the staff, the school council and the parents. I supported the concerns of the gentleman who approached me. I said that, on the surface, it appeared to be a lousy deal.

I contacted Mr Geoff Spring, the Secretary of the Department of Education. He said that, although it was agreed that one person would have to go, a bubble had arisen because the Teachers Federation did not consider it to be fair and the person who had to go was not happy about it either. The Department of Education considered that some agreement had to be reached on who would have to stand down. That is understandable. It explained why the duty statements of 4 people in the school had to be divided up between 3, and that is a sensible approach. However, there seemed to have been a shocking breakdown in communications, including the sending of telegrams saying that teachers had to apply for their own jobs for 1986. There were all sorts of rumours. For example, there was a rumour that a top level public servant was coming to Alice Springs and his wife, being a teacher, would get one of those jobs.

I was very pleased that Mr Geoff Spring also expressed horror at how things had been handled. I believe that there was a breakdown in communications and these things were not explained to the teachers. I was pleased to receive from Mr Spring the assurance that at least 3 of those 4 people would be at Gillen Primary School in 1986 and there was no chance of an outsider picking up a position there. That was exactly what I would have hoped for. He also gave me an assurance that the teacher who was displaced, along with teachers from other schools in the region - including Ross Park Primary School in my electorate which was subject to the same treatment brought about by the $3m reduction in education finances forced on us by another place - would have the very first opportunities to pick up band-2 positions. I was able to communicate this to the person in question and assure him that this would be told to the teachers that particular afternoon. That did indeed happen. The communications were straightened out but, somewhere along the line, somebody was not thinking about the effect of these actions upon people. I fully supported the teachers concerned. I am glad the matter has been resolved satisfactorily. I hope that the backsides of people who did not give enough thought to their handling of the matter will be kicked as a reminder that you cannot treat people who are vitally important to our education system in such a manner.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to respond to the quite immoderate outburst by the member for MacDonnell concerning the arrangements for the development of Katherine east. In his histrionic ravings last week, the honourable member accused the CLP of having 'its snout in the trough'. He said it had 'allowed public money to be transferred to its own account'. He trod on the edge of imputing improper motives to ministers and fundamentally made a fool of himself and a mess of this Assembly's decorum. He did, however, ask a series of questions to which I now respond by outlining all the circumstances. I will preface this response with a brief background on the land situation in Katherine and, to assist honourable members, I ask that a paper be circulated providing a summary of land development costs and land sale prices in Katherine from 1980 to 1985.

In the period to the beginning of 1984, land was available, through a government subdivision at Katherine east stage 1, at $10 500 per block. Honourable members will note that this was considerably below the actual cost of development which was $21 725 per block, but was consistent with government policy of minimising land costs and limiting acceleration of land values for home purchasers. At the same time, at what is known as the Transport and Works subdivision, land was selling at between $12 000 and $12 500. Privately-owned land was even more expensive and, by mid-1983, was around $15 000 to $16 000.

In recognition of the continuing demand for residential land in Katherine, the Department of Lands had sought funding, through both the 1983-84 and 1984-85 capital works programs, for a further residential subdivision. However, due to a commitment in other capital works areas, the requisite level of funding was not immediately available from government resources. Contrary to the apparent view of the opposition, there are not unlimited amounts of capital works money available and priorities must be set year by year. The Department of Lands had provided an item in the 1984-85 capital works program to provide 140 blocks at a cost of $3.1m. However, the capital works program subcommittee revised this to $0.9m which would yield 40 to 50 blocks, less than the number needed to meet 1 year's estimated demand. The NT Housing Commission indicated that it alone required approximately 35 blocks at Katherine during 1983-84 and a further 50 during 1984-85.

In August 1983, a new element was added to the picture when the federal government without prior advice, as is its practice, allocated funds for investigations and surveys for the upgrading of the Tindal air base to cater for an FA18 fighter squadron. The Department of Lands foresaw the likelihood of an early strong demand in both public and private sectors for serviced residential land. Therefore, a major residential subdivision was seen as an urgent necessity. This arose following the indications from the federal budget in 1983 and it was a response from the Department of Lands to move promptly to avoid unnecessary delays in the provision of land in Katherine. Because of the restricted availability of capital works funding, the preferred course was to release an area for private development, consistent with the government's policy on residential land development. To call for public invitations for a development lease would have taken at least 6 months before a lease could have been issued and this was regarded as an unacceptable delay.

Because of the above, the minister agreed that the Department of Lands negotiate with local contractors to ascertain if any were willing and able to construct a residential subdivision under private development conditions. The government was, and still is, most concerned to allow local firms the maximum opportunity to participate in the growth of Katherine, a policy long supported by both parties in the Assembly and promoted by both the Katherine Town Council and the business community in that town. This procedure would allow us to accelerate the turnoff and to have local participation. I am advised that larger out-of-town firms had been approached but they had showed considerable reservations and wanted extremely favourable conditions because of the necessary establishment costs and the relative uncertainty of the market. This was a further reason for approaching local firms.

Four firms were approached: SBS who were prepared to negotiate and were considered suitable; B.J. Saville, who was interested but did not consider he had the necessary resources; K.J. Hickey, who was not interested, as his main work was in earthwork jobs in the rural area; and Barcar Constructions which was in the process of closing its contracting operations in favour of the

development of its other interests and was worried that Tindal might not proceed.

The minister then agreed that SBS Constructions be approached with a view to negotiating a development lease over 58 ha in Katherine east to yield an estimated 310 blocks over 5 years. SBS investigated the project and advised that it wanted to proceed but that the project was too large for it to undertake alone and it wished to enter into a joint venture arrangement with Henry and Walker. In view of the circumstances, the Minister for Lands at that time agreed that negotiations proceed on that basis. It should be noted that this approach was made by SBS and that SBS provided, and still provides, a local base and most of the physical resources for that project.

Members of the Katherine Town Council were approached for their opinion on the proposed method of release. They advised that they were in agreement with the introduction of private developers as proposed, particularly if it would accelerate the turnoff of much-needed residential land and if cost savings could be achieved. They did, however, express concern that a private developer would hike up the price of government land to the disadvantage of the residents.

Honourable members will clearly see the upward pressure on prices indicated in the paper I have circulated. The minister approved that the agreement with SBS and Henry and Walker should include a condition that the price of allotments to be sold to the private sector would be pegged at $15 000 until January 1986. On the other hand, the Housing Commission requirement, together with the possible Commonwealth requirement, meant that the government would be required to buy back 80% of the lots to be turned off. The price of the repurchase was to be $20 000. This would yield the developer an average price of $19 000 per block. This was a decrease in the cost of land to the government and was seen to be a very reasonable price when the government's own experience reflected development costs in excess of $21 000 per block. Thus, the joint aim of the government and the Katherine Town Council had been achieved. The developer's average return was pegged at, or slightly below, the then current market rate and was pegged at that for 2 years. To make any money, the developer had to perform significantly better than government contractors and this was without paying anything for the land.

The resultant agreement was signed on 14 March 1984 and the first 64 R1 lots were turned off in July 1984. This initial agreement was formally based on a pre-Tindal demand projection, but contained provisions for renegotiation of its terms in the event that upgrading of the base became a reality. This was seen as necessary so that the additional land required by the government would be available when it was needed.

Following the announcement by the Minister for Defence that the Tindal upgrading was to go ahead and the inclusion of funds in the 1984 federal budget, new terms were negotiated with the developers with effect from 30 November 1984. The terms negotiated included: a revised lease term of 3 years where previously it had been 5 years; earlier and greater production of lots, now at 490 lots over 3 years - it had been 380 lots over 5 years; recognition that, provided the developer achieved his contractual target, there would not appear to be a need to release a further private development area until late 1985; the $15 000 ceiling on private sales and $20 000 on buy back would cease at the completion of stage 2B of the development which was approximately June 1985; and the R1 lots needed to meet special RAAF requirements would have a price differential of $750 per lot because the

Department of Administrative Services required different standards and special conditions which caused a higher development cost.

The member for MacDonnell asked why tenders were not called for the renegotiations in November 1984. I would remind him that the developers were in possession of a lease over the area being developed. There was no legal way the government could have introduced another developer into the leased area. In 1984, there was urgency for the provision of land to meet the requirements of both the Commonwealth and Territory governments but this could not have been provided for in the first instance because the Commonwealth Labor government would not give any firm indication about the future of Tindal, and it did not do so until August 1984.

In the case of this subdivision, the Katherine Town Council and the Department of Transport and Works called for an upward revision of standards during the lease and the developers were thus entitled to a variation to their original lease agreement. In addition, following representations from Katherine residents to upgrade the Lindsay Street arterial road and for the provision of a private school site, it became necessary to extend the existing section of Maluka Road to the arterial road from Lindsay Street. This work would normally be classified as government headworks. Once again, there would have been a delayed process of getting this onto a capital works program. As one side of this road would have produced the residential allotments available to the developer, the minister decided that negotiations should be held with a view to the developer constructing this section of the road and the costs being shared 50-50 between the government and the developer. Further compensation was payable because changes were made to the original agreed standards which involved greater costs for the developer. Some of these were extra sealing of roads, larger water mains, wider roads and some larger sites.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I now circulate a further paper containing a statement of the extras negotiated with developer for these charges which amounted to a total of $270 000. It was agreed that this amount should be apportioned into a combination of a monetary payment and an addition of further land to be developed to be included in the development lease. The apportionment was based on advice received from the Valuer-General. The relevant proportions of the settlement were a cash payment by the government of $180 000 and additional land of 5.6 ha valued at $90 000. Members should note that, effectively, the developer has paid $90 000 for the additional 5.6 ha of land. This is the first time in the Northern Territory that private developers have been engaged in external headworks. But it is proposed to investigate this process further and it now appears that the government may use this method in the later stages of Larapinta in Alice Springs and other future residential subdivisions to achieve a timely release of land within the limitations of the capital works programming system.

The member for MacDonnell asked why the developers were compensated at all as a result of the renegotiation of terms. This was a contractual right and I explained the details earlier. The member for MacDonnell asked also about my department's estimates of profits which would accrue to the developers from the subdivision. The government is not directly concerned with the level of profits which a private developer expects to make from a subdivision. That is the concern of the developer. However, given the knowledge of our development costs and the pegged price conditions on the developer, he had to perform very well to make any money. Taking into account the buy-back prices agreed on and the estimated costs of turning off the serviced land, the previous minister and my department were satisfied that the terms of the agreement were fair and reasonable from the government's point of view.

The member for MacDonnell expressed confusion about matters arising from perfectly normal administrative arrangements in land dealings. He should know better or hand back his shadow portfolio. The original lease was divided into 2 areas - lots 1936 and 1937. Development had commenced on lot 1937 and some 4 ha was already surrendered as fully developed when the arrangement was renegotiated. The 2 areas which it was agreed were to be added to the development lease adjoined lot 1937. As a new lease was to be issued, it was agreed that lot 1937 would be resurveyed to include the additional areas excluding the area already developed. This area was given the new lot number of 2136.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this explanation should be clear enough even for the member for MacDonnell. Perhaps if he cleared his mind of some big words, there would be room for rational thought and analysis mixed with a bit of common sense. There never was, and certainly cannot now be, any reason for the disgraceful allegations made by the member last week. The only honourable course that the member can take is to retract his allegations and aspersions unreservedly and to apologise publicly to the previous ministers, the CLP, the Katherine Town Council, senior public servants and, most importantly, to Henry and Walker Pty Ltd and SBS Constructions. But, I suppose that level of honourable behaviour is too much to ask from any man with such a Machiavellian mind, a man so possessed with a conspiratorial theory of life.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, now that the pipeline bill has been passed, I would like to give the minister another reminder, and hopefully he will give me the answers so that I do not have to pursue the matter continually. I remind him that the whole point of my argument was missed, the point being that there was doubt about the legality...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member must not allude to the previous debate or revive the debate.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the point I wish to raise in the adjournment this afternoon relates to contracts which the government has let in bush communities. As an example I refer to a situation that used to occur in the Sandover region where the communities scattered throughout the area were obtaining their water from bores. There were considerable problems with the maintenance of these bores. Because they were government bores, they had to be maintained by the government; the people out there were not allowed to maintain them themselves. I was told that it cost somewhere in the vicinity of $6000 to $7000 per breakdown. Government employees had to go out there, check out what was wrong and eventually fix the problem.

The community said: 'This is rather ridiculous. We have a number of people who are expert at bore maintenance'. They asked for the contract. It was most unfortunate that they were not given a contract payment anywhere near the amount it had cost the government to do the maintenance. They were given an absolute ceiling and told: 'Here is $20 000 for the whole year. You will be able to charge only for actual materials purchased and for actual hours at the rate at which labour is paid'. There is no oncost on the salaries, and no profit component is allowed to be charged. The communities have continued to look after those bores but it makes the point that all the incentive to generate employment has gone and there is no profitability to allow them to build up a capital base to start other enterprises. There were high hopes that, having gained these skills on bore work, they would be able to form a group and contract to pastoral properties around the area. That was cut out. It really was most unfortunate.

However, that was only part of the problem. I discovered that, where communities have managed to make a cash surplus - which was not a profit but had occurred because they were unable to charge for depreciation, long service leave etc - the money could not be reallocated into some form of sinking fund which would be available in later years to replace the equipment. What happens is that that money is taken off the communities. There is a reduction against any grants that they would receive for other purposes so the communities have no incentive to make a profit on it. From the point of view of a government which espouses capitalist principles, I think it is quite a strange setup.

A further problem is faced by some communities which, in spite of all this, have continued to develop their contract system and have tried to get the whole thing going. I refer specifically to Lajamanu in my electorate. Last year, the community carried out some $420 000 worth of contracts. It did this with its machinery which it has acquired gradually over the years. It was not purchased through grants; it is its own community equipment. As it built up these contracts, the government reduced the level of grants that were provided through the TMPU. One could say that is fair enough and, to a point, we could argue that. However, this year, instead of $420 000 being available in government contracts, a figure of $125 000 was talked about and now there is talk of only $18 000. That means the community no longer has the ability to generate the surpluses which it had built up on top of its TMPU grants to provide the money necessary to run the community. Did the government then turn around and say it would reinstate the total amount of grants that it provided before? Not on your Nelly, Mr Deputy Speaker. It said that that was the allocation that it gave the community this year and it hoped to be able to find a 10% increase. That means that the community will lose in the vicinity of $300 000 for its community programs this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are ways around this for the communities, and some of them are talking about them. A community could set up a proprietary limited company. It could contract that company to carry out certain services on behalf of the council and make that its profit centre which could then donate the money back or into a third body which would carry out the various community works outside of the council. It seems unfortunate that communities need to go to the extent of contriving these devices when the system could work quite reasonably. Just like any private contractor, a community should be allowed to bid for government work in its area, contract to do the work and make what profits it can. It should then be allowed to utilise any profits for its own particular priorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no funding for community councils and ordinary councils. They are not like town councils which have various avenues available to them such as rating. Rates are not available to communities, nor can they be with the current system. They cannot avail themselves of federal money from the tax-sharing arrangements which other councils throughout the Territory can. They do not have actual untied funds available to them to carry out their own projects. They have attempted to find some form of untied funding by contracting. However, big brother, the Northern Territory government, says: 'We are not going to allow you to utilise those funds for what you consider to be priorities. You will utilise any surplus funds from your own operation for priorities'.

There are a number of other points still to be made regarding electricity. I have been encouraged by the possibility of a movement towards metering. I hope that that will proceed at a great pace and that the system of charging is

the same as we have in our towns. However,I would like to point out a couple of figures regarding the 16.5% of last year's fuel bill that has been mentioned as the basis upon which the communities would be expected to contribute. In one community in my electorate, people were able to work out what the percentage break-up between the various parts in the community was. The actual percentage of power used by Aboriginal housing in that town was 7.5% of the total power used. Although 16.5% may sound fair enough, the actual amount used by Aboriginal housing was 7.5%. Other figures might be of interest to members. In the lead up to winter, the school used 38% of the total power used by the community. That percentage would be much higher in summer when air-conditioning is used. A few other figures establish clearly that the government itself is a very high user of power on these communities. The Department of Health uses 7%, the police use 7%, the powerhouse itself with its flood lighting consumes 4% and the Department of Education houses use another 6.5%. Therefore, the Department of Education is using almost 50%. Police use 1.5%, Department of Health flats use 2% etc. I think that those figures should indicate to the minister that he has not done enough work on determining what would be an equitable charge.

I want to make another point with respect to water and sewerage contracts. I had hoped that somebody would be able to enlighten me on these. I have been told that, in June, the Katherine office was drawing up a specification for a quote and the specification was then withdrawn. It has been advised that a standard specification will be drawn up for the various communities. However, I am told these are due to start on 1 September, particularly in regard to Lajamanu, but nothing has arrived as yet. People are becoming rather nervous about what is happening with water and sewerage contracts and the NTEC contract relating to fuelling etc.

To conclude, I shall await the opportunity to raise my problems about aspects of a certain pipeline which I believe ranks somewhere near the casino in its potential for problems. I am sure the minister will be able to help me in that area.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, before speaking on the matters that I want to address, I could not help but admire the honourable member for Stuart's professionalism when he stood with a glass in his hand. It really shows a lot of practice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Community Development said this morning that the McMillan's Road cemetery was nearing saturation point and the government was considering establishing a cemetery site in the rural area during the next couple of years. If the proposed new site is the one which has been earmarked for some years, it is section 110 at Berrimah. To my current knowledge, this is outside the city boundary. I believe the city boundary extends to McMillan's Road. The minister has spoken at various meetings in the rural area on the subject of local government. I have attended those meetings and heard him say that personally he would be against the city council moving its boundaries further out into the rural area. Judging from what he has said in those reiterated statements, and believing him of course, I understand that there is no likelihood of the city increasing its area to include section 110 of Berrimah within its boundaries.

Approaching the subject from another tack, and considering the formation of a shire in the rural area and peoples' thinking about the whys and wherefores of rates, how much we will be paying, who will be paying and what the rates will be spent on, I arrive at another subject connected with the

minister's statement earlier today. The minister has said that the rates will be used for the upkeep of the shire and the supply of services to residents in the rural area. At different meetings, he has said that different ways of raising money and different avenues of collecting money for the supply of these services are being examined.

I see one way of redressing an unfair financial situation relating to the burying of dead people. It relates to where those people lived. If one has lived in Darwin, it costs $250 to be buried at McMillan's Road cemetery. If one has lived in the rural area, it costs $400. This means there is a difference of $150 per burial depending on where a person lived. I have it on good authority that, give or take a few, there are about 300 burials per year at the McMillan's Road cemetery and, following the law of averages, I would say that about 200 of those burials were of people who had lived in Darwin. If one is very realistic about this financial situation, one can see that 200 burials at $150 involves $30 000. If this cemetery is in the boundaries of the new shire, I can see that $30 000 going into the coffers of the new shire. This is without considering the burials from Palmerston which could be added to this. It might seem a bit morbid referring to this as a source of income for the new shire but I think all avenues of income must be investigated.

After we have considered the income resulting from a cemetery in the rural area, we come to the subject of a dump in the rural area. This has been discussed by the Darwin City Council and other interested people. I attended a meeting in the Civic Centre regarding the future formation of a dump in the rural area. I believe Leanyer Dump is nearly filled up, or the people living near there are nearly fed up with the dump being there, and the subject of forming a city dump in another area must be considered. As the people in the Darwin area probably are a little bit iffy about having a dump in another part of the city area, the Darwin City Council is looking to the rural area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, will the Darwin City Council pay our future rural shire for this site? It is too easy to say that people in the rural area will use the dump. Mainly it will be used by the people in the city. The minister has said at meetings with the people in the rural area that we must pay for our 3 Rs: rubbish dumps, roads and recreation reserves. Disregarding the roads and the recreation reserves for this argument, I want to know whether the Darwin people will pay for their rubbish dump in the rural area.

This brings me to the next question that I would like to address in the adjournment debate. This relates to a reply given by the Minister for Education to a question I asked of 'her' this morning. I found 'her' answer very interesting. I know of 'her' interest in agricultural education as 'she' gave the answer that I expected. I also know of 'her' expertise in this subject and 'her' rural interests in my electorate. Mr Deputy Speaker, you might wonder at my use of the female pronouns. I thought the minister knew 'her' onions and I thought 'she' knew the difference between Arthur and Martha but, if the minister has any problems in this regard, I do have certain expertise in botanical and entomological matters and I will be happy to enlighten the minister and to increase 'her' knowledge. I do not mind being referred to by the minister as one of the boys if 'she' does not mind being referred to as one of the girls.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on a more serious note, the minister gave a reply to my question regarding a future boarding school at the Taminmin High School. I was pleased to see that the minister has been addressing the subject of

boarding schools for outback children in other parts of the Northern Territory. I would like to pose another question to the minister. The minister has said that the Department of Education is addressing the question of boarding schools at Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I would like to know why the Taminmin High School has not been considered also because it is the only rural high school in the Northern Territory. From its conception, Taminmin High School has suffered from Department of Education ignorance of what the people really want. In the beginning, the Department of Education argued against the people. First of all, it argued against plans for the primary school, where it was to be sited and the areas of land to be used. I remember that the proposal for a high school at Humpty Doo was completely pooh-poohed by certain departmental officers in the early days. In fact, the minister at the time said that it was expected that the rural high school students would go to Palmerston for their education. I do not know what would have happened if that line of thinking had been carried through. To say that there would be gross overcrowding would be an understatement.

Even before the Taminmin High School was planned, and in opposition to what the gurus in the Department of Education said, the parents pressed their case. They formed a committee which collected statistics on the number of children at primary school, the number of children expected to go to high school, the number of children who could be expected to go to private schools and the number of children with parents who would continue to live in the rural area. It came forward with concrete figures to demonstrate that a high school was definitely needed in the rural area. To cut a long story short, a high school was built. I would like to say now that the information that the parents submitted was correct to the last detail. I like to think that, when the information was given to the Department of Education, had no choice but to build the school. The point I would like to make is that the parents' committee was ahead of the Department of Education in its thinking at that time and it has been proved correct. In collecting the information, it saved the government a lot of time, trouble and expense.

This morning I asked the minister a question about a boarding school connected with Taminmin High School for the simple reason that many parents and teachers are already talking about it. They can see the need for this type of education in the community and in the wider field of education in the Northern Territory. Those people who live in the rural area are in a position to perceive a need way ahead of the Department of Education. I hope that my question to the Minister for Education this morning will stir up some active discussion between the Department of Education and the parents and teachers connected with Taminmin High School.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, as at 26 August, 43 persons had been killed on Northern Territory roads this year. That is 10 more than for the same period in 1984. The categories of road users killed were 11 drivers, 15 passengers, including 6 rear-tray passengers, 7 pedestrians, 6 motor-cycle riders, 2 motor-cycle pillion passengers and 2 bicycle riders. While the increase in fatalities compared with the same period last year might suggest that the overall road safety situation has deteriorated this year, such a conclusion would be premature. The number of fatalities in the Northern Territory in any one year is subject to considerable fluctuation over time due to chance factors alone. For example, there is often a fine line between a fatal accident and one with little or no serious injury. Only very minor differences in circumstances can lead to very different results and, with our relatively small number of road users, often isolated statistics do not reflect the true situation.

The fatal accident rate has been declining for several years and there is no concrete reason to believe that this trend has suddenly been reversed. However, I must stress that there is no room for complacency. Statistics continue to be dominated by persons killed in single-vehicle accidents - 27 such accidents accounted for 31 of the 43 road users killed and 16 of these accidents occurred in remote areas of the Territory. Of those, 1 particular accident resulted in 3 persons losing their lives. The contributing factors in these accidents included occupants not wearing seat belts, the consumption of alcohol, fatigue and vehicles being driven at speeds which were excessive in relation to the prevailing road conditions.

Another characteristic of fatal road accidents in the Northern Territory is the over-representation of passengers killed in relation to drivers compared with the experience elsewhere in Australia. This is due at least in part to the practice of riding in the open load space of commercial vehicles; 6 of the 14 passengers killed so far this year were being transported in this manner. Obviously this practice is undesirable. People can be thrown easily from the vehicle should the driver take evasive action such as a sudden swerve to avoid another vehicle or a straying animal. However, additional legislation to prohibit this practice appears to be impractical at this stage due to the widespread usage of this form of transportation, lack of practical alternatives for many rural communities and the difficulties of enforcing any prohibitive measures in these areas.

Public education is the most effective answer. The Road Safety Council is fully aware of the problem and is actively encouraging groups who travel by this means to consider the use of alternative vehicle types.

Of far more significance than the backs-of-trucks problem is that evidence currently available indicates that few if any of the other 16 vehicle occupants killed were wearing seat belts. There is no doubt that many of these people would have suffered far less severe injuries had they been effectively restrained. There is an apparent lack of awareness amongst those persons who live and or travel in remote areas concerning the value of seat belts. There are and will continue to be real difficulties in enforcing seat belt legislation in remote areas. The only effective long-term answer is education, reinforced by legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the police and the Road Safety Council have been running coordinated programs in enforcement and public awareness through the press and the radio. Subjects covered have included seat belts, alcohol, speed, motor-cycles and bicycle riders. Whilst the effects of such programs are often not easy to measure, the seat belt campaign was demonstrated to have been effective in raising the seat belt wearing rate in the urban areas. Consequently, similar programs will continue to be run as countermeasures to the road accident problem.

I would also like to emphasise the slogan of the Queensland Road Safety Council: 'Road safety - finally it is up to you'. That is very true. While government will play its part to the full, it can only help minimise the risks and the consequences. It is the road user who invariably has the major responsibility for getting involved in an accident or for the extent of the injury.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet, I would like to mention the Wynns Safari which commenced in Sydney on 25 August with vehicles entering the Northern Territory from Queensland on 26 August at Tobermorey. The safari

finishes in front of the Administrator's residence on Friday 30 August. More than 300 vehicles, with a total crew in excess of 600 plus support staff, will take part in the event. Of these, 5 vehicles are from the Territory and 33 drivers are from overseas, including some of the world's top rally drivers. A vast amount of work has gone into organising the safari, identifying the route, arranging access to roads and gaining appropriate approvals from property owners and regulatory bodies. The Department of Transport and Works is to make available the plant branch workshops for post-event inspections and scrutineering.

The safari aims at combining a high level of driving skills with time constraints and maximum safety for both the participants and the public. The competitive phases are confined to roads not normally used by the public. The roads normally used by the public are identified as transport sections, are not subject to tight deadlines and do not form part of the safari's scoring system. Safety will be a major consideration throughout. Mr Deputy Speaker, this event provides an excellent opportunity for manufacturers to assess their vehicles, vehicle parts and the capabilities of vehicles under pressure, and to expose those faults which may otherwise take a long time to discover. The event has generated considerable interest, not only locally and nationally but also internationally because of its challenging nature and high standards. It will also generate substantial publicity for the Northern Territory through exposure, giving both participants and those watching through the media a real taste of the outback. The trial itself will directly generate considerable local income through the numbers of people involved. The organisers of the safari mounted this initial event as a trial to establish the feasibility of an annual international-status event. Presuming the successful completion of the safari, I hope we can look forward to its becoming an annual event, drawing many motor-sports enthusiasts to the Northern Territory and assisting in the general promotion of the Northern Territory as a place people want to visit or invest in.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before closing, I would like to make special mention of an important aspect of the Wynns Safari. Here we have an international-standard event with highly-qualified rally crews recognising the importance of the seat belt both for tough outback driving and intervening transport sections. The existence of legal and trial requirements to wear appropriate seat belts is really secondary to the participants' own recognition of the need. What better example could people have of the importance of wearing seat belts for self-protection? Belt-wearing needs to be seen as a matter of common sense and not just something to be done to avoid a fine. I think there should be a lesson in this for all, but particularly for those driving in rural areas. There is no stigma in wearing a seat belt, but there certainly may well be for not wearing one.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, for a number of years now, I have been very concerned about the grass fires that abound in our community during the dry season. Every June, July and August, we see palls of smoke hanging over our community. These fires originate from cigarette butts, matches or perhaps the sun shining on a piece of glass. Some are deliberately lit. This causes tremendous damage to the flora and fauna and, on many occasions, to property. There is no doubt that there is a problem regarding overgrown vacant blocks of land in the urban and closely settled rural areas of the Northern Territory. These provide a fire hazard as well as harbouring vermin and debris. They are often an eyesore in an otherwise well kept area.

In my electorate, I can point to several domestic-sized blocks and 8 or 10 2.5 ha blocks which back onto Rapid Creek. These blocks are in varying states of neglect. Some have tall grass and have rubbish and soil dumped on them. They are a tremendous eyesore and constitute a fire risk. In recent times, the fire brigade has been called to that area on a number of occasions. Just to highlight the point, there is a park in Greenwood Crescent - a park mind you - which caught fire a week ago as a result of children playing with matches. The fire brigade had to be called and, when it left, some of the fencing posts that the council had put around that block were still ablaze. I had to take the time and the effort to ensure that those fires were put out before those posts were burned to the ground. This matter needs to be addressed to ensure that landowners are made responsible. We need a policy that can be implemented easily and controlled.

After quite a deal of research, I found that the current situation is that the responsibility for removing the fire hazard from such vacant land currently rests with the NT Fire Service. I have had discussions on this particular matter with the Director, Mr Alan Ferris, who briefed me on the difficulties his department faces in attempting to police this problem. I will just run through a few of the problems.

First, there is the problem of absentee landlords. There is a tremendous amount of land whose owners are overseas, even permanently living there. It is very difficult to contact those people. Then there are landowners who refuse to respond to notices served on them requiring the clearing of blocks. They ignore the notice and that leads to a lengthy and expensive business of arranging for contractors to clear blocks before attempting to recoup the cost from the landlords. There is the costly business of having to take legal action when the owners refuse to pay and, of course, that of insufficient staff to implement proper controls. Let me point out to you - and I think this is the critical point - that the NT Fire Service is not geared up to start searching for who owns blocks of land. If you went to local government, you would find that it has the records of the ownership of blocks of land and the current addresses. It has that information because it must regularly serve rates notices on the owners. The NT Fire Service does not have access to that information nor does it keep appropriate records. If it has a problem, it must do a search on the property ownership and then start the whole process. Of course, it has no means of redress other than to take the matter to court if it cannot get its money.

All this results in very little positive action being taken by the NT Fire Service to have such land cleared. That is understandable because its officers know what a trauma it will be to get any action. What has become obvious is that the NT Fire Service does not have the resources nor is it geared up to solve the problem easily. I think that it is up to us to ensure that this matter is addressed.

After some consideration, I would like to put forward this proposal. First of all, I have done quite a bit of research both in Darwin and with local governments in the Northern Territory. In fact, I have had discussions with local governments in north Queensland and I have written to the responsible minister in Queensland, Martin Tenni, who sent to me copies of the Fire Services Act which applies in Queensland and which contains a tremendous amount of information. The Mulgrave Shire Council chairman, Alderman Tom Pyne, also supplied me with a copy of the bylaws which relate to fire services in his area and I am quite sure that much of that policy could be applied here.

I recommend that we adopt in principle a policy of transferring responsibility for the control of land containing debris to local government in urban areas. In rural areas, as local government develops, the same policy could apply. The problem is that, in most rural areas, we do not have local government and therefore we cannot implement the same sort of policy. I do not suggest for a moment that blocks of land be cleared completely in rural areas. In some cases, that would be totally impracticable. In a domestic situation, we can do it; in a rural situation, we cannot, but we can insist on firebreaks. If we insisted on that, we could cut down dramatically the number of fires that destroy the flora and the fauna around our community. There is abundant precedent for the move because this system applies currently right throughout Queensland and New South Wales. It may well be that it applies in other states.

Local governments recoup their costs by applying a fee for their services. They are in an ideal position to handle this matter for a number of reasons. First of all, they have inspectors who circulate regularly throughout the community looking at all sorts of local government-type issues. They are able to identify a problem area quickly. They maintain current records of land ownership. They have staff and equipment which could be used for the clearing of such land. For example, local councils have earth moving equipment, graders and so on. Their day work forces could complete the work in a flash. The costs could be surcharged on to the rates and collected in the same manner. That is what happens in the 2 states that I mentioned, and it works very well indeed.

Councils could have the legal right, under the Local Government Act, to collect those costs and to sell property where owners refuse to pay. In fact, in the Northern Territory, we have that authority at the moment because, if rates are not paid, the local authority has the right to acquire that property and sell it to recover costs. As I pointed out previously, the system works well in the states and I do not see any reason why it could not operate successfully here. Of course, we would need to draw up regulations to suit local conditions. It is also accepted that these may vary between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, I believe it would be a positive move towards solving this problem.

I recommend that we adopt this proposal as a broad policy which would lead to discussion between the various arms of government involved and allow regulations and, if necessary, legislation to be drawn up. At this point, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to quote from the regulations which apply in the Mulgrave Shire Council area of north Queensland. Item 14.1, which has the heading 'danger from grass and weeds', states:

> 'Subject to the provisions of the Rural Fires Act 1946-68, where any grass, weeds or herbage is growing on any land and, in the opinion of the health inspector or other authorised officers of the council, the growth of such grass, weeds or herbage is such that there would, or would in the near future, be a danger to the buildings or fences upon such land of adjoining owners if such grass, weeds or herbage caught fire, then the council health inspector or other authorised officer may, by notice in writing to the occupier of such land or, where there is no occupier or it is not known if such land is occupied or not, then to the owner of such land direct that such grass, weeds or herbage shall be cut down and removed or burnt as provided by such notice.

If the owner or occupier fails to comply with the notice issued in pursuance of clause 1 of this bylaw within the time specified, he shall be guilty of an offence against this bylaw. Moreover, upon such failure, an officer or an employee of the council may, at the expense of the occupier or owner, cut back such grass, weeds or herbage to the road alignment and may enter upon any such land which it may be necessary to enter for such purpose. Such officer or employee may either place upon the land of the occupier or owner parts which he cuts from such grass, weeds or herbage or remove or dispose of them.

All expenses incurred by the council in doing the work specified in clause 2 of this bylaw shall be and remain a charge on the land and be recoverable by the council in the same manner as rates due in arrears are recoverable'.

That is the way they handle it in that state, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I would like to foreshadow one item, although I am not proposing that we adopt it at this stage. It is the policy adopted in other states of imposing a fire levy on all property owners to fund the cost of provision of fire services. Again, this is collected as a surcharge by local government and is scaled according to the proximity to the fire service and the degree of fire service available. This system could well offer a means of recouping fire service costs in part at some time in the future.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

NOTICE OF MOTION
Proposed Select Committee on Constitutional Development

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I give notice that on the next sitting day I shall move -

'That, whereas this Assembly is of the opinion that, when the Northern Territory of Australia becomes a new state, it should do so as a member of the federation on terms resulting in equality with the other states with its people having the same constitutional rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the people of the existing states;

and whereas, in so far as it is constitutionally possible, the equality should apply as on the date of the grant of statehood to the new state,

(1) A select committee be established to inquire into, report and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on:

(a) the constitutional issues arising between the Northern Territory of Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Northern Territory of Australia and the states of Australia concerning the entry of the Northern Territory of Australia into the federation as a new state including, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

(i) the representation of the new state in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament;

(ii) legislative powers;

(iii) executive powers; and

(iv) judicial powers;

(b) the framework of a new state constitution and the principles upon which it should be drawn;

(c) the method to be adopted to have a draft new state constitution approved by or on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory of Australia; and

(d) the steps required or desirable to be taken by the Northern Territory of Australia, the Commonwealth and the states of the grant of statehood to the Northern Territory of Australia as a new state within the federation.

(2) That, unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of Mr Robertson, Mr Dale, Mr Palmer, Mr B. Collins, Mr Smith and Mr Lanhupuy.

(3) That the chairman of the committee may, from time to time, appoint a member of the committee to be the deputy chairman of the committee, and that the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee at any time when there is no chairman or when the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee.

(4) That, in the event of an equality of voting, the chairman, or the deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a casting vote.

(5) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(6) That 4 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee and 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of the subcommittee.

(7) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly.

(8) That the committee shall be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it. Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard shall be published of such proceedings of the committee as take place in public.

(9) That the committee have leave to report from time to time, and that any member of the committee have power to add a protest or dissent to any report.

(10) That the committee report to the Assembly 12 months from the date of this resolution.

(11) That, unless otherwise ordered by the committee, all documents received by the committee during its inquiry shall remain in the custody of the Assembly - provided that, on the application of a department or person, any document, if not likely to be further required, may, in the Speaker's discretion, be returned to the department or person from whom it was obtained.

(12) That members of the public and representatives of the news media may attend and report any public session of the committee unless otherwise ordered by the committee.

(13) That the committee may authorise the televising of public hearings of the committee under such rules as it considers appropriate.

(14) That the committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee.

(15) That nothing in these terms of reference or in the standing orders shall be taken to limit or control the duties, powers or functions of any minister of the Territory who is also a member of the select committee.

(16) That the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a short statement in relation to this notice of motion.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it is plain to see that the terms of reference of this motion are very broad. We would have it no other way. By passing this motion, this Assembly will declare its opinion on the fundamental issue of the terms on which the Northern Territory should be granted statehood. The people of the Northern Territory, and for that matter of Australia, should be in no doubt of the determination of this Assembly to seek equality for the new state with the existing states from the outset as far as this is constitutionally possible. This goal of equality is held by myself and the government, and I invite, through this motion, a similar commitment from the opposition.

The terms of reference are divided into 4 parts, (a) to (d), while the remainder of the motion is concerned with procedural and related matters. As I have pointed out in an earlier debate, we need to seek the closest possible cooperation and consultation with the states and the Commonwealth and this is addressed in reference (a). Reference (a) also sets out the key elements of a state constitution; that is, federal representation, and legislative, executive and judicial powers. The motion calls on the committee to examine and research these aspects thoroughly.

Reference (b), which deals with the drafting of the constitution, will impose the biggest workload on the committee. Mr Speaker, here it is important to note that it is not intended that the committee have the task of drafting the constitution. Rather the committee will take submissions on this subject and make recommendations on the principle in the framework of its drafting.

The assent of the people of the Northern Territory to our new state constitution is of primary importance. Reference (c) deals with this consideration and, in consultation with Territorians, will be a paramount element of the select committee's role.

Reference (d) sets out the need for the committee to determine and advise on the steps we need to take to obtain the granting of statehood from a state or a Commonwealth viewpoint. I repeat that, apart from nominating the members of the proposed committee, the balance of the motion is of a procedural nature.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the notice of motion relating to the appointment of a select committee on constitutional development be now taken.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Appointment of Select Committee on Constitutional Development

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move -

That, whereas this Assembly is of the opinion that, when the Northern Territory of Australia becomes a new state, it should do so as a member of the federation on terms resulting in equality with the other states with its people having the same constitutional rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the people of the existing states;

and whereas, in so far as it is constitutionally possible, the equality should apply as on the date of the grant of statehood to the new state,

(1) A select committee be established to inquire into, report and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on:

(a) the constitutional issues arising between the Northern Territory of Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Northern Territory of Australia and the states of Australia concerning the entry of the Northern Territory of Australia into the federation as a new state including, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

(i) the representation of the new state in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament;

(ii) legislative powers;

(iii) executive powers; and

(iv) judicial powers;

(b) the framework of a new state constitution and the principles upon which it should be drawn;

(c) the method to be adopted to have a draft new state constitution approved by or on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory of Australia; and

(d) the steps required or desirable to be taken by the Northern Territory of Australia, the Commonwealth and the states of the grant of statehood to the Northern Territory of Australia as a new state within the federation.

(2) That, unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of Mr Robertson, Mr Dale, Mr Palmer, Mr B. Collins, Mr Smith and Mr Lanhupuy.

(3) That the chairman of the committee may, from time to time, appoint a member of the committee to be the deputy chairman of the committee, and that the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee at any time when there is no chairman

or when the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee.

(4) That, in the event of an equality of voting, the chairman, or the deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a casting vote.

(5) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(6) That 4 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee and 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of the subcommittee.

(7) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly.

(8) That the committee shall be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it. Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard shall be published of such proceedings of the committee as take place in public.

(9) That the committee have leave to report from time to time, and that any member of the committee have power to add a protest or dissent to any report.

(10) That the committee report to the Assembly 12 months from the date of this resolution.

(11) That, unless otherwise ordered by the committee, all documents received by the committee during its inquiry shall remain in the custody of the Assembly - provided that, on the application of a department or person, any document, if not likely to be further required, may, in the Speaker's discretion, be returned to the department or person from whom it was obtained.

(12) That members of the public and representatives of the news media may attend and report any public session of the committee unless otherwise ordered by the committee.

(13) That the committee may authorise the televising of public hearings of the committee under such rules as it considers appropriate.

(14) That the committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee.

(15) That nothing in these terms of reference or in the standing orders shall be taken to limit or control the duties, powers or functions of any minister of the Territory who is also a member of the select committee.

(16) That the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think it is appropriate that the matter be dealt with immediately. It is with some pleasure and indeed a strong commitment to support the motion that the opposition wishes to contribute to this important debate. I think we have covered some of the questions concerned with statehood ad nauseam. They indeed will be complex.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Graham Nicholson on the very useful synopsis he gave at a Law Society function last week of some of the problems. I had not heard of some of them. They are connected with the constitutional and legal issues that might confront us on the way to statehood. Indeed, if that was the opening shot in terms of Mr Nicholson's contribution to the work of this committee, I look forward to working with him.

Mr Speaker, we have all acknowledged that it will be a difficult road. There are serious constitutional, legal and, more to the point, political problems ahead of us. We are extremely pleased with the terms of reference. I want to emphasise that we support unreservedly the terms of reference, particularly as outlined in the first 2 paragraphs of the motion. I think that those 2 paragraphs indicate clearly the parameters within which this committee will operate, and they have the support of the opposition. I am also pleased to see that there will be equal numbers from both government and opposition on the committee with the chairman of the committee, the Special Minister for Constitutional Development, having a casting vote.

Mr Speaker, at this stage, I do not know whether other honourable members on this side intend to speak, but suffice it to say that the majority of the work of the committee is before it and there is really no need to canvass those issues ad nauseam in the Assembly now. The committee will be reporting to the Assembly in due course and no doubt a fully-fledged debate will take place at that time.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the motion before the Assembly, I believe it is essential that we look at the reasons behind the move to statehood and the benefits that will ultimately accrue to all Territorians. The federal government's intention to treat the Territory as a state from 1988 for the purpose of disbursement of funding in itself provides good argument for seeking statehood. However, that argument will be lost amongst the increasingly more apparent benefits statehood will bring. As a state in its own right, the Territory will achieve new status amongst our trading partners. The recognition by other Australians of the Territory's political maturity and ability to accept statehood and our subsequent admission to the federation will add impetus to investor willingness to invest in the Territory, sparking greater development of our natural resources and adding to our ability to trade on a free and open market. It is investor confidence upon which our system of growth economics sinks or swims for, without growth in the economy, our capacity to provide employment opportunities for our young people will be severely impeded.

Self-government did not bring the dire consequences that so many former occupants of the benches opposite predicted. It kindled the fire of economic growth and statehood will fuel an inferno. Only the most naive amongst us will believe that the road to statehood will be an easy one. It is a goal

that will not be achieved without the wholehearted support of all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, the Territory is a diverse and dynamic community containing groups and individuals of quite differing needs and aspirations. With that in view, the committee as a whole and its individual members must be prepared to treat those needs and aspirations with consideration and respect without losing sight of the common goal or the objectives of the committee.

The committee will be faced with issues many of which will not be unique to this task, many of which will have been faced and overcome in other places or parliaments, and many of which we need look no further than our own history in which to seek guidance. A draft of a constitution must be just that: not a firm unshakeable position, not a non-negotiable document upon which our move to statehood stands or falls but a draft. It is surely for the Assembly to settle this draft. The committee and, ultimately, this Assembly must be flexible in their approaches. We must be prepared to wait to allow the people of the Territory to fully digest and understand whatever is contained in the draft document and, above all, we must be prepared to allow a free-ranging debate canvassing all of the issues surrounding the draft constitution and the move to statehood and we must give the debate time to run its course.

Mr Speaker, the federation of Australian states had its roots in Lord Grey's proposals of the early 1850s for a general assembly. The issues of federation were first addressed in the Duffy committee's report of 1857 to the Victorian parliament. It took a further 43 years to attain federation. The Constitutional Convention of 1891 substantially set the form of the Australian Constitution yet it took a further 10 years of political and public debate to resolve the issues satisfactorily. Certainly, our founding fathers did not have the benefit of our modern modes of travel or communications, but I can find no evidence to show that their thought processes were any slower.

History will show that the time it takes to progress from self-government to statehood will be of little consequence. What will be considered of consequence is the ultimate result. The intent and function of a constitution will, I believe, be largely misunderstood. We are not moving toward a unilateral declaration of independence with a constitution forming the basis of that declaration. What we are doing is seeking admission, by whatever process, albeit 84 years late, into the federation of Australian states. Unlike a declaration of independence, our move to statehood is not a severing of ties. We are not cutting the apron strings and heading off to do it all by ourselves. It is a strengthening of our bond with our sister states. We are becoming truly one of a family, with responsibilities to that family, but equally expecting that family to honour its responsibilities to us.

Mr Speaker, our approaches to the Commonwealth government and the governments of existing states must be well researched and convincing and, in cooperation with those governments, we must establish the machinery by which the Territory can achieve statehood whilst reserving unto the Territory all the rights and privileges that are reserved to the existing states.

Mr Speaker, one of the ways in which the Territory can be admitted to the Commonwealth is by an act of the federal government in terms of section 121 of the Constitution. If we were to proceed along that course, it would be in terms of a bill to be presented to the federal parliament that a proposed constitution be framed. To proceed to statehood via section 121 of the Constitution would not, I believe, allow for the granting of statehood on terms equitable with the existing states.

Section 106 of the Constitution makes it clear that the constitution of each state, as amended from time to time in accordance with the state's constitutional procedures, will remain unimpaired by the federal Constitution except to the extent to which the latter otherwise provides or gives to the Commonwealth parliament power to deal with matters previously falling within the state's constitutional powers. For the Commonwealth to deal with the question of Territory statehood under section 121 of the Constitution, and at the same time grant equal rights with the states in terms of section 106, poses questions of law and precedent. To guarantee our rights under section 106, somehow the Commonwealth would have to pass a Northern Territory constitutional bill and then legislate away from itself the power to deal further with the resultant act, a precedent which the Commonwealth would advisedly be unwilling to set. Without legislating away from itself the power to further deal with the constitution of the state of the Northern Territory, and to deal with the question under section 121 of the Constitution, would require the placing of great faith in the Commonwealth by the people of the Northern Territory to honour and to continue to honour our implied rights under section 106.

For precedent, we could look to the British North America Act or the Australian Constitution Act, both acts of the British parliament which have remained largely untouched by the parliament at Westminster since their enactment. However, given the Commonwealth's predilection for monkeying with the Territory, given the likelihood of small unrepresentative pressure groups continually lobbying federal parliamentarians to alter any Northern Territory constitution for whatever spurious reasons and given any federal government's tendency to wilt before small noisy pressure groups, to have our constitution protected by nothing more than an act of faith is an untenable position and one which should be rejected by all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, a more likely and more desirable scenario is to move towards statehood via section 128 of the Constitution, that is by amendment of the constitution. Traditionally, Australians have not voted in favour of constitutional amendments and it will be incumbent upon all of us to convince our fellow Australians to accept us as a seventh state by constitutional amendment. One of the tasks the committee will need to address is the form in which any proposed amendment to the Australian Constitution is to be put to the Australian people. It will be of paramount importance that, when the matter is referred to the people, they understand the issues. The matter must be in a form which is easily understood and is not open to misrepresentation. To proceed to statehood via amendment to the Constitution will be a long and complex process requiring the clarification of many points of constitutional law and a thorough appraisal of the Constitution as it affects the rights of existing and new states.

Mr Speaker, much has and will be made of the level of representation a new state of the Northern Territory should seek to achieve. As we all well know, the equal representation of the states in the Senate was a device used to ensure that, on federation, the states of New South Wales and Victoria were not able, through their numbers in the House of Representatives, to divide between them the surplus revenues which customs duties were expected to reap; that would have been to the detriment of the smaller states. It was also a device cynically used by supporters of federation in all of the states to allay the fears of the more parochial amongst their numbers.

Mr Speaker, John Macrossan, a delegate from the self-governing colony of Queensland at the Constitutional Convention of 1891, had this to say about

equal representation of the states in the Senate: 'The influence of party will remain much the same as it is now, and instead of members of the Senate voting, as has been suggested, as states, they will vote as members of parties to which they belong'.

As right as Macrossan has been proved since federation, so will his views be vindicated by the senatorial representatives of the Northern Territory. It matters not if we are granted 4, 6, 8, 10 or 12 senators. From the day they are elected, they will divide along party lines and there they will stay unswerving in their devotion to party. All we have to ensure is that we elect senators from the appropriate party at the appropriate time, hoping of course to direct the party policy in favour of the Territory.

The one issue upon which the states may well unite to attempt to defeat the Territory in its drive to statehood is the level of representation. We must convince the states that we are not seeking statehood with the sole motive of upsetting the status quo in Canberra. We are not seeking to cause a mischief to any of the states. We must convince the states that we merely want to play our proper part in federation on terms equitable with other Australians.

Mr Speaker, the road to statehood will not be an easy one. It will be strewn with obstacles, both real and perceived. It will be based on a resolve by all Territorians to see their Territory assume its rightful role as a body politic in its own right, yet remaining within the democratic union of the Commonwealth of Australia. I congratulate the Chief Minister on his foresight in announcing the formation of this committee. I congratulate him on his choice of minister to head this committee. I congratulate members who have been elected to this committee and I am very proud to serve on it myself. Mr Speaker, I commend this motion to honourable members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I wish to comment on this matter because, as you will recall, I was quite severe, and justifiably so, in my criticisms of the previous statement by the Chief Minister in relation to ministerial appointments and statehood. Specifically, I discussed the appointment of the Special Minister for Constitutional Development. In this morning's debate, I want to place on record my support for the move towards statehood and my wholehearted support for the continuing constitutional development of the Northern Territory, whatever direction that might take.

I wish to comment briefly on the statement made by the member for Leanyer. He mentioned that we are 84 years late in being included as a full state. It is a little bit difficult to imagine how we could have been included as a state in 1901.

Mr Robertson: We were.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I retract. In fact, we were a state, albeit a fairly neglected one. Of course, in 1911, we ceased to be one.

When one takes the long view of the constitutional development of the Territory, from the state of being the northern territory of South Australia through the period of being a territory of the Commonwealth with negligible representation, one looks at the efforts of Harold Nelson. His initial representation of the Northern Territory in the federal parliament was with very restricted rights. He had no voting rights. Then there were the subsequent developments of the Legislative Council in 1948 and the

fully-elected Assembly in 1974 leading to self-government several years later. It is of interest to note, particularly in the context of the criticism that is so frequently heaped on the federal Labor government, that 2 of those key developments - namely, the Legislative Council and the fully-elected Legislative Assembly - were the initiatives of federal Labor governments: the Chifley Labor government in 1948 and the ill-fated Whitlam government in 1974.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to place on record my support for the formation of this committee. Certainly, I look forward to the development of the Northern Territory towards statehood in the context of a united Australia. I say that proudly as an Australian, as a Territorian and as somebody looking forward to the continued economic and human development of the Territory. I am sure that the committee that is being established by this motion of the Assembly will give due consideration to whatever problems may lie ahead with respect to statehood.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Establishment of a Northern Territory University

Mr HARRIS (Education)(by leave): Mr Speaker, on 9 August, the Chief Minister announced that the government intended to speed up plans for a Territory university so that the first intake of students could take place in January 1987. That was a momentous decision but it was inevitable and unavoidable in light of Commonwealth intransigence.

If members will bear with me, I would like to explain in some detail what we have achieved to date in our plan for a university, why we need to press ahead without Commonwealth aid at this stage, and how we propose to achieve the January 1987 starting date for undergraduate courses. I also want to spell out the situation regarding the Darwin Institute of Technology and go into some of the important and far-reaching implications the university presence will have for education and the Territory generally.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory has been pressing for a university for nearly 20 years. 15 years ago, when the Commonwealth government was responsible for education here, and when the University of Queensland was willing to negotiate for a university college, the Commonwealth decided that our total post-secondary needs could be met by means of one multi-disciplinary, multi-level institution - the Darwin Community College. The college has served us well but it has no university component and was never intended to have the functions of a university, functions which centre on teaching but also go far beyond teaching.

Immediately the Northern Territory government assumed responsibility for education in July 1979, we turned our attention towards the establishment of a university. On 1 July 1980, the University Planning Authority was set up to give full-time attention to how this goal could best be achieved.

From the beginning, we emphasised that we could not contemplate a university unless it was first rate, accepted by all existing members of the academic community and enjoyed the confidence of its students, teachers and the community at large. It was decided that the Northern Territory university should: (1) provide for Territory residents and others a range of courses which, while maintaining the quality which is essential to university programs, would also develop special characteristics appropriate to our

location; (2) provide a resource for research of particular relevance to the current social and economic circumstances and future development of the Northern Territory and the adjacent region; and, (3) provide a basis for activities relating to continuing links of common interest between northern Australia and the peoples and countries in our region.

Despite our successive submissions prepared in detail and vetted by experts, neither the Commonwealth government nor its advisory body, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission has been willing to provide financial support to get us started. Our ambit claim in 1981, despite its having been examined by 4 vice-chancellors and others who pronounced it practical, was dismissed out of hand.

It was condemned as premature primarily on the grounds of the Territory's small population, and the Palmerston site was considered excessively remote. They should see it now.

We attempted to meet the explicit and implicit criticism by developing a proposal to establish a Northern Territory university in the same manner in which the Australian National University came into existence. This was to concentrate on the urgent needs in postgraduate study and research while deferring the undergraduate teaching until agreement could be reached with the Commonwealth about an adequate population base. Again our case was rejected.

The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission asked us to increase the size of our University Planning Committee to include more university experts. This we did. The committee now includes the vice-chancellors of Adelaide, James Cook and Queensland universities, the Assistant Director of Higher Education in Queensland and the Field Director of the Australian National University's North Australia Research Unit. It also includes a number of other experts with distinguished academic backgrounds, including Sir William Refshauge, now Chairman of the Board of Menzies School of Health Research and formerly Commonwealth Director-General of Health.

Throughout this period, I should point out, the Northern Territory's case was not helped by the opposition and various self-interest groups denigrating our proposal and hindering our negotiations. This action enabled the Commonwealth to refuse support on the additional grounds that it was reluctant to make a decision until such time as the Northern Territory could speak with one voice. The Leader of the Opposition promoted a case based on expansion of the Darwin Community College which...

Mr B. Collins: That's nonsense.

Mr HARRIS: ...was unacceptable to Australian universities and would have made the Northern Territory once more the playground of the Commonwealth government, a remote laboratory for carrying out experiments on humans that would not be countenanced in Sydney or Melbourne. To use a favourite expression of his, he encouraged a volley of shots into the Northern Territory's foot, leaving us to limp away from our negotiations with the Commonwealth, bleeding from wounds inflicted by people who should have been in the fighting line with us.

Mr B. Collins: This is utter nonsense.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, when our initial negotiations with the Commonwealth government came to nothing, we felt it imperative that we

demonstrate beyond doubt that the Northern Territory could create a centre of excellence, staffed by people of international academic standing who are dedicated to practical support for Territorians, and work cooperatively with a university of the highest reputation. All of this we achieved through the establishment of the Menzies School of Health Research which is located at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Mr Speaker, with financial support from the Menzies Foundation, an academic link with the University of Sydney and substantial funding and facilities from the Northern Territory government, the Menzies school has demonstrated our firm commitment and has reassured our collaborators. Students of the school may qualify for the higher degrees of the University of Sydney until our own university is able to take over responsibility. Academic staff of the school can be considered for honorary titles at the University of Sydney.

Mr Speaker, practical research of the highest quality has begun into major health problems of the Territory: trachoma, heart disease, alcohol-related disease, nutrition, growth and disease, hepatitis B and renal disease. In past weeks, a major international meeting has been organised on chlamydial disease. In fact, the Northern Territory is rapidly becoming recognised as a major centre for health research. Through the Menzies School of Health Research, we have already proved the ability of the Northern Territory to establish and develop a university-sector institution of top quality. In the process, we have won the help and support of one of Australia's premier universities and of a national charitable foundation.

In the course of the past 5 years, we have learned a great deal. We have refined our original ambit claim to an immediately practical plan for the progressive development of a university from small beginnings. We have identified in some detail the Territory's research needs, and begun to meet them through the Menzies School of Health Research and the University Planning Authority's program of awards and grants.

Mr Speaker, the planning authority has become known and recognised by the university community in Australia and overseas as being responsible in its approach and credible in its academic status, as exemplified by its link with the University of Sydney and the presence of 3 vice-chancellors on its advisory committee. The planning authority has examined options for funding outside the state grants system well in advance of the current interest in private universities. It will continue to assess the appropriateness of new academic structures and the use of new technologies. In a very real way, the Northern Territory university exists in embryo.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory has achieved all this without Commonwealth assistance. Indeed, we have achieved it in the face of Commonwealth resistance. We would have preferred to negotiate productively with the Commonwealth government and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission for funding of the university but the commission has not responded positively. Over the past 5 years, we have engaged in honest consultations and have attempted to adjust the planning to the advice of the Commonwealth. It has been a fruitless exercise.

Mr Speaker, I would like members to consider where we would be now if we had caved in to Commonwealth intransigence and followed the Commonwealth line. Rather than support our proposal for a university, the Commonwealth provided additional support for the Australian National University's unit in Darwin,

which was seen as responsible for university research in the Northern Territory. It also provided some funding for external studies at the Darwin Community College but with the proviso that the college should develop in no additional study areas. To top it all off, the Commonwealth threw in the suggestion that, before the end of the 1980s, an existing university should undertake a detailed feasibility study of development in Darwin of a university college some time in the 1990s. In effect, the outcome of our submissions for a Northern Territory university was to limit development of the Darwin Community College, nominate the Australian National University as the coordinator of research in the Territory and give to an interstate university the task of recommending what ought to be done in the Territory by way of a university presence a decade hence.

The recent visit of Mr Hugh Hudson, now Chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, resulted in no firm undertaking with regard to Commonwealth support for a university in this decade. Not only did he not commit himself to a timetable for a university but the Darwin Institute of Technology was also precluded from developing any courses deemed by the Tertiary Education Commission to be better provided by a university. This has placed the Territory in an intolerable no-win situation. It has forced us to take the bull by the horns so to speak, not only to realise our legitimate, earnest and urgent aspirations for a university presence but also to remove the cloud of uncertainty which hangs over the Darwin Institute of Technology. For far too long, the staff, students and prospective students of the institute have been left to languish in a state of confusion whilst the Commonwealth has dragged its feet over the university proposal. With any prospect of gaining a university through Commonwealth support at least a decade away and a roadblock placed in the way of expansion of higher education at the institute, we have been forced to act. In setting a commencement date for university undergraduate courses to commence, we can now chart a clear course for the institute and enable staff to start planning positively for the direction that the institute will take.

For the Commonwealth, a university in the Northern Territory has low priority. For many years now, we have been told that our case has merit but the time is not yet right. The time is never right to do something which the Commonwealth does not want to do. Many people said the time was not right in 1854 when the the University of Sydney opened with 25 students. According to some people, the correct thing then for Australian students to do was to study at Oxford or Cambridge. Time was not right nearly 100 years ago when the New England University College was established as a result of intense local pressure. Some insisted the correct thing for rural students to do was to travel to Sydney to a proper university. Today we are told the time is still not right for a university in the Northern Territory. The critics say that the 19 existing universities form a single national system, and, provided facilities are available somewhere, they need not be available everywhere. This does not reflect the reality which is that 90% of Australian students attend a university in their home state and 74% of them travel no more than 40 km to that university from their permanent home base. For Territorians, the nearest university is in Denpasar and our nearest Australian university is nearly 2000 km away. The Northern Territory alone of all the Australian states and territories has no university to serve its needs in teaching and research, advice and information, and to assist in stabilising its growing population. We cannot remain an education colony any longer. There are means of overcoming our small numbers and distant location. There is an overwhelming advantage in having a permanent local university presence in the Territory and in seeking help and cooperation from universities elsewhere.

Others have shared our frustrations in the past and we have their examples of success to guide us.

Mr Speaker, in establishing a university presence, we will complete the education system of the Northern Territory, bring it in line with the states and territories and follow the Australian tradition of starting a university by local initiative and local resources. No new university has been started in this country since the Commonwealth government took over funding responsibilities for universities in 1974. It is not only in the Northern Territory that the dead hand of Commonwealth inaction is felt.

For the Commonwealth, a university in the Northern Territory is a matter of low priority; for us, it is of the highest priority and essential to our constitutional, economic and social development. We need to start undergraduate courses now for a number of pressing reasons: to contribute to the stability of the Northern Territory population; to stop the brain drain through young Territorians going interstate for higher education, in many cases never to return; to prevent the loss to the Territory of whole families leaving as their children reach university age; to raise the existing levels of education and professional and technical skills; to build soundly on the basis of controlled growth while student numbers are still small; to begin to develop a feeling among Territorians, as prevails elsewhere in this country, that the natural choice is to attend their own university; to provide opportunities for the many mature-age students who cannot attend university now because of time, distance or money problems; and to ensure the balanced development of the higher education sector.

Mr Speaker, the community will gain many benefits from the presence of a university, not least of which is the fact that a university is potentially big business. For example, in Armidale, a town with a population of 20 000, one-third of that of Darwin, it is estimated that the University of New England injects more than $20m into the city's economy each year. That is a substantial contribution to the development and support of a whole range of services and also provides employment opportunities. There are many other practical returns. When overseas students leave university, they tend to use the books, materials, agents and contacts with which they have become familiar during their university studies.

The presence of overseas students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the Northern Territory will have benefits for consultants, technical advisers, manufacturers, publishers and suppliers and will also help tourism. When established, our university will reach out to the community in other ways. Its staff will have expertise for use both in professional and voluntary capacities. Much of their research will be designed to help with local needs and circumstances, as the Menzies School of Health Research is now demonstrating. They will be expected to give public lectures and run public courses. Visiting scholars will give lectures and hold seminars and workshops and international gatherings will be organised. Through the university presence, the Territory will become part of the national and international community in a way that is not possible by any other means.

Mr Speaker, things will happen around the university facilities. Staff and students will affect the style of trades and services in the area and have an effect on transport and housing. They will require and provide cultural, recreational and sporting facilities. Theatre, music, arts, parks, gardens and sport can be expected to grow with active university support. The staff, teachers, technicians and others will have children and tend to play an active

role as parents and as members of school councils to ensure high standards in our schools. University training will give our young people an advantage in obtaining employment. Prospects for new graduates are better than those for school leavers. The pattern of employment now emerging in the Territory, with less labour needed for primary industry and more for services, gives us confidence that our graduates will be able to find employment here.

The establishment of a Territory university is an essential step in our constitutional march to statehood and, since there are those who claim that the Territory is still too small to start a university, let me assure members that the history of universities shows that they start small, but with unquestioned excellence, and grow at a pace controlled by the evolving needs of the community. This brings me to the question of what the government plans to do and how it intends to do it.

The government proposes to add the teaching of undergraduates to the other university-sector activities already supported by the University Planning Authority. During the initial stages, we will develop close links with an established university, a pattern which has already been set in the close relationship which exists between the Menzies School of Health Research and the University of Sydney. The main initial thrust of the Northern Territory university presence will be to provide for young Territorians who have had no opportunity to be taught directly in the Territory until now. At the same time, no university, however small or new, can restrict itself entirely to the teaching of undergraduates. All university teachers are expected to undertake research themselves and to encourage and support research by others. Therefore, postgraduate research programs will form an integral part of our university, both directly and through links with other research centres.

Mr Speaker, there is an urgent need for research into many factors affecting the well-being and prosperity of Territorians, a need which was highlighted last year when the University Planning Authority conducted a northern studies workshop which was attended by more than 80 academics from Australia and overseas. Besides health research, the meeting identified several additional areas for urgent research in the Northern Territory including Aboriginal studies, the environmental sciences, tourism and regional studies. All of these can be developed by academic staff who will teach the basic arts and sciences to undergraduates. We look also to the parallel development of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in these important areas of research for the benefit of the Territory.

In order to enrol the first students in 1987, a great deal of planning and preparation must be done in a short time. Initially, this vital task will be undertaken by a Northern Territory working party of the University Planning Authority Advisory Committee. I have asked the Northern Territory working party to examine a whole range of matters as a matter of urgency and report in time for me to make a further detailed statement to the Assembly during the November sittings. Fortunately, an enormous amount of work has already been done by Dr Jim Eedle and the University Planning Authority. Detailed work has started on the academic, administrative, resource and accommodation implications of a university presence in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, members will appreciate that one of the most difficult and sensitive issues will be to provide for the balanced development of the higher education sector and to ensure the continued development and improvement of the Darwin Institute of Technology. I have asked the NT Council for Higher

Education to monitor developments and advise me on the effective coordination of higher education so that the university and institute courses will not compete with but rather complement each other. It is essential that we get this right and it is my intention to ensure that we do. Naturally, because the Darwin Institute of Technology has been the only institution offering advanced courses until now, there will need to be rationalisation of the courses provided by the 2 institutions. However, it is important that the university presence should not be allowed to affect the development of the institute adversely. At the same time, of course, we cannot allow the institute to limit university development. There will be ample work for both institutions in delivering the courses and services required by our rapidly growing population. Increasing numbers of young people are seeking to further their education, and a dramatic indication of this is the fact that Year 12 enrolments have grown by about 100% in the last 4 years.

Plans will be developed to ensure that the Darwin Institute of Technology will continue to prosper. Advanced education courses at the institute will have a most important and continuing place in our education system. Nursing education, teacher education and some aspects of business and management education are obvious examples. In many areas of study, the university presence will play a complementary role at postgraduate level. One area at the institute that must be examined very carefully is the Bachelor of Arts degree because that is a fundamental requirement for the university program. I will be asking the Council for Higher Education to take special cognisance of possible new directions for this degree at the institute, concentrating on areas of applied knowledge.

Extensive consultation will take place with the staff and students of the Darwin Institute of Technology in order to ensure that the best possible system of higher education evolves. The institute has many highly qualified and outstanding staff members and, depending on their areas of expertise, I would expect that some would now see their future lying in the university sphere, and would eventually apply and become university staff. However, there can be no question of staff being transferred from the institute to form a nucleus of academic staff of a university. While complementary in many respects, institutes of technology and universities are quite different institutions serving different purposes and it cannot be assumed that staff engaged for one would automatically be suitable for the other. In engaging university staff, preference cannot be given to any particular group as the credibility of the entire institution would be at stake. The highest standards of academic excellence and independence will be sought and maintained.

Mr Speaker, one of the tasks of the Northern Territory working party will be to update the estimates of potential student numbers. From work done over the past 5 years, we know approximately how many students from the Northern Territory are enrolled in university courses elsewhere. However, these figures are incomplete because they do not show the students and families who move out of the Territory to seek university education and no longer give the Northern Territory as a home address. Public help will be sought in the coming months to assess more precisely how many students, and which categories of students, would wish to enrol in what courses when the university undergraduate courses commence in 1987. As well as surveying Year 12 students in the Territory, efforts will be made to seek out students of Territory families matriculating interstate, encourage mature students, consider students from interstate and overseas, look to part-time and external students - including Territorians living outside Darwin - assess the support

which can be given to potential students requiring bridging courses and negotiate cooperation for students of other universities who wish to undertake field work or specialised studies in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the rate of growth of the Northern Territory population, coupled with the increasing retention of students in high school, will ensure that potential students will exist to fill not only the university courses but also to necessitate the continued expansion of the Darwin Institute of Technology. The university presence will broaden the base of higher education in the Territory by offering more and different programs and complementing the Institute of Technology wherever possible rather than detracting from it. This will be achieved through extensive discussions and a frank disclosure of intent. During the early years, we will not be able to provide full university courses in many disciplines. Therefore, we will need to negotiate the transfer to other universities of credits gained in 1 or 2 years of study in the Northern Territory. Decisions will be made as soon as practicable about the courses and units which should be offered in 1987 and how these should be developed and expanded over the first 10 years.

Advice given to the Territory vice-chancellor and other academics over the past 5 years has been unanimous in emphasising that undergraduate teaching should be founded on a solid base of excellence in the arts and sciences. These are the courses favoured by the majority of Australian students. They underpin the latest specialisation in the humanities, social sciences and applied sciences and they make up the essential units which can be recognised for credit when students seek entry to specialised courses elsewhere. One of the great deficiencies suffered by the Northern Territory until now is the lack of any teaching of the natural sciences up to the first degree level.

Mr Speaker, I emphasise that, in planning for the university presence, existing resources in the Territory will be identified to provide an initial base wherever possible. Already the Territory has equipment and accommodation which could be used in 1987 pending the development of special facilities at the permanent university site at Palmerston. I would point out also that, within the Territory, there are now a number of qualified and experienced people who could supplement the university course staff as part-time teachers, local supervisors, technical advisers and local examiners.

In November, I shall be in a position to advise members of more details and anticipated costs. At this point, however, I can say that additional expenditure beyond current allocations in 1985-86 will be negligible. Costs will begin to rise in 1986-87 as staff is recruited and other expenditure incurred. In the second half of the 1986-87 financial year, students will be enrolled and costs will be more substantial. Costs will be discounted to some extent by the non-payment of Northern Territory grants to students who would otherwise have travelled interstate to university, and by other substantial indirect savings. Members will appreciate that the growth of the university is a matter of time, care and money. While we cannot wait any longer for the Commonwealth to help us launch the project, I hasten to add that we still look to financial support from the Commonwealth on the same basis as existing universities in this country.

In 1981, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission identified per capita student costs as one reason for refusing our submission. It told us that small new universities were extremely expensive. When we investigated, we found that this was not true. Some of the small universities, like Deakin, were among the cheapest and some of the larger

universities, for example the University of Western Australia, were among the most costly. By far the most expensive of all, nearly 6 times as costly as Deakin and 3 times the national average, was the Australian National University based in Canberra. Size and age have little to do with the cost; staffing ratios and high-cost courses are the determining factors.

Mr Speaker, we are confident that the cost of the Northern Territory university presence can be monitored carefully to ensure effectiveness with economy. Special arrangements have already been approved elsewhere by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, most recently in Western Australia and South Australia which happen to have Labor administrations. Every state and territory has a university with the exception of the Northern Territory, and all of the universities receive Commonwealth funding. We calculated 3 years ago that the Commonwealth was spending $67.40 per head of the total population on university education and that, on that basis alone, the Northern Territory had an entitlement in 1982 to $8.5m for university education. We alone of all the states and territories received nothing to support our constitutional responsibility in this sector. This injustice must be redressed and we shall continue to make special representations and submissions for Commonwealth triennial support. While demonstrating our firmness of purpose and our ability to take the first step in establishing a university of excellence using our own resources, we believe nevertheless that the Commonwealth government has a moral obligation to provide financial support for our legitimate endeavour from its inception.

Constitutionally, education is the responsibility of each state and territory and we are now exercising that constitutional right by starting Northern Territory university undergraduate courses. Let me emphasise that our negotiations with the Commonwealth government and its agencies have not been based on the issue as to whether or not the Northern Territory should establish a university because it is not within the power of the Commonwealth government to determine that question. During the past 5 years, negotiations have related solely to the question of the terms under which the Commonwealth government would give financial support to the Northern Territory university under the same system as applies to existing universities in Australia. We hope that the Commonwealth government will now respond by supporting the legitimate enterprise of the Northern Territory government and provide financial support as it does for all other state universities.

Every state university in Australia has grown out of a local initiative, often the result of a few people of vision pushing with determination through a swamp of apathy and opposition. Throughout history, such ventures have been first of all criticised as unnecessary and then derided as impractical but, later, they have been acclaimed as wise and farsighted and that will be the case in the Northern Territory. We have been left with no alternative but to start out on our own, following the example of every other state university established so far in Australia except for the Australian National University which was set up by the federal government in exactly the way in which we had in mind for the Northern Territory university. In starting alone, we are affirming the vital role which a university can play in stabilising our population and improving the quality of life and future prospects for all Territorians.

Those who question the need for a Territory university at present need to realise that Australia's existing universities have insufficient student places to meet the current demand. The critics should also take cognisance of the fact that, in the 5 years during which we have been getting nowhere with

the Commonwealth, the demand for places for Territory students has greatly increased. After 5 years of honest endeavour and fruitless negotiations for Commonwealth funding, the government has decided that its reiterated declarations of intent with regard to a Northern Territory university must be translated into action. Initially at least, this means using Northern Territory resources to benefit Northern Territory people. I look forward to the undivided support and assistance of all members of this Assembly and the public at large as we set our hands to this extremely important task. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, Sir Humphrey Appleby would have been proud of this ministerial statement. I have seldom witnessed such a sustained delivery of platitudinous drivel in the whole time I have been here - 28 solid pages of it. I would say to the Minister for Education that this paper should be retitled. It is currently called the 'Establishment of the Northern Territory University' but it should be called 'Find the University'. We could have a competition for high school kids to find the university in this document.

Mr D.W. Collins: Come on.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I look forward, as I always do, to the contributions of the honourable drongo opposite.

Mr Speaker, it takes us 15 pages to come to a statement which says: 'This brings me to the question of what the government plans to do and how we intend to do it'. That is after 15 pages. What the Minister for Education knows about universities could be put on the head of a pin or, alternatively, on the top of Denis Collins' head - one and the same thing.

I would raise a number of specific issues in the hope of eliciting some response from the minister at some later time. One that intrigues me is on page 4:

> 'Throughout this period, I should point out, the Northern Territory's case was not helped by the opposition and various self-interest groups denigrating our proposals and hindering our negotiations. This action enabled the Commonwealth to refuse support on the additional ground that it was reluctant to make a decision until such time as the Northern Territory could speak with one voice'.

Mr Speaker, I look forward with anticipation to the minister providing me with evidence, either written or verbal, of a statement or a sentiment expressed by any Commonwealth minister, in particular the Commonwealth Minister for Education, or indeed by any member of the Tertiary Education Commission - and I have had a number of meetings with those gentlemen and have presented oral submissions on the university - that would give the slightest grounds for the minister to make such an extraordinary statement. I would like to know who said it or who had authority to put the absurd proposition that somebody in the TEC or the federal government suggested that, until we had a unanimous position on the university in the Northern Territory, it would not happen. I have never heard anything so absurd. This typifies the drivel that is contained in these 28 pages.

The minister said: 'Despite our successive submissions prepared in detail and vetted by experts...'. I would like to pay some attention to that. The most detailed submission from the Northern Territory government to the

Tertiary Education Commission was not a submission; it was a joke and not a very funny joke at that. We know who was responsible for it. It was not the Minister for Education nor the University Planning Vice-Chancellor. The parameters were set for that absurd proposal by the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the Hon Paul Everingham. People who had even the slightest connection with universities fell about laughing at that absurd proposal. I believe it did as much to set back our chances of being taken seriously as anything else.

As honourable members would recall - and it has been canvassed enough times in this Assembly and, I might add, not defended by anyone except the former Chief Minister - that submission seriously proposed that a free-standing university would be established on a campus at Palmerston on University Avenue. That university was to offer 15 degree and sub-degree courses with an academic staff in excess of 60 and 5 departmental heads who would be deans of faculties. That submission was given to the Commonwealth government in June of one year and it was proposed to open the doors in February of the following year. The Tertiary Education Commission is a fairly responsible group of people. Its members cross-examined me on my feelings about that particular submission and some of them found it very difficult to keep a straight face. That first submission was a disgrace which should never have been taken seriously. It was a political statement, and I am not knocking it for that. The political goals were set by the Chief Minister because he had made a campaign promise that a university would open its doors by February 1982. He then said to the poor public servants who had to follow in his wake: 'Put it together and get it moving'. Apart from any other considerations, everybody knows the difficulty of attracting qualified research staff of sufficient excellence to guarantee the quality of the degrees offered by a university. The very proposition that we would be able to attract 60 academics and 5 heads of school in 6 months, and build the university - and I think it was proposed to have 1500 undergraduates on opening day in February - was a joke. The Territory did its case no good service by even proposing it.

I would suggest that the minister, who was not Minister for Education at that time, refresh his memory because probably he has not read the first submission. He was a lowly backbencher in those days. I would not be surprised if the honourable minister had not even taken the trouble to go through that very first submission from the Northern Territory government to the Tertiary Education Commission. We are supposed to cop statements such as: 'Despite successive submissions prepared in detail and vetted by experts...'. It was vetted all right.

I will concede that the second submission was a far more responsible, balanced and serious document but it took some time to overcome the credibility gap established by the first submission. Nevertheless, the minister had the hide to accuse the opposition in the Northern Territory of hindering the development of a university.

Mr Perron: You have been torpedoing it from day 1.

Mr B. COLLINS: Here he goes again - brains incorporated on the frontbench. We all know the Attorney-General's interest in tertiary education. I was rubbished the other day by the Attorney-General who thought it was terrible that I had been studying law.

'The Northern Territory's case was not helped by the opposition'. It was the government, to use the Chief Minister's favourite expression, which shot itself in the foot.

Mr Speaker, the opposition was delighted to see the establishment of the Menzies school. Indeed, that demonstrated how difficult it is and how long it takes to attract highly-qualified people to head such schools. I must say that we won handsomely because we obtained a person of international repute. But, as the honourable minister himself knows, it took time to do it.

I like this one at the bottom of page 9: 'For too long, the staff, students and prospective students of the institute have been left to languish in a state of confusion while the Commonwealth drags its feet over the university proposal'. I talk often with students who are undergoing tertiary education in the Northern Territory. I talk a great deal to some of the highly-qualified academics whom we are fortunate enough to have in the Northern Territory. When they pick up a document like this, they look for certain details to overcome this confusion. Not only will this document not satisfy them but it will cause more confusion! The reason is this. The government's last positive statement on the university, via the minister, was heralded with a fanfare of trumpets. We were proceeding to establish in Darwin a university college of the University of Queensland. I remember the numerous press releases that were put out stating that the senate of that university, along with the government of Queensland, had given its blessing to those meetings taking place. On every occasion I have seen academic staff or students - which I do on a fairly regular basis through the external study section at DIT - they all ask me the same questions consistently: 'Have you heard what is happening to the university college proposal? Do you know what is happening with Queensland?' My answer has always been: 'No. We chase it up in the Legislative Assembly and I do not have the slightest idea. It seems to have died a death'. Then out of the blue, all of a sudden with no prior announcement, we have abandoned the university college of the University of Queensland sight unseen and now we are to build something unspecified at Palmerston by 1987.

The confusion will be exacerbated to a great degree by these 28 pages of drivel. The member for MacDonnell pointed out, having attended the Master Builders' Association dinner last night, that some parts of the minister's speech had been used. He is using a second-hand speech. Parts of it were delivered last night.

Mr Speaker, who is going to argue with 28 pages of platitudes? There are 3 pages saying why we need a university. They contain the same arguments that we have heard before in the Legislative Assembly and I do not deny any of them. 'Contribute to the stability of the Northern Territory population... raise the existing levels of education'. There are 3 pages of that! 'The community will gain many benefits from the presence of a university... many other practical returns... the university will reach out to the community in other ways'. I like this: 'Things will happen around the university'.

Mr D.W. Collins: You have a dirty mind.

Mr B. COLLINS: You are sick in the head; you really are.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: There is something wrong with you.

'University training will give our young people an advantage in getting jobs'. On page 15, we get into the nitty-gritty: 'This brings me to the question of what the government plans to do and how we intend to do it'. Here is the most positive statement contained in the whole speech. At the top of page 16 we read: 'What the government now proposes is to add the teaching of undergraduates to the other university sector activities already supported by the University Planning Authority'.

Mr Speaker, every undergraduate in the Northern Territory who is doing a degree course and those who propose to undertake one will have 500 questions to ask the minister in respect of that statement. If they try to find the answers to those questions in the next 20-odd pages, they will fail. It is going to 'add the teaching of undergraduates to the other university-sector activities already supported by the University Planning Authority'. Now what does that mean? I know there is a Menzies School of Health Research but the honourable minister is not seriously proposing that we will have a school of medicine in our university. Of course he is not, so one cannot consider that to be part of the university sector's activities. We know that degree courses are being offered at the Darwin Institute of Technology but what are the university sector activities supported by the University Planning Authority that undergraduate teaching will be added to? What courses will be offered? Where will the facilities be placed? Are we offering arts or science? What are we doing? None of that is in here, and the minister has the hide to refer to this on page 1 as a momentous decision! 'During the initial stages, we will develop close links with another established university'. That is as close to that as we get. Does that mean we will maintain our links with the University of Queensland? If it does, why not say so? That was the last public position we adopted on a university. I assume that, because the university is not named, it does not mean that and that we have in fact abandoned the proposal for the University of Queensland. That is just an assumption on my part. It is a real guessing-game statement.

'The main thrust of the Northern Territory University will be to provide for young Territorians who have had no opportunity to be taught directly in the Territory until now. In order to enrol the first students by 1987, a great deal of planning and preparation must be done in a short time'. No one will argue with that.

Mr Speaker, it is a fact that, every time the government, through this Minister for Education, opens its mouth on tertiary education, the students in the Northern Territory despair and so do the lecturers. They will do so yet again after they read this. He said: 'I have asked the working party to examine a whole range of matters as a matter of urgency'. It is a matter of urgency all right - effectively we have 12 months to lash this together. It is a repeat of, 'we are going to open in February 1982', and the devil take the hindmost.

Mr D.W. Collins: We work better under pressure.

Mr B. COLLINS: 'Extensive consultation will take place'.

Mr Firmin: What is your constructive opinion?

Mr B. COLLINS: 'Update student numbers'.

Mr Robertson: This is not going to read all that well in Hansard.

Mr B. COLLINS: Drongoes incorporated - listen to them. They are like Pavlov's dogs - ring the bell and they dribble.

'In November I shall be in a position to advise members of more details on anticipated costs'. Well, that is nice. This next one is good: 'In 1986-87, costs will begin to rise as staff is recruited'. I cannot argue with that. 'In the second half of the 1986-87 financial year, students will be enrolled and then the costs will be more substantial'. I am reminded of Sir Humphrey Appleby's hospital that had no doctors and was cheaper to run that way - it had no patients either. 'This will be, however, discounted to some extent by the non-payment of Northern Territory grants to students who would otherwise have to travel interstate'. This is where we get to the crunch: 'Members will appreciate the growth of a university is a matter of time, care and money'. We do not have any time, we do not care very much and we have no money, but away we go. 'While we cannot wait any longer, I hasten to add that we still look for financial support by the Commonwealth on the same basis as for the existing universities in Australia'. Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that you will find a reference to that 3 times in this speech.

On page 12, I think it is, we find a brave statement: 'We are not going to be shackled by the Commonwealth government. We are going to throw off these shackles that have been placed on us'. We are going to launch out on our own somewhere and we are going to start a university 12 months from now. We will pay the establishment costs before we have any staff or students but, once they arrive, the Commonwealth will have to foot the bill.

Mr Finch: That is our kids' entitlement, though. Isn't it their share?

Mr B. COLLINS: That is all right. Mr Speaker, what are we going to have out at Palmerston, a 2-man tent?

'Members will appreciate that the growth of a university is a matter of time, care and money... we still look to financial support by the Commonwealth on the same basis as for the existing universities in this country'. Of course, we do. And this is the one that I am particularly concerned about because it is a familiar theme with this government. It was the consistent theme of the former Chief Minister and it has now become this government's theme, and what nonsense it is. When it investigated, it found out that the size of the university does not affect the cost. Some of the small universities, like Deakin, were among the cheapest; some of the larger universities, like the University of Western Australia, were among the most expensive. The ANU, which is based in Canberra, was the most expensive. Can I tell the honourable minister that the reason for that is very simple: it is all related to the extent to which research is carried on in those institutions and the money made available to support that research.

Mr Speaker, the minister went on to say: 'We are confident that the costs of a Northern Territory university presence can be carefully monitored to ensure effectiveness with economy'. I know what that means because of the detailed discussions I have had with people: a complete concentration on the presence of undergraduates - and that was what Paul Everingham's proposal was all about - and no research, or so little research that it does not matter. It means classrooms full of tertiary students, all doing arts and science, so that we can say: 'There is our university'. There is a great big hole in that argument that even the most prominent institutes of technology around Australia must cope with. If we do not provide a substantial research allocation in our funding for a university, we will not attract the graduates

of excellence who will give credibility to degrees that are offered in the university.

Some very notable academics are working in institutes of technology around Australia and the degree courses that are provided are enhanced because of the presence of those people. When you go shopping for the best school to go to, people say to you, and they are right: 'That is a good school. It happens to be an institute of technology, not a university, but there are X, Y and Z lecturers and senior lecturers. That is the gentleman there, Mr McKellar, who has had this published and that published, and this person is an expert in this area of this, that and the other'. The degree achieves its credibility because of the standing of the academics who run the schools. Having gone over this ground again and again in this debate, I am disappointed to find it back here again - a chip shop university that is to be kicked off the ground in 1987. We do not have to wait. I know the thinking of the members of the government and the responsible minister: we can economise on research and keep the university costs down - and Paul Everingham said it again and again - by concentrating on undergraduates and not turning it into 'hives for tall poppies from the south'.

I am alarmed at what the government is proposing to do. I am not going to support this proposal. I am alarmed because it is a revisitation of the election promises that were made in that campaign. It made a complete laughing stock of the Northern Territory government in respect of advancing our tertiary education needs and we are about to do it again. We have already set the parameters and we have not even started the work. We have announced the date - 12 months hence, because the rest of this year is of no account. We are already at the end of this month. We will open for business in 1987. The minister said that all the investigations would be initiated now and we would have a great deal of work to do in a very short space of time.

Mr Speaker, I must say that the students who will be attending - I do not know what because it does not say - this free-standing university, wherever it is to be, will have serious doubts about the credibility of the degrees. When you consider the amount of slog over a period of 5 years that a person must put into a degree, the initial decision of where to start that degree is a very important one. We will not enhance our position by announcing such a ludicrous proposal at this stage. The only definite thing in the statement is the date on which it will open. That has been determined but everything else is to be lashed together afterwards. That is what is says.

I turn to page 26: 'While demonstrating our firmness of purpose and our ability to take the first steps in establishing a university of excellence using our own resources, we believe nevertheless the Commonwealth government has a moral obligation to provide financial support for our legitimate endeavour from its inception'. That is the third reference to the necessity for Commonwealth funding to get this independent, autonomous Northern Territory initiative off the ground.

'Every state university in Australia has grown out of local initiative, often the result of a few people of vision pushing with determination through a swamp of apathy and opposition'. Mr Speaker, the opposition has never opposed the establishment of a university in the Northern Territory. I can say with some degree of feeling that I will be delighted the day it occurs. But I must say that we will do ourselves a grave disservice if we start off in the second-rate and shoddy manner that this so-called initiative promises. It is simply the procedures and the methods that this government has followed.

The track record makes for pretty appalling reading in terms of the numerous proposals that have been picked up and dropped. This is yet another one.

Perhaps at some stage during this sittings the minister might like to explain in some detail what happened with the university college of Queensland proposal. It was a firm proposal of the Northern Territory government. It was announced when the first students would be there. The minister now finds that timetable unacceptable. It has not changed. The same timetable is contained in here. Perhaps he would like to tell the Assembly what has happened since because that information is not contained in here either.

'After 5 years of honest endeavour and fruitless negotiation for Commonwealth funding, the government has decided that its reiterated declarations of intent with regard to a Northern Territory university must be translated into action'. Can I say this to the Minister for Education? I was appalled when he made the statement in the Legislative Assembly in respect of the advanced education sector of the Darwin Institute of Technology. He said here that, as far as he and his government are concerned, the Chief Minister had a perfect right to appoint the principal unilaterally because 'the Darwin Institute of Technology is just a government department like any other government department'. He said that he would treat it as a TAFE institution. That is recorded in Hansard. So in one fell swoop, he has written off the advanced education sector of the Darwin Institute of Technology that currently offers the only degree courses available in the Northern Territory. I do not care personally if the Northern Territory launches an initiative. I will support it without getting the necessary go-ahead from the Commonwealth government in terms of funding. That does not concern me in the slightest. But there is no detailed mention of what does concern me. I will not support the independent, so-called initiative of the Northern Territory government in establishing this university if there is not a general consensus among tertiary institutions in Australia that the degree courses that will be commenced in 1987 will be degree courses of standing, repute and excellence.

Mr Harris: You have no worry there. That has always been the government's position, and you know that.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, perhaps the minister might do us the courtesy of telling us that because this does not contain the slightest detail. In order to establish what chance we have of starting those degrees of excellence, and as this is to commence in 1987, I suggest that it would not be unreasonable to give us a slight hint about what the faculties will be. But there is nothing here. We have not the slightest idea what courses will be offered. The minister seriously expects us to accept, sight unseen, the fact that they will be courses of excellence, and yet he is not in a position even at this stage - almost 12 months off opening day - to tell us what degrees are to be offered by the university. I think that is a reasonable concern.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that I am not suggesting that the Territory should be shackled by waiting for someone to give us the money. But I am concerned - and I am yet to be convinced by anything contained in these 28 pages of nonsense - that the degree courses that will be offered will be held in some esteem from the very beginning by other tertiary institutions in Australia.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Government Commitment to Tourism Development Projects

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory government resolved some years ago that it should help secure the economic future of the Territory by encouraging tourism. The aim to which my government remains committed today is to have one million tourists visit the Northern Territory and spend their money here by the year 1994. You cannot attract visitors, especially overseas visitors, if they have nowhere to stay. Thus, every opportunity has been pursued to accommodate them. The Territory government, led by the former Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham, took many bold decisions with a vision which was wholly commendable.

Mr Speaker, we remain committed to that vision but, with changing circumstances, the task before us now is to take stock and face up to and solve some of the considerable difficulties so that we can realise the enormous benefits that tourism will bring to our community. In the last 4 years, this government has taken a series of significant initiatives designed to give impetus to this industry. These have included the provision in 1982 of guarantees to lenders of the Yulara Development Company for the construction of Yulara. Then, in replacement of those, an agreement to contribute such amount as required by that company to meet its net commitments until the commercial assets are sold to the benefit of the Territory Insurance Office. There was the provision early in 1984 of guarantees and agreements to provide makeup payments to the lenders to the Alice Springs Sheraton project to secure their position, and to the AIDC, as the ultimate owner of those premises, to ensure some minimum return on investment. This guarantee was to last until a contemplated sale of the hotel as a going concern in 8 years. At that time, repayment of all support with interest was anticipated. There was the provision in September 1984 of a support mechanism to Manolas Hotels covering the Darwin Sheraton under which its capacity to meet its lease payments on that building and obligations to Sheraton were secured. Again, any makeup payments are to be repaid with interest when the hotel is sold, in 10 years in this case. There was the purchase on 1 October 1984 of the casino properties and their sale to the Territory Property Trust on the basis of a price discounted by $2.5m and agreement to pay interest on $2m of their borrowings and an agreement with operators of international repute that they would pay rent to the trust which included at least 10% return to unit holders and a profit share for a minimum fee of $600 000 per annum. Tax of 8% on casino gross profits was agreed to be payable but would be waived to the extent that this left insufficient funds to meet their minimum fee and the rent. If such a tax waiver was insufficient to allow such payments, the operators would have access to loan support via the NTDC. There was a further agreement that, in exchange for this initial support, the tax payable after 5 years would be increased each year by a sum equal to a third of the operating profits. Lastly, there was a dramatic increase in tourism marketing through the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Mr Speaker, the feasibility studies for Yulara and the Sheratons in Alice Springs and Darwin were conducted by well-regarded professional accounting firms. In each case, it proved impossible to attract true risk capital and the projects would not have gone ahead without the level of government assistance I have outlined. The consultants' studies and their own decisions to act as catalyst were based on some fundamental premises. These were: the prompt upgrading of the Darwin Airport facilities to facilitate the direct flow of international tourists to the Territory in accordance with the recommendations of the Commonwealth parliament's capital works subcommittee;

that visitor facilities within Kakadu National Park would be upgraded in accordance with the undertakings given by the Prime Minister; the Commonwealth upgrading of the Alice Springs Airport and its terminal to cater more adequately for increasing domestic traffic and wide-bodied aircraft; the consequent capacity of the accommodation side of the industry to support 3 5-star hotels opening in succession over a 2-year period; the continuation of real interest rates - that is, the difference between the rate of inflation and the rate of interest on borrowings in Australia - of about 4.5% which is already an historical high; the provision of better infrastructure within the Uluru National Park, such as provision for such basic needs as toilets, picnic areas and a sealed road to the Olgas to provide more favourable visitor experience; domestic airline commitment to the Territory as a tourist destination through attractive packages and scheduling cooperation; and an adequate flow of funds to the Territory government as a continuation of the agreements reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Hindsight may suggest that some of these assumptions were just too optimistic, particularly when we look closely into them and see that each involves, to some degree, the policies and the honouring of commitments by the federal Labor government. Further, for example, the real interest rate today is not 4.5% but approximately double that. The fact is that the independent experts on whom we relied also regarded the basic assumptions as realistic and they too saw no impediment to progressing the projects on the information available at the time, which was in 1980-82. On the basis of continuing federal support for infrastructure and sensible economic achievement, we and the respective project owners accepted their projection.

Mr Speaker, my colleague and former leader, Mr Paul Everingham, made a statement in this place on 13 June 1984 which set forth the commitment position as seen at that time. That statement drew heavily on those projections and I will table a copy of it for the convenience of honourable members.

The emerging actual Sheraton experience, influenced as it is by the circumstances I have quoted, is such that we must now reappraise our commitment in respect of these 3 projects. I have already announced the formation of a special group comprising senior Treasury and NTDC personnel, which has already drawn in specialist banking and legal advisers to work directly to me in formulating new arrangements which reflect the new circumstances.

Mr Speaker, the man and woman in the street are generally aware of the way in which our tourism development strategy has been frustrated by events and are justifiably concerned about what has been referred to loosely as the contingent liability problem. I make no bones about it: the problems we face are not contingent; they are actual commitments to provide underwriting support to these projects through legal agreements. A contingent liability is strictly one which could be precipitated by some particular external event - for instance, a major court action or a call on guarantee after default under a borrowing facility. These projects involve actual liabilities which happen to be quantifiable only by application of the circumstances of each year, as for example with a commercial lease payment which may increase each year by the uncertain rate of the CPI.

Unless changes are made to our arrangements with these projects and unless we can influence the assumptions I have quoted, the support requirements will continue to grow. The prospect of our being reimbursed those amounts in some

reasonable time frame will become remote and an unfair burden will fall on today's Territorians. I can give honourable members an appreciation of the current position, without going into long streams of confusing numbers, by way of the following summaries, and I table a document relating to the financial advice received by the government in relation to these projects.

The original feasibility reports indicated that, in today's dollars, the annual amount required for Yulara by government would be of the order of $6m. This figure was a mid-range case. Improved performance would have seen it fall and adverse performance would have seen it increase. I am tabling with this statement a copy of the following documents prepared by those consultants: the development feasibility study by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co; the Yulara Tourist Resort Project Financial Analysis prepared by Citi National; and the Equity Partnership Financial Model prepared by Capel Court. From these papers, the extent of governmental support and the residual value of the project for the TIO can be seen. This established a proper basis for the decisions of the day.

The prospect now is that the required contribution is more like $14m per annum and rising. The increase can be broken into 2 elements when compared with the detail in those feasibility studies. The first is a reduction of $5.5m in the performance expected of the Four Seasons and Sheraton Hotels. The second is the sum of $2.5m representing the effect of the need to capitalise extra interest, certain changes in depreciation, unanticipated management expenses and the timing of income.

The feasibility studies included the following assumptions as compared with what is now projected. With the Sheraton occupancy for 1985, the feasibility study showed 65% and is now projected at 36%. The occupancy for 1986 was shown in the feasibility study at 70% and is now projected at 48%. The Sheraton occupancy was foreshadowed for 1987 at 74% and is now projected at 63%. The Sheraton average tariff was shown for 1985 in the feasibility study at $112 a night and is now projected at $74. The tariff for 1986 was shown at $123 a night and is now projected at $80 a night. The tariff for 1987 was shown in the feasibility study at $135 a night and is now projected at $91. The Four Seasons occupancy for 1985 was shown in the feasibility study at 70%; it is now projected at 65%. For 1986, the feasibility study showed a level of 74% and the new projection is 70%. For 1987, the feasibility study showed 77% and it is now projected at 75%. For Four Seasons, the average tariff in 1985 was foreshadowed in the feasibility study at $92; it is now projected at $80. For 1986, the feasibility study showed a tariff level of $101 and that is now projected at $89. For 1987, the feasibility study showed $112 and is now projected at $98. Thus, the patronage and what it will pay was wrongly forecast albeit in good faith. In addition, the projected costs of running hotels in this remote location were too conservative and the expectation that the hotels could cross-subsidise all normal government services is now proving impossible to achieve.

Mr Speaker, I said in my budget speech that we will change our relationship with Yulara to one more closely resembling that which applies in a normal Territory town. The reduction in our annual contribution by purchasing governmental assets is about $4m. A further $3m may be saved each year by a combination of actions which will be taken by the Yulara Development Company. These include severe internal cost-cutting measures, borrowing techniques and cash flow rearrangement. With these measures becoming effective, the 1985-86 contribution has been set at $7m. The scope for

additional measures, which will impact future years' commitments, is under close scrutiny.

The Alice Springs Sheraton is due to be purchased by the AIDC from the developers on 12 September for $34m. By then, pre-opening expenses of $1m will also have been incurred by Sheraton. The $35m in funds so required was to have been provided by AIDC - $10m - and by a commercial loan through an intermediary company - $25m. At the time this arrangement was concluded, the consultant figures, including budget, showed overall prospects of commerciality over an 8-year period and thus a sound expectation that government support payments in early years would be fully reimbursed.

Mr Speaker, I table the original advice from Price Waterhouse and figures provided by the developer at the time.

Mr Speaker, in June this year, the Sheraton people produced a budget for this property which reflected their Yulara experience and the changed circumstances that I have mentioned. It revealed an operating loss which, on average, was more than $2m per annum worse than the result originally expected.

For occupancy in the calendar year 1985, the feasibility study showed 65% occupancy and the new projection is now 19.5%. In 1986, the feasibility estimate was 67.5% and that is now shown at 49.2%. In 1987, the feasibility study estimated an occupancy of 70% and it is now shown at 61.9%. In 1988, the feasibility study showed a possible 75% occupancy and that projection is now 63%. In 1989, the feasibility study foreshadowed 80% occupancy and this is now projected at 68%. For the average room rate, in 1985 the feasibility showed that $94 may be achieved and that has been reviewed now to $70.92. For 1986, $103.40 was anticipated and that is now $83.76. For 1987, there was a forecast of $113.74 and that is now $91.04. For 1988, $125.11 was foreshadowed and that is now $106.19. For 1989, the foreshadowed figure was $137.63 and that has now been reviewed at $114.69. On that basis, the government contribution could have been, in today's dollars, as much as $26m in total over 8 years. The change is so dramatic that all parties became most anxious about continuing a relationship according to the agreements in place. The mounting losses and the resultant effect of large makeup payments on the balance sheet of the AIDC have destroyed the tax effectiveness of the ownership structure.

Studies have revealed 2 inescapable facts. The first is that, without a tax effective structure, the hotel will never be able to compete with other hotels and the second is that, unless the cost of capital is substantially reduced, the prospect of the government recovering its support, even if better performance is achieved, is slim. Neither the AIDC nor potential lenders wish to insist on the continuation of what has become an uncommercial arrangement. Each has graciously agreed to renegotiate the agreements in place to allow restructuring to occur and the government appreciates their cooperation.

The necessity is, then, to encourage the creation of an alternative and effective ownership vehicle and support it in a way which will enable it to access loan funds in the cheapest possible manner. We have approached the TIO, National Mutual Royal Bank and the AIDC, and asked if they will take up shareholding in a new company to purchase this hotel. The new company will be established as soon as possible. Various options for the injection of equity have been studied. The numbers in the range of options under study show that this company, structured soundly, has good prospects of long-term

profitability. Opportunities may be identified for this company to take an interest in other developmental projects in the Territory.

Additionally, the government has appointed a panel of independent expert advisers, both to confirm this and to give guidance as to the best means of meeting the government's objectives. I am happy to advise that these people are Mr Denis Horgan, a businessman of Barrack House in Western Australia, Mr Larry Smith of Cherry and Partners, a chartered accountant and nationally-reputed tax adviser, Mr David Graham of S.T.H. Graham Ltd, a financial adviser with considerable experience in large-scale tourist-related projects, and Mr Ken MacKay of Wardley Australia Ltd, a banker whose experience and interest in the Territory is well known. I am confident this panel will give my government the best advice available.

The new company will have to raise at least $35m before the takeover date of 12 September 1985, and it is just not possible, nor would it be proper, for it to enter into a long-term financing arrangement of this magnitude prior to that date even with government backing. Accordingly, we are investigating a range of options for bridging finance, including the short-term use of the government's cash balances, and this of course, if accepted, would only be followed if the government was fully secured and if it produced both a commercial return to the government and, in terms of our overall support to this project, the cheapest possible cost to the taxpayers. Clearly, the need for some governmental guarantee of the capacity of the company to meet its loan obligations will be needed. The advice which I have commissioned will extend to a recommendation on the appropriate form which such support may take, as well as the advantage, if any, of our providing some direct longer-term debt financing.

The Darwin Sheraton is due for completion in May-June 1986. Construction is well on schedule and the Sheraton manager has taken up residence. According to the feasibility figures, we expect that the required level of government support in 1986-87 will be several million dollars and then a declining amount for 6 years, followed by a progressive recoupment. It is still too early for a firm budget to be available from Sheraton. I remain concerned, however, that the Darwin Airport decision will influence our position most adversely.

Mr Speaker, the Darwin Sheraton's viability, and I should also say that of the Beaufort Hotel in which substantial risk capital is involved, extends from the reasonable assumption at the outset that the Commonwealth commitment to upgrade facilities at the Darwin Airport would be honoured. The cessation of work on this airport has discouraged those airlines which were considering exercising their landing rights here. The arbitrary nature of this action has reflected severely on our national credibility on the professional side of the tourist industry. Prolongation of the period during which the cattle crush conditions must be endured by our visitors will cause serious erosion of any goodwill created via our modern hotel premises.

Such a sour note in the visitor's experience is working against the word-of-mouth advertising which is so vital to our competitive position as a world destination. International air carriers must work very hard to get passengers into aircraft and it is well known that they will not use airport facilities which are substandard. It is sobering to note that, whilst domestic tourism to the Territory increased by about 16% in 1984-85, the increase in overseas visitors was only 2%. Against this background, we are examining our position in respect of the Darwin Sheraton with the aid of

well-qualified external advisers and will reconsider our relationship as this progresses. It may be that the company to which I have referred could take up our interests to mutual advantage.

Mr Speaker, across the spectrum of these Sheraton-related projects, in addition to these matters, we have taken steps which will reduce our overall commitment. I have been in contact with, and will soon meet again, the responsible Sheraton President, Mr John Kapioltas. He has been made aware of the flow-through effects of their performance to us. Though some of the underlying factors are beyond either of us to control, we can improve the position by reducing operational costs of service in the hotels. We can also join forces in marketing and make use of the expanded network being established by the Tourist Commission in improving occupancy levels.

Mr Speaker, respective officers have met already in a very cooperative atmosphere. Sheraton is agreeable to adjusting its standards at least until the international tourist flow warrants its reinstatement. Marketing meetings between ourselves, each hotel owner and the Sheraton have already begun. Sheraton officers have agreed also to recommend reduction of their management fee in recognition of our position. At the same time, we are looking at the use of expertise already available within government and the Yulara Development Company so that the current fragmentation in our interfacing with such projects, spread as it is across the departments and authorities, is productively integrated.

With the casinos, I share the general concern that their role in stimulating international tourism is taking longer than we would like. Until the current works program refurbishing the premises is complete, however, some patience is called for. The refurbished premises must be attractive to the clientele we need if we are to put the Territory on the international circuit. It is important that the premises are completed before the Asian marketing programs are pursued vigorously. There are good prospects for this new market to develop quickly in 1986. As I have stated, we have done what we can to make that enterprise a commercial success. The market is there and it is now for the operators to draw it in our direction.

The key to the success of all of these projects remains the support of the federal government. There is just so much we can do without some positive action by it. Tourism has great national benefits. What we are doing is designed not only to improve our economic base and reduce our mendicant role but also to improve Australia's position as an international destination. We have attractions of world-wide appeal and, as Australians and not just as Territorians, we should all press for absolute federal support. The current attitude of the federal government is appalling.

Mr Speaker, I call on the people of the Territory to support our actions. I want to signal unequivocally to the banking fraternity and our hospitality operators that we are willing to respond to the challenges and circumstances of the day in whatever combination they emerge. They can be reassured that their own commitment to the Territory will be matched by that of the Territory government and all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, do not honourable members on both sides of this Assembly share a vision for the Territory's future? Do they not agree that this vision can be realised only by strong and unwavering commitment to decisions taken? At the same time, are not all Territorians entitled to expect that the federal government will honour its undertakings upon which our strategy is based?

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there has certainly never been a statement made in this Assembly by any minister that has contained such a disastrous admission of total financial incompetence, mismanagement and duplicity on the part of the government, and 3 ministers of that government in particular.

The opening paper in the voluminous attachment that the Chief Minister has produced begins in this way: 'I have been asked by the honourable Leader of the Opposition to supply details of government liabilities and contingent liabilities in respect of major projects, including the Yulara and Sheraton projects'. That is dated Wednesday 13 June. The pressure applied by the opposition on the government to do this started quite a bit before that. In fact, it is impossible for me to participate in this debate without some real feeling of anger and dismay at the appalling mess the government has got us into, because that is what this is. It is with some degree of anger and bitterness that I remember the answers that I received to numerous questions. The references in Hansard on the number of occasions I raised this question are so numerous that I do not have time to read them now. They started at the beginning of last year and continue through to the present: statements, speeches and questions. All I received in response was a pack of lies from start to finish and it has now been exposed as such.

To my dismay, that continued this morning on Territory Extra in an interview with the Chief Minister. Considering the voluminous and serious nature of this statement, it is impossible for me to deal with this in 20 scant minutes, and I have sought the courtesy of the government for an extension of time in this debate. I was dismayed to hear the Chief Minister's reply this morning to the question: 'What does the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bob Collins, think about all this?' His reply was: 'Well, he made a statement to the House in June last year and he supported our conclusions and assumptions'. Mr Speaker, that was one more piece of blatant falsehood perpetrated by the Chief Minister. It must be corrected. I have the Hansard extract here. I simply do not have time to refer to the original statement contained in these papers. People can read it for themselves, but I will read a few key quotes from it to indicate the extent of my so-called acceptance of the government's position. Of course, members are at liberty to read it all for themselves.

Mr Speaker, in respect of the Chief Minister's statement, among other things I said: 'This is not what I want... I am still no further ahead and neither is the Northern Territory in terms of the information that is available to the public of the Northern Territory as to where we stand... I do not believe a word of this document'. I am not sure how much more categorical one can be than that! I also said: 'We have so far heard nothing from the Treasurer' - the now Minister for Mines and Energy - 'in this debate at all even though it is all about money and the government's liabilities. That is despite the fact that my question was addressed to him and not the Chief Minister at all... I asked for a Treasury brief outlining to me in some detail what we are going to get slugged for in years ahead'. This is very prophetic: 'Without getting into technical financial language, perhaps the Treasurer could simply take that on board. I would like to know what commitments have been entered into and are being entered into by the Northern Territory government that could end up as liabilities in future Northern Territory budgets'. Is that clear enough, Mr Speaker? 'I would like to know on a best

case and a worst case scenario'. In an interjection, the member for Fannie Bay, the then Treasurer, said: 'Look it up in a dictionary. You will find out'. I said: 'I do not want a dictionary; I want a financial report. I am not talking about language; I am talking about money. That is the problem with this document. We have pages of English and no money'. Again, towards the end of the speech, I said: 'There is no point in going through the document in any more detail because, in the brief perusal I have had of it, I already know that it goes nowhere near to explaining to me what kind of future budget appropriations we are likely to see in terms of the total amount of government money that will be expended on projects like Yulara'. That was described this morning as support for the government's position. It is symptomatic of the non-stop parade of untruths that come from the benches opposite.

Mr Speaker, it gives me no pleasure at all to rise in response to this statement. The inescapable conclusion is that the government has plunged the Northern Territory into a dire financial crisis. 24 hours after the Chief Minister and Treasurer stood in this Assembly boasting about balancing the books and how happy he was to see his first budget interpreted as good news, he has the gall to drop this bombshell on this parliament. The truth is that the Northern Territory has an actual deficit of $250m. The statement is a confession that this government's management of the economy is totally out of control. I am devastated, as I am sure all Territorians will be, at the Chief Minister's admissions to this Assembly as to the extent to which this government has opened the public purse strings to private enterprise and then sat silent for 18 months while the world slowly crumbled around it. We have witnessed here today a frightening new chapter in the political history of the Northern Territory, shoddily packaged and callously presented.

Mr Speaker, for the first time, we have a clear admission from the government that 4 major tourist developments represent a real and ongoing liability to the Territory taxpayer, due entirely to the high-rolling ineptitude of those on the Treasury benches. I could not have delivered myself a more damaging indictment of this government if I had handwritten the minister's speech. It is not a statement one would expect to hear from a government which is now actively urging its constituents to follow it along the path to statehood. I remind honourable members that the Chief Minister and Treasurer had the temerity to stand before us yesterday and utter not one word about the financial mess we are in when he delivered the budget speech. It is a situation that the government has consistently - and the record shows it - denied both inside and outside the Assembly despite constant opposition pressure over 18 months. We all know of the press release the Chief Minister issued categorically denying that Treasury funds had been transferred for the purchase of the casinos, and yet he admitted later in the Assembly that, as Treasurer, he had personally ordered that very thing to be done 2 weeks before he issued the public statement.

We have here the unveiling of the Tuxworth economic trilogy: the pound of flesh out of Territorians in the June mini-budget with hikes in taxes and charges, the balanced books and good news budget yesterday, and now the deficit or at least that much of it that the Treasurer is prepared to admit to today. Let there be no mistake about it: this is still only part of the story. When will this government finally come clean? As disastrous and as tragic a picture as this statement paints - and it is certainly as close to the truth as it has yet come - it still bears the unmistakable stamp of all previous statements on this issue. It poses more questions than it answers and crucial documentation is missing. In fact, 3 very crucial documents are

missing that should be attached to this statement: copies of letters of resignation of the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister responsible for the Northern Territory Development Corporation and the former Treasurer of this government who put all this together, the now Minister for Mines and Energy.

On taking over as Chief Minister, the Chief Minister gave a commitment to Territorians that he would lay all the cards on the table. It did not take long for everyone to find out how false that was. He did not tell us that he was going to lay them on the table one by one and we have still only been dealt half the deck. The most recent document we have been provided with in all of these attachments is 2 years old. Apart from the references to Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co and to Price Waterhouse, we are left with vague references to faceless legal and banking specialists who provided feasibility figures on projects. Where are the documents the government has been basing its decisions on for the last 2 years?

The basic reason for this statement is to be found on page 4. I quote the Chief Minister's admission: 'It proved impossible to attract true risk capital'. In other words, hard-nosed businessmen took a look at the feasibility studies, relied on so heavily by this government, and did not want a bar of them. The Chief Minister stands condemned by his own words. His speech is littered with admissions of this government's failure to come to grips with reality. In fact, there is a profound air of reality about the statement in its entirety, particularly the last 2 pages.

On the very first page, he admits the government is now facing considerable difficulties with its liability - something we have been trying to ring the bell on now for 18 months and have been snowed in response. He then went on to blame his predecessor, Paul Everingham, by condemning him with faint praise. He then went on the blame Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co, Capel Court, Citi National, Price Waterhouse, the federal government, the airlines and, lastly, the tourists because they are not coming to the Northern Territory.

In fact, in this statement, he blames everyone except the Chief Minister. I am not here to defend Paul Everingham, who must take his share of the blame, and it is considerable. But the only difference between the current government and the Everingham government is the absence of Paul Everingham himself. That must be nailed down because this line of 'it was all dumped on us' cannot be sustained any longer. The 3 ministers directly responsible for this mess, apart from the federal member, are ministers Tuxworth, Perron and Dondas - the finance ministers. These 3 served under Everingham for 7 years and were perfectly content to ride on his coat-tails without a peep. The Chief Minister now sits here today and tries to push the blame onto him, among others. We all know that the government is collectively responsible for this appalling mess. One of the few things that we have learned today is that these liabilities are not contingent in any event; they are actual and we must pay for them. I thank the honourable minister for that admission at least.

Mr Speaker, in yesterday's budget, we made available a second instalment of $27m of public money to Yulara. The new issue today - and one can only assume it emerged overnight because it was not referred to in our good news budget yesterday - is the sequel of the casino saga: the Alice Springs Sheraton. We are told Sheraton Alice was due to be bought by the Australian Industries Development Corporation from the developers - Sitzler Brothers, Neighbour and Lapsys Pty Ltd, and Connaird and Company Pty Ltd - in 2 weeks

for $35m with $1m for additional charges. We are told that, last month, Sheraton produced a budget which showed changed circumstances. This has all fallen apart presumably in 12 months. If members doubt that, read what the Chief Minister said in here just a year ago.

I hope that honourable members understand what I am saying. 'This budget revealed an operating loss which, on average, was more than $2m a year worse than the loss originally estimated'. It is important that members understand that a loss was always anticipated. This new loss simply compounded the initial deficit projection. We have the Chief Minister's extraordinary admission that this loss would have amounted to at least $26m over 8 years. This represents, on this one project, a minimum haemorrhage of $3.75m per year per budget for the next 8 Territory budgets. The Chief Minister said this morning: 'Refer to the Hansard to see Bob Collins' position on this'. That is exactly what I have been fearing all along - that the ratbag economic management of this government would put us into hock for the next 20 years. That is exactly what we have. In respect of the Sheraton, on the Chief Minister's own projection, $3.75m will be necessary in every budget for the next 8 budgets.

Mr Speaker, I can understand 'the 2 inescapable facts' about the Sheraton Hotel. I can understand that the hotel will never be able to compete with other hotels without an effective taxation structure, although it would be helpful if the government gave me a clear definition by tabling the relevant documents. It is the second inescapable fact that worries me because we are so tied into this deal that we seem to be getting the casino logic once again: we are committed in terms of annual subsidies with a distant promise of recouping our losses. As I have said before, and it has been indicated now, no one should believe anything this government says about anything between now and the end of its current term.

The government tells us that the only way to recoup these losses is to spend more public money now. As is the case with the casinos, the only people who will reduce the capital cost of the Alice Sheraton will be the taxpayers of the Northern Territory. One of the classic understatements in this entire document would have to be contained in this paragraph:

> 'Neither the AIDC nor potential lenders wish to insist on the continuation of what has become an uncommercial arrangement. Each has graciously agreed to renegotiate the agreements in place to allow restructuring to occur. The government appreciates their cooperation'.

That would have to be the understatement of the year because they had an agreement with the government that guaranteed them an income on their investment which, to quote the Chief Minister, 'if it had been proceeded with, would have cost us $3.25m each budget for the next 8 budgets'. That is what we must restructure now. I am sure he is grateful for their cooperation. We would be in trouble if they did not cooperate.

Mr Speaker, the explanation the Chief Minister has given us in this paragraph is impossible to swallow. It is a complete duplication of what the Chief Minister has already admitted occurred with the casino fiasco. He admitted in his statement that the government came within an ace of losing the international operators unless they were provided with the injections of public money they then received. I concurred with that. It was true. The entire explanation from the Chief Minister for the renegotiation of the Alice Sheraton deal is arrant nonsense.

A panic-stricken situation now exists 2 weeks before D-day. That is the amount of time we have left before 12 September: 14 days. Now the government is proposing to patch together a company, which currently does not exist, which will then borrow $35m in the next 14 days. That is the keystone of the government's recovery program from this mess. The true explanation is a lot harder and a lot less palatable than the fairy floss explanation we have been given today. But I will take that up later.

Mr Speaker, the reality is that, thanks to these people sitting opposite, we are in big trouble. On the government's own statement in respect of 2 developments in the Territory, we could have faced an annual budget loss of $20m a year. The Chief Minister himself said in his statement that the figure would escalate beyond that in each succeeding budget. The fear that I raised again and again in this Assembly that this government was recklessly mortgaging the interests of future Territory governments for the next 20 years has been proven true with a vengeance. This 19-page document is the proof and we still do not have the full story.

There is every indication that the Darwin Sheraton will go the same way. But we are told in the statement that the government cannot give us any figures, apart from the fact that we are going to lose some millions. The Sheraton is being built. The Chief Minister said that the general manager has taken up residence. There have been full-page advertisements, 3 or 4 that I have seen, at a $1000 a page to thank the construction team that built the hotel but, according to the Chief Minister, it has not worked out the figures for its returns yet. Garbage!

Mr Speaker, let us look at how the government intends to deal with the Alice Springs Sheraton. This is the way we are told it plans to do it. 'An ownership vehicle' which seems to include the Territory Insurance Office - God help us - National Mutual, Royal Bank and the AIDC will soon be established. We do not know yet where the money will come from but there are 2 very ominous warnings in the statement. Firstly, the Territory Insurance Office, which has only just snuck back into the black this year, still has accumulated losses of $14m. Secondly, I was horrified to see the use of Treasury cash balances. We already had $21m of those removed on a short-term basis to give to Henry and Walker to facilitate its purchase of the casinos. Now the Chief Minister is seriously suggesting in this statement that we will take a potential $35m out of Treasury in order to provide bridging finance. Then he compounds it. In case any member is in any doubt, this will stay in place only for as long as it takes the developers or the new company to obtain government-guaranteed loans. We are now in the Sheratons up to our neck in the same way that we are up to our necks in the casinos and Yulara. What a mess!

Let us take the Territory Insurance Office. Fancy seriously mentioning that again as being a potential milch cow, a source of money to put into this one, after it has picked up the options for the casino that were not taken up by the overseas operators. The third and crucial part of the Chief Minister's strategy for restoring credibility to the government and retrieving us from this mess concerns me deeply. It is a panel of independent expert advisers - more expert, presumably, than the advisers that the Chief Minister debunks in his statement: Mr Denis Horgan, a business man of Barrack House Western Australia; Mr Larry Smith of Cherry and Partners, a chartered accountant and nationally reputed tax adviser; and Mr David Graham of S.T.H. Graham Limited, a financial adviser with considerable experience in large-scale, tourist-related projects. Before I cover the crucial aspect of this debate, I simply want to remind honourable members of what the Chief

Minister himself said in his statement concerning the vital strategies proposed by the government to recover itself from this appalling position. One of them, of course, is the cooperation of the Australian Industries Development Corporation. It is all going to happen 14 days from now, in respect of the Alice Sheraton, to the tune of $35m.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Leader of the Opposition be granted an extension of time to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Assembly.

There are 2 crucial elements with which the Chief Minister proposes to restore the government's credibility. He says we need the cooperation - and he is grateful that he has it - of the Australian Industries Development Corporation and the Commonwealth government. We need its cooperation too.

The Chief Minister has put together a panel of experts. Mr Deputy Speaker, having listened to 19 pages of debunking and rejecting the advice of the last expert panel, we are entitled to ask what this panel can bring that the last one did not. For a start, we need to know what it can bring. If what it can bring will assist us in our negotiations with the AIDC and the Commonwealth government, I will walk to Bourke. This panel will have to retrieve the government's credibility - publicly, I would assume, because you had better believe that there will be some bad national press out of this. Just have a look at the casino press! It is 2 feet thick now. This will put that in the shade.

The leading light in this panel is Denis Horgan. Even though it was 3 o'clock in the morning when I read that name, Mr Deputy Speaker, it rang some bells. I did some checking and my worst fears were realised. I thought I recognised the name and I should have. There is a considerable amount of press on Mr Horgan. I say again, and honourable members will note, that the Chief Minister is relying on the cooperation of the AIDC and the Commonwealth government, and this expert panel is supposed to help him with that. I quote from the Sydney Morning Herald of Friday 24 September 1982, headlined, 'How Horgan Company Avoided $7m in Tax in 5 years', by Malcolm Wilson, Investment Editor:

> 'In the 5 years Denis Horgan was Chairman of Metro Industries Ltd - from 1976 to 1981 - income tax was sharply reduced by selling subsidiary companies in transactions totalling $40m. These activities appeared to stop in 1981 after saving $7m in income tax.
>
> In August 1981, Mr Horgan sold his 30% interest in Metro Industries for $14m. Mr Horgan is a leading member of the Liberal Party of Western Australia. The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, this week asked Mr Horgan to step down from all his public positions, pending an inquiry into his business affairs.
>
> Metro Industries' main activities are manufacturing of heavy structural steel work, the repair of heavy mining equipment and the manufacture and installation of illuminated signs. The McCabe-LaFranchi report into the bottom-of-the-harbour tax schemes

outlined transactions in one of those years. It stated that, in December 1976, Metro Industries sold one of its subsidiaries to the group associated with Mr Brian Maher for $6m. The report said that the company was then sent to the bottom of the harbour. However, the McCabe-LaFranchi report does not mention, and Metro Industries in its public accounts does not say, what was the fate of a large number of other companies sold by Metro Industries in the period 1976-81. In the 5 years from 1976 to 1981, Metro Industries earned a total trading profit of $19.5m. At the company tax rate of 46%, it should have paid income tax of $9m on this but, through the sale of a large number of its subsidiaries to Mr Maher, and other purchasers, and what it described as the restructuring of these subsidiaries, Metro Industries in fact paid income tax of only $2m over this 5-year period.

During this 5-year period, Mr Horgan was the chairman of the company and his brother, John, was the managing director. During this period, Metro Industries sold more than a dozen of its subsidiaries for $40m. Where they went after they were sold is not revealed'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have time to detail the numerous press accounts on this. Here is another one, on a completely fresh subject, from the Daily News of Thursday 22 September 1983:

'$2m Tax Bill For Treamog.

Treamog Ltd, a Melbourne-based subsidiary of Metro Industries Ltd, has been hit with a $2m tax bill under bottom-of-the-harbour legislation. This follows action by the tax office to recoup $1 789 682 from shareholders of Metro Industries. Treamog was sold for $6m to one of the company's controlled by eastern states businessman Brian Maher in 1976. Maher has been named in government reports as a key figure in the tax avoidance industry. Treamog is the seventh subsidiary company of Metro Industries to be named by the taxation office as owing back taxes. Prominent Western Australian businessman, Mr Denis Horgan, Chairman of Metro Industries was a director of Treamog when it was sold'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is much more press on the subject. Mr Horgan is in fact a well-known businessman in Western Australia. I just point out this to the government, and it astounds me. There is a statement in this newspaper report that the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, asked Mr Horgan to stand down from his public appointments. In fact, Mr Horgan chose to resign from both those public appointments. The 2 public appointments that Mr Horgan - who will now restore our credibility with the AIDC and the federal government - had were to the Board of the Australian Broadcasting Commission and to the Board of the Australian Industries Development Corporation, the AIDC.

Therefore, to my utter astonishment this morning, I discovered that this government, in this brilliant tactical public relations move which I am sure will pay off in spades, has set up this super-duper, expert, independent committee which has on it one of the best known leaders in terms of tax avoidance in Australia. He has been named in government reports in Western Australia, Queensland and the Commonwealth and was asked by the Prime Minister to stand down from the AIDC and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. That should be the public relations coup of all time, I am sure. I am astounded at the ineptitude of this Chief Minister.

I ask the Chief Minister whom he considers to be our most bitter opponent in the federal parliament. We all agree on that: Senator Peter Walsh. If you want to read some tasty stuff, read Senator Peter Walsh's press statements on Mr Denis Horgan. If you read them, you will need asbestos gloves to hang onto them, I can tell you. I just cannot believe how clumsy and stupid the government has been.

One of the companies that Denis Horgan sank, which went down with a great 'glug glug', is interesting. It is called 'Drool Investments'. Drool sank without trace. We have not yet named the company that will be lashed together within the next 2 weeks to raise $35m for the AIDC. Perhaps we could call it 'Bottom of the Billabong Investments Pty Ltd' or maybe we could even resurrect Drool Investments just to make Mr Horgan feel at home on the special committee that has been set up.

There is talk in the government's statement of guarantees for company loan obligations. I would now point out the most ominous prospect. Again I quote the Chief Minister: 'Opportunities may be identified for this company to take an interest in other developmental projects in the Territory'. We know what the Chief Minister is capable of when he issues public statements categorically denying acts that 2 weeks earlier he authorised himself. If you read between the lines of these statements, you come to certain inescapable conclusions. One is that this company, which does not exist at the moment but which will be lashed together within the next 14 days, will get bridging finance to the tune of $35m from the cash advances of the Northern Territory Treasury. The other one is that that will only stay in place until it can get loan funds, again fully guaranteed by the Northern Territory government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, have a look at the original projections the government gave for the Sheraton hotels. Forget about the casinos. Forget about Yulara. The former Chief Minister said: 'The contingent liability is minimal and we will recoup any investment we have within 8 years'. We are now about to climb into a total underwriting facility with Sheratons exactly as we did with the Yulara Village and the casinos and we shall tickle the till again. The Treasurer will raid the bank and take public money out of it. It is there in the Chief Minister's own statement and I think it is a frightful prospect. The Territory Insurance office is also involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, has the government received its instructions from Pratts and Aspinalls on how to put this together? Would they like to improve their overall profit situation in the Northern Territory by separating the ownership of the 2 casinos and by reducing the capital cost? We must presume that that is the only way they will make the 2 casinos profitable, if we are to believe the line we are being asked to swallow.

I would argue that, if revenues at the Alice Springs casino are basically fixed, there is only one way it can be made profitable: the existing owners sell it at a loss and, therefore, the Territory Property Trust incurs a loss, or it is sold at full price to a new owner who needs government support to then make it profitable. I point out that Pratts and Aspinalls would still be the operators. Any restructuring of the casino ownership appears to be designed for one reason and that is that Pratts and Aspinalls want to cream more off the top at the expense of the taxpayer.

Once again I call on this government - and it ignored my last call for it - to appoint a joint parliamentary select committee of inquiry to investigate the Northern Territory government's financial liabilities. I

issued a call for this inquiry at the beginning of the month after 18 months of non-stop lies fed to the opposition on this crucial issue both inside and outside the Assembly.

These are the men who are urging Territorians to march with them towards statehood. Perhaps I could suggest that any state under their leadership should be named the 'State of the Never Never' because that is where all our money is vanishing to. The only place that ministers Tuxworth, Perron and Dondas need to march to is not to statehood but straight out of this Chamber to the Administrator's office to hand in their resignations, and they ought to be urged along by any member of the government frontbench or backbench with any inkling of responsibility to the people who put them in this Assembly. This really is a day of shame for the Northern Territory.

Leaving aside the rights or wrongs of the issue, I would like to see some government member, other than the Chief Minister, stand up in the Assembly during this debate this afternoon. In light of the appalling financial situation we now know we are in, and in light of the fact that we have an urgent need to get the Commonwealth government onside over this issue, particularly if we are to raid the Northern Territory Treasury yet again - and that we must remain cooperative with the AIDC - I would ask them to defend the strategy of appointing Mr Denis Horgan as the key figure in heading up the government's independent panel of expert advisers to put the matter right.

It is impossible for me to speak without some degree of anger on this matter when I think of the briefings I have had from Treasury, the rubbish that I have been fed and the snow jobs that have been done on the opposition over the last 18 months. Before they leap too readily to their feet to defend the government, I advise all honourable members to cast their minds back over some of the answers received in this Assembly to questions asked without notice and to some of the debates in this Assembly and responses we have had from the government.

This is a day of shame for the Northern Territory government. It is a total admission of complete financial incompetence, of the most crass kind, to an unbelievable level. I say again that the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and minister responsible for the Northern Territory Development Corporation - the former Treasurer, now Minister for Mines and Energy - should resign forthwith.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, it is a fact that, at least in those places in the world which are adjacent to large population centres, incentives of some kind are required to encourage private investors to build tourist accommodation. Most of the major hotels in Australia which were built in the last decade or more faced substantial losses in the first few years of operation. That is nothing new and it is certainly nothing new for the future of hotels in the Northern Territory. Indeed, even some of the biggest hotels in the country, which are in major population centres, such as the Regent in Melbourne and the Hilton in Adelaide, experienced the same sorts of problems. Major developments face opening costs, promotion costs and so on. During the first years of its operation, a hotel runs at a loss. Investors are aware of that and governments are aware of that.

Any government that wants to encourage tourism and the building of hotels - and certainly the Territory has always needed hotels - seems to have 2 options. One is to provide incentives to private investors at taxpayers' expense and the other is to build the accommodation itself. Honourable

members will be aware that the New Zealand government runs a chain of hotels throughout both islands. It chose to put its money where its mouth was in relation to tourism by building the hotels and running them.

A few years ago, during an election campaign, the ALP in the Northern Territory announced a policy of constructing, owning and operating hotels throughout the Northern Territory if it won government. It is certainly a policy which is open for a political party to adopt. It is practical and it has been done. However, if members opposite think that government-operated hotels would not result in a continuous flow of taxpayers' dollars propping them up, then they are very naive. Government hotels would face the same problems as private hotels face. Initially, they would not have high occupancy levels but would have all the expenses that private hotels have and would make a loss for several years unless, of course, these hotels were not built using loan funds but using direct appropriations from consolidated funds. That is an option, but to try to represent that as not costing the taxpayer anything is a nonsense.

Government incentives for development are used all over the world. We are not unique. Indeed, the history of neglect of the Territory, and its geographical situation relative to centres of population of any size leave us with very particular disadvantages when it comes to attracting investors. That should not be news but, of course, in his tirade today, which was pretty typical of him, the Leader of the Opposition did not offer or suggest any answers to the problems of attracting investment in the Northern Territory. All he wanted to do was say that the way we had gone about it was wrong. He did not suggest what the right way was.

The Territory must have a basic network of quality accommodation in order to promote the Territory's attractions such as Ayers Rock, Kakadu etc. Of course, we need more than hotels. We also need airports and national park development capable of handling hundreds of thousands of tourists without adverse effects on the parks. In embarking on a campaign to attract investors to develop the Territory, a number of important prerequisites are needed: firstly, a vision of what the Territory has to offer and where it is going; secondly, faith that the objectives can be achieved; and, thirdly, a determination that the task will be followed through to completion.

We also need, as is obvious today, an enormous amount of patience to press on with our objectives of job creation and economic growth in the face of persistent attacks by the opposition over every major development proposal. Having been unable to secure enough support for its policies to gain government in the Northern Territory and earn the opportunity actually to do something for the Northern Territory, instead the opposition's members spend their lives whingeing and criticising everything that goes past their eyes. Vision and faith are things that members opposite have none of. They have plenty of determination to oppose, irrespective of the merits of initiatives of this government, any proposal that we put forward and any way we care to go about it. Their policies in the past have kept them small in numbers in this Assembly and, if they persist in them, they will keep them small in numbers in the future. Did the opposition come out screaming when the federal government said it would spend what started as $70m and crept back to about $35m for tourism development at Kakadu National Park? That was taxpayers' money and we all sat back and expected it. We said: 'We want it. We need the accommodation'. After the election, of course, the rules changed. The federal government did not send us the money. We are all very disappointed but we are talking about funds for tourism facilities and infrastructure in

the Northern Territory paid for from taxpayers' funds. It is strange that the federal government should be urged to put its money into Northern Territory tourism but, when the Northern Territory government puts any funds in, that is financial mismanagement and we are in some sort of crisis.

Mr Speaker, with the Yulara situation, we took the view that the whole village should be planned and constructed as one unit rather than by the usual practice, which we could have followed, of splitting the land into a series of blocks, selling some to hotel developers and programming government infrastructure through our capital works program for schools, a police station, staff accommodation and other government services. The whole place could have been built as a normal town and that would have impacted on our budget over the past several years - bear in mind that Yulara is largely completed now - to the tune of millions of dollars in capital works which would have been financed with private loans. We have a financial arrangement at Yulara whereby all those facilities have been constructed under a complicated private loan arrangement.

The Northern Territory government made its contribution with infrastructure which was absolutely necessary to support those hotels. We made our contribution by paying rents for government facilities. The Leader of the Opposition himself stood in this Assembly - I believe it was during the last budget debate - and criticised us. He did not criticise us for subsidising the Yulara development because he accepted that one cannot build magnificent villages in the desert without a subsidy. He criticised us because we were paying outrageously high rents, and described that as a subsidy in disguise. 'If you are going to pay a subsidy, pay one and do not hide it', he said.

For financial reasons, we have decided to alter the funding flow between the government and the Yulara Development Company structure by buying some of those government facilities as a capital outlay now and, obviously, reducing the rental arrangements that we had in the past. Our financial advisers, who are very competent people, have indicated that this is a way in which we can reduce the amount of government exposure in future budgets for Yulara.

The Leader of the Opposition certainly did not touch very much on that today. He chose to patch Yulara up with a couple of brief mentions and suggested that the whole place was about to disappear down the gurgler financially. He concentrated on the Alice Springs Sheraton. He has stated before in this Assembly that he supports the need for government support for places such as Yulara.

Had we funded the police station, the school and all the accommodation through the Territory government's budget via the capital works program, it would not have raised a murmur. It would have been expected. We build police stations and schools at Borroloola and Katherine. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on capital works, many of which are related directly to tourism. Because funds are going to Yulara for those purposes, all of a sudden it is a disaster and we are about to disappear down the financial gurgler. Had we funded them directly, we would still have had to fund the private investors to build hotels at Yulara. We would have had to provide incentives. That is quite clear and nobody has said otherwise. When we put together a package trying to attract investors to the Northern Territory, we had to make a number of judgments. I am pleased to say that this government and former governments have had the courage to make judgments and decisions and to proceed. That is why the Northern Territory has had such a successful record since self-government.

We must make judgments on CPI for the future. We all know that the predictions, even by experts, vary widely. We had to make predictions on interest rates for the next 10 years and occupation rates for our hotels. Yulara was a particularly difficult one. Whilst there had been a history of many people visiting Yulara, there had never been a decent pub or decent accommodation at Yulara, let alone 4-star and 5-star hotels. We had to make assumptions on what sort of occupancy levels they would attract and how long it would take us to build up to quite high occupancy rates. All of these things must be graphed and there must be highs and lows. It is also necessary to make some judgments on the health of the Australian economy over the next 'X' years and what will happen to the Australian exchange rate. That has a bearing on these matters.

Judgments must be made on these things; they must be discussed as they were with the Alice Springs Sheraton and Yulara. We discussed these projects with virtually every major financial institution, insurance company, bank, merchant bank and other investors who deal in this sort of business. We discussed the basis on which they would be prepared to include amongst their portfolios a hotel, be it at Ayers Rock, Alice Springs or wherever. From such discussions, you obtain a picture of what you will have to agree to in order to attract investment. It is as simple as that. It is not a matter of calling one of these fellows into your room and saying: 'Tell us how much you want and we will give it to you'. You deal with a whole range of people and you keep an eye on the going market rates, expected returns and what other governments are doing to attract investment.

I am sure honourable members opposite are well aware of the incentives provided for the Hilton Hotel to be built in the heart of Adelaide, not in a town of 20 000 in the middle of Australia. It was necessary to provide attractive incentives to have a decent pub built in Adelaide, and it did not even have any competition. There is not yet another decent pub in Adelaide. I think one is being built now. The Hilton was the first top-standard accommodation for Adelaide and, by then, it was a big city. You would think that investors would have waltzed in there without anyone asking. However, the occupancy and the return rate did not stack up so the government attracted people to do it.

The Chief Minister has reported to the Assembly that some of the assumptions originally made have turned out to be incorrect. The situation has worsened in a number of ways and, therefore, the level of government support will be greater. If you want to avoid that and say that we cannot go into a deal because we might have to admit in 2 years or 5 years that things have changed and it will cost us more, you will never have a pub in the Northern Territory. You will never attract a decent project with that sort of attitude because you will not have the courage to offer some incentive for people to invest.

The Leader of the Opposition wrapped his comments in beaut phrases such as: 'total financial mismanagement', 'incompetence', 'everybody should resign', 'dire financial crisis' etc. I presume that he is saying that we would have a $250m deficit if all the guarantees were called up: $150m for Yulara, $25m or $30m for the Alice Springs Sheraton and $25m or $35m for the Darwin Sheraton etc. I am not sure how we could get to that situation. I mean, if they all burnt down totally tomorrow and not another customer could ever walk through their front doors, we would have $250m from insurance to pay off all the loans. If all the financiers found a legal reason to call up their loans, and we had to pay out the $250m, we would have $250m in assets

for our $250m cheque. Somehow it is a deficit, a sort of black hole into which we are to pour $250m.

On top of the $250m, why not throw in the $320m accumulated deficit which we will run up to pay for the privilege of being able to supply Territorians with electricity over the next 10 years? That is a contingent liability. It may not even be contingent. Today the Chief Minister explained to us that it is not contingent; it is an actual liability. We can plot today, with reasonable certainty, a growth in NTEC's debt up to $320m. Of course, we all know on whom we can pin the fact that Northern Territory electricity consumers are faced with that debt. It will be underwritten by the Northern Territory and I do not see why the Leader of the Opposition should not add it to his...

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I have always had some admiration for the efforts of the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy when he puts his mind to it, and I must say that he has attempted to defend his government admirably. Unfortunately, he is working with straw which is not enough to make a whole set of bricks for a competent building to shield the government on what, quite obviously, is an appalling performance.

The Minister for Mines and Energy made great play of the fact that, over a period of 5 to 6 or even 10 years, negotiations entered into on tourist development and tourist infrastructure may change. We may have a changing set of circumstances. I accept that. We are not talking about 5 years down the track. In one case, we are talking about 12 months. In the June sittings last year, we had definitive statements from the then Chief Minister that our contingent liability exposure was minimal, particularly in relation to Yulara.

On another situation, we are not talking about 5 years down the track; we are talking about 3 months down the track. Of course, in that particular situation, we are talking about the Sheraton Hotel in Alice Springs. What has changed in that 3-month period, Mr Speaker? It is not 5 years but 3 months. What has changed? The only thing that has changed is that it is now quite clear that the government does not know the first thing about negotiating and has put itself in an open-ended negotiating position which has turned bad.

That brings me to a point made earlier by the Minister for Mines and Energy. He said, and I accept it, that, if you want hotel development these days, whether you are in Sydney, Melbourne or Yulara, the government must be prepared to assist a developer to build and assist with running the hotel in its early years of operation. I have no problem with that. The evidence is on the board. The Perth casino complex would not exist without government assistance. The Gold Coast casino, the Townsville casino, the South Australian casino and the Regent Hotel in Melbourne have all had government assistance, which is right and proper. It is the only way to get hotels built these days.

However, the difference in this situation is that this is the first government that, 12 months down the track, has said: 'We want to withdraw from this set of agreements because we are too exposed'. That has not happened before anywhere in Australia. It reflects quite clearly the difference in the competence and the ability of governments in the states of Australia compared with the competence and the ability of this particular government. Unfortunately, when you look at that comparison, we come out of it very poorly indeed.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Mines and Energy said that what we needed in the Northern Territory was a basic network of good quality accommodation. There is no doubt about that. But what we are finding is that this government, despite the reservations stated by the opposition on a number of occasions, has not gone for a basic network of good quality accommodation. It wanted the best accommodation for the best people whom it would attract in their hundreds of thousands to the Northern Territory.

It was clear to us, without the benefit of all these expensive consultancy surveys, that there was not enough demand for this 4-star and 5-star accommodation. There is a heavy demand for basic motel-type accommodation in the Northern Territory. At Yulara, we have this crazy situation where the Sheraton Hotel has been operating some nights with only 8 or 9 paying guests whilst people cannot obtain basic accommodation or youth hostel accommodation. If they want medium-priced accommodation at Yulara, they have nowhere to stay. There is an enormous gap in the Yulara network between the $30-a-night and the $90-a-night accommodation. We pointed out that that was a basic fault in the Yulara design from the time it was started.

It is quite clear from the desperate moves that this government is now attempting to make that it finally accepts that point of view. We now have the crazy situation set out in the Chief Minister's own speech where the 5-star Sheraton Hotel at Yulara will be a cheaper place to stay than the 4-star Four Seasons accommodation. If members do not believe it, here it is: the Sheraton average tariff, projected for 1985, is $74; Four Seasons' average tariff for 1985 is $80. The figures for 1987 are: Sheraton - $91; and Four Seasons - $98. This is an incidental point but it does not make any sense to me. How do you turn a 5-star hotel into something that is cheaper than a 4-star - that is, if the Four Seasons is a 4-star and not a 3-star hotel? What do you do? Do you rip out the electric hair dryers that are in the wall? Probably the answer is that you do not give people room service - the Territory tried-and-tested way of reducing standards and cutting costs. As soon as you get into that sort of business, you make it even harder to attract international tourists to the Northern Territory and you make it even harder to convince the travel operators that they should come to the Northern Territory because the flagship in the north, the casino, does not even offer something as basic as room service. We find that the flagship in the south will be cheaper than a hotel that is supposedly of a lesser standard. It does not make much sense at all.

Another thing that does not make much sense is that, at a time when we are having trouble attracting sufficient people to use our 4-star and 5-star accommodation, the Tourist Commission has had its budget slashed by $4m. Most of that money is in the advertising and promotional area. In fact, $800 000 to $900 000 of that money has been taken out of the international advertising allocation.

Mr Dondas: You have not done your homework.

Mr SMITH: If I have not done my homework, it is because the government has not provided the real reason behind this. If you read the Tourist Commission appropriation, you will find it quite clear that the Tourist Commission, in contradiction to what has been said here, was quite happy with its performance last year. In fact, there is a very bald indication in the statement that the government has set things in place and the commission does not need as much money this year. Again, that is an enormous contradiction.

On Yulara, the government is saying that it is not attracting international people. The Tourist Commission, which has a large responsibility for ensuring an increased number of international tourists, is saying: 'We are quite happy with the efforts we have made and the procedures we have set in place'. The only possible explanation is that the minister has made it say that. I cannot see how it could be happy with its figures when its flagship in the south, and probably its flagship in the whole of the Northern Territory, is performing so badly.

Mr Hatton: Which flagship is performing badly?

Mr SMITH: There is only one - the Yulara Sheraton.

We also have this statement in the budget papers: 'The Territory's major growth industry during 1984-85 was, as expected, tourism which recorded increases of over 20% in both takings and activity'. That is a truly impressive figure. Again it raises the question of why Yulara is not attracting its share. What is wrong? What is not happening at Yulara that should be happening? I do not believe that it is a result of the extraneous matters which the Chief Minister has raised in order to shed the blame for his own incompetence. There are internal problems there.

Mr Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition said, we have another classic example of the government attempting to blame everybody but itself for the position that it is in. We have had the previous Chief Minister blamed. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co, Capel Court, Citi National, Price Waterhouse, the federal government, the airlines and tourists themselves are all blamed for Yulara not performing well and for the Alice Springs Sheraton projections all being wrong. All of those groups are operating in some sort of grand conspiracy and ganging up on the poor old Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, an air of unreality surrounds this whole statement. We have the argument on page 6 that the independent experts accepted the basic assumptions made by the Chief Minister. It is clear that this was not the case. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co, in talking about Yulara Sheraton and the Alice Springs Sheraton, never gave any consideration to the Darwin Airport. It was irrelevant to its projections and to its comments. Often the assumptions are irrelevant to the basic decision-making time frame. In at least one important case, the Alice Springs Airport, the independent experts disagree with what has been said today. I will refer to the sort of research techniques used by these experts: 'Peat, Marwick and Mitchell visited Alice Springs, Yulara and Darwin and had discussions with officers of the Conservation Commission, other Northern Territory government departments and tourist operators at Ayers Rock and Alice Springs'. This government employs these people. It tells them what it wants and receives a report telling it what it told them. Look at the Price Waterhouse report: 'There are few reliable statistical indicators which can be used to indicate the trends and potential of tourism in Alice Springs. A comprehensive reliable time series of total visitors to the Northern Territory is not available'. Dare I ask if such necessary and essential information is available even today. Here is another quote: 'Many industry sources believe that a 252-room international hotel could not be supported at Alice Springs. However, we believe that the proposed hotel is the critical strategic element in the long-term development of the tourism and other visitor markets in central Australia'. There it is: you simply dismiss any objections. If you cannot come up with any evidence for your position, you say it anyway because you know it is what the government wants to hear.

The bottom line of the problems that we have today is contained in pages 8 and 9 of the Chief Minister's statement. He said, firstly, that there has been 'a reduction of $5.5m in the performance expected of the Four Seasons and Sheraton Hotels'. Secondly, he said: 'A sum of $2.5m, representing the effect of the need to capitalise extra interest, certain changes in depreciation, unanticipated management expenses and the timing of income... Thus the patronage and what it will pay was wrongly forecast, albeit in good faith. In addition, the projected costs of running hotels in this remote location were too conservative and the expectation that the hotels could cross-subsidise all normal government services is proving impossible to achieve'.

By the government's own words, in its own speech presented by the Chief Minister, it is damned. The government has failed to do its homework and that is why it is in the mess that it is in. That is why the people of the Northern Territory are in the mess that they are in and that is why we will continue to be in that mess for the next 7 to 8 years as we bail ourselves out from these ridiculous deals that we have entered into.

Mr DONDAS (Tourism): Mr Speaker, in rising to debate this statement, the first point I would like to make is in relation to a comment made by both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Millner about the June 1984 statement. The first thing I would like to say is that the June 1984 statement was made, on the best available advice, 15 months before the Alice Springs Sheraton Hotel opened and some months before the Yulara complex was completed.

Mr Speaker, I would like to pick up an earlier point made by the honourable member for Millner in regard to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission budget. We will have an opportunity to debate that budget in full during the course of a future Assembly sittings. The point that I would like to make is that, in 1984-85, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission undertook an aggressive expansion program. It opened offices in Hobart, Parramatta, the Dandenong Ranges and Canberra. It opened overseas offices in Tokyo, Los Angeles, Frankfurt, London and Singapore. It has also relocated the marketing office from Alice Springs to Sydney. All that cost money. Because we have spent that money in 1984-85, there is no requirement to do the same in 1985-86. Consequently, there will be a lessening of funds available to the Tourist Commission. I thought I would make that point for the member so that he may take it into consideration when we discuss the budget in full at a later date.

Let me pick up a point made by the Leader of the Opposition. He implied that the Chief Minister said nothing but a pack of lies on the radio - that was the term that he used - when the Chief Minister said that there was some support from the opposition for contingent liabilities and the problems that the Northern Territory government was having. Let me quote from the Hansard of 30 August 1984. The Leader of the Opposition had this to say: 'The concern we have about government support in this area is simply the degree to which it is applied. Having availed myself of a briefing with Treasury, which I appreciated and found to be informative, I do not believe that the government has to this point in time overextended itself in this area'.

Mr B. Collins: Would you like me to table information I was given at the Treasury briefing?

Mr DONDAS: He said: 'But it certainly is possible for the government to do so in the future. In respect of the considerable financial risks - and

there are considerable financial risks as well as benefits - that the government has undertaken, it has probably gone about as far as it should prudently go at this stage'.

Mr B. Collins: That was precisely what I was referring to when I said that I had been snowed for 18 months.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order! Will the honourable Leader of the Opposition cease interjecting?

Mr B. Collins: Well, stop provoking me, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, that is the end of the quote. The important thing is that the particular story on the liability of the government has been around for some time. The reason why the Chief Minister made this statement this morning was to lay all the cards on the table as to where we stood and as to what our liabilities were. We now seem to be under threat of attack by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that it was the most shameful day in parliament and all the rest. What a load of poppycock! We have heard all this before but in a different vein.

Let us talk about the member for Millner and his particular capacity. It is the same debate that we had on 30 August 1984. He was speaking about the tremendous exposure of the Northern Territory government and about the money that it was paying out in rent. The Leader of the Opposition interjected at that particular time and said: 'The school only cost $1m'. For the benefit of other members who had not bothered to look up what we said in August 1984, the member for Millner said:

> 'Almost $1m is allocated this year for the lease of the police station, a Conservation Commission office and school buildings: $234 000 for the police station, $430 000 for the Conservation Commission office and $246 000 for the school buildings. Mr Speaker, if you have been to Yulara, you will have noted these buildings are not excessively large and that the operators are getting a good rate indeed'.

Mr Speaker, that totals almost $1m. What we have said is that we are going to allocate funds from the budget to provide the financial resources to purchase that infrastructure back.

Mr B. Collins: Oh, you've done it! You've done it! Sorry. Keep going.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, they interject because they know they are on pretty thin ice over there.

The important thing is that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Millner said at that time that the Northern Territory government was paying out far too much money. They were getting a bit concerned that the level of commitment by government in future years would escalate. That is the reason why the Chief Minister has made a reappraisal. He made the reappraisal in light of the federal cutbacks as well. We have not forgotten what Senator Walsh said. His committee reduced the level of funding to the Northern Territory by some $65m. That is another point.

Mr Speaker, Yulara is the largest and most important development undertaken by this government since 1978. The impact on tourism has been very

important. Of course, the honourable member for Millner is quite right when he talks about the increase and what is happening in the tourist area. I will not take up the time that I have in this debate to cover that because we will debate a ministerial statement at some future time.

The government decided to consolidate the government liabilities in order to allow future planning of other tourism developments. In fact, the Kings Canyon proposal has been put on the back-burner for a very short time until the government has the full picture on where we are in regard to liabilities.

Let us talk about the importance of tourism. Tourism is the second biggest industry in the Northern Territory. If the mining economy stays as it is for the next few years, I am quite sure that tourism will overtake it and become our biggest dollar earner. Tourism for the Northern Territory was worth some $280m in the 1984-85 financial year.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the federal government's attitude. The Leader of the Opposition was talking about the government having to take great care as far as the AIDC and the federal government were concerned. He said that a couple of times. I thought it sounded a bit like a veiled threat.

Mr B. Collins: It is in the Chief Minister's speech.

Mr DONDAS: It was a veiled threat that the Northern Territory ALP would put some pressure on its federal counterparts to interfere and to pull the rug out once more as happened with the casino takeover and FIRB approval.

Mr B. Collins: This is long bow stuff.

Mr DONDAS: Let us not put that aside.

Mr B. Collins: If we tell them anything, it will be to keep out.

Mr DONDAS: They keep on throwing up the extra $2.5m that the Northern Territory government paid to acquire the casinos over the $47.1m. The reason was because of interference at the time by the federal Treasurer who actually delayed the flow of funds which would have put that particular contract in place before November. I am a bit worried. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition has something up his sleeve to try to torpedo the Northern Territory government once more. I am normally a very trusting person but, in this instance, my trust is starting to wane.

As I said a few moments ago, the federal government's financial attitude towards the Northern Territory has concerned our government to the point where we must reappraise what we are doing in many areas. In fact, our budget handed down yesterday is certainly something that we can be very proud of in light of the fact that some $65m in direct funding and probably another $10m or $12m in indirect funding have come off the Northern Territory's budget.

The important thing is that the federal government's attitude is very important to the future development of the Northern Territory. One particular development that I mention to members opposite is Kakadu. The Gagadju Association is willing to put up a 200-room hotel-motel complex at Kakadu, with a small equity participation by the Northern Territory government, and that particular development is being thwarted by the federal government, especially by Professor Ovington of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The important thing is the intention of the government to try to get private enterprise involved in as many projects that are going on in the Northern Territory or are proposed for the Northern Territory as possible. In the case of Yulara, when we advertised for expressions of interest from the Australian business community at the time, there was very little interest. There was no incentive. In the meantime, a statement had been made by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service that the infrastructure that existed at the rock would be dismantled and that those particular people who had leases would no longer be able to operate there. What was the Northern Territory government going to do? Not one member opposite said that the Northern Territory government took the right decision and took the right punt to try to get as much of the infrastructure in place as quickly as possible to take up the slack that would eventuate when those units were moved away from the rock. Not only did we do it for the integrity of Northern Territory tourism but we did it for Australia's tourism integrity because, in the last 4 or 5 years, Australian governments have realised the potential of international tourism. At the moment, about 1% of Australia's tourist trade is international. That is worth $1000m. It was the government's desire to increase that from 1% to 2% which would have put $2000m of overseas money into our economy.

Another thing not mentioned by members opposite concerns jobs that have been created since 1981. In 1981, 3300 people were employed in the tourist industry. In June 1985, over 6200 were employed and projections for 1990 indicate that there will be 10 000. The opposition has not spoken about that benefit to the Territory from the jobs that have been created. All it can do is knock. It has not put forward a single constructive idea about what it would do to develop tourism. All it can do is criticise the Sheraton chain that came into the Northern Territory. We were lucky to get Sheraton and I am quite sure that, with the passage of time, the decision that was made 3 years ago will prove to be correct. In another 3 or 4 years, the honourable member for Millner, if he is still sitting here, will be eating his words.

Mr Speaker, the other important factor that relates to central Australia is that the occupancy levels at the Sheraton Hotel are not as high as originally predicted but there will be a turning point. This is because the Sheraton operators themselves realise that the prices that they are charging are in excess of what the market desires. They are not going to knock walls down nor turn lights out! They will provide a level of service commensurate with costs. At the same time, they will be moving into another promotional phase which they hope will stimulate further interest in that particular hotel.

There is one thing that I can be happy about as far as the federal government is concerned: the provision of funds to the South Australian government for the completion of the South Road. The completion of that road will be a key and integral part of the development of the tourist industry. Not only will people drive to central Australia and out to Ayers Rock but it is to be hoped that we will be able, by certain marketing procedures, to attract them to the northern region.

The other important thing is our Darwin Airport. Most of the planned developments, including the Beaufort and the Sheraton Hotels in Alice Springs and Darwin, related to the airport which had been promised. In many instances, if a tourist is going to come to the Northern Territory, he will come to Darwin. He will come to Darwin irrespective of the standard of the airport, but that is not the important thing. The international carriers will

not subject their clients to standing out in the rain in the middle of the wet season for 2 or 3 hours.

Mr Speaker, 14 Hong Kong businessmen, who arrived the other morning at 5 o'clock, said: 'What a lousy airport you have'.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is always quite interesting to listen to the Minister for Tourism because one always knows that, sooner or later, he will muck it up. We heard him carrying on about how the member for Millner complained about the high level of rent for the police station, the school and Conservation Commission offices. He says the government will buy them and there will be no more rent. That shows the level of his knowledge. We are not buying the police station, the school or the Conservation Commission offices under this budget; we are buying $14m worth of staff housing for officers.

Mr B. Collins: And water and sewerage.

Mr EDE: And water and sewerage. However, we will still be leasing the police station, the school and the Conservation Commission offices for $7m! It is no wonder that we enter these deals where we end up losing millions of dollars when the Minister for Industry and Small Business does not even understand the budget that was brought down yesterday.

Mr Speaker, I do not have any problems with pump-priming. As I said in this Assembly when we were talking about the casinos, you start with a little bit and then you pull out. What this government does is start with a little and then put in more and more until it reaches a stage where it is putting it in buckets and throwing it at them. Future investors want more than the previous ones; they want guarantees. There is a fair bit of dishonesty involved in that too.

Look back to some of the early statements that were made regarding Yulara. On 10 March 1982, in response to a question, the then Chief Minister said - and, at that stage, he was playing down the expenditure of taxpayers' money:

> 'I should make it clear that, when I say "expenditure of taxpayers' money", that is a contingent commitment because we proposed at the outset that the total project would be funded from private sources and the government will have what amounts to an option to purchase those facilities within the project that are, in fact, government facilities, such as the police station'.

This option to purchase facilities seems to have gone a bit farther than that. We are into the takeover of the assets and we do not know if even that will be the end. I would like to know about this $35m that now must be used to get the Hilton through. Is that the end of it? Where do we go? Those guarantees are still outstanding. Are there any other guarantees? What about the return that we had before on the guarantees on capital? Suddenly, we have these guarantees on profits. We appear to be at a stage now where it is better for the companies not to have anybody at all in their hotels. Look how much simpler it would be! We have guaranteed profits, capital and everything else. Why have people in there mucking things up? When we look at it, that is the way things are going. Some of the attendance rates at Yulara have been as low as 5% so they are working towards zero.

We heard the now Minister for Mines and Energy say then that the schools, telephones etc would have been put in place anyway. He looks at it that way now but it is one of the things I would like to have asked him about. At the time, he was saying that it was very necessary for us to install telephones etc there. I did not complain but it is rather ironic that there are an enormous number of born and bred Territorians who have lived here for generations and who are still waiting for telephones, power, water, schools etc.

However, apparently, for a while now we are to go backwards. We will ask Sheraton to downgrade its service. That was made quite clear by the last 2 statements. I do not think that the government has realised that the major source of complaints that people have about the Territory and Australia generally is the poor service that people receive in some establishments - a lack of professionalism. However, now the honourable minister is going to suggest that that professionalism be lessened by a few degrees.

As recently as the last sittings, the government said that everything was rosy; now, apparently, it has all turned to ashes. It placed the blame for that on a number of things. The first was the Darwin Airport. I would point out that the Darwin Airport was planned for completion in 1988, which is 3 years from now, 4 years after Yulara opened, 4 years after the new casino operations were in place and at least 2 years after both Sheraton Hotels opened. Those financial problems can hardly be blamed on the airport. Further, in respect of the problems of Yulara and Alice Springs Sheraton, neither the Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co document nor the Price Waterhouse document refers to the Darwin Airport as essential to those developments. Indeed, I cannot find a reference to it at all. We have already had the word of a senior JAL official that the Darwin Airport decision was unfortunate but not the end of the world. We have had other statements from our Tourist Commission people in Athens etc. The argument is a sham.

Mr Speaker, the promise of development at Kakadu was made only in 1983. I am not standing here to back any broken promises but let us have a look at the facts because the government is trying to avoid the blame for its own incompetence. It might have been implemented during 1984-85 and during the current year but, rationally, completion could not have been expected before 1987-88 at the earliest. What has something that is at least 12 months away to do with financial problems at Yulara that go back 12 months or problems at the Alice Springs casino which are apparent now? Let us consider logically the implication of Kakadu for central Australia? The Price Waterhouse study made a number of references to potentially negative competition between Yulara and the Alice Springs Sheraton. What happens when the Darwin Sheraton and the Darwin casino are added?

It is a fact that Americans and Japanese do not receive much more than 2 weeks holiday each year. Their trips to Australia are often aimed at seeing as much as possible in as short a time as possible. Undoubtedly, many will make the decision to visit only one, either Uluru or Kakadu. The facilities that are available are irrelevant to that decision. It is unlikely that it will affect hotel accommodation in central Australia. I do not think that the government should try to draw that long a bow.

Let us look at the Alice Springs Airport. Let me summarise from the Price Waterhouse report: 'Alice Springs needs to be upgraded to prevent it becoming a constraint on central Australian tourism'. The Alice Springs Town Council was reluctant to become involved under the ALOP scheme. In fact, when money

was available, this government leaned heavily on the Alice Springs council not to follow the ALOP route but Price Waterhouse advised that entering ALOP could be advantageous, partly because the Commonwealth would upgrade the airport. It said: 'Upgrading should be considered as playing a role even to the extent of assisting through a statutory body'. The Northern Territory government has chosen not to assist. How much are we talking about, Mr Speaker? It is about $14m, half of what we poured down the drain over Yulara this week.

The next excuse almost left me speechless. The Chief Minister said the government did what it did because it believed that people would fill the hotels. That is a good premise, but why all the other excuses? Presumably, people filled the hotels because they flew in from other places.

Interest rates were thrown at us next. The Citi National document of December 1982 has, in table 3, a worst case scenario of a nominal interest rate of 17.5% per annum. It is my understanding that, between the December quarter of 1981 and the December quarter of 1982, the movement in the CPI was 9.7% which gave a real rate of interest of 7.8%. The next year, measured between the March quarters, was more than 7%, as were the June to June quarters. Even if the consultants made a mistake in talking about 4.5%, surely all the sharp people in Treasury and NTDC would have realised that that particular projection was completely unrealistic, given what occurred in the previous year.

Mr Speaker, I come to the Uluru development. I trust that the Chief Minister is not telling us that tourist development at Yulara has been hampered because of a quibble over a few toilets, a picnic table and a few kilometres of road. We spent 10 times the value of that on Yulara yesterday and we could go on paying it for the next 20 years.

Domestic airlines was the other point. I quote Price Waterhouse: 'Alice Springs is well served by domestic air services'. This seems to have been some blind act of faith on the part of the Northern Territory government. No evidence has been submitted to give me any belief that the airlines were under any obligation to show a greater commitment.

I come to the question of adequate Commonwealth funding. Must I say it again? The timing is all wrong. The shocks from Canberra came in May 1985 when Yulara was already on the skids. If I had to summarise my thoughts about this list, I would say it is about time the Tuxworth government stopped blaming other people. Looking at this whole document, it has blamed the former Chief Minister, Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co, Capel Court, Citi National, Price Waterhouse, the federal government, tourists and the airlines. Apparently, they are all ganging up on the poor old Chief Minister. An air of unreality surrounds all of this statement.

We had the argument that the independent experts accepted the basic assumptions. That was simply not true. In most cases, there was no reference to these assumptions. Often the assumptions were irrelevant to the basic decision-making time frame and, in at least one important case, the Alice Springs Airport, the independent experts disagreed with what has been said today.

Mr Speaker, I will refer to the sort of research techniques used by these experts. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co visited Alice Springs, Yulara and Darwin and had discussions with officers of the Conservation Commission etc. These people are employed.

I would like to talk about a group of tourists who have not been catered for in the development at Uluru. I am talking about the families who will drive up on the new highway which is close to completion. We will have families who will be looking for somewhere to stay. They cannot afford the facilities that were put in there at the time. This aspect has not been raised only recently. It was raised with the Chief Minister by the Chairman of the Alice Springs Regional Association on 27 May 1982. The association complained about the enormous gap between the level that was available in the new facilities compared with the level provided by the old motels. At that stage, the Chief Minister tried to say that these $100 tariffs really were for years and years in advance, and that it would cost about $80 or $60 a room per night for 5-star and 4-star hotels and the tour operators would be offering accommodation at $40 and $30 a night. I assure members that, if $40 and $30 per night is what is being offered, and that has not been able to fill the 2 hotels down at Yulara, I do not know how any drop in the standard of service will be able to get the whole thing going again.

What worries me is that, right up to the last sittings, everybody was saying that everything was rosy. Now we have seen it turn to ashes. The building is not even finished and the deal has fallen apart. Just have a look at some of the deals that this government has put together. We have the casinos, Yulara, the Sheraton in Alice Springs and the Sheraton in Darwin. We have blocks of apartments and that shocking looking building, the Beaufort. The absolute incompetence which was displayed in relation to each of those projects is starting to conform to a pattern. Completely unrealistic projections are made without a great deal of knowledge of the practicalities of the situation. It makes projections and hopes that everything will somehow come together. When I hear this, I have a horrible feeling of deja vu because that was exactly the type of thinking that got us into the earlier problems with Humpty Doo and Willeroo. I dread that this government is about to enter another of these episodes that the Territory has had to endure throughout its whole history.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to confirm and put on the record the comments of the Leader of the Opposition that I referred to in Territory Extra this morning. They were recorded in the Hansard of 30 August 1984. He said:

> 'The concern we have about government support in this area is simply the degree to which it is applied. Having availed myself of the briefing with Treasury, which I appreciated and found to be informative, I do not believe that the government to this point in time has overextended itself in this area. But it certainly is possible for the government to do so in the future in respect of the considerable financial risks, as well as benefits, that the government has undertaken. It has probably gone about as far as it should prudently go at this stage'.

Those comments, made a year ago almost to the day, are an encapsulation of what the statement I made to the Assembly is all about. We are saying that the assumptions that we made in the early 1980s for the financing of the projects, and the government guarantees for those assumptions at that time, right up until the middle of last year, were reasonable, balanced and objective assumptions for the government to use in underwriting the projects. The events of the last year have given us the actual operating costs and a true measure of occupancy levels so we must review the financing for the projects.

The Leader of the Opposition said that what we have announced today is in fact a deficit of $250m. That is arrant nonsense. He knows it and I know it. There is a big difference between a government guarantee and a deficit of $250m for some of the most fantastic infrastructure that has ever been built in this country. It is certain that, in the course of time, we will realise the benefits of that infrastructure but it will take some time and we will have problems. Today is the day to lay the cards on the table: no holds barred, nothing held back, this is where we are and this is what it means. In the days ahead, we must determine quite clearly where we are going and how we will solve the problems. There is a determination on my part and on the government's part to solve this problem and to get ourselves back into a state of financial equilibrium as soon as possible.

The Leader of the Opposition also referred to the fact that it was stated in the papers that it is impossible to attract true risk capital, and that is true. It is true of any major project that has a long life and a vision such as this one. My colleague mentioned the Hilton in Adelaide and there are others all around Australia where that is the case. The problem from the banker's point of view is very simply that he wants to see a track record on which he can base his assessment and his lending formula. If the banker does not have a track record for the facility he is proposing to finance, it is very hard for him to say that it is a reasonable risk. It is risk capital because what we had at Ayers Rock were 4 of the scungiest motels that one could imagine. People tried to run them well but they were old, rundown buildings which could not meet the demand, were hard to maintain, were expensive to run and which left people going away from Ayers Rock with a total distaste in their mouths. When you ask the banker to put $140m into tourist accommodation tomorrow, he will say: 'Show me the track record that will justify all the things that you are saying will happen in the next 10 years'. You must say to him that you cannot because this has not been done before. All we could give was our best assumptions, supported by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co, Price Waterhouse and Citi National. The banker agreed but, given the circumstances, wanted the government to underwrite it. That is why we have been underwriting the project.

Mr Speaker, I make the point that this will be the case in the Northern Territory for some time to come. It will be the case at Kakadu. When we want to build a motel out there, whether it is the government or Gagadju, the money lenders will say: 'Show us your track record that will prove to us that we will recoup a certain amount of money over a certain period of time and that our lending is secure'. What are we going to say? We have never had a pub at Kakadu before. We can only tell them what we believe we can achieve. They will say: 'You have more faith than we have. We want you to guarantee it'. I would not have the slightest hesitation in being involved in a form of guarantee for the new project at Kakadu. I think it will be a winner.

Mr Smith: Like Yulara?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable member says, 'like Yulara'. When we underwrote Yulara, the assumptions and assessments that we made at the time were reasonable and were not contested by advisers in the financial market. They were seen to be sound assumptions. The history of the projects have shown that those assumptions were incorrect. The history is what the banks and money lenders want to base their lending priorities on.

Great play was made by the opposition about how I want to lay blame. Mr Speaker, let me tell you that I am not laying blame on anybody; I am not

passing the buck. I have been in the government since 1978 and I have been involved in the projects. I saw the assumptions at the time. I was involved in the deliberations to fund the projects. What has caught us all is that the assumptions that we used, and which we thought were reasonable, turned out to be not reasonable due to a range of circumstances which I will come to in a minute. Let me make it clear that I am not blaming anybody. The only group that I want to sheet blame home to is the Labor government for the role that it has played in the Northern Territory over the last 3 years.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition then referred to Yulara and the $27m involved there. Let me just take a moment to track that through. The financing of Yulara was based on the assumption that the room rates and the occupancy levels would return enough revenue to give the operators a profit to finance the project and to pay for the capital investment for sewerage and water and other things that were needed. We did not believe that it was necessary for that to come out of the government's pocket as it does for every other town. That was part of the assumption for Yulara and that has been shown to be false. If we build the cost of the water, the sewerage and the accommodation into the room rental, the hotels would become uneconomical because they could not compete with Hayman Island and other major projects around Australia. Their occupancy rate would fall and the government payment would be affected. The obvious thing to do is what we have done: lift out all that infrastructure, not make it a burden on the hotel operator and put the project on a more economic basis. Mr Speaker, do you believe it would be reasonable that hotels in this town, Katherine or Tennant Creek should have built into their room rates the cost of water and sewerage for those towns because it would be convenient for us to pass it onto the tourist industry and take it off Territorians? That would not work. Anybody can see that.

Mr Smith: Why did you agree to it in the first place?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it was believed, and reasonably supported by the assumptions, that it could and would work. That is the point that I make.

I would like to come now to the references that the Leader of the Opposition made about Mr Denis Horgan. The references were really throwaway lines, selective quotes and suggestions that Mr Horgan was involved in all sorts of tax evasion and improper practice. There are a couple of things the Leader of the Opposition left out, and they are facts. At that time, many people in this country, including the Finance Minister at the time, Mr Dawkins, were accused of being in all sorts of bottom-of-the-harbour rackets. The accusations went so far across the country that it would be impossible to name the people who were involved. The process of denigration by selective quotation used by the Leader of the Opposition cannot be left unanswered this afternoon.

Those charges were laid against Mr Horgan the way they were laid against Mr Dawkins, the Finance Minister at the time. The Prime Minister said to Mr Horgan: 'I want you to stand down and I want you out of all these government committees such as CSIRO and AIDC'. He was also on a satellite body and a director of the Airlines of Western Australia as well as being a private banker. Mr Horgan said to the Prime Minister that he had done nothing wrong. The Prime Minister told him to stand down anyway. They had an inquiry and he was proven subsequently to be not guilty of any impropriety just as Mr Dawkins was proved not guilty. Mr Horgan said: 'I just feel I have been treated unreasonably because I was asked to stand down and regarded as guilty of the charge before I even had my say. I do not want to be involved in

anything more'. He stood back. He was involved in most of these organisations because he is regarded widely across the community as a man of great competence, a man of integrity and a man who knows how to get things done. I would make the point that these wild accusations that reflect on the integrity of people really go a bit far from the mark.

We saw another one where a lobbyist and member of the Labor Party, Mr Coombe, was accused of some terrible impropriety so far as the security of this country is concerned. It caused great consternation in the whole country for a while. Subsequently, as I recall, he was cleared by a Royal Commission and he has since been posted to a diplomatic mission overseas as a trade envoy. I think that this selective quotation and the insinuation that a person is guilty because, 4 years ago, a charge was laid are pretty base.

A part of the article that the Leader of the Opposition read out referred to Mr John Horgan, Mr Denis Horgan's brother, who is supposed to be a part of this great machination of tax evasion. John Horgan today is the chairman of one of Western Australia's government corporations and is a senior adviser of the Premier, Mr Burke, on financial matters. He is probably there in his own right.

The Leader of the Opposition said that, if we want to get the support of Senator Walsh, we ought to be doing other things. What rot! Mr Deputy Speaker, do you believe that anything we do in the Northern Territory will change the attitude of Senator Walsh towards this place given the vindictive, vitriolic assaults he has made on Territorians. He is a man who wants to depopulate the place with machine guns and we have to suck up to him and do what he wants. What unreasonable nonsense! It is a joke. The Northern Territory is not his only hate; he hates half his own party. What hope have we of getting the guy into some form of order? Look at the man's attacks on the funding for education in recent days. The guy is not normal. To use the fact that we should be sucking up to Senator Walsh as some sort of argument for doing things in the Northern Territory is nonsense. He will use every opportunity he gets to stick the knife into the Northern Territory whatever happens.

I would like to move on and talk about the cooperation of the federal government and how the people opposite are so concerned about the financial future of the Northern Territory and the position we find ourselves in. The Darwin Airport project has been set aside by the honourable member for Stuart as a furphy. The Darwin Airport project has been in the starting blocks since 1980 and most of the financial investment decisions taken on tourism infrastructure have been based on the assumption that it would be operating by 1986. The Public Works Committee started in 1981 or 1982 and a series of election promises and work commencements enabled us to reach a point this year where we shut it down on the Thursday before Easter because it would cost too much. We had already spent $20m but that was an irrelevance. That airport was the key to our whole strategy.

If we want to bring in a million people a year by 1994, we have to bring them from overseas. How are we going to get them into the Northern Territory through Darwin Airport? How many Boeings a week must go through Darwin Airport to get a million people a year? The answer is 7 a week. Last year we spent millions of dollars setting up overseas tourist offices to start the marketing program to bring the Boeings in at 7 a week, and the Commonwealth pulled the rug out from underneath and said: 'no airport'. What is the game? The game is the knifing of Territorians by the ALP. It is a neat little trick.

If the honourable member opposite was so concerned about the Territory, where was he making all the noise and who was he representing when it turned its back on Jabiluka and Koongarra and let Roxby go ahead. Did anyone hear a whimper from here? There was not a word. When the Commonwealth decided not to honour its promise to develop the tourist infrastructure at Kakadu, what did we hear from these people? We heard nothing. They are wimps, hopeless wimps.

What about the Alice Springs Airport? It has been known for years that it must be upgraded. Something must happen in Alice Springs to cater for wide-bodied aircraft. Do you know what they say in Alice Springs, Mr Deputy Speaker, when the wide-bodied planes pull up on the Alice Springs tarmac? They say: 'Will the Darwin passengers please stay on board; there is not enough room for you on the tarmac and in the terminal'. What sort of a rort is that? That was promised before the election too.

What about the railway? How many times have you heard these people here castigating their own colleagues for cancelling that? Never! What about the road funding? When we lost the $27m that we were supposed to get in lieu of the railway, were the members opposite barking then? Who were they blaming then? Who were they putting down then? No one! We never heard a word from them.

What about the Workers' Club, that great bastion of the workers that we had the misfortune to assist financially? It went down the tube and it cost the government $3m. Where were all the financial wizards on that side of the Assembly then? Who were they helping? Why did they not take some of their expertise down to the Workers' Club and save it from ruin?

Mr Bell: Irrelevant.

Mr TUXWORTH: What! That is not irrelevant. If you are so smart, why did you not do something about it? Rubbish!

Mr Deputy Speaker, the position we are in is a difficult one but the Northern Territory will recover from it because Territorians are used to recovering from the assaults of the Commonwealth government. This is another one that we will have to get around. But we will get around it. I say to the people of the Northern Territory that it is difficult and it is not easy but we are going to do well out of it. We will make sure that the tourist infrastructure that we have developed with great confidence for the future of the Northern Territory does turn out to be the fantastic asset that we believe it will be.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Noting of Ministerial Statement on Establishment of
a Northern Territory University

Continued from page 1367.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity at least to respond to some of the absolute tripe this morning from the Leader of the Opposition. There is no doubt in my mind at all that the opposition is still grasping at straws. When it has before it what is probably one of the most critical statements on education in the interests of

future Territorians, all it can come up with is diatribe and waffle. I guess it is typical of the negative, knee-jerk reaction that we have come to expect from the opposition. Perhaps it would have been better if the Leader of the Opposition had considered the statement, deliberated on it and read it thoroughly before he opened his mouth and demonstrated his entire ignorance of and disinterest in the subject of a university for the Northern Territory.

I guess it is understandable. He probably finds himself in a fairly untenable position in relation to his ALP cohorts in Canberra who have once again shown a lack of commitment to the people of the Northern Territory. I guess it also reflects his distaste that the Northern Territory government has taken the initiative in responding constructively to the educational needs of our young people. It is not by choice that the minister and the Northern Territory government have had to respond in this way to provide university education facilities. If the Leader of the Opposition had taken care to read the statement, he would have seen that it is by necessity that the minister must now take the initiative leading towards a reasonably timed implementation of facilities. I ask why Territorians are not entitled to the same opportunities as students and people elsewhere.

The Leader of the Opposition dwelt much on the timing and the 1987 target that he kept throwing back at us. Would he have us wait until 1991 just for reconsideration of the implementation of a university? What we are talking about here is at least 4 years, an absolute minimum of 4 years. With further procrastination and involvement by the ALP government in Canberra, there is no doubt in my mind that further delays would be encountered.

In his diatribe, he said that the statement did not say one single constructive thing. It is clear to see why he has not said anything: he finds himself and his colleagues opposite in an impossible position. You do not need a degree in law to interpret what the minister's statement was about this morning. It was simply about 2 things. I will elaborate on those 2 things for the benefit of members opposite. Firstly, the Northern Territory is moving sensibly to a most expeditious establishment of a university for Territory students. Secondly, the statement was in regard to the establishment of a working party to meet those needs.

In regard to the first, one might ask why is it necessary for the Northern Territory at this stage to take the ball alone and run with it. After all, was it not a federal government election commitment in 1983 to work towards implementation of a university for the Northern Territory? We do not need to hear time and time again the full list of broken promises by the federal ALP government to realise that it is big on talk and small on action. When we talk about railways, airports, highways and that collection of promises made in 1983, one cannot help but be cynical about its performance. So much for placing trust in a federal ALP government. What did John 'Who' achieve for us during his whole term? The answer is nothing.

Maybe all ALP policies should have sunset clauses attached to them or validity periods. That would seem to be far more appropriate. It seems that promises are only good for a short while and then they disintegrate in a typical fashion. Unfortunately, I cannot recall exactly what the quotation was in this week's Bulletin but I implore all members to take particular note of the last page. It contains a classical quotation of the attitude taken by the federal government.

Let us look at the ALP's involvement in the exercise relating to the university. Initially, it was 3 years late with its acceptance of the basic concept of the university. If we had had a bipartisan approach from the beginning, we might have had the interests of the Territory's young people taken care of well before now. It took it 3 years even to get around to addressing itself to the question, and then to acknowledging the basic concept. When it eventually came up with that 1983 ALP policy on the progressive establishment of a university of the Northern Territory, as it called it, its document contained a great number of deficiencies. It illustrated a pure lack of research and basic consultation with people such as the University Planning Authority which could have set it straight on many of the issues before it produced such a useless document.

We are talking about getting on with the job. In relation to time, that 1983 document stated in paragraph 5.2: 'A Territory Labor government will be committed to the development of a university progressively in the near future'. I guess the question is the ALP's definition of 'near future'. If we wait around until 1991 to initiate another discussion, maybe that might give us some sort of understanding of what the ALP believes is expeditious timing.

Let us talk about the format of the proposals to implement a university in the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition implied that the Queensland university college proposal had been dropped. The statement by the minister made no reference to the Queensland university college proposal or to any other specific proposal for good reason: the planning and negotiations for the progressive establishment and development of a fully-fledged university are extremely complex and sensitive. Therefore, any premature announcement about a specific scheme in association with one university or another might prejudice our negotiations. The University Planning Authority has been working on this project sensibly and deliberately for 5 years. It has been working towards ensuring that the best possible path is followed, not going off half-cocked and shooting down options before they are even fully considered. Understandably, negotiations were undertaken with many institutions and bodies during the period. The Queensland university college proposal was one of those sets of negotiations and was included, amongst other things, in a ministerial statement recently.

Despite the cynical attitude adopted by the Leader of the Opposition, discussions with these various establishments and universities included implementation timetables. 1987 is not some mystical date that was plucked out of the air for political purposes. If one reads the statement, I am sure one would agree that it represents the first possible starting date. That potential starting date was determined on the basis of expert advice given to the University Planning Authority by the possible sponsoring universities. We are not talking about starting tomorrow. The University Planning Authority has been working towards this for 5 years already. It is quite reasonable that we do not prejudice our position by waving around the countryside the sensitive negotiations that have been undertaken with establishments elsewhere. In his statement, the minister flagged that there would be a further announcement in November. That announcement will be based on the findings of the working party and negotiations that will be continuing in the meantime. November 1985 is time enough for students who might be matriculating at the end of 1986 and who would be hopeful of starting in 1987.

The Leader of the Opposition made much of his discussions with students and young people about their so-called anxiety of not knowing where they are

going. It so happens that I have a daughter who will be matriculating in that year and, from my discussions with not just her fellow students but with many other youth groups that I come into contact with, I do not recall ever hearing any indications of distress. The Leader of the Opposition would have us believe that young people are distressed about what is happening with the university. They are not, and with good reason. Those young people of the Northern Territory recognise and acknowledge that their interests will be best looked after by this government, as they always have been.

It might be of interest to all honourable members opposite to recognise once again what the government's commitment is to the ongoing tertiary education of its own students. It is quite substantial. Currently, we are helping over 1000 Northern Territory students who are studying interstate. Figures from 1983 include 517 university students doing undergraduate courses and 535 doing advanced education courses. That does not include the unknown number of students whose families have moved interstate so that their children's futures could be best looked after. Unfortunately, we do not have statistics on that but it must be significant. With those total numbers, there is great scope for potential involvement of Territory students in a local university. In supporting those students who are interstate, the Northern Territory government pays tertiary education allowances. We also pay return air fares which are extremely important. They not only enable local students to travel interstate, but also to return during vacations so that they can have the benefit of family support and, if we want to be selfish about it, so that the Northern Territory has the best possible chance of having those students return in the long term. This government provides vacation employment for them, at a cost in excess of $1m. This year's budget allocation for tertiary assistance and air fares is over $600 000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst this government does not have any problem in providing practical support to students who need to study interstate, should it not be the responsibility of the federal government? I cannot understand why Territory students are not entitled to their fair share of the tertiary education cake. We heard this morning that figures on a per capita basis of some $64 would give to the Northern Territory an $8.5m share of the educational cake. I find it absolutely astounding when $6000 to $7000 per university student is okay for New South Wales and Victoria. What is the Territorians' share? Zero.

During the many pregnant pauses in the Leader of the Opposition's waffle, he was challenged to give us the advantage of his infinite wisdom and knowledge on university proposals. There was no answer. One can only assume that he stands behind that 1983 ALP policy that advocated a lean-to university. He has a fixation with a lean-to university and he suggested this morning that we set one up in a 2-man tent. That is how seriously he takes the university debate.

Whichever way we look at it, Territorians are entitled to their fair share. Anyone who has any knowledge of development of universities would certainly realise that it is not acceptable to any sponsoring university to have a half-baked solution to the problem. We must ensure that we have courses of impeccable quality that will give us a university of excellence. Suggestions about our kicking off from what was a community college scheme as proposed by the ALP are absolutely impossible. They are nonsense and C-TEC put them to rest long ago. It identified the Institute of Technology as substantially a TAFE college and it would have nothing to do with proposals involving it. I am not making a derogatory comment about DIT. TAFE colleges

serve a useful but specific purpose. Their functions are quite clearly different from those of a university and they should be kept separate.

The Leader of the Opposition made a number of specific allegations and time is too short for me to go through them all. In relation to courses, he made statements about the lack of identification. The minister mentioned arts and sciences for a start! It is up to the working party and the sponsoring university to determine specific courses. That will be done and I would implore all members to add their contribution to those investigations. The Leader of the Opposition made some snide remarks about the Menzies school and about medical courses. For the benefit of members, the basic science course includes the provision to move into the medical school part way through the course. It is important for us to realise that implementation of a university college will not restrict major involvement in a great variety of courses.

The Leader of the Opposition was correct in identifying research and there is no beef about that. We acknowledge and recognise that research will play a very important role in the development of a university. At the moment, over 600 research topics are undertaken by people within the Northern Territory associated with universities elsewhere. It is important that the Northern Territory gain maximum benefit from all of those research programs. It is to that end that we need to ensure that the ongoing work of the University Planning Authority is not interrupted and certainly not negated by the negative attitude of the members of the opposition.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is rather unfortunate that this debate has been characterised by a rather high level of vituperation. The flames for that vituperation must quite clearly be sheeted home to provocative comments made about the contribution of the opposition to this debate. I believe the minister's comments in that regard were thoroughly uncalled for. For his benefit, because during prior debates he was not Minister for Education, and certainly for the benefit of the member for Wagaman who seems entirely ignorant of the facts, I suggest they acquaint themselves with a debate that was held in this Assembly on 20 August 1981 on a statement by the then Minister for Education, Mr Robertson, on a report on the proposal for a Territory university. I very much doubt that, if they were to study the comments there, they would have responded in quite the way they did. It is regrettable that the Minister for Education had not read that particular statement as well because, had he done so, he might have made a rather more informed contribution to this debate than he gave this morning. I seriously doubt whether he has done so.

With respect to the comments made by the honourable member for Wagaman about the sins of the parliamentary Labor Party in the Northern Territory or the federal Labor government, let me read to him the first few lines of the statement made by the then Minister for Education. He said: 'It was with a sense of shock that Territorians learnt at the end of April this year that the so-called razor gang had put the kybosh on any immediate funding for the setting up of a Northern Territory university'.

I presume that that quote from the then Minister for Education will go some way to explaining the matter to the member for Wagaman. I think that this issue is of such importance to the future economic development and the development of human resources in the Territory that to use a debate like this for a puerile attack on the Leader of the Opposition or the federal Labor

government is quite unnecessary. I draw the honourable member's attention to the comments made by the Minister for Education criticising the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to this debate. If you read the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition to the 1981 debate, you will see that it was the best informed, best reasoned and most cogent contribution to that particular debate that was offered by anybody, including myself. That is part of the reason why I am contributing to this debate today. It is an issue in which I have taken some particular interest. I have spent a year or 2 of my life inside universities and education is something that is of interest to me. I believe I have a contribution to make to this debate.

It is perhaps apposite at this stage to rehearse the argument about university colleges. I noted with interest the minister's statement that the Queensland Cabinet had given the go ahead for the University of Queensland to establish a university college in the Territory. That is a quote from the minister's press release of 21 October. He went on to explain that there had been talks between Queensland authorities, himself and Dr Eedle, the Northern Territory University Planning Vice-Chancellor. When that announcement was made, I thought: 'They have pinched another of our ideas, and good luck to them'. I thought that would be the end of it until we saw this statement this morning. I refer the Minister for Education to the 1981 debate on this particular subject. He will find that both the Leader of the Opposition and myself made exactly that suggestion about a university college. When I found that this extraordinarily thin statement made no mention of something that was obviously of importance less than 12 months ago, I was bemused to say the least.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will place on record again exactly what I said 4 years ago. I said that the development of the Australian National University is particularly instructive in this context. The Australian National University started off prior to the Second World War as a small university college associated with the University of Melbourne. I do not have the exact dates or the numbers involved but perhaps the honourable minister is aware of that. In fact, I believe the minister referred to that particular initiative. He did not refer to the university college specifically but, on page 28 of his statement, he said: 'We have been left with no alternative but to start out on our own following the example of every other university established so far in Australia except for the Australian National University which was set up by the federal government in exactly the way in which we had in mind for the Northern Territory university'. I would appreciate some elucidation of how that particular idea keys in with the University of Queensland idea. The University of Queensland is where a large number of Territorians have undertaken external studies at tertiary level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of further ideas I want to put forward. One is to challenge the assumption that this university college should necessarily be based in Darwin. I point out that the James Cook University in Queensland already specialises in many areas of importance in tropical medicine and other areas of expertise that might be relevant to the tropical north. Can I suggest that consideration be given to siting it in the arid zone of the Northern Territory. After all, the arid zone comprises some two-thirds of Australia's land mass and there are certain areas of expertise - for example, in range land management - that might provide a base for such an institution in central Australia. I merely float that idea and trust that the minister will take it up.

My final point relates to the categories of post-compulsory education. There seems to be some doubt about the place of a university, the place of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the place of technical and further education in the context of post-compulsory education. I raised the point, and I wish to make it again, that a natural division has always been made in post-compulsory education between technical education and academic education. The distinction is somewhat blurred because practical, technical education inevitably involves some academic aspects and many academic studies involve practical and technical concerns. I quote as an example faculties of engineering in universities. There always has been a debate as to whether that is an academic study or a practical, technical study. People have a clearer idea of the appropriate place for other studies in one area or the other but there seems to be some confusion in that regard when various forms of tertiary education are being considered.

I do not raise that point merely to draw some nice distinction for the sake of intellectual satisfaction. I think there are practical issues involved in that. The Minister for Education undoubtedly will feel that it is one of his onerous duties to attempt to stretch the education dollar as far as possible. I would suggest that, unless he has a clear idea in his mind and his department has a clear idea in its mind of exactly what forms of post-compulsory education are being carried out by which institutions and why they are being carried out by particular institutions, there is a serious risk of inefficiency and duplication and we will not be obtaining the best value for our education dollar in that respect.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that I believe it is rather unfortunate that, at the minister's instigation, this debate has been rather more vituperative than was necessary. I sincerely hope that, in future, the minister can pursue the progressive development of university education in the Territory in a somewhat less emotive fashion.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, most of what needs to be said has been said in this debate and I have no doubt that the minister will address those matters.

I have a profound problem with one matter within this paper that causes me some concern. It was referred to in many places in the statement but most clearly in the last paragraph on the very last page. I will just read that for the benefit of honourable members and perhaps they will appreciate my concern. The minister said:

> 'After 5 years of honest endeavour and fruitless negotiation for Commonwealth funding, the government has decided that its reiterated declaration of intent with regard to a Northern Territory university must be translated into action. Initially, at least, this means using Northern Territory resources to benefit Northern Territory people'.

Mr Speaker, I can appreciate the frustration of people who are obliged or decide to pursue their tertiary education through institutions outside of the Northern Territory. Indeed, my wife has just completed a 7-year course from a university in Western Australia and, after 5 years with books piled up around my house and our children writing over papers that have had to be rewritten, and the domestic trauma that goes with that, I can quite appreciate the dilemma that faces many external students in Darwin and other places. Of course, a university in Darwin would be of as much benefit to persons in a

position such as my wife as a university in Perth. It makes little difference if the university is 4000 miles away or 400 so perhaps a university in Darwin would be of little use to persons in Nhulunbuy. However, what concerns me deeply is that, given the pressures on education within my electorate, I would be bitterly disappointed if a single penny for this proposed university came out of the allocation for education generally. I would be bitterly disappointed. For many years, I have tried to get another primary school in Nhulunbuy. We have the largest primary school in the Northern Territory - 750 young students crammed into one area. It is impossible to control them. The problems with Aboriginal education...

Mr Harris: It is not impossible to control them. The school is doing a very good job.

Mr LEO: I accept that; it is not impossible to control them. I apologise to the principal but the situation is exacerbated. The problems with Aboriginal education have been enunciated long and loud in this Assembly and there is no need to go through them. Suffice it to say that that section of my electorate requires much in educational terms to catch up with the rest of the Northern Territory. Unless that is effected in a very short time, these people will continue to be disadvantaged citizens of the Northern Territory in terms of education. We are condemning them to a life in which they are unable to compete in mainstream society, and I think that is an absolute tragedy. When the minister speaks in closing this debate, I hope that, at the least, he will assure me that not one penny from the general education vote will go to this university.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, it is a pity that this very important issue has been treated in the manner that it has, particularly by the Leader of the Opposition. Complete contempt has been demonstrated for a statement that I believe has spelt out very clearly what the Northern Territory government is all about. I am particularly disappointed in the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition and his approach because I felt that he had a genuine interest in Territory people and their education generally.

Mr Speaker, all we heard during his contribution was knock, knock, knock at this whole issue of the establishment of a university presence in the Northern Territory. That was disappointing indeed. The statement spelt out very clearly that the Northern Territory would have university undergraduate courses up and running at the beginning of the university academic year in 1987. It was necessary to go into all the detail because it pointed out very clearly to the people of the Territory the effort that this government has put into trying to obtain funds from the Commonwealth to set up a university or a university presence in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, when I first became Minister for Education, I acknowledged that the original proposal that had been put forward by the government was high flying, though I guess there is no reason why we should not aim high in our efforts in relation to this matter. However, the point I would make is that I acknowledged that it was high flying at that time. Indeed, during my first meeting with Senator Ryan, I mentioned that and I said that the Northern Territory government was seeking to establish a university through a university college approach. Senator Ryan agreed with that proposal when I put it to her.

I repeat also that neither the government nor I favoured the proposal by the Leader of the Opposition that a university college or a university should

grow out of the Darwin Community College. I did not believe that that would receive the support of academics elsewhere in Australia. The Darwin Community College, as it was, whether we liked it or not - and I spelt this out on another occasion - was a TAFE college offering advanced education courses of quality, and I acknowledged that. But the point is that we would have had a university growing out of a TAFE college and that is something that academics in universities would shudder about.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to protect his Commonwealth mates. I refer particularly to the comments that the Chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, Mr Hugh Hudson, has made in this whole exercise. He is strongly of the view - and I believe the honourable member for MacDonnell referred to this - that you could have the 3 sectors - that is, TAFE, advanced education and a university - operating from one campus. I am not saying that that might not be a good idea. What I am saying very clearly is that we do not want to be experimented with here in the Northern Territory.

If it is thought to be a good idea to have a university sector growing out of an institution that has a major TAFE sector, then that proposal should be put to Sydney University, the University of Queensland or one of the other established universities. If it were accepted at those institutions, then I would have no difficulty at all accepting it in the Northern Territory. However, we will not be seen as second rate. I have said that, when we have university courses here, they must have credibility. That has never been doubted by this government. I repeat that any university presence in the Northern Territory and any university courses offered here must have credibility.

Mr Bell: Hear, hear! It is hardly contentious.

Mr HARRIS: I apologise to the honourable member for MacDonnell, Mr Speaker, but the Leader of the Opposition picked up the statement this morning and he did not even read it. He flicked through the pages and did not consider the statement at all before he shot his mouth off in relation to it.

Mr Speaker, I made it very clear that a further statement would be made in November, and I would have liked to have heard some positive comment from the opposition in this debate. All it had to do was adjourn the debate so that it could continue in November. The Leader of the Opposition knows, and members of this Assembly know, that at this point in time we cannot have university degrees unless their standing is linked with another university. He knows that and yet he still said that we were looking at establishing a free-standing university. That is not on and he knows it. Shame on him for putting forward that particular view today.

I want to make it quite clear that there are really only 2 options if we wish to have university undergraduate courses available in Darwin in February 1987. One option is to have a university college which is linked to an established university. The other option is to contract out degrees to an established university. That is similar to the situation we have with the Menzies School of Health Research, an arrangement that the Leader of the Opposition has supported. He knows that such a system can work. The credibility of that school has never been queried. The only way that we can have these courses in 1987 is to move in that direction.

I am not prepared at this time to identify the university to which we are looking for assistance. We have been talking with several universities. Again, the opposition knows that. We have been speaking with James Cook University. We have been speaking with Sydney University. We have been speaking with the University of Adelaide. We have been speaking with Queensland University. Last week, I addressed the NT Council of Higher Education on this particular issue to let it know the situation in respect of the Commonwealth's indication that there would be no funding until at least 1991. I understand the serious financial mess that the Commonwealth government is in. I do not blame it for saying that a university presence in the Northern Territory is of zero priority to the Commonwealth government. That is its business. But, as far as the Northern Territory is concerned, the availability of university undergraduate courses in the Territory is a high priority. We had to make some decision in relation to that.

I would have thought that the statement as such would have been supported by the opposition. When I addressed the NT Council of Higher Education, I told it exactly where we were at in relation to this particular issue. I also said that there appeared to be a conflict of interest. I must say that, when we were debating the amendments to the Education Act to establish the NT Council of Higher Education, the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of conflict of interest. Whilst I am concerned that the establishment of a university presence in the Northern Territory should not affect the Darwin Institute of Technology adversely, it also follows that the Darwin Institute of Technology should not be allowed to limit the development of a university sector in the Northern Territory. That is very clear. It is difficult when there is a higher education authority which oversees the Darwin Institute of Technology and yet is able to comment in relation to a university. Some people see that as being opposed to the Darwin Institute of Technology. I made it clear in my statement that the Darwin Institute of Technology and a university college will complement one another and not be opposed to one another. The Darwin Institute of Technology will play a very important role in relation to education in the Territory, particularly in relation to nurse education and teacher education.

I also mentioned to the NT Council of Higher Education that there had been a great deal of uncertainty about where we were going. The lecturers did not know where we were going. The students did not know where we were going. I took the opportunity to clarify exactly what the Northern Territory intends to do in light of the Commonwealth government's decision not to assist us financially at this time. I reiterate a point that I made in the statement. We have done everything the Commonwealth government asked us to do in relation to the establishment of a university presence here yet it continues to deny us support.

I have made it very clear that university undergraduate courses will be available in Darwin in January 1987. I wanted to spell out to the NT Council of Higher Education and those who are actively involved that that will happen. There can be no uncertainty. People will be able to make up their minds exactly where they stand on this particular issue and what aspect they wish to become involved in. Whilst I was at that meeting, I made the point that the Northern Territory government is considering separate legislation for the Darwin Institute of Technology, separate legislation for the Menzies School of Health Research and separate legislation for the university.

Mr Speaker, a great deal of research has been carried out in relation to this whole exercise. We do not have to go through that again. It has been

many years since we started down this road. Honourable members must appreciate the fact that a great deal of information has been obtained during that period. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that this has been chucked together overnight is something that I just cannot accept. Shame on him for suggesting that that is what the Northern Territory government is doing. Is he interested in having a university in the Northern Territory? If he is not interested, then he should say so.

The lack of Commonwealth support has forced us into making this decision to go it alone. In order to chart our final course, it is necessary for us to obtain a great deal more information in a very short period of time. I said in the statement that we will establish a Northern Territory working party. I did not feel it was necessary to go through this exercise here because this working party will be in existence only until October. It will have strict terms of reference in relation to gathering further information that can be used by the associated university and the University Planning Authority to develop university undergraduate courses that will operate from February 1987. The membership of that working party will be as follows: the chairman will be Dr Keith Flemming as the Public Service Commissioner designate and the other members will be Dr Jim Eedle, the Planning Vice-Chancellor of the Northern Territory University Planning Authority, Mrs N. Giese, the Chairman of the NT Council of Higher Education, Mr K. Davis, Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology, Mr G. Spring, the Secretary of the NT Department of Education, a nominee of the Staff Association of the Darwin Institute of Technology, a nominee of the students of the Darwin Institute of Technology, a nominee of the Federation of College Academics of the Darwin Institute of Technology and also Mr Brian Hughes as the secretary.

Its terms of reference are to obtain further information to be used in formulating a development strategy in the following areas. Firstly, it will deal with accommodation for students and staff, including an investigation of existing and future facilities which may be utilised. There are many facilities in the Northern Territory that can be utilised as part of a university presence and it will be up to that group to identify them. It will look at teaching and learning facilities, including utilisation of existing and future facilities. It will examine student projections, school leavers and mature age and overseas students. Reference was made today to the number of students who are leaving the Territory to obtain higher education. Courses, transferability of units - which is vital - finance and staff available as local tutors and supervisors were all mentioned in my statement today.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is questioning the credibility of this whole exercise. I might say that the working party is answerable to the University Planning Authority's advisory committee. I will read out for honourable members' benefit the membership of that particular advisory body which includes 3 vice-chancellors of other universities in Australia. The chairman is Dr Eedle. The members are: Mr N. Alford, Assistant Director-General of the Queensland Department of Education; Professor K. Back, Vice-Chancellor of James Cook University of north Queensland; Mrs M. Else-Mitchell who is a lawyer in Canberra; Mrs N. Giese, Chairman of the NT Council of Higher Education; Dr C. Jack-Hinton, Director of the NT Museum of Arts and Sciences; Dr P. Loveday, Field Director of the North Australian Research Unit, ANU; Sir William Refshauge, Chairman of the Menzies School of Health Research; Professor D. Stranks, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide; Professor B. Wilson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland; and Mr B. Hughes, secretary and a member. Does the Leader of

the Opposition honestly believe that there is a credibility problem with that particular group of people? They will oversee this whole exercise and they will ensure that we have in the Northern Territory a university presence of high standard. No one can question that.

Saying that we have a shonky deal which puts at risk the credibility of what is proposed for a university presence in Darwin is a nonsense. I am disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition putting forward that particular view. It is terribly important that we work together on this exercise. I mentioned before that we were not helped by the opposition putting forward its proposal which was seen by C-TEC as being in opposition to the government's view that we needed a university. It was important but it happened again today. We had the same knocking attitude from the opposition.

Its comments do nothing to assist our move to provide for the people of the Northern Territory. I am talking about all of the people in the Northern Territory. The member for Nhulunbuy mentioned the plight of some of his constituents. We are looking at those areas in relation to providing total education in the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition's comments did nothing to assist our move towards providing the people of the Territory with access to university degrees in Darwin.

Mr Speaker, we must move in this direction. We do not want to prejudice our case in relation to future funding. It is a big move. It is the first time since 1974 that a government has bitten the bullet and said: 'This is a high priority for the Territory. We need this and we are prepared at this time to assist financially in the establishment of a university presence'. Although the Commonwealth is in a financial mess and has given this matter a low priority, we regard it as a high priority and we are prepared to get up and run. I would have thought that everyone in the Northern Territory would have supported us. We will have university undergraduate courses available in the Northern Territory by the beginning of 1987.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
1984-85 Northern Territory Tourism Monitor

Mr DONDAS (Tourism)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory has many success stories to tell as a result of self-government, but none more dramatic than that of the tourist industry.

At self-government, the Territory government recognised the potential of tourism in the Territory. To foster the growth of this industry, we established the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. Its success has been staggering. Tourism has come from nowhere to its present level, where the tourist industry is second only to mining in importance to the Territory economy. The results of the public opinion poll conducted by the Northern Territory Confederation of Industry and Commerce at EXPO 85 in June indicated a substantial number of Territorians polled thought that the tourist industry was the most significant industry in the Northern Territory at present. It will still be the most significant in 5 years time.

During 1981-82, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission undertook the first major benchmark study on quantitative travel in the Northern Territory. That study was designed not only to provide authoritative visitor data but, significantly, to guide the government in the development of its tourism

policy. I am now able to advise members of the results arising from the most recent survey, ended 30 June 1985, which reaffirms the success of Territory government initiatives and support for the Territory tourist industry.

The report's main findings indicate that 594 000 visitor trips were undertaken to and within the Northern Territory during 1984-85. This represents a 16% increase over the previous 12 months. Total visitor nights spent in the Territory increased 38% from $4.962m to $6.84m. Real levels of expenditure have also grown, pushing average expenditure over $40 per person per night. Overall direct expenditure by travellers in the Northern Territory in 1984-85 totalled $281m. This represents a substantial injection of revenue into the Territory's economy and reflects a major and rapidly expanding source of income and employment for the Territory. A very strong growth of 60% in direct travel expenditure in the Territory reflects a number of factors such as inflation and increased costs associated particularly with travel to relatively isolated areas such as the Northern Territory. However, despite the undoubted influence of these elements on the level of direct expenditure, the increases were real as shown by 2 major pieces of data. Firstly, visitor numbers shot up by 16% overall, including an impressive 40% growth rate in central Australia. Secondly, the length of the average trip duration was stretched by almost 20% to 11 nights per trip.

Mr Speaker, the results reaffirm the position of tourism as the Territory's major growth industry. The government's unequivocal commitment to its growth and development is vindicated by these encouraging results. Other significant data revealed by the survey includes a growth in the interstate visitor market of 29%. A staggering one million visitor nights - that is, a 57% increase - were spent in the Centre, and this is part of the encouraging growth in all major centres.

I believe it is also worth noting that, in 1984-85, sales generated by the Northern Territory Government Tourist Bureaux national network exceeded $10m for the first time. A record figure of $10.7m represented an increase of 172% over the 5-year period since the government established the Tourist Commission in 1980.

Despite the obvious unqualified success of our policy initiatives, I must again stress that there is absolutely no reason for complacency or an attitude of self-satisfaction either at government or, indeed, at industry level. We are not resting on our laurels. The government is continuing its concerted effort to develop its tourist industry, realising that it is an employment-intensive industry and one with considerable spin-off benefits for the whole Territory economy. My colleagues with ministerial responsibility fully realise the important supportive role their various portfolios must provide to the more obvious and specific functions of the Tourist Commission and the Northern Territory Development Corporation if the momentum we have already achieved is to be sustained successfully.

This latest survey shows that the Australian and international travelling public have taken to the Territory in a big way. With a range of new initiatives on the horizon, the future looks even more promising for the tourist industry. The sealing of the South Australian section of the Stuart Highway will open up the Territory to a significant section of the Australian family road traveller market.

Hotel rooms which have been at a premium in all centres in the Territory will be boosted by the completion of various projects. Among major

contributors to the development of the accommodation infrastructure are the Sheraton in Alice Springs, which opens in October this year, and the Darwin Sheraton which will open next June. The Burgundy Royale and the Performing Arts Centre in Darwin will also help to alleviate the accommodation shortage.

One of the Territory's chief assets from the perspective of the tourist is its natural beauty. We are investigating the development of various areas in the Territory to cater for the demand from those who want to see more of our great outdoors. There is a proposal for a resort development at the top end of Stapleton Station to be known as Litchfield Park. This has been the subject of a report which is currently being studied by both the Conservation Commission and the NTDC. In the Centre, we are examining the possibility of developing wilderness resort accommodation at Kings Canyon. Our tourist bureaux all over Australia continue to record active interest and healthy sales. Just last week, I opened another Territory tourist bureau in Dandenong. In the past 6 months, we have opened bureaux in Canberra, Parramatta and Hobart. In addition, 6 overseas regional offices have been opened since late 1984.

Mr Speaker, the challenge immediately before us is to overcome obstacles such as the federal government's prevarication over the redevelopment of the Darwin Airport and the entirely unsatisfactory management proposal governing the control of our national parks. Responsibility for the development of infrastructure which the Territory government sees as vital to our tourist industry rests with the federal government. The deferral of the construction of Darwin Airport, the failure to upgrade Alice Springs Airport and tourist facilities at Kakadu National Park are issues which impede the realisation of the tourist industry's full and undoubted potential. However, I am confident that this challenge will be confronted successfully by the energy and resourcefulness of Territorians, and we look forward to a better deal from the incoming coalition government at the next federal election. The Northern Territory government and the Tourist Commission are working towards our goal of 1 million visitor trips to the Northern Territory by 1990. It is a goal that on present information looks set to become a reality. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, the results obtained when the different government departments do not coordinate their approaches on any particular topic are very interesting. Various aspects of the tourist industry have featured quite widely today and yesterday and some very interesting and different points of view have been put forward by the honourable Chief Minister and the honourable Minister for Tourism.

I think we might start by looking at his first paragraph. There have been 'many success stories to tell as a result of self-government but none more dramatic that that of the tourist industry'. Certainly, the tourist industry has been dramatic in more than one way, and I am the first to say that the increase in tourist numbers has been quite dramatic. Certainly, there is no doubt that it has become one of our 2 major income-earning areas. However, the tourist industry has been dramatic in a different way. It has been dramatic in the failure of this government to get on top of the major projects that it has initiated. Without going over it again, we now have 2 examples of that: the casinos and the contingent liabilities affair that we talked about earlier today. It appears very likely that the undoing of this government will be in the area where great benefit has been obtained for the Territory. Even in bringing more tourists to the Northern Territory, the government has been so ham-fisted and so amateurish that we could well find that, at the next election, it will get its just desserts.

Mr Speaker, then there is a contradiction on page 5: 'This latest survey shows that the Australian and international travelling public have taken to the Territory in a big way'. Earlier today, we heard the Chief Minister saying that we really had not made much of an impact on the international market and that was one of the prime reasons why the Sheratons were in such strife.

Further down, the statement says: 'Hotel rooms, which have been at a premium in all centres in the Territory, will be boosted by the completion of various projects'. After some of the statistics about room occupancy rates being revised downwards, quite clearly that is nonsense.

Mr Speaker, the other conflicting piece of information that has been presented today is that there are different figures relating to the extent of the increase in tourist numbers and tourist activity. In 1 set of figures provided today, it was quoted as 16% and, in the paper we have before us, it is over 20%. Even in that small area, the government has found it difficult to get its act together.

The Tourist Commission figures concern me a bit. In a genuine search for information, I would ask the minister for some comment. The problem is that we have, in the minister's own words, an increase in tourist numbers of over 20% but, in the budget papers, the increase in tourist bureaux figures was only 10%. The effectiveness of the tourist bureaux might be brought into question by the fact that, when there is a 20% increase overall, they can only generate for themselves a 10% increase in their own business. I am not at this stage proposing that as a condemnation or a criticism of the tourist bureaux but it is an interesting figure and it does deserve an explanation from the minister.

Mr Speaker, one of the things that I note with some pleasure is that the number of visitor nights in the Northern Territory has increased quite significantly. That is due to 2 factors: the increase in the number of visitors and a tendency for visitors to stay longer in the Northern Territory. It is an important part in the success of the whole tourist strategy in the Northern Territory to encourage tourists to stay longer because, obviously, the longer they stay the more money they will spend in the Northern Territory economy.

Mr Speaker, I have mentioned on a number of occasions the concerns that many people in the industry have at the quality of the product being offered by some sectors of the industry. This is an area to which the government will have to pay some detailed attention. I quite often hear complaints from tourists about the package tours or day tours. They have been very disappointed with the quality of the product. On the odd occasion, I have heard people complain that they have been ripped off by tourist operators. I wish to take this opportunity to provide the Assembly with an example.

A number of friends of mine from southern climes, together with an American couple whom they had not met before, went on a package tour to Kakadu. It involved flying to Kakadu, having a look at Kakadu and flying back in the 1 day. Basically, they were very impressed by that experience and had no problem with the quality and the organisation of the trip. However, there was an unfortunate incident. The American couple made it very clear that they were well-heeled, to put it politely. They had just been to some other part of the world and bought quite a lot of artefacts and other materials there. The wife said that, if she purchased anything else, she would need a new room

to store it. The tour guide said: 'I can do a special deal for you. Jabiru is not on our itinerary but I know a very good place in Jabiru where you can pick up bark paintings at a very good price'. He left that tantalising suggestion.

An hour or so later, the American couple asked about the diversion to Jabiru. The guide arranged the diversion into Jabiru. They went to the back of the petrol station at Jabiru where there was a significant collection of Aboriginal bark paintings. The American couple eyed-off an Aboriginal bark painting that they thought was very nice. They were quoted a price of $1600. After some bargaining, they got that price down to $1000. My Australian friends were ashamed by what was happening and walked away. The American couple purchased this bark painting for $1000. On the plane, the American said to my friends: 'They must think there is an American sucker born every day'. He knew he was being ripped off. He was fortunate to be rich enough that it did not upset him unduly.

Mr Speaker, if that sort of practice is followed regularly by tourist operators, the Northern Territory will very quickly get a bad name.

Mr Hatton: Did you report it to the commission?

Mr SMITH: I would report it to the commission if there was a tourist complaint tribunal such as the honourable minister promised us at the beginning of the year. We still do not have it and the tourist season is almost over.

I do not want to suggest that we move into licensing these people because it is very difficult to license every tourist operator in the Northern Territory and it could well be counterproductive. I want to point out once again that there are problems in that area. There are people operating in the field who think that the tourist business is the way to the easy dollar. It will have a very adverse effect on our tourist industry if we do not nip that sort of thing in the bud very quickly. With those comments, I conclude.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to speak at great length except to say that I believe that the Tourist Commission is doing an excellent job in bringing tourists to the Northern Territory. It gives us an opportunity to look at some of the figures on what is happening in the industry throughout Australia.

Before I go on, I would like to refer to the member for Millner's comments on the different statistics. I might point out that there are different points of view which are based on different figures. The Northern Territory Tourist Commission's figures err on the conservative side. Our Tourist Commission's figures are based on a growth pattern estimate of some 15%. When I visited the commission in Alice Springs recently to obtain some evidence on another matter, I had an opportunity to speak to the Australian Tourist Information Bureau about the same estimates that it was compiling on the Northern Territory. It was using a forward projection growth of 17%. I visited the 2 major airlines in Alice Springs to find out what their projections were for airline growth patterns within the Northern Territory. In the central region, they were using a growth pattern percentage projection of some 20%. There are different points of view. What we are saying is that our projected figures are conservative.

The member for Millner commented that we have not made any big inroads into the tourist market. We may not have made an enormous inroad into the overseas tourist market as yet but we have only been attacking that market for a very short time. Results will take some time to show up but I believe that they will show up. What we must remember is that the overseas tourists who are coming to the Northern Territory are extremely valuable to us for a slightly different reason. I was not aware of this but the majority of overseas tourists come to the Northern Territory in the northern winter and that helps regulate the market in the Northern Territory for a longer period of time. We do not have massive peaks and lows and I think that is important.

Tourist numbers from some overseas areas will be increased significantly next year. Members may have read - certainly the Northern Wanderer has a very good article on it - about Halley's Comet which, it is believed, will attract a considerable number of people late this year and early next year culminating possibly with some 80 000 to 90 000 visitors over a 6-week period in March-April next year. In fact, the numbers are certainly causing some concern to Alice Springs people at the moment. There is a working committee comprised of the Alice Springs Town Council, the Tourist Commission, the tourist operators themselves, the transport authorities and all the hotels to make sure that we provide a high level of service to the overseas and interstate visitors who will come to Alice Springs to view this comet. I believe it will achieve that aim.

Other factors will increase tourist numbers in the next year or so. Some of them have been mentioned. One is the completion and sealing of the South Road. Another is the construction and manning of the Tindal RAAF base. That will have a significant effect. I found that strange when I was first told that because I thought it would only attract the base personnel and support staff who cannot be considered as tourists. But I was not aware of the significant number of people who come to the Northern Territory to visit relatives and friends who live in the Northern Territory. They constitute a very significant number of the interstate tourists to the Northern Territory.

We have opened overseas offices now in Frankfurt, London, Tokyo, Los Angeles and Singapore and have appointed representatives in New Zealand. The bureaux within Australia have been expanded by 4 to 11. We expanded our sales force from 1 to 8 during 1984-85. The single sales force member whom we had in the previous period assisted in producing an enormous increase in tourist numbers so an increased sales force of 8 should have a significant effect on the 1985-86 figures.

As I mentioned earlier, the airlines have started to project increases in the number of travellers coming to the Northern Territory. In the past, it has been a thrust-push method of trying to get people into the Northern Territory. In the past, the airlines tended to wait until the number of tourists coming here forced the waiting lists to become so extended that they included additional aircraft in their scheduling. I was pleased to find out the other day that they have changed that method and are supporting the tourist market by forward projections. They are starting to work up models of where they need to include additional flights throughout the Northern Territory not only to cope with general demand but to cater for possible demand from people who will not sit around and wait but who want to get on a particular package tour straight away.

The convention market in the Northern Territory is starting to grow. One of members of the commission, Eunice Metcalfe, has been working as the

convention coordinator for some 11 months. People involved in conventions realise that venues are selected at least 2 years in advance and, in some cases, 3 or 4 years. We are just now starting to reap the benefits of working our way into the convention market around Australia. We have linked into the other bureaux around Australia and we are on the convention listing. We will start to see the benefits of this late this year when some major conventions come to Darwin, and particularly next year when the Beaufort Convention Centre opens.

Something that I was not aware of is that the commission believes that the America's Cup in Perth will have an incredible spin-off into the Northern Territory by providing an alternative venue for pre and post-America's Cup tours. Because the America's Cup will be held in Perth, the attractions of Ayers Rock and the Great Barrier Reef will stimulate travel both ways: west-east and east-west. I believe it will produce larger visitor numbers in the 1985-86-87 period.

Mr DONDAS (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I really did not expect the member for Millner to jump up on his feet and shout out that he thought it was a good statement and things were going well. I knew that he would take the approach of gloom and doom. However, the first matters he raised in debate were casinos and contingent liabilities. We are all aware of that. The point is that the opposition fails to understand why there is government liability in relation to tourist infrastructure and, of course, the casino acquisitions. He said that, if we are not going to do so well with the Sheratons, we may not need them. The point is that, over the years, the development of the Northern Territory has been approached in such an ad hoc way that we have never been able to plan for the future. Everything in the Northern Territory that was needed today was done tomorrow. This government has taken the conscientious decision to plan for the future. That is what the members opposite fail to understand. All this planning is for the future.

I would like to bet the member for Millner $10 that, if he tries to get a hotel room in Alice Springs on Saturday night at any of the leading establishments, he will not get one. That is how quiet the place is. Last Saturday, we conducted a telephone survey in Alice Springs of the 7 leading eating establishments and not 1 of those establishments could take a booking for 4 people for that night. That happens Wednesday nights, Thursday nights and Friday nights. All traders down there are saying that things are pretty busy. In fact, if it were not for the fact that I usually stay at the Oasis Motel and have been doing so for 11 years, often I would not be able to get accommodation - and I am the Minister for Tourism. What the members opposite fail to understand is that all this planning is for the future.

We spoke about our bureaux figures which are up 10%. The explanation is that, if it is $10.7m this year, then last year it must have been around $9.7m. It is a simple matter of working out the percentage increase so I really cannot understand what his particular point about that is. In relation to the discrepancy between the 16% and 20% figures, I said in the statement that visitor nights have increased to an average of 11 nights and that represents an increase of 20%. That would mean that more people were spending more money. The statement presented by the Treasurer reads: 'The Territory's major growth industry during 1984-85 was, as expected, tourism, with recorded increases of over 20% in both takings and activity'. The statement on the tourism monitor relates to the visitors. This relates to income because our income, as indicated in the statement, was $281m for the

1984-85 financial year. I would certainly hope that that satisfies the honourable member. Let me reiterate that the Northern Territory government sees tourism as being very important for the future development of the Northern Territory.

The honourable member for Ludmilla highlighted several points relating to the aviation industry. We are taking specific measures to try to encourage more international operators into the region. At the moment, some 14 or 15 international airlines have landing rights into Darwin but they are not using them. The reason why they are not using them is that it would cost about $5000 to land in Darwin a 747 which is en route to another port. We intend trying to encourage those international air carriers to call at Darwin at least once a month. If they do not want to call at Darwin that often, we would request the federal government to cancel their landing rights. Then other organisations which do not have landing rights at Darwin would be able at least to make an approach. British Airways has had landing rights since the early 1950s but it has not landed planes here since just after Cyclone Tracy. I believe pressure can be put on some of those international carriers once our new infrastructure, the Sheraton and the Beaufort, is in place.

The other point made by the member for Ludmilla concerned conventions. The Northern Territory, especially Alice Springs, can become the convention centre of Australia if it is marketed correctly. We cannot do that if there are no 4-star or 5-star hotels. When you are talking about holding conventions, you are talking about 1500 to 2000 people. We believe that, once infrastructure is in place, there is no reason why we will not be in a position to market that properly.

The debate has been interesting from my point of view because I know that we will be talking about tourism and the financial implications of the budget later in the year. I would be happy to have a briefing arranged for the member opposite on the reasons why the Northern Territory Tourist Commission's budget exceeds $10m in the 1985-86 financial year in contrast to the $13m that was allocated for 1984-85. There are specific reasons. I will highlight them again. There has been a massive movement by the Tourist Commission in opening new offices, not only at the national level but at the suburban level and the international level. There has been a relocation of our marketing division from central Australia into Sydney. There have been relocations of bureau offices from one part of King Street to another. All that costs money. There has been very significant expenditure on a promotional film. This has cost the Northern Territory Tourist Commission about $800 000. That certainly sounds like a large expense but it will be at least a 32 to 35-minute feature film and some shorter 10-minute segments will be taken out of this particular film. Other private promotion material will also be obtained from that film. When you start adding the costs of the feature film, the relocation of offices and the establishment of offices, you can see that these require large expenditures. For example, opening the Hobart office cost $90 000. We do not have to open another Hobart office next year. All this information can be made available to the member for Millner. I am sure he is quite genuine in his concern that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission may have problems because its level of funding is not as high as it was in the 1984-85 financial year.

Whilst we are moving into the international scene, there is a reluctance on the part of the Tourist Commission to spend large sums on promotional activities for those particular offices. We cannot do that until such time as our infrastructure is in place. As most members opposite would know, it takes

time to get your product into the marketplace in Europe. In fact, I am told that, for a country to get its product into the wholesaler's market, is certainly a painstaking ordeal. It can take from 6 to 12 months to get 4 or 5 products into a particular wholesale magazine. That is what we will be concentrating on in the next 12 months. We will be working very closely through our overseas offices, especially in Europe, with travel agents and wholesalers. We will not need to spend large sums on promotion because our particular strategy will be to hold close and deliberate consultations with those wholesalers.

I will give the Deputy Leader of the Opposition an example. I am informed that some 18 000 people from Holland go to Bali each year. I am also told that the international traffic to Bali is 185 000 international tourists a year. The commission tells me that, if we can get Dutch wholesalers to incorporate in their wholesale magazines an extra Bali-Darwin trip at a very small expense - about $US90 - we might be able to encourage a few more Dutch citizens to come here. After all, the Northern Territory played a significant role when the Dutch were in power in the Dutch East Indies in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Many of our place names, such as Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt, come from Dutch citizens. If we can break into that market of 17 000 to 18 000 people who visit Bali, we would obtain a higher percentage of international traffic into Darwin with very little effort. It is not that important that we should spend $0.5m in promotion in Holland when it could be done a little bit cheaper. The point is that the Tourist Commission budget will allow it to operate in a highly functional manner as it has in 1984-85.

Our promotional material cost a lot of money last year. It does cost a lot of money to obtain film footage and provide the necessary resources for a good promotional campaign. We have footage that is not outdated and can still be used. At the same time, we expect a greater role from the industry. The government cannot continue to support the industry forever. The industry has to start playing its part in the promotion of the Northern Territory. We hope that the industry will pick up a small amount of promotion expenses which will partially offset the slight shortfall that may appear to exist. As I said, this will be debated more fully later in the year.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Composition of Bench of Supreme Court of the Northern Territory

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, upon self-government in 1978, the responsibility for the Supreme Court was not transferred to the Northern Territory government. Following negotiations with the Commonwealth, the transfer of responsibility was subsequently effected in 1979. As a consequence, the relevant Commonwealth act governing the Supreme Court was repealed and this Assembly enacted the Supreme Court Act. At the time, Sir William Forster became the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He has recently retired from that office and his successor in an acting capacity has been Mr Justice Muirhead. He in turn has indicated for some time his intention to retire at the end of September. The Territory government has accepted this with regret. I will say a little more about His Honour shortly.

It is now appropriate to indicate to the Assembly the Territory government's decision in respect of the successor to this office. Following careful consideration of the matter, it has been decided to recommend to the

Administrator that Mr Justice O'Leary be appointed to the position of Chief Justice. You will be aware that Mr Justice O'Leary is already a member of the Supreme Court bench and has had a long and distinguished career. This includes a distinguished war service record, a lengthy period in academic legal work, extensive experience as a solicitor and barrister, culminating in his appointment as Queen's Counsel, lengthy service to the legal profession leading to his appointment as President of the Law Council of Australia as well as numerous other appointments and offices. He was an acting judge of the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea before being appointed as an acting judge of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 1982. This appointment has since been extended on a permanent basis. It would take too long to detail all His Honour's qualifications and experience and I do not intend to attempt that at this time. Suffice it to say that I am more than satisfied that he would be a worthy appointment to this most important judicial position and I am most pleased that he is able to accept this appointment.

Let me now make a few remarks about the career of His Honour Mr Justice Muirhead. In my estimation, his has been a career of great distinction and service to the Territory and its people. He is a person who has demonstrated an interest in and concern for all aspects of Territory life. His Honour came from a family with a legal tradition going back to his grandfather. His father was the chief police magistrate in South Australia for many years. His Honour followed in their footsteps and, after war service, was admitted as a legal practitioner in South Australia. He became a senior partner in the firm of Thompson and Co, specialising in civil litigation. He took silk in 1967.

His career changed direction when he took up an appointment as a judge of the local and district criminal court in 1970, followed by a short period as a relieving judge of the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea in 1972. I understand that it was during this time in New Guinea that he developed his interest in law among more primitive communities and their adaptation to western influences. This interest has continued since coming to the Territory. It has been displayed in his breadth of learning in dealing with Aboriginal law and traditions and their relationships to European law.

His Honour had a break of about 1½ years during which he was instrumental in setting up the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra. He followed this by his appointment to the Territory Supreme Court in 1974. In his period as a judge of the Territory Supreme Court, he has presided over numerous trials, many of great complexity. His knowledge in the law is profound and his compassion for his fellow man is great. He has always demonstrated a particular concern and compassion for members of minorities and for the common man.

His Honour has also developed a great fondness for the outdoor life in the Territory, an interest fostered by hobbies of bushwalking and camping. His community activities should not be overlooked. He was founding Chairman of the Northern Territory Law Review Committee, Chairman of the Darwin Theatre Group and Chairman of the Winston Churchill Fellowship Committee. He is currently Chairman of the Parole Board. He is also the patron of the Northern Territory Crafts Council and a supporter of the arts. He has a keen interest in literature generally and poetry in particular. His wife Margaret has also made an outstanding contribution to Territory life through a variety of organisations.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Territory government, I wish His Honour and his family the very best for the future and thank him for his services in the past. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I rise to add the opposition's congratulations to Mr Justice O'Leary on his appointment as Chief Justice of the Northern Territory and also to add to the comments of the Attorney-General on the service given to the Northern Territory by Mr Justice Muirhead. We in the Northern Territory have been very lucky in the quality of judges whom we have had in the last few years. They have a particularly difficult legal environment within which to operate and I think no one would dispute that. The racial composition of the Northern Territory and the seemingly unlimited capacity of the Northern Territory to turn up spectacular crimes at times has made their job very difficult and, at other times, it has made their job very interesting indeed. I am sure that judges in the Northern Territory have a much wider range of experience than judges in other jurisdictions.

I think that our judges, particularly Mr Justice Muirhead, have earned a reputation for themselves as being liberal judges in the best sense of the word 'liberal'. They have been aware of the need for the legal system to work within the confines of general society. They have not insisted on strict legal interpretations and strict legal values. They have been very aware of the nature of the society that they have worked in. Certainly, we owe Mr Justice Muirhead and other judges such as Sir William Forster a very real debt of gratitude for their ability to relate the workings of the law in the Northern Territory to the wider community. Mr Justice O'Leary will follow in that distinguished tradition and I am sure that we can look forward to continuing high quality work from him in his position as Chief Justice and from his other judges.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to take the opportunity to say a few words about Mrs Muirhead. The Attorney-General made brief reference to her involvement in many organisations, and certainly that is true. She has been particularly involved in her time in the Territory in questions relating to the status of women. She had a large degree of responsibility for setting up the first International Year for Women Committee in 1975 and she has continued an active interest and involvement on that committee. She is convener of the United Nations Australia Association Status of Women Committee. She was the executive director of the YWCA for 5 years and is still on the board of the YWCA. I guess she would be leaving with mixed feelings, particularly at this time. In its involvement with YY Enterprises, the YWCA formed the board of management of Larrakeyah Lodge and was very successfully involved in the provision of low-cost accommodation in Darwin. It is unfortunate that much of the good work she did in the setting up of Larrakeyah Lodge is about to be destroyed. As I understand it, the government is still proceeding with the plan to demolish Larrakeyah Lodge in the very near future. Margaret Muirhead has made a very significant contribution to the affairs of the Northern Territory. As with her husband, she will be missed when they leave. Certainly, they go with the best wishes of us all.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is more than appropriate but also a pleasure that I rise to support the statement made by the Attorney-General on the appointment of Mr Justice O'Leary to the Chief Justice position.

One of the things that politicians in the Northern Territory have become comfortable with is the fact that the Chief Justice has always been a man of great quality and substance. We have never had to worry about our court system; it has proceeded in a very smooth manner. I think that reflects the role of the judges that we have had over the years. Sir William Forster made a tremendous contribution to the judicial system in the Northern Territory at a particularly interesting stage of our development. He was sadly missed when he went. It is always difficult to find a replacement for someone like Sir William. We thought we had a lucky break in Mr Justice Muirhead being available to do the job. However, he made it quite plain at an early stage that he would be retiring and would not be taking on any permanent role as Chief Justice. That left us again with the question of how to obtain a successor for 2 such talented men.

I believe that we have been extremely fortunate in obtaining the services of our new Chief Justice. He is already regarded very highly in the Northern Territory legal profession and he is well regarded in the general Northern Territory community. He is a man who does the job because he loves the law and he loves the Northern Territory. I welcome Mr Justice O'Leary to the position and I wish him well. His days ahead will be difficult but I am sure that he will cope with them in the way that he has coped during the rest of his career, and that is in an exemplary fashion.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Draft Unit Titles Amendment Bill

Mr HATTON (Lands)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table a draft bill to amend the Unit Titles Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the draft bill I have just tabled provides amendments to the Unit Titles Act and it is my intention that it should lie on the table of the Assembly for sufficient time to allow public comment on the proposed legislation. We intend that the legislation in its final form will be introduced during the November sittings this year.

It has been apparent for some time that the Unit Titles Act has not kept pace with property development in the Territory. The act in its present form was introduced in the Territory primarily to facilitate the development of residential accommodation. As honourable members will be aware, there has been enormous building development in the Territory in the past few years and the indications are that the next half-decade will see developments on a larger scale in the Territory, not only in home units but also in commercial and industrial unit subdivisions. To keep pace with the volume and nature of developments that are taking and will take place - that is to say, large, multi-purpose developments - amendments to the Unit Titles Act and the Real Property Unit Titles Act are considered necessary.

It is interesting to note that, in recent years, both New South Wales and Queensland have made substantial amendments similar to those contemplated in this draft bill to keep pace with the developments pursuant to the equivalent acts in those states. It is not proposed to table draft legislation at this sittings to amend the Real Property Unit Titles Act. That act is complementary to the Unit Titles Act and generally prescribes the duties of the office of the Registrar-General when registering titles of units resulting from unit plans of subdivision. The amendments proposed for the Unit Titles

Act are new to the Territory. Not only do they represent a change to the procedures of the Registrar-General but they also represent changes for the functions of the Surveyor-General, the Valuer-General and the Department of Lands in many cases, especially in the manner of maintaining real property title records in the computer-based, land information system. The procedural solutions have not yet been entirely resolved by the above officers to the extent that the final form of amendments to the Real Property Unit Titles Act will depend on the public response to the draft bill I am tabling today.

The definition of 'unit' in the act at present is giving rise to some concern because it is somewhat ambiguous. Further, the concept of a unit subsidiary is cumbersome both theoretically and practically. Unit subsidiaries are generally balconies, garages or external staircases attached to units and do not come within the boundary of the unit. To overcome these problems, the definition of 'unit' has been clarified and amended so that the concept of 'unit subsidiary' is no longer necessary. This will mean that balconies, garages and the like can be included within the unit boundary. In this legislation, the boundary of the unit title, where it is not specifically stated otherwise in plans, will be the surface of the internal walls. This is in contrast to the present boundary which is the centre line between the surface of the exterior wall and the surface of the interior wall.

The present Unit Titles Act and Real Properties Unit Titles Act do not allow for redevelopment of a units plan that has been registered at the office of the Registrar-General. Currently, if a unit owner wishes to add a balcony or a verandah or garage outside the boundary of the unit as shown in the registered plan, the units plan would first have to be cancelled by making an application to the Supreme Court for an order that the whole plan be cancelled and, as a consequence, for the body corporate to be dissolved. The amendments proposed in the draft bill will allow for a units plan to be altered by the registration of an amended unit plan reflecting the actual alteration to the property. Of course, a number of steps will need to be gone through to achieve such registration. There must be a unanimous resolution of the body corporate to the redevelopment of a units complex and a units plan showing the alterations drawn by a licensed surveyor and to be certified by the surveyor. The plan must have the approval of all relevant authorities - for example, the Planning Authority and the building controller - before being registered.

As well, the bill contains provisions in clause 5 for defining what is meant by subdivision for the consolidation of lots and the conversion of lots to common property. Clause 14 of the bill sets out the requirements for registration not only of original unit plans but also for amended plans, plans of consolidation and plans of conversion.

These provisions are complementary to clause 19 of the draft bill which will allow a developer to develop a site in stages. The concept of developing land in stages is not new. It is already theoretically possible in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and the idea is a natural progression in the development of the concept of using the strata or unit method for issuing titles to property. New South Wales introduced a bill earlier this year to achieve staged development. However, the design of its proposed legislation is somewhat different to that proposed in the Territory. Staged development or condominium development, as it is described in the bill, will not be available to every developer of units. Only the larger projects with at least 20 units in each stage will be considered for this type of construction.

There need be no concern that the prospective purchasers of units in a development to be completed in stages will suffer detriment. To the contrary, clause 19 of the bill illustrates that a prospective purchaser will be able to exercise a number of checks and balances on a developer. A developer would have to apply to the Planning Authority for a consent to develop in stages. As part of that application, he would have to submit a disclosure statement which would show in detail all stages in the development. This statement must be lodged with the Registrar-General so that it is available to be searched by all members of the public. Should the developer wish to deviate from the statement, he must obtain the consent of all members of the body corporate; that is, to alter the plans for the complex, a vote by the body corporate would be required. For the purposes of such a vote, each registered proprietor, including the developer, would be entitled to 1 vote and voting would not be in accordance with the proprietor's unit entitlement. This would ensure that at no stage will the developer be able to outvote the other members of the body corporate.

Should a developer for some reason be unable to complete the total complex, the draft bill provides for another developer to step in and complete the scheme as per the disclosure statement. Alternatively, the remaining stages can be subdivided and sold off, therefore ensuring that owners of units can be paid damages for any loss suffered by virtue of the fact that the complex was not completed. If the developer does not build in accordance with the disclosure statement, the body corporate could apply to the Supreme Court for an order appropriate in all the circumstances. The developer too gains from these provisions of the draft bill in that they allow him to sell off one stage at a time, thereby having a source of finance for subsequent stages.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the draft bill provides for the developer of a units complex to hold, within 2 months from the registration of the units plan or for the first stage thereof, the first annual general meeting. To assist the developer to hold the meeting, the bill specifies, in clauses 37 and 38, precisely what matters are to be determined at that meeting.

Clause 41 of the draft bill provides for the amount of public liability insurance carried by each body corporate to be prescribed as not less than the sum of $2m. The figure at present is $250 000. Given the amounts that courts are awarding in common law actions these days, $250 000 seems to be inordinately low. I must point out that, should an award for damages consequent upon an injury occurring in a block of units be in excess of $250 000, then the individual owners of the units would have to contribute to the amount out of their own pockets, provided of course that the public liability policy was for only $250 000. While the figure of $2m may at first seem high, it is apparent that the figure should cover most foreseeable public liability risks for a number of years to come.

At present, there is no provision in the Unit Titles Act for the name of the body corporate, the address for service of documents on the body corporate or the names of the members of the body corporate committee to be registered with the Registrar-General. Such a provision is contained in clause 26 of the draft bill. This would ensure that any person, particularly a prospective purchaser, when he searches a unit title, would be able to ascertain readily, for instance, to whom a request for information pursuant to section 36 of the act should be addressed.

It has been necessary also to reassess and expand those areas of the principal act considered to be deficient in ensuring that a body corporate

will conduct its affairs in a manner conducive to good management. Purchasing a unit, whether it be for family living or manufacturing, is taking a decision to live within a community on the 1 parcel of land. Community decisions and community management will ultimately determine the success of the corporate venture. Clauses 30 to 41 generally cover the revised areas of corporate management.

The amendments proposed to the Unit Titles Act are the result of the continuing evolution in the concept of unit titling. If worthwhile developments are to be attracted to the Territory, these amendments are necessary. Not only will the proposed amendments assist developers, they will also give a great deal of protection to prospective purchasers of unit titles. The government is sure that the proposed amendments will be accepted by the community and the industry. It is intended to distribute this draft bill to all groups who have an interest in the concept of unit titling and allow ample time for comments to be submitted on the proposed changes. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
2-Airline Policy

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of honourable members to the Northern Territory's submission to the Independent Review of Economic Regulation of Domestic Aviation, otherwise known as the review of the 2-airline policy. I welcome this review as it gives the Territory an opportunity to express its long-standing concerns about Australia's airline industry and offers the hope of better things to come.

The 2-airline policy was introduced in 1952 against a background of fear of monopoly, desire to maintain competition between the 2 major airlines and belief that the market could not support more than 2 major operators. The 33 years since have seen dramatic changes in Australia's aviation industry. As an illustration, the Sydney-Melbourne market now supports the same number of passengers that were carried by the total industry in 1952. However, airline levels, airline seating capacity and airline equipment types are still regulated in 1985.

The infant industry approach which underpinned the original 2-airline policy is no longer appropriate. I submit to honourable members that it is time that the infant was weaned and encouraged to function as a mature adult. Although there has been some improvement in schedules recently, the results of the 2-airline policy on Northern Territory routes are well known to every member of this Assembly: parallel scheduling, rationalisation of services during the wet season, inconvenient schedules and high load factors which often make it difficult to secure a reservation on the desired flight.

These practices are symptoms of a regulatory system where competition is controlled. It encourages the airlines to focus on a jet network which is designed mainly to service the specific needs of south-eastern Australia. The threat of entry to the industry is removed and the stimulus to efficiency and entrepreneurial responsiveness is severely compromised. In short, the existing arrangements prevent the airline industry from operating in an efficient manner.

When formulating a submission, the Northern Territory surveyed recent overseas experience in economic regulation of aviation. The United States commenced deregulation of its domestic airline industry in 1978. Hence, there is 7 years' experience to observe. In liberalising its own economic controls, the United States was influenced by the role of potential competition through threat of entry to particular markets. This limits the exercise of monopoly power. The United States community has benefited from the new competitive market through more efficient airlines competing aggressively on price. In response, the air travel market has expanded in that country. It is important to note, and I draw the attention of honourable members to this point, that the United States has retained control over qualitative entry to the industry, trade practices, consumer protection and services to small communities. The latter is supported by an explicit subsidy scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the United States is not alone in reforming regulation of its domestic airline industry. Canada, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand have all relaxed economic regulations in the last 2 years. This has been due to the lessons learnt from the United States' experience and market forces placing tight regulatory regimes under pressure. I might add that market forces, primarily evidenced by the activities of East-West Airlines, have placed our own regulatory regime under pressure. In general, the overseas approach has been to allow free entry to the industry and to let market forces set prices. This has been accompanied by mechanisms designed to control restrictive trade practices and to maintain small community services.

When applying overseas experience to Australia, it is important to note that Australian aviation is considerably smaller than the United States or Canadian industries. Other aspects are also different. For example, successful United States airlines have concentrated on hubbing whereas there is little potential for that here. Another example is that, unlike the United States, long, thin routes are an important feature of the Australian market. All of this points to the need for a homegrown, regulatory environment for Australia which will promote airline efficiency and provide what the customer wants.

The Northern Territory has proposed what has been termed a workable solution. It has been developed within the context of Australian market characteristics, constitutional background to economic regulation, operational considerations and aviation infrastructure constraints. The main features of the proposed regulatory environment are free entry to the industry subject to qualitative control, free entry to routes, market forces to determine air fares, no control on industry capacity or equipment, no control of profits and a mechanism to check restrictive trade practices.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I submit that the above criteria must be incorporated in any future regulatory regime governing Australian domestic aviation. The Northern Territory has proposed that an air services commission reporting to the Minister for Aviation replace the existing regulatory apparatus. Its principal functions will be to determine the fitness of potential airline operators for entry to the industry, to monitor industry pricing and competitive practices, to direct industry members to desist from anti-competitive behaviour when this has been identified and to provide an annual report on competitive performance of the industry.

The air services commission mechanism will serve the public interest through increasing consumer choice and by promoting economic efficiency through competition. The major attributes of the regulatory environment

proposed by the Northern Territory are: it facilitates competition under any foreseeable industry size and structure; it affords appropriate roles for existing carriers; it provides for new entrants to the industry and expansion of existing industry members; it allows market forces to determine air fares and pertaining conditions thereby removing barriers to cost efficiency; and it provides checks on predatory pricing, monopoly pricing and anti-competitive behaviour.

As well as possessing the attributes outlined, the recommendations to the independent review are pragmatic and workable. They were not dreamed up in the halls of academia. It is no use advancing something that cannot be implemented. That is just a waste of time.

Obviously, my statement has touched only the edges of what is a complex issue. All honourable members have previously received a copy of the Northern Territory's submission. It contains a full discussion of the points I have mentioned and I commend it to all honourable members. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

URGENCY
Prisons (Correctional Services) Amendment Bill
(Serial 147)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, Mr Speaker has received the following letter from the honourable Chief Minister:

'My dear Speaker,

Prisons (Correctional Services) Amendment 1985 (Serial 147)

Pursuant to standing order 153, I request that you declare the above bill to be an urgent bill. You are no doubt aware that an inmate of the Darwin Prison has been identified as suffering from the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). In order to ensure the good health and safety of both prisoners and staffing at Territory institutions, it is essential the Director of Correctional Services has the legislative power to compel prisoners to undergo a medical examination. If it is not compulsory for prisoners to undergo medical examination, the health of other prisoners and prison staff may be at risk. The public could also be at risk when a prisoner is released into the community.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Tuxworth
Chief Minister'.

Honourable members, Mr Speaker has considered the Chief Minister's request and, in accordance with standing order 153, has declared the Prisons (Correctional Services) Amendment Bill 1985 to be an urgent bill.

PRISONS (CORRECTIONAL SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 147)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, due to media comment, honourable members are probably aware that an inmate of Darwin Prison has been identified as suffering from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS as it is more commonly known. The prisoner concerned was transferred to this jurisdiction in late July from South Australia where his condition was originally diagnosed. Currently, he is isolated from other prisoners to prevent the spread of the disease and is under close and regular medical observation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, because the South Australian authorities were able to give us advance notice of this man's condition, with the cooperation of the Minister for Health, it was possible to introduce an extensive campaign for prisoners and staff at all Northern Territory prisons aimed at giving them the facts about the disease. As a result of this program, the majority of prisoners have participated voluntarily in tests which seek to find out if they are carriers of AIDS or not. Similarly, staff at all institutions are being tested also. I am happy to announce that, of the tests completed so far, not one has revealed the presence of the virus either in staff members or prisoners. Unfortunately, however, 2 prisoners at Gunn Point Prison Farm and a further 2 at Darwin Prison have refused to be tested and legal opinion is that there is some doubt as to whether they can be compelled to participate in a testing program or not.

Prisons are environments where individuals are held in close physical proximity. The sexes are confined separately and homosexual activity is always possible. For numerous reasons, violence can be endemic between inmates and between inmates and staff. Overcrowding exacerbates these problems. It is worth while noting that, as late as last Friday, 372 prisoners were being held in our prisons and that number is over the capacity for which they were designed. As AIDS is a sexually-transmitted disease that can also be contracted through contaminated blood, saliva and other body fluids, it can be seen that prisons are places where this or other infectious disease might flourish. Indeed, overseas experiences have demonstrated a higher incidence of the disease amongst prison inmates than in the general community.

The refusal of any inmate to participate in an AIDS screening program raises the spectre of an unknown disease carrier in the prison environment infecting other prisoners who in turn may infect members of the public upon their release to the general community. Officers working in the prison environment could also be at risk in this situation. It is a potential problem which can be avoided by sensible, practical humane diagnosis and treatment. Honourable members have noted the concern felt by the public about the disease. You can imagine how much more intense this concern is in a prison setting and what a potential it has for disturbing the good order and security that is necessary for the safe running of a penal institution.

It is essential that the Director of Correctional Services have the legislative power to ensure the good health and safety both of prisoners and staff and this can be effected by giving him the power to compel prisoners to undertake those tests decided necessary by his medical advisers. The proposed amendment deliberately does not mention AIDS as the same concerns exist in relation to other infectious diseases. No additional funding will be required to implement the amendment; neither will there be a need for any additional staff. It may be that the bill will meet some opposition from certain

sections of the community who may see it as an infringement of personal liberties, but I am convinced that, without it, unacceptable risks to the community will be incurred and the administration of our prisons will be constrained. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition will certainly support the passage of this legislation this evening. I thank the honourable minister for making his officers available to both myself and the Leader of the Opposition for a briefing on this matter. That is why we have no difficulty in supporting the passage of this legislation now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, undoubtedly there is concern amongst the community, and certainly persons within this Assembly would feel some discomfort, at the growing encroachment upon civil liberties which is generally forced upon us day by day by one extreme event or another. Unfortunately, this measure is necessary and that is why we have no difficulty in supporting this bill.

However, the potential for the spread of these diseases amongst the prison population highlights a problem that has been raised in this Assembly before and that is the inability of our present prison system to isolate prisoners who may have extremely contagious diseases and also those unfortunate prisoners who are the victims of profound psychiatric disorders. I would hope that the honourable Minister for Community Development is able at some stage in the very near future to inform the Assembly of what facilities can be made available permanently for these unfortunate people. I reiterate the support of the opposition.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

URGENCY
Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment Bill (Serial 148)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, Mr Speaker has received the following letter from the honourable Chief Minister:

'My dear Speaker,

Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment Bill 1985 (Serial 148)

Pursuant to standing order 153, I request that you declare the above bill to be an urgent bill. When the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act was amended in 1984, amongst other things, it was intended that any judge of the Supreme Court could be appointed, from time to time, to constitute the Motor Accidents Compensation Appeal Tribunal as the need arose. However, there is now a view that a specifically appointed judge may be required to constitute the tribunal. It is most desirable that this anomaly be rectified as soon as possible so that the work of the tribunal can proceed. Any delay in the passage of this bill would cause hardship to those persons whose cases are

currently under consideration by the Motor Accidents Compensation Appeal Tribunal.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Tuxworth
Chief Minister'.

Honourable members, Mr Speaker has considered the Chief Minister's request and, in accordance with standing order 153, has declared the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment Bill to be an urgent one.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 148)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to rectify an apparent anomaly relating to the appointment of judges to the Motor Accidents Compensation Appeal Tribunal under section 28 of the act. This section was amended as part of a wide-ranging change made to the act in 1984. As a technical amendment, for the purposes of greater clarification, the words 'appointed by the Chief Justice' were added. However, there is now a view that this may have had the effect of altering the original meaning of the section such that a specifically-appointed judge may now be required to constitute the tribunal. The original intention of the section, and administratively the most satisfactory arrangement, was that any judge of the Supreme Court should be able to be appointed from time to time as the need arose. While this doubt exists, there could be delays in hearing appeals to the tribunal and it is therefore considered desirable, as a matter of urgency, to amend this section by deleting the words 'appointed by the Chief Justice'.

At the same time, the opportunity is being taken to amend the references in section 10B to the 'Workmen's Compensation Act' to replace them with 'Workers' Compensation Act'. The purpose of this amendment is self-explanatory and accords with similar amendments being made elsewhere to such references.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have discussed this matter with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and he has agreed to support the passage of this bill through all stages at this sittings. I am grateful for his support in this matter because it really is important.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to confirm that the honourable Chief Minister is correct for once.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TUXWORTH (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.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 143)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

During the debate on the Chief Minister's statement on Aboriginal residential areas on pastoral properties in the April sittings of the Assembly, I foreshadowed the possibility of amending legislation to ensure that Aboriginals who are not eligible for the grant of a community living area do not take up permanent residence on a pastoral property under the misapprehension that they are entitled to do so under the provisions of section 24(2) of the Crown Lands Act. Therefore, the principal purpose of this bill is to make clear that the intention of the reservation contained in a lease under the Crown Lands Act permitting Aboriginals to enter and be on the leased land with one exception does not include the right to establish a permanent residence on the leased land. I will explain this exception when I address the bill in detail.

The government is anxious to ensure that excisions from pastoral leases of living areas for Aboriginal communities are carried out with a minimum of delay and, wherever possible, are achieved as a result of negotiated agreements between the eligible interested Aboriginal groups and the pastoralists. Pastoral lessees, while supporting the provision of living areas, have expressed concern that misinterpretation of the provisions of section 24(2) of the Crown Lands Act could result in erosion of good management and prejudice amicable negotiations.

I turn now to the amendment bill. Honourable members will observe that there are 3 categories of Aboriginals recognised in the proposed new subsection. Two of these groups are identical to those described in the current wording of the legislation; that is, Aboriginal inhabitants of the Northern Territory who ordinarily reside on the leased land and those who, by Aboriginal tradition, are entitled to use or occupy the leased land. The government recognises a third group and these are the Aboriginals who live in an area of land that was part of a pastoral lease but which has been excised as a living area. The first of these living areas to be registered was a special purpose lease granted to the Mbungara Community Incorporated near Narwietooma Pastoral Lease on 11 May 1979.

The government is currently negotiating for 24 living areas as a direct result of initiatives announced in April this year. All 3 categories of Aboriginals will still be able to enjoy the traditional rights and privileges of entering and being on pastoral land identified by the legislation, taking and using natural waters, hunting and gathering vegetable matter. However, the only Aboriginals who will be able to reside on the leased land are those Aboriginals who ordinarily reside on the leased land and then at no other place than where they ordinarily reside. This has always been the intention of section 24(2) and I draw honourable members' attention to chapter 4 of the report by Mr Justice Toohey entitled 'Seven Years On', particularly paragraph 102, the tenor of which has been incorporated in the rewording of the section.

This is not an onerous change to the Crown Lands Act. I wish to stress that this bill does not represent a change in policy relating to the rights of

Aboriginal inhabitants of leased land. It is introduced to make clear the intended purpose of section 24(2) of the Crown Lands Act.

The second purpose of this bill is to extend the scope of section 36AA to include term pastoral leases as well as perpetual pastoral leases. This section was commenced on 1 January 1983 together with new legislation concerning the introduction of perpetual pastoral leases. This category of lease is not subject to forfeiture and it was envisaged that it may be difficult and time consuming to force a lessee to carry out important remedial work on his lease without which adjoining properties could be in danger. An obvious situation would be boundary fencing when it is in such a state of disrepair that cattle of adjoining properties can intermingle, thus perhaps mixing disease-free herds with other cattle that are not entirely free from tuberculosis and or brucellosis. This section enables the minister to order urgent remedial work to be carried out and the cost to be recovered from the lessee. The government now believes term pastoral leases should also be subject to this legislation. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION (EXTRA-TERRITORIAL OFFENCES) BILL (Serial 133)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to permit the issue of search warrants in the Territory for the search of premises or persons in the Territory, to enable the seizure of anything that might be related to the commission or suspected commission of an indictable offence in another state or territory where, if the offence were committed here, it would attract criminal liability.

Where an offence is committed or suspected of having been committed in a jurisdiction other than the Territory, there is presently no power in Territory law to issue a search warrant for the search of premises in the Territory for the seizure of objects connected to the investigation of that offence. If an offence has been committed in the Territory, a difficulty in obtaining a search warrant in another state is that no offence has taken place in that state.

At the request of Queensland, the whole problem was brought before the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. The Attorneys-General agreed to the principles presently contained in the bill and the bill is therefore a reciprocal measure with the result that, should the police request assistance in the investigation of offences interstate, the provisions when enacted in those jurisdictions will be of assistance. The Attorneys-General considered the various facets of the problem and a uniform bill has now been prepared by the Parliamentary Counsels Committee which comprises parliamentary counsel from the various states and the Commonwealth. The bill before the Assembly mainly follows the basic uniform bill although some variations have been made to suit Territory conditions.

Provision exists in the bill for the issue of search warrants by a magistrate only upon his being satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an indictable offence has been or is intended to be committed and

that there is at any premises or on any person an object relevant to the investigation of that offence. The magistrate may then issue a search warrant in respect of those premises or persons. Provision is made for the issue of a warrant upon application by a member of the police force either personally or by telephone, although stringent conditions apply when a warrant is sought to be issued by telephone. Where a warrant is sought to be issued by telephone, the bill requires particulars of the member of the Territory police force seeking the warrant to be given to the magistrate, the grounds on which he seeks the warrant and an undertaking from the complainant that, if the warrant is issued, a complaint in writing verifying the facts will be made on oath. Following the giving of the undertaking, a search warrant can be issued by the magistrate and it comes into force when signed by him. The magistrate shall inform the applicant of the terms of the warrant and a copy of the warrant shall be prepared there and then by the Territory police officer. The search will take place by executing a copy warrant.

A police officer is required to produce upon demand particulars of the warrant to the person searched or the occupier of the premises. The officer is also required to give written notice of his name and rank, the name of the magistrate who issued the warrant, the date and time of its issue and a description of any objects that are seized and removed to the person searched or the occupier. The notice is to be given as soon as possible or may be left for the occupier in a prominent place if he is not present. The search warrant remains in existence for a period of 1 month, or 14 days in the case of a telephone warrant, and a person who obstructs the police officer in execution of his duty commits an offence.

This bill, being a reciprocal one, provides for arrangements to be made to enable objects seized in other jurisdictions on behalf of the Territory, or seized in the Territory on behalf of other jurisdictions, to be dealt with in the appropriate manner. It is considered that the provisions of the bill will assist in the investigation of criminal offences and, because of its reciprocity, the Territory police will benefit from legislation of a similar nature when enacted in other jurisdictions. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL
(Serial 137)

Continued from 27 August 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I believe the government is acting in a fairly shabby way today in deferring, by means of statement after statement from ministers, the opposition's opportunity to respond to the budget debate. It is a matter of concern because, from my memory, it is the first time that the opposition has not been given the opportunity to respond immediately after question time. It is practice in the federal house that a budget response be delivered at 8 pm on the appropriate day. It is a shame that this government has delayed the opposition's response until this late hour. Because of that, some of the comments that I am about to make may appear to be repetitious - because they have already been mentioned in other debates that have taken place today.

Mr Speaker, this budget has been described at least in one quarter as a 'good news budget'. I challenge those who hold that view to show me where the

good news can be found; I cannot find it and I am sure thinking Territorians will be unable to find it. In fact, they are still reeling from the taxes and charges imposed by the Treasurer in his June mini-budget. It has been said that the budget was good news for Territorians because it did not include any new taxes and charges. The Treasurer got his pound of flesh in the June mini-budget. Thank goodness for small mercies.

Although the Treasurer received his pound of flesh from all Territorians in the June mini-budget, they did not stop paying for it then. It hits Territorians every time they pay an electricity bill and every time they pay rent or water or sewerage rates. It hits them every time they buy a packet of cigarettes or a beer or even when they send their kids to school on the bus. It is no surprise that the budget contained no new taxes and charges. I would hazard a guess that the Treasurer could not find another slug to hit us with.

This budget has shown, however, the real reasons why Territorians were faced with such massive hikes in taxes and charges just 8 weeks ago. Without doubt, they were increased to pay for the Territory government's prolonged mismanagement of this economy. Look at its track record in handling this economy and then ponder the result. We learned yesterday of a massive $27m payout on Yulara. We learned yesterday that the Northern Territory government has forgone $4m tax on the casinos. The budget reveals the beginning of the bad news on the Territory's financial liabilities from the Yulara project and, as we learned today, from other projects. The Treasurer has revealed problems at Yulara that had not been brought to the attention of the Assembly or the people of the Territory before this budget. In his normal fashion, the Treasurer has sought to blame these problems on someone else. This government is never responsible for its own actions; it is always someone else's fault when things go wrong. That will not wash.

The government's incompetent handling of contingent liabilities has dealt our credibility another body blow. The Treasurer indicated it will cost $20m this year to purchase water and sewerage facilities and housing at the Yulara complex. We also understand that the variable lease arrangements and contribution agreements - that is, subsidies - to Yulara will still cost $7m this financial year. The seriousness of the Yulara position is seen when it is demonstrated that we are paying $7m this year on a significantly reduced level of debt, a reduction that cost the taxpayer $20m. On a much larger level of debt last year, we paid only $6m. We are paying $7m for the privilege of having a school, a police station and a health clinic at Yulara. Next year, it could well be $10m or $11m.

Mr Speaker, these figures indicate that we have not yet seen the worst. The full contingent liability of the Northern Territory government, because the CLP has guaranteed profits with no emphasis on performance, is over $200m. It is made up, as we found out today, of separate amounts at Yulara, the 2 Sheratons and the 2 casinos. In relation to the casinos, our worst fears have been realised. This year, the government estimates receipts of $44 000 in casino tax. If Federals had still been there, we would have been receiving $3.5m to $4m. On top of that, it is costing us $474 000 to police the casino through the Racing and Gaming Commission. Over and above the $2.5m gift to the casino last year, we are subsidising the casinos this year to the tune of $430 000 per annum. That is on top of forgone casino taxes of $3.5m to $4m. The operators of the trust are desperate to sell off the Alice Springs casino and, under the agreement, any losses will be made up by the Territory taxpayer. How long will it be before the Territory taxpayers own a casino?

The very real problems of our contingent liability may lie in the immediate future, but we are already feeling the impact of these undertakings today. This budget contains very little by way of new initiatives that have any long-term goals or objectives in terms of economic development and job creation. What we have is a set of pathetic minor initiatives that have been used to dress up a rather bland document.

Let us look at some of the initiatives in this so-called good news budget. There are some minor capital works for mines and energy from various storage areas at a cost of $500 000. The allocation for some groundwater assessments is $250 000. There will be some minor initiatives in primary production at a cost of $0.5m. What the government refers to as women's issues are allocated $250 000, $170 000 of which is additional assistance for pre-schools. Pre-schools are hardly an issue restricted to women, but it certainly is indicative of the government's thinking on women. This government has not realised that there are things that people, through ignorance, have traditionally called 'women's issues', but they are more properly called 'people's issues'. It really has not understood what the women's movement is all about. To classify $170 000 for pre-school assistance under the heading of 'women's issues' is an insult to women and an insult to men because, in this modern age, both have responsibilities for the raising of children.

Perhaps the most perfect example of the lack of direction and the attempted window-dressing lies with the allocation for the university. Last year, the allocation for the University Planning Authority was $500 000. This year, the allocation is only $200 000, yet the start of a university in 1987 has been trumpeted as a great initiative. Under this government, the university is as far away as ever. It is impossible to tell from day to day what direction the government is taking in relation to the university. It would not surprise anybody if we have a different story in the November sittings from the Minister for Education on what he will do about the university.

Mr Speaker, the budget lacks direction. The reason is that the government is staggering from crisis to crisis in its mismanagement of the budget. One need look no further than tourism. In one breath last year, the Chief Minister described tourism as a cornerstone of Territory development. In that budget, tourism received a 150% boost to its funding yet, this year, we have a 35% reduction in funding and a loss of almost $4m. The whole of the Territory's tourist initiatives have centred on the flagship of Yulara, and Yulara, as we learned today to our cost, is predicated on international tourism. We find the Tourist Commission's budget has been slashed, particularly in relation to its efforts in maintaining and expanding international tourism for the Territory and Yulara. One of the biggest cuts has been in the area of international advertising and promotion. At a time when the government needs to show a continued commitment to the tourist industry, it has lost its way. It has decided that it is too hard. It has gone for what is seen as another easy fix - a retirement village at Alice Springs. You do not need to be a genius to see that that is at the same level of wishful thinking as the benefit from the casino takeover.

Mr Speaker, the other significant failing of this budget is youth employment. The Treasurer has trumpeted 2 pieces of good news for Territory youth. One of them involves the employment of 10 more policemen and the other involves the creation of what have been called Junior Police Rangers. I can think of nothing more ridiculous than these proposals, which involve almost $900 000, being put forward as a solution to the problems of youth today. It

is perfectly clear that the government has no strategy and no understanding of youth needs. It operates on the flavour-of-the-month principle. A few months ago, it was Red Cross that had the ear of the government. Presently, it is the police. The government ignores the advice of its advisers and its own committees. It has no policy on youth and proceeds in an ad hoc fashion to give most support to the group that screams loudest.

Mr Speaker, police have a role to play in the youth field but, to give them $1m and completely ignore other organisations working in the area, is doing youth a disservice. The creation of employment opportunities for youth will not be solved by schemes for police community liaison nor by schemes for police rangers. The solution lies simply in the creation of jobs in the Territory. The government's lack of commitment to youth employment is shown by the 25% reduction in the apprenticeship scheme subsidy of the Housing Commission. So much for the negatives.

Turning to the positives, which could well be adopted at this time, the Labor Party has developed a set of principles within which the budget should fit. These principles are aimed at making the Territory a better place to live. There are 4 of them: training and employment opportunities for NT youth; responsible economic development; action to reduce cost impediments in the Northern Territory; and an efficient public service with maximum career opportunities for Territory residents.

Within that broad framework, there are a number of ALP initiatives. First of all, I refer to tourism. The budget was remarkable in that it did not contain a single tourism initiative. The major factor acting on tourism in the next 18 months will be the sealing of the South Road yet there is no mention of that in the budget. It has been well documented that we can expect a dramatic increase in road traffic, particularly in the first couple of years after the sealing. There is a need to look at the infrastructure needs that will be created by this dramatic increase in traffic. The ALP argues that, as a high priority, the government should investigate what facilities are needed to cater for these tourists. This task involves identifying areas for planned development and working out strategies to attract private developers to develop facilities in these areas. The ALP would also allocate money for a joint promotion of the South Road with the South Australian government. If Yulara is to turn the corner, the increased road traffic resulting from the sealing of the South Road is an important part of the answer. The Yulara resort must be assessed for its attractiveness for these visitors and, if necessary, changes must be made to its current operations to make it more attractive.

Mr Speaker, an underutilised section of the tourist market is Territory residents visiting their own Territory. To expand this, the Territory government must encourage the tourist industry to offer further incentives to Territorians to know their own Territory. A Labor government would also ensure the development of recreational areas aimed at local people. Gunn Point will have a high priority.

A Labor government would take a careful look at standards in the tourist industry. There are too many stories around of tourists being ripped off. Such stories can do great harm to our emerging industry. In the first instance, the approach would be to encourage the industry to accept self-regulation. If that did not work, and one would sincerely hope that it would, a Labor government would look at a system of licensing.

Mr Speaker, we would also look at extending the good work the CLP government has done on establishing circle route systems. I acknowledge its plans for a Kings Canyon circle route and the Pine Creek to Jabiru road will prove to be significant tourist incentives. We would propose, however, an examination of what we call 2 grand circle routes. At this stage, for familiarity purposes, we would call one a rock-reef route, linking Ayers Rock and the Centre with the Barrier Reef along the Plenty Highway into Queensland. Secondly, there is one we would call the rock-top-and-barra route, linking Ayers Rock and the Centre with the Kimberleys and the Top End.

Mr Speaker, there is a need to redirect our tourist efforts to ensure that the area of greatest growth in the next few years - the domestic visitor travelling in his or her own vehicle - is adequately looked after and visitors are encouraged to stay as long as possible in the Northern Territory. Our proposals in the tourism area are directed towards that end.

In relation to youth unemployment, the Chief Minister said that this budget would concentrate on youth employment opportunities yet there is not one decent new initiative in this budget on this question. Instead, we have a figure of $900 000 spent on police-related youth activities. That money could be much better spent on youth employment schemes. It is well known that a major factor in juvenile crime is the frustration that young people feel at the job situation. Band-aid solutions are not the answer; the creation of real jobs is the answer. The ALP has identified the tourist industry and the fishing industry as areas of great job growth. We would press the tourist industry to employ local people in all facets of the industry and we would develop a range of incentives to encourage them to do so. We would also investigate proposals for establishing an apprenticeship scheme in the fishing industry to ensure a sound local base for the anticipated growth of the fishing industry in the next few years.

Mr Speaker, the administrative ranks of the Northern Territory Public Service provide a number of unfilled opportunities for youth employment. Unfortunately, under this government, due to lack of central controls, the number of A1 and A2 positions in the public service has been dramatically reduced. In fact, we have really had a very skewed public service staffing structure. The number of A1 and A2 positions in our public service is much less as a proportion than in public services either at the federal level or the state level. This has made it much more difficult for young school leavers to get jobs in the public service because it is those A1 and A2 positions that traditionally had been the entrance point for school leavers: A1 if they had a sub-matriculation certificate and A2 if they had a matriculation certificate. At present, the total number of A1s in the system is about 110 and there are not all that many more A2 positions. This has made it much more difficult for young school leavers to get jobs in the public service in the general administrative area. The rationalisation and the restructuring of the public service which is proposed by the ALP, and which we will announce soon, would result in a greater proportion of A1 and A2 positions which, without cost, would significantly increase employment opportunities for school leavers.

Mr Speaker, that leads me to an initiative in relation to the Public Service Commissioner's Office. Aside from the Chief Minister's personal fetish for interfering in public service issues, the CLP has failed to present any cogent argument for its current policy of fragmenting controls within the public service. The ALP believes that a strong Public Service Commissioner's Office is a necessary requirement for an efficient public service. The office

would be reconstituted with sufficient staff and resources to fulfil its industrial relations role and to provide significant management practice advice. It would include a special group to investigate service-wide practices such as advertising, vehicle policy, recruitment, promotions etc. The development of efficient and effective management practices within the Northern Territory Public Service is essential. Unfortunately, it is not happening at present.

The ALP's policy is to create a state development bank. It is our belief, and one also expressed by the business community, that the Northern Territory Development Corporation is an ineffective and inefficient operation, a feeling obviously shared by the government which has sharply reduced its budget. One needs only to review the NTDC's part in the casino fiasco to realise the truth in this belief. The existing functions of the NTDC would be absorbed within the state development bank as would the functions of ADMA. Some small savings could be expected in administration costs by this move. The new authority would include an export marketing branch whose responsibility would be to develop farm or factory to market services which would assist Northern Territory producers develop Asian and Pacific markets. We welcome current moves to eliminate state preference systems. We believe this opens up the potential for the development of a northern regional economy transcending political boundaries. An important task of the marketing arm of the state development bank would be the development of regional markets.

The Labor Party is acutely aware of the importance of electricity prices as a basic factor in developing the Territory. It believes the most effective support the government can give to industry at this stage is softening the blow of rapidly-increasing electricity charges. In no other way can it so effectively provide assistance. The Labor Party believes that, on the basis of evidence that is available to us, in addition to existing arrangements, NTEC should receive additional payments from consolidated revenue to lower tariffs in the high-cost period over the next few years. The essential goal of such subsidies must be to hold the rate of growth in electricity tariffs to avoid a growing disparity between the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia, and hence making our products even less competitive than they are at present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have consistently supported the gas pipeline project in principle and, in this light, I am saddened by the government's inability to provide us yet with proper information on the full financial details of the agreement. We believe and hope, on what we have been told, that the project will lead to reduced electricity prices in the 1990s.

The Labor Party, like much of the community, is concerned with standards of education in the Territory. Education in the Territory from pre-school through to tertiary education has been the subject of whimsical interference from this government. This interference has been particularly obvious in high schools and the DIT. The Territory Labor Party believes that an education system that is widely respected by the community is an important ingredient in maintaining a stable population in the Northern Territory. We have heard today constant comment about the need to have a university to keep tertiary-age students in the Northern Territory but I would submit that, under the present education system, we lose more families and more children of school age who are not satisfied with our primary and secondary school system than we lose tertiary-age students who, by necessity, must go out of the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as a first step in the process of correcting education in the Territory, Labor proposes that all new entrants into the education system at grade 1 be tested to fully assess their educational needs. We believe that this step would then enable schools to provide the most appropriate education for all students. We know and accept that some testing is done at present. It is certainly not comprehensive. We know as well that many students do slip through that system. Unlike the government, the opposition has had a consistent policy on the establishment of a university. The obvious logical step which we have always held is that we start with a university college. It appears the government is still unable to accept that that logical step is the one to follow. It is clear that, if the government had followed Labor Party policy on the university, there would be a university college in place today and Territory students would be attending it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have watched with concern the operations of the Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. This budget confirms my fears. The salaries vote has increased by 50% and the administrative vote by 60% but the grants-in-aid vote has decreased by 11%. The department has become a bureaucratic nightmare. There is no justification for a separate department. In government, the ALP would ensure that the emphasis would be on service delivery and grants-in-aid delivery and not on administration.

Other speakers in the opposition will talk about their own policy areas.

Mr Robertson: I am sure the member for Nhulunbuy would be happy to go along with the withdrawal of the officer we have just placed in his electorate. Is that right? We'll pull that bureaucrat, as you call him, out of Nhulunbuy. We can do the same for Aboriginal communities in central Australia. I'm sure Mr Ede will have something to say about that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr SMITH: Can I just respond to that? When the salaries vote goes up 50% and the administrative vote goes up 60% and yet grants to sporting organisations go down by 11%, I think it is a very unhealthy situation. If you want to disagree, you have the opportunity.

Mr Robertson: That will be demonstrated later.

Mr SMITH: As a matter of priority, a Labor government would renegotiate the casino arrangements. In particular, if existing arrangements concerning the Alice Springs casino are changed, the opportunity must be taken to limit the Territory's contingent liability and gain some much-needed revenue for the Territory. The message is simple to the casino operators: shape up or ship out. We cannot afford to forgo $4m this year and a larger sum of money next year for the promise of some increasingly tatty rainbow in 15 years' time.

A Labor government would examine other areas of taxation. Exemption on stamp duties for the sale of large assets with commercial operations would cease. We all know that that cost us well over $1m last year. We would increase the stamp duty on the sale and purchase of marketable securities. It would be increased to 20¢ per $100 or part thereof. This additional revenue would in part be used to hold existing rates of taxation at current levels.

As well as extra money from taxation in certain areas, a Labor government would make a number of savings. A Labor government would make savings in

advertising and in restricting first-class air travel both inside and outside the Territory.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly for an extension of time to be granted to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition so that he may continue his speech.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we would also save money in the area of hospitality. We would put a stop to the current explosion in the public service in the creation of positions of executive assistants and personal assistants. We believe that we could save $350 000 to $500 000 there which would be available for redirection to service delivery. To pick up a comment of the Minister for Community Development, it is a matter of incredible concern to us that, following the recent internal review of the Department of Community Development, the ratio between administrative and service delivery staff has changed from 27%:73% to 42%:58%. That is a most unhealthy and undesirable situation and can only lead to a reduction in the services that his department is offering.

Mr Speaker, the provision of government vehicles is excessive and new, stringent guidelines need to be introduced. The use of consultants by departments has risen to an art form, largely because of the department's failure to develop adequate staff. Of course, the government's insistence on MSAs has not helped in that area. The use of consultancies needs to be much more strongly policed and we believe that, without any effort at all, we could save $1.5m to $2m in that area.

There also exists a major opportunity to redirect the resources of the Northern Territory government by reorganising the public service into a smaller group of departments and authorities. It is incredible to note that there are more departments and authorities in the Northern Territory government than there are in the Victorian government. The figure is something like 37 compared to 34. We believe this process for rationalisation can reduce the number of departments and authorities by almost 50%. Apart from the obvious cosmetic appeal of a smaller public service, we believe that a combination of smaller departments around common administrative cores would free significant resources to be directed from the administrative areas into the service-delivery areas. Our initial estimates indicate resources worth $5m to $7m could be available as a full year's savings, to be redirected to other proposals. These changes can take place only after a number of conditions are met, particularly a review of the details of our proposals and continued consultations with the affected unions and professional associations.

My colleagues in their budget responses will comment in detail on their particular portfolio areas. The federal government in its budget established a climate for sound economic growth in Australia. Its aim of a 4.5% growth rate, inflation at 8%, dropping unemployment and a dramatically-reduced deficit augurs well for the Australian economy in the next 12 months. The Territory government has missed the opportunity to build on this sound base and guarantee the Territory's economic future. Instead, it has demonstrated once again its inability to make good business decisions, and its inability to protect the interests of the taxpayer. As well, its fragmented and piecemeal

approach to the budget is the approach of a tired government which has run out of ideas and which is unsure of its direction.

Debate adjourned.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 144)

Continued from 27 August 1985.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise the Assembly that the opposition supports this bill. The bill will indemnify the Red Cross, doctors and hospitals where AIDS can be contracted by the administration of blood or blood products.

In the case of the Red Cross and its officers, a declaration is obtained from the blood donor before blood is taken and then all appropriate tests are carried out with negative results before blood is supplied for transfusion or for use in the preparation of blood products. In the case of doctors and hospitals, the blood will be certified as having been treated or that the above procedures were carried out by the Red Cross. If the Red Cross supplies blood and later has reasonable grounds for suspecting that it may be affected with AIDS, it must take all reasonable steps to track it down or it will not be indemnified. Doctors and hospitals will have to take similar steps if they are informed that it was likely the blood contained AIDS antibodies. It should be noted that the indemnity also covers cases where AIDS is contracted by someone taking, testing or handling the blood in any way.

The bill also makes it an offence to give a false declaration before donating blood and we note that this offence provision is not specifically dependent on the donor's knowledge. The terms of the declaration are such that it is made only on the facts to the best of the donor's knowledge. Thus it would be difficult to make unknowingly a false declaration. Mr Speaker, AIDS is also added to the list of notifiable diseases.

As I have said, the opposition supports this bill because it ensures that blood is tested before being used, it lays down rules and guidelines for the donation and use of blood and it provides necessary indemnity so that blood collection and use will continue.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise very briefly to speak on this bill. I agree with my colleague that it is worthy of support, and definitely the opposition will support it. There is one aspect of this which is distressing to me. We have indemnities for the Red Cross and its officers, the doctors, the hospitals and so on but what about the poor individual who, in spite of this, contracts AIDS through no fault of his own?. I know if I were in such an unfortunate situation, I would want to find somebody to sue. It looks as though we have effectively covered all the holes but we have not looked at what will happen to the poor person who contracts AIDS as a result of his compliance with normal medical practice.

I would also point out for the record that the reference in this bill and other bills is to AIDS. As we go further, it will become more important that we understand what we are talking about. AIDS is a syndrome, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and there are 3 categories within that particular disease. It may be necessary for us to look more carefully at those 3 as we gain more information about them. For example, category A, which is generally

referred to in the literature as full-blown AIDS, has many related diseases, including pneumonia, and it is likely that the person who has it will die. It is highly contagious of course. Category B is a lymphatic condition and its symptoms are loss of weight, sweatiness and swollen glands. This condition is again quite highly contagious and needs particular care. There is a strong possibility that it will develop into the full-blown stage. Category C refers to the case where positive antibodies are present in the blood. At the moment, under the assumption that it is better to be safe than sorry, the people who have category C AIDS are presumed to be carriers even though there is definite information available that not all people who have those antibodies in their blood will actually be carriers. Eventually, we will have to give that matter a bit more thought because I see it as the major disease to confront us over the next 20 to 50 years.

I am extremely distressed with the potential impact of this sickness on society and, for that reason, I support the bill. I believe not to do so would be a gross dereliction of our duty to the Red Cross and its officers and the doctors in the hospitals. I feel some consternation that the insurance companies have taken the action they have. I would have thought that it would have been possible for them to establish similar provisions and to have covered people at a reasonable rate. They have seen fit, in their wisdom and their less than community-minded spirit, not to do so. That is regrettable and it has left the government with no option but to take the current action. For those reasons, I commend the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Speaker, I thank the opposition for its support of this bill. Two points were raised by the member for Stuart. I take his point about the person who contracts AIDS in any shape or form from a blood transfusion. Certainly, we are removing certain recourse but I am heartened by the response from the various transfusion and blood groups throughout Australia who say that it is virtually impossible to contract AIDS from a blood transfusion because of the precautions that are now in place. As for the types of AIDS, we seem to be moving rapidly. During my first week in the health portfolio, I have been bombarded with the word 'AIDS'. I can ensure honourable members that, at this stage, I do not think that we have seen the last of any legislation that will come before this Assembly dealing with the disease. I am sure that, with the concurrence of honourable members, we will move in a positive direction as more and more facts emerge relating to this particular disease.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS REGISTRATION BILL (Serial 114)

Continued from 21 August 1985.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.1.

This amendment makes clear the intention of the bill that all persons in these categories be registered whether or not they are directly involved in health practices.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.2.

This results from discussions that I have had with honourable members on both sides. It deletes the definition of 'practitioner company'. This will enable practitioners who wish to form companies to form such companies under the Companies Act without any reference to any board. It is still a requirement that the registered practitioner will practice as a registered practitioner and he will be liable for his own practice.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 25 agreed to.

Clause 26:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.3.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 36 agreed to.

Clause 37:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.4.

This amendment is self-explanatory. I would point out that there is a typographical error. It says 'Australian national therapists'; it should be the 'Australian natural therapists'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 37, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 38 agreed to.

Clause 39:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 39, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 40 to 63 agreed to.

Clause 64:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 35.1.

This is to omit from clause 64 'a person' and insert in its stead 'subject to subsection (2), a person'.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the government will move to defeat the amendment. The amendment has been circulated on a premise that a trainee Aboriginal health worker will not be able to work under the Medical Practitioners Act. That is quite incorrect. A trainee works under supervision and under supervision alone. It is a requirement, under the definition of 'medical category', that an Aboriginal health worker be registered to undertake duties but a trainee is under the responsibility of the Aboriginal health worker or a senior officer of the medical profession. They are not prevented from working under the act. I point out to members opposite that a trainee Aboriginal health worker must have responsibility. It has been indicated to me that perhaps trainee Aboriginal health workers are working in communities without supervision. It is certainly not the intention of the government to encourage that. As I have mentioned to the honourable member for Arnhem, I would like to discuss the issue further with him. It may well be that a greater emphasis on training or the identification of a lack of training facilities may be the answer.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I find this extremely disappointing. There is nothing wrong with the current training schedule. One of its strengths is that it involves on-the-ground work with intermittent intensive training courses. It would be unfortunate if a person who wished to be an Aboriginal health worker had to undertake a full-time course beforehand. Particularly in relation to Aboriginal health workers, we have found that that is not the way to go. It generally creates all sorts of problems with regard to family relationships and the long-term removal of the person from the community. It would be nice in an ideal situation if the trainee were able to enjoy full-time supervision at his place of work. However, that is not the situation. The people that we are trying to cover are in communities and outstations which have had no health services available to them on the ground. Such communities have asked a member of the community to undergo training to become a qualified health worker. The real problem is that they are not under direct and immediate supervision - which has been a hallmark of trainees and nurses - yet the requirement for the trainee to be able to partake of the cover that is normally available is that the supervision be direct and immediate. Such direct and immediate supervision is not available for those particular health workers. By its very nature, it is remote and intermittent.

We had hoped that, by this amendment, we would help those people to be able to undertake their training period with some degree of protection for malpractice suits. It would be very unfortunate if the government were to persist in the line that it is taking now. I hope that it will change its attitude and will agree to the amendment. It is designed to cover trainees working in remote localities away from immediate supervision who, to the best of their ability and in good faith, take a particular action which may be beyond the limits of their training. They may consider that the alternatives were possibly too frightening to contemplate. They are the persons with at least some skill whereas other people in the community may have no skills at all. If they utilise what little skill they have at that stage of their training in an attempt to assist a person, they leave themselves open to a malpractice suit.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to pick up the point that the honourable member has raised because it is very important. We should not set it aside and treat it lightly, and I do not. The government's opposition is not bloody-minded. In fact, the honourable member argued the case for the government himself by saying that we should not subject trainees to malpractice suits but should give them cover. By giving trainees cover, we may encourage them to go outside the breadth of their experience and their authority and do things that are not prudent.

Let us come back to the purpose of the act which is to give to those people who have achieved a certain level of competence and ability a recognition and a protection for the duty that they must perform. Trainee nurses do not get protection. When you are qualified and allowed to stand alone, then you have protection.

Mr Ede: Direct and immediate supervision.

Mr TUXWORTH: The direct and immediate supervision may be a flaw and a weakness in the system we have of delivering the service and providing the training but that is not a reason to say to every trainee in remote areas who is not under supervision that he will be protected for whatever he does. That is not a fair proposition.

Mr EDE: That is patent rubbish. Obviously, the acts must be done in good faith. It is not a matter of giving carte blanche to people to do whatever they like because they have some acknowledgement under this legislation. The idea that we are trying to incorporate is that, where a person is in a situation where he must act, and he acts in good faith, he should not, by that action, lay himself open to these sorts of suits. To say that such people, because they have registration, will attempt complex operations is patently ridiculous. The people will concentrate within the area of their expertise. We are talking about a special provision acknowledging realities of rural life in the Northern Territory and attempting to find some way that we can make this act work for the trainees. Obviously, it will be in the interests of the Department of Health and the training bodies to get them through that particular training period as quickly as possible.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 64 agreed to.

Clauses 65 to 67 agreed to.

Clause 68:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.6.

This is in accord with what I mentioned earlier about removing practitioner companies from the list of those matters on which a board may issue guidelines. The honourable member for Stuart was not present when I addressed the issue that he raised in his second-reading speech. We have deleted reference to practitioner companies from the legislation in part to accommodate the very course of action that he required because practitioner companies will still be able to be formed by practitioners registered under the Companies Act. They are not required to form a company as a prerequisite of instructions from the board. That overcomes the point that the member for Stuart was making in his second-reading speech; for example, a chiropractor, a

dentist and a medical practitioner, provided they are registered, can form a company and open a clinic whereas, in its original form, the bill was restrictive in that sense.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 68, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 69:

Mr HANRAHAN: I invite defeat of clause 69.

It is in accord with the direction that I previously mentioned.

Clause 69 negatived.

Clause 70 agreed to.

Clause 71:

Mr HANRAHAN: I move amendment 40.7.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 71, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 72 agreed to.

Title:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 40.8.

This amendment actually omits the word 'associated' and inserts instead 'allied'. This amendment is to emphasise that practitioners such as psychologists and social workers who are working in fields which are not directly associated with health practice are covered by the provisions of the bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Title, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 136)
PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 135)

Continued from 21 August 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, we are about to spend the next half hour, an hour or an hour and a half essentially wasting our time because of the slap-dash, amateurish way that this government has introduced what is completely unnecessary legislation anyway. Despite the changes that the

minister is making to this legislation, it still leaves the door wide open for political interference in the Northern Territory Public Service, something that we all should deplore.

The Electricity Commission Amendment Bill corrects a serious fault in the previous bill where NTEC employees were placed under the operation of the Public Service Act. I think we all accept that to have NTEC employees operating under the Public Service Act would be disastrous if only because the rates of pay of NTEC employees are substantially higher than those of their counterparts in the Northern Territory Public Service. The government has quite rightly recognised that there is a serious flaw in the bill. After strong representation from numerous people, including the Chairman of NTEC at Smith Point during Cabinet discussions, the government has decided quite rightly that it will amend the bill. Certainly, we have no problems with it and we will support it.

I turn to the Public Service Amendment Bill. There are 3 changes proposed and 2 of those are technical amendments. I must say that they would not have been necessary if the bill had been presented properly and if adequate time had been allowed for a debate in the first instance.

Mr Hatton: And you had not walked out.

Mr SMITH: You really want to raise that again, do you? Some people just lead with their chin, don't they? Due to the lateness of the hour, I will resist the temptation to reiterate the reason why the opposition staged a principled walkout in the last sittings - something it had never done before.

Mr Deputy Speaker, firstly, the definition of 'employee' is amended to cover all those who are employed by statutory authorities. The previous definition was thought to be too narrow. We have no problem with that and support it. Secondly, the transfer provisions apply to heads of prescribed authorities where they actually hold their positions as members of those authorities. Although we object to the principle of heads of statutory authorities being able to be transferred at the whim of the minister, we do not object to this change. It does raise a question that the minister has never addressed satisfactorily. Why is he content under the legislation to transfer heads of statutory authorities but not give himself or the relevant minister the power to transfer the Public Service Commissioner as an alternative to simply terminating his employment? I have never seen an explanation for that distinction.

It does lead to a feeling that this is just one more piece of evidence that backs up the case about the politicisation of the public service. The Public Service Commissioner is singled out. He alone can be disciplined by dismissal whereas other heads of statutory authorities can be disciplined by being transferred. In fact, under the legislation as it stands at present, heads of statutory authorities cannot be dismissed; they can only be transferred to another position. It is an intriguing point and it does lend weight to a theory which I support: it is aimed at the politicisation of the public service.

The third amendment to which we strongly object is the one which will provide the power to the person directed by the minister under section 16A to undertake actions contained within sections 14(2) and 14(3) of the Public Service Act to, in turn, delegate his authority. Although not objecting to that particular power of delegation, we are very concerned at the need to have

this piece of legislation at all. It has never been spelt out why the government wants this power. I would invite the Chief Minister or any other minister opposite to spell out specifically why he wants the power for the minister to direct another person to do a job which is clearly the Public Service Commissioner's responsibility. No reason has been given for it at all. There is no justification. The only possible reason that we can think of is that it gives the minister the power to direct a person who has the same political inclinations and who is prepared, within the limits of the act, to do something that the commissioner is not prepared to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this amendment that we are discussing now exacerbates this by allowing the minister's henchman to appoint in turn his own henchman to do the deed. Let it be clear that, in our view, the minister now has a direct power to give a direction that would relate to any personnel or management-related function in the public service. Previously, this power was in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner; there is no doubt about that. With this amendment, this power will reside with the minister. We accept that there are constraints on that power and that he must act within the legal limits imposed by sections 14(2) and 14(3). But within those constraints, the ultimate view is that the minister can now take decisions previously taken by the Public Service Commissioner. If our view is correct, that is called the politicisation of the public service. That is what we are talking about and that is what our concerns are with this particular legislation. That is why we have consistently opposed this legislation and that is why we will be proposing an amendment tomorrow to remove section 16A completely. Without being melodramatic, that expresses our concerns about the legislation.

I want to pick up, as the honourable the Chief Minister did, some comments on the ACOA's submission to changes in the Public Service Act. In his comments, the Chief Minister said that the government has a right to expect that the public service exists to advise on policy and to implement decisions made by government. No one could disagree with that. That is obviously very true and obviously every government has that right. What we disagree with is the further statement of the Chief Minister where he said:

> 'The amendments to the Public Service Act and the other related issues are deliberately designed to establish an appropriate relationship between the government and the key officers who have responsibility for the government's policies and programs'.

In our view, it is not appropriate that the minister can make a political appointment to take over some of the Public Service Commissioner's powers and, through that appointment, issue directions to the public service. We have significant disagreement with the Chief Minister on that point. It is my clear reading of the legislation as it stands that the minister has the power to issue directions to that person he appoints and to handle sections 14(2) and 14(3). He has the power not only to appoint the person but also to direct the person to do particular things. That, in our view, is the danger, and has the prospect of leading to the politicisation of the public service.

The Public Service Commissioner in his speech to the industrial relations society said:

> 'Public servants are different. We accept implicitly a naturally open competition for employment, neutrality in decision making, impartiality in the giving of advice, anti-discrimination in the implementation of procedures, confidentiality of information and curtailment of the freedom to speak out'.

That is a very good description of some of the restrictions and obligations placed on public servants. Of course they do not always adhere to them, and that is why there are disciplinary powers in the Public Service Act. To take that point a little further, what we are saying is that those disciplinary powers are best exercised by the Public Service Commissioner not by the political arm. What the government has done is to confuse those 2 and give rise to the prospect that the political arm may become involved in that sort of area.

I raise the Public Service Commissioner's definition of the rights and obligations of public servants to rebut the comment made by the Chief Minister that he wanted public servants who were more like people in private enterprise. There is an obvious difference, as outlined in those comments by the Public Service Commissioner, between the rights and obligations of people in the public service and the rights and obligations of people in private enterprise. The rights and obligations of public servants have evolved over 150 to 200 years and, although one can accept that that has resulted in some hidebound practices, which I think governments have an obligation to get rid of, the basic principles are very sound indeed: neutrality in decision-making and impartiality in the giving of advice. Any government which attempts to deflect the public service from those ends is treading a very dangerous path. That, I am afraid, is one of the end results of the legislative changes that we have seen and why we have so loudly opposed them, and of course why the union movement in the Northern Territory has so loudly opposed the changes as well.

I would like to make a couple of brief comments on the negotiations and conditions section. The Chief Minister emphasised in his speech that, although legislative protection was taken out for statutory authority heads, they were perfectly able to negotiate conditions in their employment contracts. I do not accept that. In a process whereby an individual negotiates with the government his or her terms and conditions of employment, the public interest is in serious danger of being neglected and being forgotten. That is why we have had terms and conditions of employment for public service heads, written in broad terms at least, into the legislation - not for the protection of the public servant or the potential public servant but for the protection of the public. There are things in which the public has a legitimate interest, in terms of the conditions of employment of public servants. We know without going into details here of public servants who have met the displeasure of this government yet walked away with large sums of money, $200 000 to $300 000. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would put it to you that it is not in the public interest to have that freedom for either the government or the individual to negotiate such conditions of service and such termination arrangements. You need to have the broad principles for the engagement of public servants written into the legislation. That is another of the reasons why we have such grave concerns about this legislation. To satisfy the fears of the honourable minister who is looking at the bill, I am not referring particularly to the amendment we have before us but to the bill in general.

Finally, I want to read into the record the comments of the ACOA about the role of statutory authorities and the relationship between statutory authorities and their permanent heads because I think it summarises what can be done, what statutory authorities are all about and, if we are to have them, what sort of conditions they should be set up under. I quote:

'This unfettered power to dismiss without reason or notice is in direct contrast with the principle and rationale behind the establishment of statutory authorities. Statutory authorities are established by their own legislation. They are established on a perceived need by the government of the day for that particular section or aspect of government to operate for at least some purposes in a different manner to that of a government department.

Generally the binding principle has been that statutory authorities, by their legislation, have a certain freedom and independence not found in government departments in relation to their day-to-day activities. This is an important and accepted principle which must be maintained. It would seem to us that the granting of an unfettered power to dismiss heads of statutory authorities contrasts directly with the reason for their establishment. We would say that, instead of heads of statutory authorities basing their decisions on what they deem to be the best interest of the good government and future of the Northern Territory, they could now be seen to be in a position of either blindly following ministerial direction or trying to anticipate what their minister may say or think. A person who lives within a situation where his or her minister may, without reason or notice, terminate him/her, cannot possibly be said to be or to be seen to be impartial or politically neutral in his or her decision making'.

I accept that the legislation deals only with the transfer of statutory authority heads and not their dismissal but the principle is still the same. A statutory authority is set up because it is desired to establish some distance between government and that authority. That very important principle is undermined by saying that, at any time, the minister can take away the head of that authority. Mr Deputy Speaker, to me that does not make sense.

With those comments, I reiterate that we see that most of these matters are technical amendments and, although we have grave reservations with this bill, we will not be opposing them at this time.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must place on record my extraordinary surprise that nobody on the government benches chooses to rise to speak on what is clearly a bill that strikes at the heart of the relationship between government and bureaucracy in the Northern Territory. The implications of these particular bills strike quite clearly at the heart of the relationship between an elected government and a bureaucracy that is there to maintain a degree of continuity independent of the variations in the people's will as they may be evinced, and we have seen plenty of that within the CLP and within the CLP government in the last 2 years, as you would be only too well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am deeply concerned about the implications for government in the Northern Territory. I am concerned that the Chief Minister is the only government member who is prepared speak on this bill. Quite clearly, in respect of these bills, in respect of the manner in which he is seeking to manipulate the public service, he has absolutely no support either from his frontbench or from his backbench. I think that that needs to be put on the public record. Quite clearly, he is standing out alone. He has no support from the honourable member for Fannie Bay, who is still here, or any other of his colleagues, and I find that quite extraordinary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us take into consideration the principles involved with this particular bill. The idea that the honourable Chief Minister has of the public service is that it is like a corporation in private enterprise and that it should operate with him directing the activities of everybody beneath him and everybody beneath each of his ministers. Mr Deputy Speaker, as a staunch supporter of the Westminster tradition, I am sure that you will find that as abhorrent as I do. I can probably go round the frontbench and find ministers who feel the same way. For example, the honourable Leader of Government Business, I am sure, will be deeply concerned that the balance between the government and an independent public service is seriously threatened by the machinations of the Chief Minister of which this bill is a prime example.

Let me draw to the attention of honourable members a comparison. Many members may, in fact, have seen the program that was broadcast on television some 2 or 3 years ago about the dismissal which...

Mr Perron: Good show, yes.

Mr BELL: It was a real shame. As I recall it, the slogan to which it gave rise was 'Shame, Fraser, shame'. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, I digress. Those honourable members who have seen that particular program will no doubt recall the scene in which the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, returned to the lodge in Canberra to inform his colleagues that he had been sacked by the Governor-General.

I do not propose to comment in this particular speech on the pros and cons of the dismissal of the Whitlam government in that fashion. I wish to make a point for those people who observed that particular program. They would have noticed the departure of the permanent Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister when Whitlam announced that he had been sacked.

Mr Hatton: Do you remember his name?

Mr BELL: I note that the honourable member for Nightcliff has asked me whether I remember his name. I believe that the secretary was John Menadue at that stage.

Mr Hatton: You got it in one.

Mr BELL: I got it in one, okay.

I think that the behaviour of that permanent Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister in the Commonwealth Public Service was quite instructive of the sort of loyalty that is required of the public service.

Mr Coulter: It has nothing to do with the bill before us.

Mr BELL: I am not sure whether that was the honourable member for Berrimah or the honourable member for Sanderson, but I will pick that up too. Whoever it was, he might put up his hand. No? He will not own up to it now but it was certainly one of them who said that that was irrelevant to the bills before the Assembly at the moment.

Let me put on record that it is in nowise irrelevant because there are a number of public service appointees and public servants who are likely to be appointed consequent upon these actions and who would scarcely be likely to

have that degree of independence and sense of their responsibility to the body politic and to that complex of checks and balances that comprises representative democracy. The model that the honourable Chief Minister chooses to adopt and to pursue is a fundamental threat to self-government in the Territory. It is a fundamental threat to our progress towards statehood. I am quite sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you will be as aghast as I am at these bills and that the directive power that they confer upon ministers, in particular the Chief Minister, is modelled on a corporation in private enterprise rather than a government in a representative democracy that prides itself on Westminster traditions.

One final point I wish to make is about statutory authorities. There is, of course, a debate in the realm of public administration about the relationship between statutory authorities and the public service generally. I am quite sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you would be as aware as I am of the importance of statutory authorities and their relationship to the particular tasks which may be entrusted to them. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition described articulately our concern at the implications of the bills before the Assembly in so far as the chairmen of the statutory authorities are concerned. As he said, and I wish to corroborate his statement in this regard, the transfer of heads of statutory authorities may not be an earth-shattering issue but the implications for the position of statutory authorities are quite clear. Why have them if their heads can be moved willy-nilly in that fashion? Quite clearly, the implication is that the Chief Minister wishes to disturb the traditional relationships that have been adopted between elected heads and public service heads.

I will not expatiate on the principles involved and which are quite properly the subject of comment in a second-reading speech. I will simply conclude where I started. I am deeply concerned that a matter of such fundamental importance to good government in the Northern Territory is a matter only for the Chief Minister to speak on and nobody else on his frontbench or backbench.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, for the purpose of the record, I support this bill.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, to reflect properly on what is likely to happen in future in the Northern Territory, the reality is that we have administrative government. We now have the same number of people in the executive as we have on the backbench of the government. The reality is that, given Cabinet solidarity and those matters that are normally involved - and I say 'normally involved' - in the public service, 5 persons within the executive will in fact not just run this Assembly and make political decisions but will make decisions on what is going to happen in our Northern Territory Public Service. Being in a particularly generous mood, I am prepared to accept the intent of the Chief Minister. Perhaps he does have some difficulty in coming to grips with what he perceives as cumbersome obstructions to his will by members of the public service. I am prepared to accept that, given those obstructions that he perceives, he wishes to streamline the public service. However, I think it would be naive in the extreme to suppose that the Northern Territory will always have a Chief Minister who is as clear thinking as our present Chief Minister.

However, one of the few protections that the public has had in the past has been not only a perception of independence but a real independence of the public service to act and to make decisions within the best intent of the law.

Manipulation of the law is not something new. It has been going on for as long as laws have been created. It is not a shame; it is a fact of life. Mr Speaker, the independence of the public service and the independence of that body from political influence have always been essential to our system. If anyone thinks that that is not a very real assessment of the strengths of our system, then I would suggest that he look at some of those unfortunate countries that are administered by less than independent public servants. I would suggest for a start the USSR which has a totally politicised public service, and it makes no bones about it. That country is, in my opinion, in a most unfortunate circumstance. I would not care to live in that country. I would think it would be most unfortunate if we were reduced to a totally politicised public service. I suggest that one looks at the other end of the spectrum, at the more renowned banana republics.

Mr Ede: At Queensland.

Mr LEO: One could use that particularly well-known banana republic, where once again there is a politicised public service. As I say, I am prepared to accept the Chief Minister's good intentions, and his perception that there is a need to streamline management control. The very real danger for us in the Northern Territory is that that will not be maintained. We are developing mechanisms by which those values which I certainly hold dear can be eroded in a very short space of time. I would urge the backbench members of this government and I would urge the Cabinet members of this government to reconsider. I believe this is unnecessarily hasty. I sympathise with the Chief Minister in the inevitable frustrations that he must face when confronting something out of 'Yes Minister'. I appreciate those frustrations but I am sure that, in the long term, the values of those safeguards which have developed over many years will be seen as worthy of preservation.

Mr ROBERTSON (Constitutional Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, isn't it remarkable the way the most empty vessels make the most noise. I do think there are a couple of observations I ought to make. One is that, when the opposition decided it would spit the dummy out and run home to a party, the Chief Minister made it very clear to the Assembly at the time that there was absolutely no intention whatsoever on the part of the government to bring into the Public Service Act any vehicle whatsoever which will provide for the politicisation of the public service.

As we so often see in these sorts of debates, the reality revolves around the complete lack of capacity of the opposition to read the most elementary words of the English language and properly construct them. The Leader of the Opposition earlier in this sittings was completely humiliated because of that lack of capacity. I believe the same thing is happening today. The Chief Minister in reply will cover matters in a little more detail than I will but, as a minister in this government, I would like to assure this Assembly that it is not this government's intention ...

Mr Smith: It is not a matter of intent.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will get to the law in a minute. It is not the government's intention to politicise the public service in any way. Indeed we believe, as does the opposition, that nothing could be more destructive to any public service.

I turn to what seems to be the principle concerned; that is, the amendment in clause 5 to section 16A. This is somehow perceived wrongly by the

opposition as meaning that a person within the the Public Service Commissioner's Office can be instructed to do something which the Public Service Commissioner would otherwise be doing. He is instructed over the head of the Public Service Commissioner to take on a particular function and, by so doing, that person can be instructed in a political way to carry out functions at the direction of the responsible minister. But one should look at the actual words of the legislation. I will read it and I will try to punctuate it to help the opposition:

> 'An employee directed under subsection (1) to take an action or step has, in relation to the action or step so directed to be taken, the same power of delegation under section 13 as the commissioner and, for that purpose, a reference in that section to the commissioner includes a reference to the employee'.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition accurately pointed out there are constraints in the principal act which limit the extent to which the Public Service Commissioner himself can act. In other words, the procedures set down in the act for such things as disciplinary matters, charges, promotions and related matters are set down procedurally in the act, and of course in subordinate legislation to the act by way of regulation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, all this does is allow, because of administrative arrangement orders, functions of government - such as equal opportunity - to be conducted by another department such as the department administered by the Deputy Chief Minister. What it in fact says is that a person can be directed to carry out a function but only to the extent that the commissioner would otherwise carry out that function. In other words, the act provides for the limits within which the Public Service Commissioner, irrespective of what the minister wants, can carry out those functions. That delegation is then transferred to another person or delegate but is constrained once again by the limits of the act. It is absolutely impossible under the principal act and this amendment for the minister to give a direction lawfully which is outside the authority granted to the Public Service Commissioner, otherwise the new person outside of the act becomes an impossibility at law.

The idea of that becoming a vehicle for politicisation of the public service is quite beyond my comprehension. Let us look at it again. I quote: 'The same power of delegation under section 13 as the commissioner'. The commissioner is constrained by the act and, under this proposed amendment, the delegate is constrained as to what he can do. It makes no difference whether the minister wants to go beyond what the act allows; the law says simply that he cannot. There are no possible mechanisms in this amendment which allow the minister to instruct anyone exercising these powers of delegation other than those powers which the principal act provides.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Araluen is particularly adroit at moving around areas and working up arguments. I think that he as acquitted himself well in this one. However, he has missed some basic points. The bill extends the power of the minister over the commissioner. It extends his ability to carry out various powers and functions which the commissioner was formerly able to carry out in his own right. The commissioner was much more independent than he is now. The minister can now give instruction to the particular delegate that he has appointed and the delegate has those powers.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: I believe that members of the government are demonstrating their ignorance of the principles involved by their interjections. It is no wonder that they are not going to stand up and talk in this debate. Those who are making the interjections obviously do not know enough to be able to take part in the debate. As I said before, it is a fine example of donkeys led by a rabbit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, who are these mental giants who have taken to the basic principles of our system and torn them up in this legislation and the previous legislation? Brilliant minds have written papers on some of the minutiae of this system under which we operate, and have worked on means of defining and redefining the various principles involved. What the Chief Minister has done in the savage way that he has attacked the whole Public Service Act is to move us closer to a country such as the USSR or one of the banana republics that we referred to earlier rather than to a western country with the proud tradition of development of a system of government which has the effective balances and counter-balances that are required. The opposition is keen not to see development down this road because, as long as we are in opposition, we will exercise our functions.

Mr D.W. Collins: But when in government.

Mr EDE: The member for Sadadeen can be assured that - even though he will not be around at that time because he will have been ousted for the pathetic way in which he represents his electorate - when we are in government, the opposition will be granted the right to talk on bills. As I said before, fools rush in where angels fear to tread. This is a particular example of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this idea was knocked up on the back of an envelope during a long plane trip. It was drafted in haste, it was considered by very few members of his own side and supported by none and yet it is something that we will all live to repent at great leisure.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Stuart does himself proud. He is such a good member of the opposition and he does it so well that I hope he is there for 25 years because I would not like to see him in government.

Mr Ede: I'll be in Stuart for 25 years.

Mr TUXWORTH: You might well be but, so long as you are in opposition at the same time, I can live with that.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised some points that I would like to touch on. He asked why the Public Service Commissioner could not be moved sideways in the way other chief executive officers can be moved. The concept of the Public Service Commissioner is that he is the nominal employer and, in that sense, is different from other chief executive officers of the service and has a different status. He should still be responsible to the minister but his status is not the same as other chief executive officers. The point that was put to me is that, if he were moved sideways like every other departmental head, we would effectively be treating him like another departmental head. That is not the point. It is still possible to take him from the office of Public Service Commissioner and make him a chief executive officer but the way to do that is for him to step down from office and then go into the chief executive officer structure. That is the reason why there is

no automatic lateral movement of the Public Service Commissioner. As I said, he is not an employee of the Northern Territory Public Service in the same sense as the Secretary of the Department of Mines and Energy or the head of NTEC or whatever.

I will just touch on something that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised in relation to sections 14 and 16A. Indeed, my colleague covered the matter well. The other day, during the second reading, the Leader of the Opposition asked: 'Why do you need anybody under section 14 anyway?' The reason for section 16A is that 2 functions of the Public Service Commissioner's office, the audit section and the equal opportunities section, have now been put under the Chief Minister's Department. For an officer of the Chief Minister's Department to be able to perform those functions in relation to the public service, he needs direction. Section 14(2) says: 'The commissioner shall take such action as he thinks necessary... prescribed authority, involving public moneys... are accountably made'. Section 16A says: 'The minister may in writing direct an employee' - that would be one in the Chief Minister's Department - 'to take any action or step that the commissioner may take by virtue of section 14(2)'. Section 16A really relates to the fact that 2 functions have been lifted out of the Public Service Commissioner's area of responsibility and are now in another department. That authority is there for that reason.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell raised the issue of setting up authorities to be at a distance from the government. That is not quite my understanding of why authorities are set up. They are set up to be outside the public service so that they can operate in a more commercial environment as distinct from being away from the government. They are still arms of the government and they should still be responsible to the government. Their chief executive should be directly responsible to the minister. Authorities have the ability to operate in a more commercial manner than they would be able to if they were in the service. That is my understanding of why we have authorities.

For the benefit of members, I reiterate the fact that chief executive officers of all arms of government should be directly responsible to the ministers of the day, be they in the Northern Territory or any other part of the Westminster system. The concept of having departmental heads or chief executive officers who are outside the control of their ministers is really quite contrary to the Westminster system. It is quite unacceptable that the government of the day could not put its policies into effect because it had a departmental head in the mould of Sir Humphrey Appleby. I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am staggered. This has been an emotional debate, not tonight but certainly in the last sittings. On my count, the Chief Minister has had at least 4 opportunities to put forward a reason why section 16A is in effect but he waited until his second last opportunity to do so.

Our major concern has always been with section 16A. It is incomprehensible to me why the Chief Minister, way back in June, was not able

at that time to spell out very clearly indeed why section 16A was necessary. He did not even do it when introducing this particular bill. It was not until 5 minutes ago that we received a clear explanation of why the government has thought it necessary to introduce this particular piece of legislation.

Of course, what that does is open up the whole debate into a new area, particularly into the area of equal employment opportunities and whether it is appropriately placed in the Chief Minister's Department or in the Public Service Commissioner's Office. You can run a very strong argument indeed that an essential element of the Public Service Commissioner's function is to have control over equal employment opportunities. In my view, to remove that power from the Public Service Commissioner simply because an equal employment opportunities office has been established in the Chief Minister's Department runs the very real risk of emasculating an extremely important function of the Public Service Commissioner. We do not know for sure whether the Chief Minister intends that to be the case because he does not have to implement that section. He does not have to issue a direction to an officer to undertake duties under section 14(3). In fact, as I understand it, he does not have to issue directions to an officer to undertake all of the duties under section 14(3). He can pick out different duties, if that is possible. I do not have that particular piece of legislation before me. It was inconsiderate of the Chief Minister to throw in that explanation right at the end. If he had done it at the beginning, we certainly would have had a different sort of debate.

I want to pick up the point made by the Leader of Government Business who was trying, in his normal eloquent fashion, to confuse what the opposition clearly stated. We were not arguing that this debate was about politicians having powers exceeding those of the Public Service Commissioner. What we were saying essentially was that section 16A provides the opportunity for a politician to take over some powers that the Public Service Commissioner had under the previous legislation. You can argue about that but I submit that the wording allows an interpretation whereby the Chief Minister or whoever is responsible for the public service can issue directions to public servants to do certain things. Such directions were previously the responsibility of the Public Service Commissioner. That allows the prospect of politicisation of the public service.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to speak very briefly because of the lateness of the hour. It was suggested that I was labouring under some misapprehension as to the role of statutory authorities and thought that the only matter of concern for statutory authorities was that they should be created in order to maintain a separateness from the government. Quite clearly, that is one of their roles. Another is that they are created for specific tasks, frequently for a short period. The Chief Minister suggested that the role of such statutory authorities was so that they could be - and I use his words - more commercial. I find that a little difficult to accept. We could perhaps dilate on the subject of the role of statutory authorities. Certainly, statutory authorities may be created for commercial purposes to give them more freedom in the marketplace but, to suggest that that is the only reason, is a little over the odds.

There are a variety of reasons for the creation of statutory authorities. I draw the attention of the minister to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority. I really wonder whether that statutory authority has been created for commercial reasons. Does the Chief Minister envisage that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority should be involved in selling sacred sites? Quite

clearly, there would be a diversity of views amongst government members on that particular point.

In nowise do I resile from my concerns about some of the principles involved in this bill and the implications that they have for the good government of the Northern Territory and the safety of Westminster traditions.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have before me a petition from 184 residents of Katherine who have grave concern in regard to a proposed licence for the removal of sand from the bed or banks of the Katherine River. Unfortunately, the petition does not conform with standing orders for submission to this Assembly. However, because of the very large number of signatories, all of whom are residents of Katherine and its surrounds, I believe that it is important that this petition be brought to the notice of the Assembly by the somewhat circuitous route of the adjournment debate. This petition reads:

> 'To the honourable the esteemed members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth that we object to the granting of a permit to George Griffiths or any other party for the purpose of extracting sand from the bed or banks of the Katherine River. This would not only pollute the river but also render the water downstream from the site of extraction turbid, interfering with water supplies for human consumption and crop irrigation. Further, it would upset the balance of the river system causing scouring of the river bed and banks downstream in the following wet seasons, destroying popular recreation areas used by the general public. Your petitioners therefore urge the Minister for Mines and Energy and the government to take whatever action necessary to reject this application'.

You would well know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Katherine is at this moment experiencing new subdivisional works, new housing and new commercial ventures. They are appearing almost daily. I have no doubt that there will be a speeding up of that development. New schools, subdivisions, housing and roadworks are being undertaken and the gas pipeline will be passing through. These projects, coupled with the federal government's development of the Tindal air base, will put considerable strain on the natural resources of Katherine. The need for sand will be very substantial and I can imagine that requests will be made for permits to extract sand and other building materials from as near as possible to Katherine. The traditional areas of sand mining around Katherine have been along the Katherine River banks and the 14-mile and Maude Creeks. Extensive destruction has caused the Katherine Town Council to resist mining the Katherine River banks. The Jawoyne land claim has tied up many sand areas. Granting of freehold land title and declaration of reserves have prevented sand mining in areas close to town. Sand mining areas to the north of Katherine were successfully mined out during 1984 with no objections to their operations and no detriment to the environment. Sand mining titles on the river bank some 12 km south of the town are active but limited in

reserves, relying on the annual wet season to recharge the supply. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is clearly need for restraint and concern for the environment when granting licences for sand extraction, particularly from the bed or banks of rivers. I join the petitioners in expressing my concern in this matter. I have spoken to the Minister for Mines and Energy about this and he has indicated concern. He will be following the matter up.

In speaking of new commercial developments, I was interested to hear the comments of the Leader of the Opposition a few nights ago when he commented on the visual appearance of the Beaufort Hotel and Performing Arts Complex. I may be jumped on for saying the things I am about to say because I know there are other people who do not like it. The Leader of the Opposition said that it must he one of the ugliest public buildings that he has ever seen. He referred to it as a big rock candy mountain. Obviously, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. At times during construction, I too had doubts about the eventual appearance of the building. However, as it nears completion, I have come to accept it on the Darwin skyline and even to appreciate it as a building of character. Most of the buildings that appear in the Darwin area are boxes, and pretty featureless boxes at that. Perhaps many people like boxes but I for one like the emerging visual appearance of the Beaufort. I think that, in time, most Territorians will learn to appreciate it as a unique addition to Darwin's architecture, even its colouring of duck-egg blue and pink. I reckon it is really attractive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one final matter that I would like to raise tonight is the new ABC radio service for the Northern Territory which is due to be available by December this year. As you know, radio transmission and reception are far from everyday matters for people in the bush, and not very far out in the bush either. The Territory's backbone, those people who live in the remoter areas, have not had the luxury of everyday radio reception. I am told that the new service will put an end to the constant dial-fiddling that has to be contended with in order to get a few garbled words of news mixed up with constant static. I quote from a pamphlet issued by the Department of Communications because, if the results are as indicated in the pamphlet, many of the communications problems suffered by people in the bush will be at an end. This is not the only area of communications lacking in the bush, as I have mentioned before. The telephone is number 1, radio is number 2 and television is number 3. Many people will receive television first. DRCS telephones will arrive at a fairly slow rate over a period of 5 years. Now we have the addition of a radio service. I read from the pamphlet:

> 'A new high-frequency short wave radio service which will provide ABC programs throughout the Northern Territory is to be introduced during 1985. High-powered 50 000 watt transmitting stations will be sited in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. Each will have an approximate range of 450 km in all directions'.

That, in fact, will cover from those 3 areas all but a very thin line down the south-western edge of the Territory. It continues:

> 'Programs for the service will originate in the Darwin and Alice Springs' studios of the ABC. For most of the time, they will be the same as programs broadcast on the present medium frequency stations: 8DR Darwin, 8AL Alice Springs, 8GO Nhulunbuy, 8JB Jabiru, 8KN Katherine, 8TC Tennant Creek. There are plans, however, to include segments of special interest to people in remote areas. The estimated cost of this new service is $3.8m'.

All of those services could be provided better through satellite and I believe they will in fact be provided through satellite. I do wonder why this service comes at this time but I do not reject it for that reason. I think it is timely that we have radio out in the bush. It is true that people will need a satellite dish for AUSSAT radio but they will need a satellite dish for television anyway. This service cannot be picked up with a car radio either, I am told. It is basically only for fixed bases. It continues:

> 'The main advantages of the new services are: there will be an ABC service available throughout the whole of the Northern Territory and the service will be able to be received by many existing inexpensive portable transistor radios. The new stations will use a technique known as vertical incidence transmission'.

That is short wave transmission, I understand. I will not go through the whole pamphlet because I can see people yawning. I photocopied it with the permission of the Department of Communications and sent out about 1000 copies with a newsletter. It is of great interest to people in the bush. I really commend the Department of Communications for finally getting its act together and providing radio to my constituents at last.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, following on briefly from what the previous speaker said, the new system will bring great benefits to people out bush. The reason why it was set up that way rather than through the satellite at this stage was that people without a satellite reception dish would be able to receive it. I assure members that, because of the price of the satellite reception dish, unfortunately, for a considerable time there will probably be a considerable number of people who will not be able to afford them. I have made that position clear to my federal colleagues on many occasions.

One other aspect stems not so much from a problem as from the nature of the beast. From memory, the frequencies are somewhere around 4.7, 4.9 and 5.2. Unfortunately, these are not available on car radio. I think that that is rather unfortunate, being myself a person who puts in many thousands of kilometres travelling around my electorate well outside the radius of the current broadcasting system. However, I am assured by the member for Araluen, who is somewhat of an expert in these matters, that there is a relatively inexpensive attachment that could be manufactured which would fit into our current radio and which would allow us to have, in effect, a parallel system to this form of radio. I assure members that I will be trying to find out how to do this and I think that it would be a good business for somebody in the Northern Territory to market the attachment if one can be developed at a relatively cheap cost. I would like to pass that idea on to the Minister for Industry and Small Business who may be able to encourage somebody in that direction.

However, that is not the main reason why I am speaking tonight. I wish to talk about Aboriginal child-care agencies. Honourable members would know that Aboriginal child-care agencies started quite some time ago with the establishment of the one in Victoria. In fact, it showed a very remarkable success rate with its ability to utilise traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture in finding ways within the Aboriginal society of overcoming many of the problems that were being confronted by adoption agencies and by people who had adopted Aboriginal children and later found that there were cultural problems and so on. The agency in Alice Springs was set up by a steering committee in 1984 and an approach was made to the Department of Community Development and the Commonwealth for funding. The department

supported the development of an Aboriginal child-care agency and allocated $59 500 from its grants-in-aid scheme for initial staff wages and operational costs. It also established the premises, rent free, until the end of 1985 and threw in some furnishings which I am told would have been better thrown out. In December 1984, the federal government approved the operation in principle and a budget of $204 000 on the understanding that there would be a 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement with the Northern Territory government. On 17 January 1985, the federal government approved a pro rata grant of $102 000 which was its share, paid on a quarterly basis of $25 500. We are constantly being told of the iniquities of the federal government which breaks its promises but here we have a very unfortunate situation. A raw chord has been struck with the honourable minister on this one.

The staff at that stage consisted of a coordinator, an administrative officer, 2 community welfare workers and a typist. Their wage costs alone for the quarter came to $27 157 which was above the actual share of the grant which the Commonwealth had generously provided even though the Northern Territory government did not provide its share. When further funds were not forthcoming from the department, approaches were made by ACCA as obviously funds would run out before the next quarterly allocation.

The Minister for Community Development wrote on 22 May 1985 that the Northern Territory government's understanding was that the core funding would come from the Commonwealth. The initial grant from the department was to lead into this. The argument is that the Department of Community Development will not fund core operations. It will provide premises rent free to the end of 1985 and it will give every consideration to program initiatives. Consequently, ACCA, as it is known, has been using the Commonwealth funds to cover it to the end of September. There have been no further funds from the department. As there has been a shortfall of $1657 in wage costs over the quarter, funds have been exhausted. Hence, the other day, 2 staff, a typist and a community welfare worker were retrenched.

Representations have been made by both myself and others over the past couple of months to the Territory government and the Commonwealth government to make a positive decision on funding. There has been no satisfactory outcome from either the federal government or the Territory government. How can an organisation operate efficiently and fulfil its objectives on one half of a budget? How can special projects and program initiatives be undertaken if there are no funds to employ the staff to run the association?

We see here the old patterns emerging. There is an initial token contribution by the federal or Territory government, sometimes by both, to gain the political kudos. Then, we have the stand-off period when both of them say that the other can continue it. They both play this little game of holding off - and who suffers, Mr Deputy Speaker? It is the people for whom the organisation is trying to provide the service. The organisation has to rechannel its efforts from trying to carry out the service to trying to organise its own survival and obtain funding from whichever side, while both sides stand back quite comfortably in their secure positions. Finally, the organisation reaches the third stage. Because it has been spending so much time trying to organise its own survival, the government turns around and says: 'You have not been doing what we originally gave you the money to do'. The coup de grace follows and the organisation is wiped out.

Mr Coulter: Have you talked to your federal colleagues about their responsibilities?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been speaking to the minister responsible. I have been attempting to get an answer out of him for some time and, if the minister will hang on, he will see where Senator Grimes gets his serve.

Discussions took place with the Department of Community Development earlier this year on funding for ACCA but no one from ACCA was involved in those discussions. Before moving on, I would note that the department apparently has stopped referring cases and, in fact, is recruiting staff to take over the function itself. This is a denial of a principle which it has said before it held dear: it would assist this type of organisation and have it done outside of the bureaucracy by community organisations which are most responsive to the people. In this case, we have an obvious example of its setting up the organisation to fail. It is taking over the cases and, in fact, has attempted to recruit some of the staff of ACCA. It cannot say that it was not happy with the staff of the organisation and their credibility.

Meanwhile, the approaches that we have made to Senator Grimes, to obtain a specific statement from him as to why he is obviously playing the same game, have met with a continued failure even to get a satisfactory response on what his department's position is. I am not satisfied at all with the efforts that he has made. I have told him this continuously. I have sent a stream of telexes to him saying that I think that it is disgusting that we have 2 powerful governments, 1 in the Northern Territory and 1 the federal government, both of whom are prepared to indulge in duck-shoving while they leave a little organisation like ACCA in Alice Springs to fail. The federal government says it has one understanding and the Northern Territory government says it has another understanding. However, it would appear that it is the organisation which suffers from the misunderstandings between them both. I would like the Minister for Community Development to furnish us with the information about negotiations held with the federal government on the funding of ACCA. I would like him to prove to me if he can that it is in fact the federal position because it will certainly strengthen my arm in the negotiations that I am conducting with the federal government.

I have been told that joint funding discussions are being undertaken by a working party set up after the Social Welfare Administrators Conference in 1984. However, it is very unfortunate that, while each side carries on with this game of putting the blame on the other and trying to get out of its share of funding, the Aboriginal kids of Alice Springs and the surrounding areas who were supposed to have been served by this initiative, are suffering.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, last Thursday the Leader of the Opposition tried to suggest that the conservative parties, as he called them - I prefer to call them the liberal parties - in opposition in Canberra and throughout Australia were trying to grab at some new scheme in an endeavour to demonstrate the difference between the ALP and liberal philosophies. He said that they had grabbed some buzz word - that buzz word being 'privatisation'. I intend to show at least in part this evening that privatisation is by no means just a buzz word. If you read what the Leader of the Opposition says, sometimes you can get a glimmer of what he really believes. Every now and then, he has this little heart-to-heart which emerges and that is why I quote from his speech last Thursday night: 'Indeed, my own view is that there are many, and I reiterate, many areas of public enterprise where privatisation so-called could occur to the benefit of everyone'.

I really think that was the true position of the Leader of the Opposition because I believe that he and Paul Keating and others have perceived what privatisation is really about and they are running scared. They would love to adopt it themselves, but they know darned well that their unions, who are their bosses after all, would never allow it. I would note 2 things from the statement of the Leader of the Opposition. The first is his refusal to name the organisations he would transfer from the public to the private sector. It was the typical Bufo marinus-like waffle which he is noted for, and I challenge him to name the organisations that he would privatise. But he will not do it. He has received orders from the caucus in Canberra, his masters down there, to attack privatisation.

I was very interested to note in the media over the weekend that privatisation had been attacked by the ALP in Canberra. The reason for that is because it is scared witless, and with very good reason as I hope to demonstrate tonight and over a period of time because it will not be the last time I will talk on this extremely exciting subject.

The second thing, of course, was that he was having 2 bob each way in his little statement. He said that there were many areas where privatisation would benefit everyone and then proceeded to denigrate it because he remembered that he had been told by Canberra that he had to attack privatisation. Then he ran a campaign of fear using his typical scare tactics.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in 1975 and 1977, Prime Minister Fraser won clear mandates from the people of Australia, many of whom would have been union members, to do 3 things: to reduce the public sector, to lower taxation - those 2 tie in together - and to curb union power. Regrettably, Mr Fraser failed. He slowed the growth rate, taxes rose at a much slower rate and the public sector grew at a slower rate. He did not do what he had said he would do. On the union front, he introduced considerable legislation which was not implemented but which gained for him a reputation for confrontation and led Mr Hawke to say that the ALP was not confrontationist but stood for consensus. Of course, that had appeal for a while but people have woken up suddenly or even slowly, in some cases, to the fact that it is a very selective sort of consensus and it is wearing very thin. Malcolm Fraser was voted out of government and he was criticised by many people, including myself, as being too soft. Some people even had the suspicion that he was deliberately trying to sabotage the liberal cause.

It is very easy for governments to obtain advice on what they should do. It is far harder to obtain advice on how to do it in a politically-acceptable manner. There is a huge difference between knowing what you should do and arriving at solutions on how to do it in a manner which is acceptable to the electorate. That is what micro-politics is about. Micro-politics is a study which is being promoted by the Adam Smith Institute. Dr Madsen Pirie, who has visited Australia a couple of times, is the gentleman behind this idea and he is an adviser to Margaret Thatcher. I would like to read into the Hansard an article which I think will put it better than I can. I believe that members will find it extremely interesting if they take the time to listen:

> 'Governments are never short of people telling them what to do. The premium is on people to tell them how to do it. The world is full of people advising governments to cut their spending, take the burden of regulations off the back of business and to reduce the level of taxation. Sometimes when governments bravely attempt these mighty

tasks and find them difficult to achieve, the cry goes up that they were not tough enough and should have struck harder, sooner, further and stronger. Behind this criticism, there lies a myth of the omnipotence of government. In the real world, governments are not all-powerful. They face interest groups and entrenched privileges ranged against changes they might contemplate, and find their political power limited to that which they have sufficient to have bought to undertake. When government does attempt to cut spending, reduce its burden and lower taxes, it finds defenders of each of the threatened programs. They identify themselves as groups, can organise and know how to command media attention. The populace at large has no such unity or self-consciousness and forms a less effective constituency.

The administrators asked to implement cuts that threaten their own empires always put the most vulnerable and popular services on the line first knowing that the howl of protest will soon sap the will of the legislators bent on reform. The unions who benefit from the public program know how to whip up popular fears that an essential service will be damaged. The results of all this has been to make campaigns to cut back government spending ineffective and short lived.

One problem is that their proposed solutions are usually on the macro scale. Economists with quite impeccable views on policies, follies and absurdities of macro-economics are apt to come up with conclusions which call for government to sell off state industries or to get out of health. Government does not do so because it does not know how.

Micro-politics is the alternative approach pioneered by the Adam Smith Institute. It offers the prospect of changes made not by the will of government but by the decisions of motivated individuals. Micro-political solutions seek to identify the interest groups concerned and to contrive circumstances in which it is to their advantage to prefer change. On the micro-political model, change is made suddenly but cumulatively as a result of the decisions of many individuals. Privatisation in its many forms is often an alternative which they willingly prefer.

Thus, the state-owned houses in Britain are bought by the tenant because the discounted price, up to 60% of market, and the prospect of home-ownership outweigh the advantage of subsidised rents. British Telecom is successfully transferred to the private sector because the workers prefer the shares allocated to them rather than the strictures of the union leaders. The administrators end up controlling a successful and profitable private firm, and the public likes the discounts on telephone bills and the profit on their acquisition. British Gas will be as successful. In a perfect world, it might be good to have the gas institute broken into competing units. Any attempt to achieve that in the real world would fail. However, a coalition of management, work force and public would thwart it.

Similar analysis produces micro-political solutions to state health. Let it be to the advantage of each to freely prefer the private alternatives so that, over the months and years, a uniform state

system will be transformed by them into one which responds to market forces and which leaves state money to fund health care for those who would not otherwise afford it.

Governments can be educated with remarkable rapidity to prefer micro-political solutions. Instead of having to undertake reforms that generate flak and lose them popularity, they find instead that their actions bring wide acclaim from the new beneficiaries. They find too that the threats to reverse the move away from big government by their opponents are shown to be empty, as large numbers of people acquire a vested interest in the new order'.

That is very much the experience of British Telecom and a host of other public enterprises which have been privatised in England. People like it. It continues:

'The fundamental reasons for the success of Britain's privatisation program is derived from a new sphere of politics and offers solutions quite different in style from the old simple planners for less government. Anyone who supposes that it presents no more than a campaign to sell off state industries perpetrated by determined government is making a fundamental mistake'.

That was the mistake the Leader of the Opposition made last Thursday when he tried to paint it in that particular manner. It continues: 'Such a simple approach would not have succeeded'. Indeed, it would not. It did not with Malcolm Fraser. 'The privatisation program has been more complex and more subtle with more than 20 different methods employed, each tailor-made to meet the requirements of particular problems'. There is no simplistic solution; each one is tailor-made. It continues:

'All too often, the critics of public spending behave like poor ski instructors pushing the reluctant government down the slopes towards the goal of a reduced public sector at the bottom. Of course, with such a clumsy direct approach, the hapless legislators come to grief with the first interest group and end up in a shower of broken limbs and out of office. More thoughtful preparation would devise a slalom course steering the skier around the interest groups in the way and down a safer pathway which enables the objective to be achieved. It is in this spirit that the creative work of privatisation has to be performed. Each part of the public sector requires a different path. Each path has different interest groups and trends along the way. The best that can be hoped for is that each can be dealt with one by one and that the skier's skill and confidence will improve with each success. Rather, to its own delighted surprise, government finds itself able to steer a way to its goals. It likes the experience and it is ready for more, which is just as well, given the size of the public sector'.

This method would have allowed Malcolm Fraser to achieve his aims: reduction in the size of the public service, reduction in taxation and, certainly, a curbing of union powers. The only people who opposed privatisation in England were the unions. There were huge full-page ads warning against it. Yet 95% of the Telecom workers came in and took up the option of shares in that company. They became a part of it. They helped reduce the them-and-us attitude which unions foster in their troglodyte manner, and helped England back on the right track whereby people are owners

within their own country and feel very proud of it and pleased with the system.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate to pay tribute to Flight Lieutenant Ian William Davidson, who is now deceased, late of No 75 Squadron, RAAF base, Darwin. On the evening of Thursday 20 June 1985, Flight Lieutenant Ian William Davidson failed to return from a low altitude intercept training mission over the sea to the west of Darwin. Following loss of ground control radar contact with Flight Lieutenant Davidson's Mirage aircraft, an extensive air and sea search was initiated. The sea search involved naval and private vessels while, in the air, RAAF and civilian aircraft conducted intensive search operations in the area of the disappearance. All efforts to locate the missing pilot and aircraft proved fruitless and the official search was abandoned early on Saturday 22 June 1985. Aircraft from the RAAF Darwin continued searching until dark on that Saturday but no trace of Ian Davidson or his Mirage aircraft was found. Flight Lieutenant Davidson was posted missing, believed dead.

The loss of Flight Lieutenant Davidson was the first fatality suffered by No 75 Squadron since its return to Australia in August 1983. The squadron was formerly located at Butterworth in Malaysia. No 75 Squadron is currently equipped with Mirage aircraft but will eventually be supplied with the new FA-18 Hornet fighter and relocated at Tindal near Katherine. Ian Davidson's ambition was to fly the RAAF's new fighter.

Ian Davidson, originally from Western Australia, joined the RAAF at the age of 17 years as a cadet in the RAAF academy at Point Cook, Victoria. During his time at the academy, Ian completed a Bachelor of Science degree and also received a Graduate Diploma of Military Aviation. He graduated from the RAAF Academy as a commissioned officer in 1981.

Ian next underwent pilot training at Point Cook and at Pearce in Western Australia, receiving his RAAF wings in 1982. Whilst doing the pilot's course, his overriding ambition was to be posted onto fighter aircraft. He succeeded and was posted to the RAAF Williamstown in early 1983 to train on the Mirage fighter. In December 1983, Ian Davidson was posted to No 75 Squadron in Darwin.

Ian quickly established himself as a likeable and popular member of the squadron and was put in charge of the squadron's social club. At the time of his disappearance, he had amassed over 300 hours on Mirage aircraft and had participated in exercises in Malaysia and at Learmonth in Western Australia.

Ian also clearly enjoyed the outdoor life available to him in the Territory. He was the proud owner of a 4-wheel-drive vehicle and a trail bike, both of which were put to good use in his many trips around the Top End. Additionally, Ian was actively involved in local church affairs and displayed a quiet but resolute faith.

Ian Davidson will be remembered by those who served with him in No 75 Squadron as a friendly and unassuming person and an enthusiastic and professional pilot. During his RAAF career he displayed perseverance, good humour and a great desire to succeed in his chosen profession. Ian Davidson was aged 24 at the time of his death and he is survived by his mother and step-father, Joan and Stan Parks of Lancelin in Western Australia, and also by his sister Gael.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the armed forces form a large part of my electorate at present. In fact, 4 in every 10 people in the electorate of Berrimah are involved in armed service of one nature or another, whether it be at Coonawarra or the RAAF base. I pay particular tribute to the men and women of the armed services who give away, in many cases, their careers and lives for the defence of Australia, although some of these people go unrecognised. Obviously, Ian Davidson was a brilliant young Australian who succeeded well in his courses and everything that he undertook. He is a credit to all young Australians and, as such, I have approached the Chief Minister and the Northern Territory government is now considering offering a flying scholarship in memory of Ian Davidson so that we may put another young pilot into the air. In this regard, it is considered that a person from No 1 Air Cadet Brigade, which operates from the RAAF base Darwin, should be selected for such a scholarship. I believe that this will be a fitting tribute to a brilliant young Australian who gave his life for the development and defence of northern Australia in particular and Australia in general. I extend my sympathy and support to Ian's parents and his sister and I know that they would support this type of scholarship to remember such a brilliant young man.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I intend to answer the honourable member for Stuart's allegations of lack of support and funding for ACCA in Alice Springs. Obviously, the truth escapes him; it was not a bad story except he did not state the facts. In fact, the Department of Community Development has bent over backwards to make up for the abrogation of federal responsibilities in the area of Aboriginal child-care in this particular instance, and I will address that issue in more detail for the honourable member for Stuart later.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at a recent meeting with a non-government organisation involved in Aboriginal service delivery, the Aboriginal members of that organisation expressed their concern that the developments I foreshadowed in March had not been evidenced in tangible progress and that, indeed, what had been evidenced in the intervening period was a restriction of funding for Aboriginal communities in particular. Happily, we were able to part from the meeting amicably after having reached levels of agreement about progress that was being made.

However, the exchange prompted me to review what I said last March and I consider it appropriate that I report to this Assembly again on the progress that has been made in the portfolio of community development. In many areas of government activity, progress may be measured quite properly in terms of money spent on programs and the cost-effectiveness of money spent in achieving the program aims. But, in my view, service delivery in any community should be measured not only in terms of money spent but also in terms of the quality of the service being delivered, with cost-effectiveness, of course, remaining an important consideration.

In respect of Aboriginal programs, officers are examining the pros and cons of introducing for the 1986-87 budget year formula funding underpinned with a Grants Commission methodology. This will involve analysis of individual community needs and income-earning capacities. This is a significant initiative which will reinforce the government's stated policies of Aboriginal self-management and self-determination. A new funding direction for essential service programs on Aboriginal communities has been approved now by the government and the department is engaged at present in formalising and effecting the transfer of funding appropriation from the Department of Transport and Works to the Department of Community Development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at a later date, I will address the Assembly on this initiative. However, an important aspect associated with the transfer will be the putting into place of a new policy designed to ensure that Aboriginal communities themselves will choose whether to bring essential service programs into effect. This will require Aboriginal communities to maximise their community resources, either by doing the work themselves or by taking the decision to contract the work out to private enterprise. The department's field service staff are now required to concentrate on the provision of advice, training and support in the TMPU and essential service area to Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory, thereby placing a maximum responsibility on Aboriginal communities for their own decisions and actions.

An important area is that of communications. A report earlier this year by a consultant, Dr Shimpo, advised the direction that we should now consider. In particular, print and video film material should place greater emphasis on communication of government policies in Aboriginal affairs. Dr Shimpo's recommendations in this regard are being proceeded with. Officers from the Aboriginal Development Division and the local government branch are working on the production of material designed to encourage Aboriginal communities to consider the advantages, in self-management terms, of adopting community government as presently designed under part XX of the Local Government Act.

The branch is also playing a major part in training Aboriginal people in media production, both with the branch and on Aboriginal communities, and it is cooperating with other agencies in programs related to the impact of communications technology on remote communities. Mr Deputy Speaker, officers are also developing a policy paper on economic development for Aboriginal communities and to this end are consulting with the Department of Industry and Small Business. The aim is to examine ways of establishing Aboriginal commercial enterprises that can provide an economic base for self-management and self-reliance as an alternative to dependence on other sources of sustenance income. In identifying commercial enterprise opportunities, a prime consideration will be provision of employment and training opportunities and Aboriginal participation in management and direction control.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before leaving the specific area of Aboriginal affairs and the effectiveness of my department in the area, I might mention that there is also a heavy expenditure of departmental resources in improving relations between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments - and everybody knows just how difficult that can be from time to time. I need not detail developments which have taken place between the 2 governments and, indeed, across Australia on the question of Aboriginal land rights. That development has gone on quite prominently since May of this year.

Another area where the department is involved on an intergovernment basis is in cooperation with the Commonwealth, South Australian and Western Australian governments on an exchange program directed at trying to solve the problem of petrol sniffing amongst young people in Aboriginal communities. I had the opportunity to meet with the Senate select committee last evening. That initiative arises from the March 1985 meeting of the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council of Ministers which I attended. I put forward the suggestion that we could not wait for the Senate select committee's findings, that we were dealing with people's lives and that we had to address the problem as soon as possible.

It is hoped that the exchange of information and ideas between the cooperating governments will point the way to solving or at least to combating this problem which has such terrible consequences. Presently, we are engaged in a Commonwealth-Northern Territory review of financial arrangements in relation to Aboriginal affairs. That also arose from the March 1985 meeting. Terms of reference for the review have been agreed between the 2 governments and it is intended to examine, clarify and, if necessary, recommend redirection of funding responsibilities of the 2 governments in all areas of program and service delivery to Aboriginals in the Northern Territory.

More recently, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs embarked on an inquiry into Aboriginal homelands, proceeding on a reference to the committee by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The Northern Territory government has agreed to cooperate in this inquiry and will be coordinating the preparation of the Northern Territory submission.

Last March, I took some trouble to explain for the benefit of honourable members the directions in which the Department of Community Development would be moving for the development of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. It is interesting to note that I received in my office this morning representatives from another Aboriginal organisation who are extremely interested in the direction in which my department is heading. I believe that there is strong feeling and cooperation amongst some of the communities. I had the opportunity in the last 2 months to travel through Arnhem Land to meet with some of the councils and associations within that area. As well, I intend to travel through the southern region of the Northern Territory in September. Although I have travelled extensively there, there are a number of regions and centres that I wish to visit to talk to the people. I realise that some of those communities will not have the opportunity to venture into Aboriginal enterprises because of their geographical position within the Northern Territory.

I believe that, despite some of the things that have been mentioned in these sittings by some members of the opposition, things are changing. The opportunities do exist. I believe that my department will be able to meet the tremendous challenge which is provided by Aboriginal communities to reach true self-determination and self-management.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be as brief as I possibly can. I preface my comments by endorsing the comments of the Minister for Community Development in relation to the unfortunate incident with the RAAF pilot. I was deeply concerned that the incident transpired in the way it did.

I really must make some reference to the comments of the member for Sadadeen. Quite apart from the fact that he is unutterably boring and really is quite painful to listen to, the substance of what he had to say was too much to take. I can tolerate people standing in Todd Street and handing out 55½¢ dollar bills and that sort of thing if they have ever known the chill winds of free enterprise.

Mr D.W. Collins: You have?

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection of the member for Sadadeen, I have not but then I do not go about spouting the sort of nonsense that he does. I really find it fairly difficult to cope with somebody who is both boring and hypocritical, somebody who has not suffered the buffetings of the private sector.

Mr D.W. Collins: You admit there are buffetings.

Mr BELL: I certainly do. I really do not understand what justification the member for Sadadeen can have to suggest that any member on this side of the Assembly has taken anything but a very sensible attitude to the virtues of a mixed economy.

What I did want to talk about fairly briefly was the stentorian display of the Minister for Lands last night. I think that his comments were remarkable for several reasons. Chiefly, they were remarkable because it was the first time in his 18 months in this Assembly that the Minister for Lands has been forced to resort to an argumentum ad hominem instead of actually addressing the matter in hand. I took some delight listening to it on the loud speakers. Unfortunately, the uncomfortable minister was forced to sink to the depths of personal criticism. Obviously, this matter of the Katherine east stage 2 subdivision is a sensitive matter for himself. The only comment I wish to put on record is that I am not satisfied that I have had adequate answers from the minister. I will be investigating other ways of pursuing this matter.

Let me just place on record 2 things. First of all, the minister brushed off my concern about the Northern Territory government's failure to call for tenders or expressions of interest for the Katherine east subdivision stage 2 by saying: 'The developers were in possession of a lease over the area being developed and there was no legal way the government could have introduced another developer into the leased area'. That is really a rather pathetic excuse because one is forced to ask how the developers got the lease in the first place. What sort of advertisement was there for tenders over that particular area for subdivision? As far as I am concerned, the Minister for Lands is clearly ducking the issue of the appropriate means of private development of land. So in answer to the member for Sadadeen's complaints about my failure to endorse private enterprise, in the next breath I give him an example.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am concerned about more than the fact that the minister's predecessors did not call for any expression of interest for this subdivision. Their pretext was that the developers already had all these and therefore they could not call for expressions of interest. That is pretty cute. Does this mean that the government just gave these developers the lease over Crown land with no estimate of costs to the developers or the possible returns? How would they work out a fair price? How would they estimate what might be possible? How did the government estimate the prices of $20 000 a block for the Northern Territory Housing Commission buy-back and the $15 000 for the public? There is a dangerous example, Denis, of government interference in the marketplace putting a ceiling price on blocks of land in Katherine. I am quite sure the member will make earnest representations to prevent that happening again. I joke, of course, Mr Deputy Speaker.

But let me just finish off that first point by again asking why there were no tenders called. Why was there no call for expressions of interest? Apart from the minister's own assertion, we have no evidence that other firms, be they local Katherine firms or others, were in fact approached to carry out this subdivision. We have no evidence apart from the minister's own assertion. I am frankly not prepared to accept that and I would like to see him put forward a little more.

I wish to make a further point. The minister said last night:

> 'A major residential subdivision was seen as an urgent necessity, and to call for public invitations for a development lease would have taken at least 6 months before a lease could have been issued, and this was regarded as an unacceptable delay. I am advised that larger, out-of-town firms had been approached but they showed considerable reservations and wanted extremely favourable conditions because of the necessary establishment costs and the relative uncertainty of the market'.

He referred to the relative uncertainty of the market, Mr Deputy Speaker. What does he mean by 'relative uncertainty'?

Mr D.W. Collins: Relative uncertainty in the market deals.

Mr BELL: Well, you listen. The government has guaranteed to buy 80% of these blocks of land. That does not smack to me of uncertainty. The minister called on me, apart from calling me all sorts of names, to make an apology. I think I substantially demonstrated that the actions of the Northern Territory government in this regard are not exactly beyond reproach.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I would like to address a question without notice that the honourable member for MacDonnell asked yesterday morning, and again in the adjournment debate yesterday. I am extremely disappointed that the honourable member for MacDonnell is now leaving the Assembly. I thought that he would be most interested in hearing the answer as it was a most serious accusation that he made in relation to the Ombudsman's report. I refer to his question which related to complaint E778 in the 1983-84 Ombudsman's Report of Complaints. The honourable member said:

> '...where it is reported that a private air charter operator was seriously disadvantaged as a result of a ministerial decision. Is the minister aware of the matter? If so, what air charter operator was involved and has the government taken any action by way of compensation for this particular operator?'

The answer to the first one is no. I was unaware of the complaint as the matter arose in late 1982. As to the second part of the question, the answer is that the air charter operator was Mr Stephen Styles who subsequently traded as Top End Aviation. The Northern Territory government has not taken any action to compensate Mr Styles. As far as I am aware, Mr Styles did not apply for compensation and he was subsequently granted a charter operator's licence.

Mr Speaker, I think it is important first of all to bring to the attention of this Assembly the words of the honourable member: 'The air charter operator was seriously disadvantaged as a result of a ministerial decision'. Nowhere in the Ombudsman's Report could I find reference to a ministerial decision. In fact, the member had not read the Ombudsman's Report of Complaints and understood what it said. As a result of that, he has put a question and he insinuated in that question that a ministerial decision was taken in relation to the matter. That was incorrect. I feel that, as a result of comments made in the adjournment debate last night by the member for MacDonnell in relation to this matter, it is only fit and proper that I outline the history of events.

On 30 September 1982, Mr Styles lodged a joint application, in association with another person, for a charter licence under the Northern Territory Aviation Act in the name of Aquatic Air Charter. This application was

rejected by the Licensing Review Committee on 21 October 1982 on the grounds that it did not meet the necessary criteria for entry to the industry, bearing in mind that the general aviation industry was in a depressed economic state at the time. The other party was advised accordingly on 23 December 1982. It is believed Mr Styles had purchased his aircraft during this period.

On 31 December 1982, Mr Styles lodged a fresh application in his own right, trading as Top End Aviation which was an unregistered company. Before that application could be considered, the federal Department of Aviation instituted investigations into alleged breaches of the Commonwealth Air Navigation Regulations by Mr Styles. Charges were to be laid against Mr Styles for allegedly carrying out commercial charter operations without holding the necessary Commonwealth licences. All further consideration of his application for a Northern Territory charter licence was suspended pending the outcome of Commonwealth investigations. It was not possible to issue Mr Styles with a Northern Territory licence while he did not hold a Commonwealth licence, as that is a necessary condition of the Northern Territory licence.

Mr Styles had purchased an aircraft and proceeded to undertake commercial charter operations without holding either a Commonwealth or Northern Territory air service licence. Whether Mr Styles decided to purchase the aircraft on the basis of some verbal advice he had received from a member of the minister's staff with regard to the issue of the Northern Territory licence, I cannot say but it does seem to me to be very shaky grounds on which to base such a significant commercial decision.

On 14 April 1983, the federal Department of Aviation issued a charter licence to Mr Styles in the name of Livestock Contracting Pty Ltd. Mr Styles bought into a company, Skyfreight Holdings Pty Ltd, on 6 July 1983, and applied to the Northern Territory government for the transfer of a charter licence held in that company name. Transfer of the charter licence to Stephen Edward Styles was approved by the Director of Transport in August 1983. This Northern Territory charter licence was later renewed in the name of Top End Aviation, a Styles company, on 9 September 1983. Top End Aviation was placed in liquidation in June 1985.

Since then, Mr Styles has been issued with both Commonwealth and Northern Territory air service licences in his own name to operate fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft. It can be clearly demonstrated also that Mr Styles has received fair treatment at the hands of the Northern Territory government despite the fact that, for some time, he was under investigation by the Commonwealth for illegal charter activity.

Mr Speaker, the second question asked by the member for MacDonnell was: 'Has the government taken any action by way of compensation for this particular operation?' The imputation is that somehow the government was responsible for a situation of financial or business loss supposedly suffered by the operator. How ridiculous!

Going back to the member's comments in the adjournment debate, he said that his first question was: 'Can it be confirmed that this was the reason the incorrect advice was given to the air charter office by the minister's office?' That was the situation. Somebody in the minister's office allegedly spoke to Mr Styles on the telephone. I ask the member for MacDonnell: if he were convicted for driving without a licence an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, would he expect compensation from the government because he had

received phone advice that he did not have to comply with the law - advice that would have been obtained from the typist or cleaner working in my office? That is the situation in this case.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, tonight I rise in the adjournment debate to pay tribute to Major Maurice John Moore ED RFD. Maurie was a resident of my electorate for a number of years and a resident of Darwin for some 30-odd years. Maurie was a member of the public service and, at the time of his death, was the Chief Property Manager in the Department of Administrative Services, a position that he held for a number of years. Maurie first started in Darwin, I understand, in a position at Government House. At various times, he was secretary to 3 Administrators: Mr Archer, Roger Nott and Roger Dean. He served at Government House from 1960 until 1967.

Maurie had a wide range of interests in the community and was a member and worker on many committees of local clubs. He was involved for 31 years with the Darwin Club and was club vice-president during the last 2 years. He was a committee man on at least 5 other occasions. Maurie was a staunch supporter of his church and many people in the community have reason to mourn his passing and regret the loss of a quiet achiever.

The other side of this man was his extensive involvement with the armed services. In this role, he went as an army officer to Vietnam in 1968-69. Major Maurie Moore was the first officer to volunteer for transfer from the CMF Darwin signal squadron to the newly-reformed 121st Light Anti-aircraft Battery in September 1962. The light aircraft battery was formed during the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. The regular army rushed a light anti-aircraft battery to Darwin to get the show on the road but there was a heavy reliance on the local citizens' military force to bolster members in case the confrontation situation widened. Maurie's skilled leadership in this area held him in high esteem and resulted in a flood of volunteers to form the new battery. He was promoted from captain to major in 1965 and became the first of many prominent Darwin citizens to lead the 121st Light Anti-aircraft Battery as the battery commander. Because of Maurie's ability to inspire trust and confidence, the army in Darwin was given the freedom of the city, a rare privilege.

In 1967, he reformed the CMF command and staff training unit, training officers for promotion, potential officers for a commission and other ranks for potential promotion also. He kept a low profile and worked hard to maintain the training standards of staff development. Cyclone Tracy saw an end to his army career in that unit.

Maurie was a founding member of the Royal Australian Artillery Association (NT) Inc, the body responsible for the NT military museum at East Point. Following Cyclone Tracy, he put most of his time into the museum, developing it to the stage it is today. Because of his work as association secretary, the museum gained a national and international reputation as an authentic historical site that presented the implements of war in their natural state and with dignity. The museum has become a tourist must over the years due to his activities.

In 1963, he was elected President of the Royal Australian Artillery Association (NT) Inc, and the following 2 years were hectic and dynamic. They were hectic because, as president, he had to guide the association and military museum to their ultimate goals of independence and security of land

tenure whilst being beset by potential takeovers and the regaining of the priceless artefacts on loan to other organisations. There was no doubt that it was through his dynamic efforts that the achievements were made.

He is survived by a widow, Lois, and a son, Andrew. I offer them my condolences.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Death of Mr J. England CMG

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its regret at the death on 18 June 1985 of John Armstrong England, Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1 June 1976 until 31 December 1980, and place on record its appreciation of his distinguished service to the people of the Northern Territory and tender its profound sympathy to his widow and family.

Mr Speaker, Mr England died at the age of 73 at Grenfell in New South Wales. He leaves a wife, with whom he was united for 45 years, and 4 children, together with grandchildren. Mr England was born at Clayfield, a suburb of Brisbane, on 12 October 1911. He was the middle member of a family of 5, and is survived by 2 sisters, Molly and Winsome. He was educated at Murwillimbah and Brisbane Boys College. In 1931, Mr England joined the Citizens Military Forces, first with the Australian Garrison Artillery and later with the Australian Light Horse. In 1941, he commenced full-time duty and, in the same year, transferred to the 2nd AIF.

Mr England's war service was distinguished. Between 1943 and 1946, he served in west New Guinea, Morotai, Labuan and Sarawak with the 52nd Australian Composite Anti-Aircraft Regiment. In 1943, John England was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and during his service he was awarded the Efficiency Decoration and mentioned in dispatches.

In 1960, Mr England was elected to the House of Representatives and he was re-elected at subsequent elections until his retirement from the parliament in 1975. During his career in the House of Representatives, he served on several parliamentary committees. These included the Joint Statutory Committee on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Joint Committee on the Australian Capital Territory. He was also Country Party Whip in the House of Representatives. In addition, Mr England held the parliamentary post of counsellor, Spring Meeting of the International Parliamentary Union April 1974, member of the Australian Delegation to the 61st Inter-parliamentary Union Conference, Tokyo 1974, a member of the parliamentary delegation to South Korea in October 1974 and adviser to the Australian delegation at the United Nations from September to December 1975.

Mr Speaker, in June 1976, following his retirement from the House of Representatives, Mr England was appointed Administrator of the Northern Territory and he remained in that post until 31 December 1980. In 1978, he was made a Commander of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. In the New Year's honours list of 1979, he was appointed a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George.

Mr England brought the impeccable credentials of vast experience and probity to his role as Administrator of the Northern Territory. These qualifications were to stand him in good stead because, during his term as Administrator, he was involved in the transition from direct government control from Canberra to Territory self-government. Mr England performed his role in this time of change with great skill and integrity.

Mr Speaker, John England was a true statesman and a great ambassador for the Northern Territory. His passing will cause great sadness. I am certain that his contribution to the evolution of self-government in the Northern Territory will not be forgotten.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the opposition, I join in support of this condolence motion. There is no need for me to go over the biographical details of John England as the Chief Minister has already done that. I had the pleasure of being associated with John England in his role as Administrator of the Northern Territory. I also knew both him and his wife, Polly, socially. They were both liked and respected greatly by everyone who came into contact with them and we were sorry to see them leave.

John England brought a great deal of distinction and bearing to the position of Administrator. Despite the fact that he was a prominent member of the National Party and former member of the Commonwealth parliament in that capacity, he conducted his role as Administrator in an impeccably impartial and completely non-partisan way. We were sorry to see him leave the Territory when his term as Administrator expired. On behalf of the opposition, I join with the government in extending our sympathy to his wife and family.

Mr ROBERTSON (Constitutional Development): Mr Speaker, although it is rare for more than 1 person from either side to speak on a condolence motion, I would like to take a few moments of the Assembly's time in consideration of the fact that I represented the Northern Territory government at Mr England's funeral. It is never a pleasure to go to a funeral even though some say that it is more pleasant than going to a marriage because the problems of the latter are just starting. Mr England and Polly his wife would not mind a bit of levity because, after all, he was a man who had a great capacity for humour.

While it was not a pleasure, it was indeed a privilege. It was a pleasure to have known the man and to have served with him on the Executive Council for some years. It was also a privilege to have gone to his home town and to have spoken with many of the people who grew up with him and knew him all of his life. It was remarkable to talk to people who knew him and to find such a warmth in their memory of him. In my typical scatterbrained way, I left the hotel at the airport in Melbourne in the early hours of the morning wearing the wrong pair of shoes. Have you ever seen anyone go to a funeral in a very dark suit and brown shoes? I went to a shoe shop in Cowra to buy another pair. I asked the lady in the shoe shop if she knew Mr England and she spent about 5 minutes telling me all sorts of things that we know the man was. That was a little shop in a side street.

Mr Speaker, the funeral was attended by a number of notable people in this country, particularly from his side of the political fence. Ian Sinclair was there as were Doug Anthony and Senator Doug Scott. More particularly, there was a great roll up at the service at the RSL. As most members know, I am a member of the Returned Services League and have been to a number of funerals at which the Returned Services League has provided the final honour guard, the playing of the Last Post and the service that goes peculiarly with the death and burial of an ex-RSL member. It was by far the most moving and beautifully conducted RSL service I have known. It was a tribute to the man that so much attention to detail was paid by that sub-branch of the RSL to farewell a former soldier and friend.

Mr Speaker, the other thing that was evident during the afternoon of the funeral of Mr John England was the mood which prevailed, both in the church and afterwards. It was not so much that the gathering was sad at his passing; it was their gladness for his having been.

Mr SPEAKER: I invite honourable members to signify their assent to the motion by standing in silence.

Members stood in silence.

TABLED PAPER
Aboriginal Community Justice Project

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the final report of the Aboriginal Community Justice Project which has been prepared by Mr Stephen Davis, consultant anthropologist to the project.

Mr Speaker, the Aboriginal Community Justice Project was initiated in 1982 by the then Attorney-General, Mr Everingham, with the aim of providing a justice program which sought to accommodate, wherever possible, Aboriginal law and social control mechanisms within the present judicial system of the Northern Territory. This has been implemented by involving senior Aboriginal custodians with a magistrate in discussion prior to sentencing an offender after close and detailed pre-court consultation with the defendant's extended family.

To date, the project has operated only at Galiwinku in Arnhem Land. The Galiwinku Community Council at Elcho Island was offered the opportunity of participating in the Aboriginal Community Justice Project in 1982. Senior Aboriginal men on Elcho Island reacted very positively to the project and continue to maintain their strong support for its continuance. The first court conducted as part of the project was convened in September 1983 and has continued to convene at Galiwinku at 2-monthly intervals.

Mr Speaker, I urge all honourable members to consider carefully the comprehensive report. The document sets out the history of the project, the choice of community and describes the operation of the court at Galiwinku. It also includes offence statistics, discussions of the data and concludes with a number of recommendations. The project has aroused considerable interest and favourable comment from a number of bodies, including the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Task Force visited the Galiwinku community and has called for implementation of the project at Groote Eylandt. The government is considering this, together with the recommendations made by Mr Davis in his report. These recommendations cover a wide range of government concerns. Accordingly, the government has requested the Department of Law to coordinate consideration of the report's recommendation by relevant departments. These include the Departments of Community Development, Correctional Services, Health, Treasury, the Department of the Chief Minister, the Public Service Commissioner's Office and the Police Force. Following that consideration, detailed submissions will be put to Cabinet on the report's recommendations.

Mr Speaker, I believe the success of the Aboriginal Community Justice Project at Galiwinku is most encouraging. The limitation of the project to a single community represents, of course, only a small start to tackling a very

complex problem. However, I believe Mr Davis' excellent report will prove to be a significant contribution to accommodating Aboriginal traditional law within our existing judicial system and I commend the report to honourable members. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, this Assembly has properly had a very real interest in the Alice Springs to Darwin railway for a number of years. A number of ministerial statements have been made to the Assembly on this subject. Looking back, they make particularly interesting reading. There were the statements which were delivered with unbridled delight when the Fraser government announced that the railway would proceed and there were those delivered in both anger and sorrow as the Hawke government first evaded and then broke the promises it had given.

Just over 2 weeks ago, I spoke about the railway in positive and encouraging terms. I indicated that the railway project was very much alive and that a comprehensive report now in the final stages of preparation would show that the railway was justified on economic grounds and should be built. The Leader of the Opposition, running true to form, immediately accused me of fabricating a new development when in fact there was nothing new to be said. Again true to form, the Leader of the Opposition was wrong.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory has been very patient. We have waited 74 years since the Commonwealth accepted a legislative commitment to build the railway. Patience may be a virtue but enough is enough. The people of this Territory want the railway and we want it now. The deceit and treachery of the Hawke government is unacceptable and intolerable. The Alice Springs to Darwin railway is a magnificent national project. It will boost Australia's social infrastructure, open up new overseas trade opportunities, provide jobs and foster development. In turning its back on the project, the government has made a sow's ear out of a silk purse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to advise the Assembly today of the current situation with the railway and the actions that we have in hand at the moment. But I want to put these into a proper perspective and to do this I need to review briefly some of the railway's recent history.

I can pass over the first 70 years of the 74-year history of the railway in just 2 words: 'nothing happened'. Oh yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, the line to Alice Springs was built and, for a time, the north Australian railway operated. But the transcontinental link, the key, was never achieved and, as a consequence, the benefits of the railway could not be realised. In fact, Australians would be about the only people I know of who would build half a railway and then complain that it did not make money.

The breakthrough was in 1980 when the Fraser government agreed to proceed with the project and promised completion as a major national bicentennial project by 1988. This was a decision which recognised at long last the contribution the railway would make, not only to the Territory but to the nation. I might also add that it was not a decision which the federal government reached all by itself. At that time, the Territory government was extremely active and very persistent in arguing, cajoling, persuading and

heading off those whose limited vision did not allow them to see the benefits of this project. When the facts were properly considered, the verdict was clear and the railway was given the go-ahead.

What were those facts, Mr Deputy Speaker? Firstly, it would create jobs, not just for Territorians but for all Australians - 700 people would be directly employed in the construction phase and 300 permanent positions would be available once the railway was operational. All told, in direct and indirect employment, the railway was worth about 2000 jobs for Australia.

The project would require 156 000 t of steel rail, an enormous boost to the steel industry at Whyalla. The project is estimated to be worth $200m to the ailing steel industry alone. The rolling stock - 30 locomotives and 2000 freight wagons - would mean jobs for workers in New South Wales and an enormous boost to the concrete and construction industries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it would be difficult to argue against the railway just in terms of its job-creation effects, and these are real jobs, not make-work schemes. Of course, the benefits of the railway are much wider. The railway would generate a new era in our nation's social cohesion and it would help establish the Territory as an integral part of Australia. This is a real consideration as we move towards statehood. The Territory's transport and infrastructural links with the rest of Australia are far too tenuous. The railway has tremendous defence implications and I will return to the defence issue shortly.

One of the historical features of railway expansion in Australia has been that economic development has followed the spread of the rail network. There is no doubt that this would be the case with the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. Territory studies have identified a number of projects which could achieve viability if the railway were in place but which, without the railway, will probably not proceed. These include the mining of limestone at Mataranka, manganese at Renner Springs, barytes at Dorisvale and phosphate at Waratah, east of Tennant Creek. In addition to these specific projects, future exploration would be boosted considerably and the viability of the silver-lead-zinc deposit at MacArthur River would be enhanced.

One of the most exciting aspects of the railway would be the new opportunities for trade between Australia and South-east Asia and the railway offers an alternative transport access between South-east Asia and south-eastern Australia. It would provide a new, efficient and relatively low cost way for Australian exporters to move their goods into South-east Asia by linking the railway and the Port of Darwin and a new way for importers to avoid the ever-increasing delays and costs of the congested and usually strike bound ports in the south.

Mr Deputy Speaker, against this background as we entered the decade of the 1980s, we had every reason to believe that, by our bicentennial year the railway would at last be a reality. After all, the government was committed to it and the opposition had given its own promises. During the 1983 federal election, the then leader of the federal opposition, Bob Hawke said: 'We, if elected, will complete the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link'. The federal Labor Minister for Transport strutted the ALP transport package for the Territory which included construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway by 1988 and completion of the Stuart Highway by 1986. The former federal Labor member for the Territory boldly declared that only a Labor government could be trusted to build the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. Less than

2 weeks after this statesmanlike announcement, the federal Labor government walked away from the railway and the Territory. Notwithstanding the legislative commitment, including a specific commitment to fund the railway in the 1949 Railways Standardisation Act, and the solemn promises and undertakings that were given particularly during an election period, the federal Labor government simply said it would not build the railway and walked away.

The vehicle for this dishonourable action was the now infamous 60/40 offer, an offer artfully but callously constructed to ensure its rejection. There must be no doubt that the Territory had no choice but to reject that so-called offer outright. It was an outrageous abrogation by the Commonwealth of its responsibilities and commitment.

The Commonwealth argued that the railway was really a Territory project and, therefore, Territorians should pay for it. That, of course, has never been true. We have always stressed the railway as a national project and its benefits are national in their scope and impact. It was the federal Labor Minister for Transport who spoke of the importance of the railway to the ALP plans for national economic recovery. Let us not forget the fervently-held ALP doctrine that railways are a federal responsibility. Federal Labor governments have spent millions in recent years to take over the South Australian and Tasmanian railway systems and have built and rebuilt the transcontinental line to Western Australia.

The Commonwealth also suggested that the Territory is generously treated by the Commonwealth in its funding arrangements and could easily afford to pick up the bill for 40% of the railway. That has never been true and the events of recent months make it very clear just how impossible it would have been for us to meet such a financial burden. Certainly, the Territory receives more per capita from the Commonwealth than the states but that simply reflects the long years of neglect from which the Territory has suffered and the pressing needs of the Territory to catch up with the rest of Australia. The other states have built their railways and their roads, and have established their industries, their agriculture and their other services with the benefit of financial assistance. I might add, for the benefit of honourable members, that the Grants Commission's recommendations to the states this year for funding state railway losses is $3000m.

We entered self-government under a financial arrangement which was designed to allow us to build those facilities and develop those services that other parts of Australia have been taking for granted for decades. That so-called offer from the federal government would have meant an interest bill alone of something like $20 per week for every Territory family. Again, the interest bill alone would have amounted to more than our total budget for police, fire and correctional services every year forever. I could go on but I think the point is obvious even to the honourable members opposite.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Hawke government then proceeded to justify this shameful fabrication by establishing an inquiry whose single simple purpose was to prove that the railway was not justified. I make no apology for describing the Hill Inquiry in those terms. It was supposed to be an independent economic inquiry into transport services to the Territory. It was not independent and it was not economic. It ignored the transport needs of the Northern Territory totally. Mr Deputy Speaker, the man appointed to conduct the inquiry was a favourite son of the ALP, a man who is chairman of a railway authority which is currently losing about $1000m per annum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the inquiry's approach ignored the fundamental methodology for economic analysis of a project of this kind. It adopted its own methodology which subsequently has been repudiated by all who have examined it. It can only have been done for one reason and that is to ensure that the inquiry produced the agreed and predetermined result. It was clearly not interested in transport services to the Northern Territory. It made no freight projections; it produced no working papers. It was superficial and relied totally on unsubstantiated and snide treatment of the important matters it was supposed to address. The inquiry was a total failure as a path-breaking study into the social audit analysis which the ALP had trumpeted. The inquiry ignored 3 volumes of evidence presented by the Northern Territory, just as it ignored the other major contributors, all of whom supported the railway project - contributors such as the South Australian government, the South Australian Trades and Labour Council, the South Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Australian Confederation of Construction Contractors.

The Hawke government moved with breathtaking speed to accept and endorse this put-up job. Indeed, the federal Minister for Transport had endorsed the report's findings before the Territory government had even received a copy. Territorians are accustomed to fighting for their interests. We expect to have to fight but, when we are right, we sometimes expect to win. There is no doubt that, on the subject of the railway, we have always been right and we should win. We will win.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Hawke government considered the Hill Inquiry to be the end of the matter, and said so. Prime Minister Hawke said we could have a few dollars for the Stuart Highway, but his Minister for Transport has reneged on that offer too. Against this background of dishonesty and deceit, the Territory government decided to take the case for the railway more firmly into its own hands. The Territory government has commissioned 2 studies. The first is a study of the defence implications of the project by the Australian National University Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies. The second is a review of the economic viability of the project by Canadian Pacific. It is important to note the credentials of these 2 organisations.

The Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies is certainly not in the Territory's pocket. Its director, who was involved in the railway study in a major way, has a view quite opposite to that of the Territory government on such important issues as the mining and export of uranium. The centre is, however, the only credible alternative source of advice to the defence establishment in Australia. I remind members that defence matters had been excluded from the Hill Inquiry on the basis that the government would make its own assessment of them. How convenient! Mr Deputy Speaker, that assessment amounted to a 1½ page letter from the Minister for Defence to the Prime Minister. In it, he said that defence priorities did not favour the railway over other projects committed already. It would be interesting to find out what they are. Incidentally, the letter was based on a Defence Department document which we received some time later and which does not support the extraordinary conclusions which the minister chose to draw. The document says that, in circumstances requiring a build-up of defence strength, the railway would have inestimable value. The document says that, in peace-time circumstances alone, there would be advantages. I quote:

> 'Defence studies are being directed towards consolidating supply from Sydney, and maximising the use of rail transport between Sydney and Alice Springs with movement onwards to Darwin being effected by road

transport in the absence of a rail system. This preference for rail is supported by the significant improvement in the rail reliability in all-weather conditions since the opening of the Tarcoola to Alice Springs rail link and by the provision of an almost daily rail freight service between Sydney and Alice Springs and by cost'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the official defence position is quite clear. The defence forces support the railway but do not want to have to pay for it out of their budget. The ANU report put the issue into its own proper perspective. It said that the defence value of the railway is undoubtedly very substantial. It would contribute significantly to the deterrence of any major threat to Australia, and it would be essential if the ADF was ever required to meet any medium or high-level threat in northern Australia. As the Department of Defence submitted to the Prime Minister in 1984, in the circumstances of a major defence contingency in the north, and in particular one in which coastal shipping could not be guaranteed, a durable inland route could have inestimable value and, in these circumstances, the Alice Springs railway would provide greater defence value than would be available from upgrading the existing road route. The defence value is extremely high and the proposed railway warrants strong national endorsement. That was the conclusion of the report. The report has been published as a book and copies are available for those honourable members who would like to study it. I commend it to honourable members. It is well worth the effort to read. On the defence issue, there was one strike against the veracity of the Hawke government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Canadian Pacific report is strike 2. Canadian Pacific is a major north American railway operator of worldwide reputation. Its operations include transcontinental freight services and it moves about 86 000 000 t of freight per annum - not exactly small beer. More importantly, it makes a profit. No current railway system in Australia can make that claim. It is reasonable to assume that, when it comes to running profitable railways, Canadian Pacific would probably know more about it than David Hill.

Honourable members would have seen the initial Canadian Pacific report. It concluded that, based on a review of available evidence - and that means evidence available to Hill - the railway was likely to be a break-even proposition in economic terms. I repeat that that cannot be said of any current railway system in Australia. The Canadian Pacific report confirmed the Territory's assessment of the Hill report. It was a powerful validation of the Territory's case for the railway and, I might add, Canadian Pacific offered to meet Hill to discuss their differing findings but Hill refused.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I come now to the current situation. On the basis of its earlier work, Canadian Pacific was asked to undertake further detailed work on the economic viability of the railway. This further work included economic and engineering studies in the field earlier this year. It included detailed investigation of the route and discussions with railway authorities in Australia and other relevant parties. Over more recent weeks, the detailed analysis of this work has been proceeding at Canadian Pacific headquarters in Montreal. I understand that the final report will be available by the end of September. It will be made available to members. Indeed, it will be made very widely available.

I am able to advise this Assembly, in general terms, of the conclusions reached in this very comprehensive report by the experts. The earlier analysis establishing the economic viability of the Alice Springs to Darwin

railway is confirmed but the detailed work allows more specific conclusions to be drawn. The railway is a very much better than break-even proposition. The report indicates that the railway would generate substantial savings to the Australian community. This is in sharp contrast to Hill who said it would be an enormous waste of taxpayers' money. He would know, because he wastes more of it in the New South Wales railways than any other person whom you can think of in this country. To those who have been sceptical about this project all along, this conclusion may appear implausible. The point is very simple: this is the first time that a genuinely independent and genuinely expert assessment has been made. It is a conclusion which flows from an honest look at the facts.

The Canadian Pacific report points out that the design and construction standards proposed by Australian National Railways and accepted by Hill are unnecessarily extravagant. I might add that this assessment is also shared by a major Australian construction company which has submitted its own very detailed report to the government on the construction of the railway. Its conclusions on the savings possible through more appropriate design and construction standards are virtually identical to those of Canadian Pacific.

The report also shows that significant savings could be achieved by shortening the construction period from 9 years to 4 years. If ever there was an example of how you can have savings in fast tracking, the Territory gas pipeline is a fantastic one. A shorter construction period allows income to be generated so much earlier, and has an obvious impact on the viability of a project.

The report also identifies substantial savings in the capital cost of the railway. These can be achieved by using the existing north Australian railway alignment between Katherine and Darwin in the early years of operation. Canadian Pacific's engineering assessment is that this alignment can be used. The existing bridges will take the standard gauge track with very little buttressing. Certainly, the trains would have to operate at average speeds less than the normal Australian national standards but, at the traffic level required, this is hardly likely to impose a major timetabling problem.

The report also identifies other major areas of saving, including the use of steel sleepers and fuel consumption for the projected transport task. Savings have also been identified in operating costs through improved running procedures, such as 2-man crews for trains. The effect of these changes would be to reduce capital costs in 1983 dollars from just on $600m to $500m. This has significant implications in respect of financing costs.

One further point raised in the Canadian Pacific report should be mentioned. The Territory and Commonwealth governments have been at loggerheads over the methodology used to assess the benefits of the railway in the Hill report. As I have previously indicated, the methodology adopted by Hill has been repudiated by experts in the field, including the Bureau of Transport Economics. The issue is whether the benefits to be attributed to the line are only those benefits which arise within the Alice to Darwin transport corridor or whether they are the benefits which will accrue to the national transport system as a whole with the completion of this last sector of the system. The Territory has always argued that wider national benefits will flow from the railway. Any effort to discount these wider benefits causes an incorrect bias against the railway.

I am pleased to note that the Canadian Pacific report confirms the Territory's view and contributes quite clearly to exposing the dishonesty of the Hill Inquiry. There is no doubt that the Commonwealth has been caught out. The case for the railway has been clearly established and the task which is ahead of us now is to determine how we can achieve it as quickly as possible. It is now quite clear that, when it comes to dealing with the federal Labor government, being correct is not enough. There seems to be no prospect of the Hawke government honouring its promises. I am encouraged, however, by the continuing commitment of the federal coalition parties to the railway. In recent statements, the federal Leader of the Opposition has clearly and firmly reiterated that commitment. However, I believe the Territory can and should take the lead. I believe we need to show how the completed railway project can be achieved with greater certainty and greater efficiency. That means, as I said in my address to the Country Liberal Party conference in Katherine, that we must look to the private sector.

The pattern has been established with the consortium approach adopted for the gas pipeline. I see no reason why it could not be repeated for the railway. All members will be interested to know that preliminary discussions have already been held with major Australian companies in the transport, construction and finance industries, with a view to establishing just such a consortium. These discussions have been very encouraging and the parties are enthusiastic about the railway and the possibility of their participation in it. Further discussions will be held when the final Canadian Pacific report is available.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to get ready for those discussions and to make sure that we are in a position to develop a sound proposition, work is proceeding to develop a possible financing profile for the railway based on the economic analysis conducted by Canadian Pacific. These financing profiles will demonstrate how private sector capital can be raised and serviced in such a way as to attract and satisfy investors in the project. Assuming current inflation and interest rates at this stage, it seems we are looking at a project which would produce a cash-operating surplus in its first year of operation and which could service and repay privately-raised capital over a period which, while long term, is within the appropriate time horizon for those financial institutions who lend long term for these types of projects. With an appropriate government contribution - for example, by way of a construction grant - the project is even more attractive in financial terms.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these projections serve to illustrate one simple point: the railway is a serious project which deserves serious consideration and support. It will clearly not get that from the present federal government but I am confident that the private sector will see it in the proper perspective. This is not to say that we intend to excuse the federal government from its obligations. The railway is a major national project and has been recognised as such by federal Labor leaders. We will expect substantial support from the federal government, particularly in the light of the defence significance of the railway, the savings to the Australian community through lower transport costs and the generation of business for public railways elsewhere in Australia. I also accept that the Territory would benefit in direct financial terms such as through the reduced financing requirements for road maintenance. We will have those direct financial benefits in mind in determining our own position as the consortium proceeds.

Sometimes there are ideas which will not die because they are so patently right. The railway is one of those ideas. It is true that, to date, for

every promise made, there has been a promise broken. It is true that the dead hand of vested interests has sought to ridicule and frustrate the project, but the idea just keeps coming back and it is getting stronger and stronger. I believe that we are now very close to that point in time when the railway will be built. That time will be the culmination of hard work and persistence by a large number of people but, more importantly, it will open up new prospects and horizons, not just for Territorians but for this nation as a whole. I would expect honourable members on both sides of the Assembly to support the efforts and directions the government is taking to achieve finally this long-awaited project. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, once again we are faced with a ministerial statement that is very difficult to debate as there is nothing in it to debate. I look forward very much to the substantive debate, and that is the debate on the report which will be tabled in the Assembly, presumably in November.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am certainly not prepared to debate selective extracts from the Chief Minister's interpretation of the draft, which is what we have in front of us today. The only result available to poor people like me so far from Canadian Pacific is the preliminary report which indicated that indeed the railway could be a viable proposition. That report indicated that the railway could be viable on a break-even basis - it would not make any money but it would not lose any. Then we had a press release from the Chief Minister which spoke about a draft Canadian Pacific report which, as it turned out, I inaccurately thought was the report that I had. I did not realise that he would be discussing a further draft after the preliminary report before the final report. That is what this statement is all about: bits and pieces of the Chief Minister's interpretation of the draft Canadian Pacific report. Frankly, I do not see the point in wasting the Assembly's time. We canvassed the issue broadly with the Hill report, as we quite properly should have. The time when we will have a major debate, in which I will participate, is when the report itself lands on the deck, presumably at our next sittings.

There are pages and pages of statements with which I fully concur. They have all been delivered before - the benefits to the Territory, the specifics of what is going to happen and the defence implications. No one would argue with any of those. I did not rush off to the newspapers but indeed I had a long meeting, over 2 hours, with the federal Minister for Defence this month. I lobbied him to take up the issue of the defence implications of the railway in Cabinet once again. The problem is, of course - and he said it to me and it is here in the statement - that the Defence Department recognises the defence implications but it has no intention of paying for it. That is the problem, as the Chief Minister quite rightly says. The defence implications are obvious.

Mr Robertson: But you admit that was distorted.

Mr B. COLLINS: Absolutely! As I say, there is very little in here that we disagree with. The defence implications certainly were distorted. I had a long meeting with the federal Minister for Defence to ask him specifically to raise the issue in Cabinet at every opportunity possible and to emphasise the benefit of the railway not just to the Territory but to Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I went to South Australia at the time that the railway looked as though it was in the balance. I sought assistance from the South

Australian government and we received that. In fact, John Bannon was extremely forthright and public in his attacks on the federal government. I visited the plants where the steel was produced. I had meetings with the union and with the management and did everything possible to put pressure on the federal government, through unions, management and the relevant ministers who supported the proposal. We all know the result of that. Obviously, that pressure has to continue because I believe that the railway will eventually be built.

There are obvious concerns about the viability or desirability of the procedure that has now been put in front of us. I am hesitant to enter into the debate until I have the final report and its recommendations in front of me. No doubt, there will be a full debate on it then. No less eminent a person than the federal member for the Northern Territory, Paul Everingham, has publicly attacked this proposal in very forthright terms. The federal member said that he disagreed with the proposition that the railway should be privately funded and he gave a number of reasons. He said that it would let the federal government off the hook and he had general concerns about such a major freight infrastructure being put into the hands of private entrepreneurs and so on, and perhaps that the government may lose some control over it.

If Paul Everingham raises those concerns, I believe that we should consider the full detail of the actual proposal when we finally receive it. All we have in front of us so far is this statement, 90% of which simply consists of advancing the reasons why we should have a railway. We do not disagree with that. After his performance this morning and during this sittings, I would not believe the Chief Minister if he told me the time of day. I would much rather debate the substance rather than the statement that we have in front of us this morning.

The member for Millner has a number of specific concerns that he will touch on. Perhaps assurances need to be sought from this government in respect of the proposition of a privately-owned railway. We may well end up with a joint public and private venture and I have nothing against that in principle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in order to use the Assembly's time usefully, the opposition is not prepared to give any commitment on the basis of this statement. That would be premature indeed before the final report is available. I remain committed to the railway for the Northern Territory and I will continue to pursue the matter with federal ministers at every opportunity, as I have already done this month. I look forward to debating the report itself when it is tabled at the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until 10 am on Tuesday 12 November 1985, or such other time and date set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Government Policy on Public Service Housing for Single Persons

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the provision of housing for Territorians remains a major thrust of the Northern Territory government. Since self-government, we have committed to construction more than 6200 dwellings worth $246m. In the area of rental accommodation, we have housed more than 11 600 families and maintained wait times that are generally considerably less than in the states.

While the current budget reflects a growing level of privatisation in our housing industry, the government will continue to have a significant involvement in assisting Territorians to obtain adequate accommodation. This assistance includes the building of accommodation units for sale or rental, finance for home ownership through the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme and special assistance for low-income earners through a rental rebate scheme.

Consistent with the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement, the Northern Territory government's housing policy is non-discriminatory. All Territorians are eligible for assistance, including access to sale or rental accommodation and housing finance. In line with this policy, arrangements are being amended to clarify the eligibility of single persons. It is clear that the implementation of housing policy which allows eligibility for single persons to the range of housing assistance places greater demand on scarce government funds. While all single persons are eligible for rental accommodation, it may well be beyond the Territory government's capacity to meet all demands even over a very long period of time.

Principles and guidelines have been established to ensure that people with the greatest need continue to receive appropriate priority for assistance. These guidelines establish basic eligibility criteria, the basis for setting priorities in housing allocation, rental policy, including rent rebates, and accommodation standards. The basic criteria are those that apply generally to married persons who are currently eligible for access to public housing. These are permanent residents of the Territory who are over 18 years of age, unless unusual circumstances are involved, and who do not own an interest in any other habitable dwelling.

Mr Speaker, it has been difficult to establish what likely level of demand there will be from single persons under the housing policy. Estimates from the Housing Commission suggest it could be anywhere from 200 to 900 people. It has been necessary to establish priorities which facilitate access to housing for those persons in greatest need. Single persons better placed to meet their own requirements in the marketplace must accordingly anticipate longer delays if they wish to receive public housing allocations through the Housing Commission.

Single persons with the highest priority will be: pensioners; beneficiaries - those in receipt of some forms of social security payments; tenants or applicants transferred between Territory centres; key personnel under the Industry Housing Scheme; out-of-turn applicants where there are extenuating circumstances; and Northern Territory government employees who joined the public service prior to 16 August 1984 who would continue to have rights preserved until 31 December 1986. As I said earlier, it is not possible, because of limited information as to demand, to anticipate the number of single persons who would receive priority allocation on the grounds outlined.

The Housing Commission's current rental policy is to ensure that permanent residents of the Northern Territory have access to adequate and appropriate housing at a price within their capacity to pay, with real cost rents determined in respect of such accommodation. This policy will apply to single persons eligible for Housing Commission accommodation. Single persons will normally be eligible for a 1-bedroom flat or unit. This standard is being adopted so that larger accommodation units will be reserved for those with the greatest need. Single persons, however, will be eligible for 2 or 3-bedroom units under joint tenancy arrangements with 2 or 3 persons sharing. A rental rebate for singles will apply only to 1-bedroom units at a level consistent with policy in that area.

Mr Speaker, the arrangements by which accommodation is available to singles may not be what everyone would desire. There may be criticism of the long delays that could inevitably occur in responding to single housing needs for those who do not have priority. There has been criticism that people such as the unemployed and single pensioners have been trapped on a treadmill, that low-income earners are victims of high rents and forced to live in crowded and miserable premises.

In clarifying this policy on housing for single persons, I have endeavoured to address what I perceive to be areas of most need. Clearly, with additional resources by way of funding, much more could be achieved, but the reality in light of the current harsh financial climate is still a housing record of which we can be proud.

The rate at which we are tackling this task is evidenced by the fact that, since February this year, 1400 families have been placed in accommodation. The rate of building increase in the Territory is more than consistent with Australia-wide trends and the number of dwelling completions in the Northern Territory has been generally higher in 1984-85 than in the same quarter in 1983-84. While the government commitment to housing is being maintained, this building activity is also due in large part to the commitment by private industry which I hope will continue.

Mr Speaker, given that the demand for public housing will continue to exceed the government's financial capacity to respond, the commission will endeavour nevertheless to ensure that its capital works program provides accommodation of an appropriate standard. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Equal Opportunity

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, members will be aware of the recent initiative taken by the government to establish an Office of Equal Opportunity in the Department of the Chief Minister. This represents a significant development in the government's approach to equal opportunity and it is appropriate for me to inform the Assembly of the government's objectives in this area.

Mr Speaker, for some time now, the government has been actively promoting principles of equal opportunity in public sector employment. Indeed, there are statutory provisions in the Public Service Act against discrimination in employment. These provisions have been supported specifically through a

number of policies and procedures adopted within the public service, particularly in the area of training, directed at overcoming obstacles to real equality of opportunity.

Mr Speaker, our public service record in this respect is good and is getting better. The government is determined that it will continue to improve. For example, at present, Aboriginal people constitute over 10% of the Northern Territory Public Service. That is a significant achievement but I acknowledge that the percentage of Aboriginal officers must be higher if the public service is to properly reflect the community at large. Currently, we are working to develop methods to increase Aboriginal recruitment and to train Aboriginal people for more senior positions.

Our record in the appointment and promotion of women is also commendable. Women constitute just over half of the Northern Territory Public Service and 13% of officers in the executive levels are women. This percentage is increasing and is higher than elsewhere in Australia. A number of programs have been developed specifically for women over the past 6 months or so to provide training to assist with career planning and the development of work-related skills. These courses have been very much in demand and well supported by departments and authorities.

Equal opportunity goes far beyond the area of public sector employment. In today's Territory society, there is no place anywhere for discrimination - no place for those barriers which inhibit individuals and groups from reaching their full potential. Discrimination on the basis of personal factors such as race, sex, national origin or physical disability is economically inefficient and socially divisive. Its only effect is to inhibit the Territory and ourselves from reaching our full collective potential.

The Office of Equal Opportunity has been set up to provide leadership. Its job is to encourage all groups in the community to examine the way they operate, and to ensure that there is equal opportunity for all Territorians in employment and access to facilities and services, and to enable people to make their full contribution to the community.

A statement of the policy and functions of the Office of Equal Opportunity has been prepared and copies are being circulated for the information of all honourable members. The statement sets out clearly the government's objectives and intentions. There are 3 aspects of the government's equal opportunity policy which I wish to highlight.

Firstly, the role of the office is limited essentially to policy development and oversight. The office will be responsible for advising the government on the development of appropriate policies and programs. It will not normally carry out these programs itself. Where it is clear that training is required, it will encourage the appropriate organisations to develop suitable training programs. Where complaints of any kind are brought to its notice, it will refer these to the authority properly placed to examine them. The essential role of the office is to assist the government to formulate an overall approach and to help oversee the effective implementation of the government's policies.

The second significant matter is the way in which the government intends to proceed in areas which are clearly matters for the private sector. Obviously, this includes private-sector employment. The policy statement says that, in relation to private-sector employment, the office will initiate

consultations with private industry to promote equal opportunity principles and will provide information to assist in their implementation. It is not the government's intention to adopt a legislative approach. The Commonwealth has enacted racial and sex discrimination legislation and some states have passed anti-discrimination legislation. Genuine equal opportunity extends well beyond anti-discrimination and does not find its real basis in legislation which tells people what they should not do. In any event, there is a limit to the extent to which government should seek to impose legislation on the community. The government's approach will not be through legislation but through consultation, education and persuasion. Much more will be achieved if we are able to establish a situation in which people want to do something rather than telling them what they must do. No one should seek to represent this approach as a lack of purpose or commitment by the government. To do so would be a total misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the government's position.

The third point which I would highlight is the government's intention to promote equal opportunity issues beyond the area of equal employment. Equal opportunity means full participation in all aspects of community life, access to government and non-government services and a fair go for all Territorians, whoever and wherever they are. This is not a matter of the government intruding into people's activities. It is rather a matter of helping to set standards and goals and, in particular, helping people to achieve. All members of the community have the same basic rights to full participation in the affairs of the Territory community.

The Office of Equal Opportunity will work closely with other agencies which share similar interests. Within government, it will work closely with such areas as the Office of Women's Affairs, the Disabled Persons Bureau and the Aboriginal Development Division of the Public Service Commissioner's Office. In the private sector, it will maintain liaison with industry and union groups and relevant community organisations. Of course, it will maintain appropriate links with similar units in the states and the Commonwealth.

The office is to be headed by a director and applications for this position are now being sought. Initially, the director will be supported by a staff of 4. Staffing needs will be reviewed as we gain experience and identify the workload involved.

Mr Speaker, I have no doubt that the government's initiatives reflect the clear opinion of the Territory community and I would hope, therefore, that this initiative will receive the full support of all honourable members on both sides of the Assembly. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Mr Peter Shack MHR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Peter Shack MHR, Shadow Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations. On your behalf, I welcome him to our Chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Lack of High-Resolution CT Scanner at Royal Darwin Hospital

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

> 'Mr Speaker, I wish to propose, under standing order 81, that the Assembly consider this morning as a matter of definite public importance the government's failure to provide adequately for the health and welfare of Territorians and tourists by its failure to provide a high-resolution CT scanner at Royal Darwin Hospital to enable efficient treatment of serious injuries which can and have resulted in death.
>
> Yours faithfully,
> Bob Collins'.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported. The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this matter came to my personal attention a number of weeks ago. On a talk-back radio program, I was extremely surprised to receive not 1 but 3 telephone calls from people who had, as it turned out upon investigation, very genuine grievances in respect of the lack of CT scanner facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Several weeks ago, I received a telephone call at my home at about 1.30 on a Sunday morning from a very distressed constituent of mine who had flown in that day with a schoolteacher from my electorate who had collapsed and was in a coma at the Royal Darwin Hospital. When he explained to me why he was distressed, I could understand it.

Before I go on, let me just say that, over the years, I have had various complaints from the public on a range of matters concerning services at the hospital. It has been my practice consistently, and successfully, to take these matters up with hospital authorities as they occur. More often than not, a resolution has been achieved at that level. I think it is important to try to do it that way because, unfortunately, speaking about a matter as serious as this can affect the public's confidence in the Northern Territory's health system. But the problems with the CT scanner at the hospital have reached the stage that it is essential that this matter be aired publicly and resolved as a matter of the highest urgency.

Mr Speaker, this schoolteacher from my electorate had collapsed out in the bush at 2 o'clock that afternoon and was unconscious. It was essential that he have a CT scan performed so that the hospital could diagnose to some degree what was wrong with him. The CT scanner at the hospital had broken down again and was out of service and they could not get access to the private CT scanner in a surgery in Darwin. I was outraged by that. I could not believe it. Not surprisingly, these people were worried that their friend would die. Unfortunately, he did die the following day. His friends were distressed and this fellow said to me:

> 'Look, we know that the doctor is distressed. We know that the doctor in the hospital is extremely angry and unhappy. The fellow is trying to do the best he can for this schoolteacher but the machine is broken down. Dr Whitlocke, who is the private doctor who has a CT scanner in town, is in Brisbane and, to our disbelief, the

hospital told us that it cannot find him. It cannot locate him. It cannot get access to the machine'.

I then rang the hospital and spoke to the doctor who was directly looking after this patient. He was entirely cooperative with me and said: 'I cannot discuss the CT scanner with you'. I understood that. But he offered to ring the Medical Superintendent at her home - and by this stage it was about 2 o'clock in the morning - and have her ring me directly, which she did. We had a conversation in which she assured me that the Department of Health was doing everything it could but, unfortunately, she confirmed everything that this constituent of mine had said: the patient was unconscious; he should have had a CT scan; it should have been performed on him already; the machine at the hospital had broken down once again and was out of service; and they could not get access to the private CT scanner.

I said to the Medical Superintendent - not unreasonably, I thought - that if this machine had just broken down for the first time in its history, perhaps there would be some excuse. However, during the previous few weeks, it had become a matter of public controversy. The machine breaks down not for days but for weeks at a time! Surely procedures should have been instigated to ensure immediate access under emergency conditions to the only other machine available in the Northern Territory. Of course, I have no complaint with the efforts that she was making or the answers I received from her. Obviously, she is constrained by the fact that she does not control the budget of the Royal Darwin Hospital. She said: 'We are doing all we can'.

I was telephoned again at about 5 o'clock that morning to say that they had finally located someone to open the building and give them permission to use the machine. The CT scanner had been used but, unfortunately, that schoolteacher, who was a friend of mine, died at 11 o'clock that morning. I am not suggesting that the lack of a CT scan contributed to his death; I do not know enough about the details of that case to be able to say that.

I certainly do have the details of another case where, unfortunately, I must say that. As a result of my distressing if enlightening involvement with the CT scanner, I carried out some investigations. Unfortunately, this is the second time in consecutive sitting days that I must rise to condemn this government's callous disregard for the welfare and safety of the people it was elected to serve.

Earlier this month, a Victorian tourist who was taking in the sights of Darwin was knocked down by a car. A week later, the man died in the Royal Darwin Hospital from head injuries sustained in the accident. Had the accident occurred in his home state, he may have been treated with the best equipment available and he may have eventually recovered. I am sorry to say that, because the accident happened in Darwin, this man received less than the degree of care to which he was entitled. He died because the Northern Territory Department of Health has been unable to provide the Royal Darwin Hospital with a high-resolution CT scanner which would have adequately pinpointed his injuries. This fact was compounded by the lack of a specialist radiologist at the hospital to report on the scans that were taken at a private clinic in the city. I do not want to go any further into the details of this case as I understand there is a strong possibility of legal action being taken. I would point out, however, that there is indisputable evidence that the man died because this government has paid little more than lip service to consistent pleas from the medical profession and the surgeons.

All they needed to spend was between $0.5m and $1m to install a new CT scanner and to upgrade the trained staff in the radiology section. This is the government which had the gall to come into this Assembly yesterday and admit that it is committed to giving $250m over a number of years to local, interstate and overseas businessmen. We know that $27m is to be paid out in respect of the Yulara tourist project this year alone. I believe the mid-range machine costs $600 000 and the high resolution scanner costs $1.1m. We are in the unfortunate position of having had one of our tourists die, and there is no question at all that one of the factors which contributed to his death was that the machine at the hospital was not operating. Why pour millions of dollars in risk capital into tourist-related projects if you cannot take comparatively inexpensive steps to protect the safety and welfare of tourists through the provision of adequate diagnostic facilities in our major hospital? Does the NT government not understand that the Department of Health is a critical support service to tourism? Investigations by my staff clearly suggest it does not.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of members, I will detail the history and importance of the CT scanner in neuro-medical emergencies. Incidentally, the Territory has a very high proportion of these emergencies due largely to high-speed car accidents and fights. There are about 135 of these machines distributed among major public and private hospitals and clinics throughout Australia. They are described by the medical profession as the neuro-medical equivalent of the invention of the wheel. Scanners are a quantum leap in the ability to see into people's heads. Before EMI invented the CT scanner and marketed its first model in Australia in 1974, neurosurgical emergencies were treated by taking the seriously-ill patient into an operating theatre and drilling exploratory holes in the skull in search of blood clots. That is done by making parallel incisions on each side of the patient's skull. The surgeons themselves refer to it as the pepper-pot technique. Holes are bored in the skull and they simply look for the clots. If a clot is found by this procedure - and it is like drilling for oil - the surgeon can then treat it. The problem with this treatment, as with most crude surgical procedures, is that surgeons often miss inter-cerebral clots. The surgeon can only see the surface of the brain or just beyond the covering of the brain. He cannot see the clots in the brain substance itself. A high resolution CT scan shows if there is a clot in the head, where the blood clot is, how bad it is and how much brain shift has occurred as a result of it. It enables a surgeon to cut straight down on the blood clot in complete confidence that he does have some pathology to treat, what it is and what can be done about it.

Mr Speaker, a CT scan takes 5 minutes to diagnose with absolutely no discomfort to the patient. It is obvious to all honourable members that the pre-1974 treatment of boring holes in people's heads is entirely hit and miss, placing both patient and neurosurgeon under great stress. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, I must report that the pre-1974 treatment is still quite often used at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It was used as the first treatment for the Victorian tourist I mentioned earlier. They had no choice other than to do that.

Mr Speaker, we have the worst facilities of this type in service in this country. We have a CT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital which was installed when the hospital was built and it is a first-generation machine. It is often out of service and, being such an early model, is capable of performing only head scans. The quality of the scans is poor. The machine is in such a bad state that it is out of service for weeks at a time. In many cases, it drops in and out of service for hours at a time in between repairs.

Mr Speaker, the situation is disgraceful. I would ask all honourable members how long they would put up with the inconvenience of having a car with the erratic performance I have outlined with this machine. The tragedy is that we are talking about life and death situations. I know of at least one death of a tourist to the Northern Territory that was contributed to by the lack of facilities at the hospital and the lack of action the government has taken to repair this machine. We are talking about the treatment of critically-injured people, most of them unconscious, being dependent upon a machine which clearly should have been replaced when these problems first started last year. I would ask all honourable members to consider how they would feel if any of their relatives were placed at the mercy of this type of service. Certainly, I had sympathy for the feelings of the friends of my constituent at the appalling situation that developed in the early hours of the morning.

Mr Speaker, there is a privately-owned body-scan machine located in a private clinic in the city centre. Unfortunately, the quality of the scans from that machine are little better than the one at the hospital, but you have to take what you can get and that is precisely what happens. When the out-of-order sign is posted on the machine at the hospital, the neurological staff shudder. From past experience, they know that every time a critically-injured person is wheeled into casualty, they must ultimately make a decision on whether to transfer him yet again into the city to undergo what should be a routine procedure. Such patients should be in the intensive care unit of the hospital. Instead, they are being ferried around Darwin at considerable risk.

That is not where my concern rests. The clinic in the city has entirely inadequate facilities to cope with such patients. There is no equipment provided at the surgery so everything needed must be transported to the patient with obvious consequences if anything is forgotten or is of insufficient quantity. A hospital anaesthetic machine has been stationed at the clinic. However, adequate quantities of oxygen, nitrous oxide gas cylinders, suction equipment, anaesthetic drugs and resuscitation drugs are all needed. In fact, the list is endless. I am sure that even those honourable members who do not deal in health matters to a great degree would be aware of the extreme danger for an unconscious patient to be ferried into lifts, loaded into the backs of ambulances, ferried into town and then transferred to a tiny surgery. The room is so cramped that, if a medical emergency occurred requiring cardiac resuscitation - and this is on the cards with these patients - it would be almost impossible to perform.

It really is a disgrace. There is inadequate space for the proper management of unconscious patients. These patients require general anaesthesia and are often critically ill. However, there is insufficient room for this type of procedure to be carried out at no risk to the patient. They must be accompanied by a doctor and a trained nurse who will be absent from the hospital. This may interfere seriously with staffing in the intensive care unit and the operating theatre because the handling of unconscious patients is a specialised skill. It is now a commonly-held view throughout Australia that it is not possible to practise neurosurgery of the standard expected in this country in Darwin without a high-quality CT scanner at the hospital. With such a scanner, I believe that neurosurgical emergencies could be managed effectively and we could all rest easy. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to be hearing the complaints from the medical profession.

I have sighted a copy of a letter written by the General Division of Surgeons in Darwin to the former Minister for Health, Jim Robertson, on 1 March this year raising the issues I have canvassed today. Is there a member in this Assembly who will deny the seriousness of this situation? That letter was written on 1 March. The government replied to it on 8 May, 9 weeks later. I am informed that the minister told them the Department of Health intended to employ a Dr Max Schieb from the Concord Repatriation Hospital in Sydney as a consultant to undertake a review of the radiology facilities at the hospital. The minister said that Dr Schieb would be available in August. We are at the end of August and Dr Schieb has not arrived. I understand he may be here next month. However, there are some highly-skilled surgeons on the medical staff at the hospital. What can he tell them and the government that they do not already know? I urge this government to save the cost of his air fare and put it towards buying a CT scanner. It can use it as a deposit if it likes but I urge it to act on it today because it is that urgent.

I have investigated the prices of these machines in Australia. The high-resolution CT scanner can be bought for $1m. The medium-range machine costs $550 000. The add-on cost is estimated at $150 000 a year for a dedicated engineer who comes with the machine. The expenditure would be worth every cent. This government is spending millions of dollars a year promoting tourism and it cannot guarantee - and it certainly did not in one case - that, if a tourist has a serious accident, he will ever return home. But let us not forget the residents of Darwin who expect much more from this government also.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Arnhem will detail another problem that is occurring in the radiology section at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is not an isolated case but a chronic concern. I will leave that to him.

In conclusion, I was appalled - as I am sure that any other member would have been appalled - to be in the helpless situation at 2 o'clock in the morning of receiving confirmation from the Medical Superintendent of the hospital that there was an unconscious patient in the hospital who could not be CT scanned, not only because the CT scanner at the hospital was out of service but because no arrangements were in place at that time - I am sure it has been fixed since - to allow instant access to the other machine in the private clinic in Darwin. I could literally not believe what I was hearing. I am sure that doctors said to the friends and relatives of that man who died at 11 o'clock the following morning: 'He probably would have died anyway, even if the CT scanner had been available'. Let me tell members that they would take a lot of convincing on that and so would I.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the short time that I have been aware of some of the facts relating to the CT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital, I have made extensive inquiries and it appears that I may have been 1 step behind the Leader of the Opposition because we have been calling the same people and talking to the same people about the difficulties that are being experienced.

Mr Deputy Speaker, so that there is no exaggeration of the facts regarding the CT scanner, I would explain that it is a head scanner as opposed to the machine located in a private clinic in Darwin, which is a full body scanner. It was installed in the Royal Darwin Hospital in 1979 at a purchase price of $500 000. The estimated quarterly cost to run it at present is $18 000 to $20 000. The down time on the machine has been quite significant. Between October 1983 and July 1985, it has been down on 59 separate occasions. On the majority of occasions, the down time has been short, in the order of a few

hours, and 37 of those 59 occasions arose due to malfunctioning of the air-conditioning system. The unit is very sensitive to its environment and I am seeking further information on that aspect at present.

From September 1984 to date, the CT scanner has been out of action for 4 or 5 days at a time on 5 different occasions. On 1 occasion, and 1 occasion only, it was down for 3 weeks when parts had to be forwarded from America. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am assured by officers of the department that they are aware of the shortcomings of the particular CT scanner and, in fact, it is proposed to replace the machine at a cost of around $1m which will be provided in the 1986-1987 budget. I will say some more about that shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will deal with one of the cases that the Leader of the Opposition raised. Certainly I share his concern. I am aware of his personal involvement in it. I will read the letter I received today from a particular person:

> 'Last month a very close friend died from a cerebral haemorrhage. She was evacuated by Air Medical, reaching Darwin Hospital by approximately 6.30 pm on 26 July. While I have nothing but the utmost respect and praise for the nursing staff and doctors directly involved in this case, it disturbs me that their commendable work was hamstrung by what appears to be some sort of bureaucratic bungle. The simple facts as given to me at the time were: (1) a head scan needed to be done but could not be; (2) the reason being that the hospital's CT scan had been broken down for a week; (3) only one other scan machine existed in Darwin, this being at Dr Whitlocke's, a private surgery; (4) Dr Whitlocke was in Brisbane and could not be contacted; (5) access and permission had to be sought from him or his wife or staff;(6) nobody could be located at the time; and (7) action had been taken to gain his permission or access. Unfortunately, it took until 4.30 the next morning on 27 July for the scan to be completed. That is almost 10 hours after reaching the hospital. I claim no medical expertise but, to the layman, it would appear that, had a head scan been made earlier, then surely it would have enabled a doctor to ascertain the nature and extent of the bleeding and thence allow decisions to be made as to which direction to pursue next. This is not to suggest that my friend's life could have been saved had a scan been made earlier. The begging question then is: why were not alternative arrangements made in case of such an emergency when it was obviously known that the hospital scan was inoperable?'

The Royal Darwin Hospital has had services provided by Dr Whitlocke, the private radiologist in Darwin, who has a whole body scanner in his surgery. The cost to the hospital for this service in the last 6 months has been around $6000. Normally, there have been no problems on a 24-hour emergency basis for access to Dr Whitlocke's equipment. I spoke to Dr Whitlocke this morning on the telephone to ascertain the particular circumstances relating to the evening in question. I am able to assure honourable members that it was an exceptional case.

Why the people concerned could not be found is understandable if one knows the circumstances. Not long ago, there was a hijack attempt at Brisbane airport involving a chap standing on top of a petrol tanker. Dr Whitlocke was one of the people herded away from that scene. That is the main reason that he was unable to be contacted. He was due to return at a particular time.

His radiographer was not aware that Dr Whitlocke would not return so he departed from the clinic and was not able to be contacted.

Subsequently, I ascertained that there are no formal arrangements with Dr Whitlocke. As a result, I have requested the Secretary of the Department of Health to formalise arrangements with Dr Whitlocke to ensure that, at least in the short term, the facilities will be available on a 24-hour emergency basis in case of breakdown of the head scanner facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I was assured by Dr Whitlocke this morning that he will give full cooperation to the Department of Health.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the particular machine that will be funded in the 1986-87 budget will cost around $1m. I have requested the Secretary of the Department of Health today to give me further information on it. He has assured me that Dr Max Schieb will be here in the next 2 weeks and will advise the department on the type of machine that may or may not be required at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

We have had problems and complaints relating to the transferral of people from the Royal Darwin Hospital to Dr Whitlocke's facility. Difficulties are experienced by anaesthetists and life support staff and it is said that the facilities offered at the private surgery are inadequate. I need to investigate those matters a little further. Honourable members can be assured that I will do that.

I might point out also that funding for such a CT scanner is normally available from the Commonwealth. The minimum population requirement for the funding of such a machine is 450 000 persons. The machine will cost us about $1.1m plus an ongoing cost of $70 000. I do not have a problem with that. However, I need time to undertake the necessary investigations.

I take exception to one aspect of the Leader of the Opposition's statement. He referred to the case of a Victorian tourist and specifically said that the lack of facilities had resulted in death. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned possible legal action and therefore, obviously, I will not say too much about it. I have been assured by the experts at the Royal Darwin Hospital, from the Medical Superintendent down, that there have not been any deaths resulting from the lack of CT scan facilities. The basis for that is that the CT scanner is a diagnostic machine. It diagnoses and confirms a clinical examination and diagnosis. Although it can be efficient in the treatment of that confirmed diagnosis, which I do not deny...

Mr B. Collins: It is not used in treatment at all.

Mr HANRAHAN: No. It can help with the treatment because it is diagnostic. It has been explained to me that, in all circumstances, the machine has been used to confirm a clinical diagnosis.

I will take this matter up further with honourable members at a later stage because, as I have mentioned, I wish to take advice on the particular case the Leader of the Opposition referred to because I am not aware of the facts. He has my assurance that, at the earliest possible opportunity, I will advise him of the pertinent facts.

I confirm to honourable members that, in the short term, I have asked the department to formalise arrangements with the private doctor so that a 24-hour emergency facility is operating in Darwin. The specialist is arriving in

Darwin within the next 2 weeks to advise the department on the types of machines available and the best suited to our environment. When those facts are before me, I will ascertain whether the machine will be purchased in advance of the estimated timeframe of 1986-1987 at a cost of $1m.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is pleasing to note that our new Minister for Health is committed to do his best in his term of office. However, that is not what I wish to speak on. The opposition has been informed that there is a man with serious kidney problems who works in the Department of Health in the Northern Territory. He had a kidney X-ray performed at the Royal Darwin Hospital on Monday of this week. It is a complicated and an uncomfortable experience because it requires an intravenous polygraph and a whole series of X-rays. He will have to undergo this again because nobody can find the X-rays. This might appear unusual but it is not. X-rays are being lost at the hospital every day and, in many instances, several X-rays have been lost on the same day.

Things have reached a point where medical staff are now talking about the possibility of somebody dying soon because of this. The government cannot label these people 'rent a crowd protestors' or 'idle whingers'. They are conservative, well-meaning professionals who have a job to do. This government's lack of concern is making it all that much harder and is seriously sapping their morale.

As the Leader of the Opposition said in opening this discussion, this government has had its head so far up in the clouds that it cannot see the real and urgent problems on the ground. The problem with the CT scanner machine at the Royal Darwin Hospital is an ongoing major problem in the radiology department. We have focused on the scanner because it is giving the people who work hard in the hospital their most immediate and serious problems - not to mention the problems for their patients.

The present state of radiology reporting within the hospital is clearly inadequate because the number of staff is so thin on the ground. One radiologist is on long service leave and the other is taking intermittent recreation leave so frequently there is no radiologist present. This, we believe, is not acceptable. It is an appalling situation. The hospital desperately needs 2 additional radiologists. The government has been advertising throughout Australia for specialist radiologists but without success. Perhaps it is now time for it to look further afield. The government cannot excuse itself by saying that it has tried to recruit radiologists and simply cannot attract one to the Northern Territory. If you cannot obtain people in one labour market, you simply go to another. The Minister for Health should consider advertising overseas as we believe this is an important matter. The radiology department at the hospital needs a complete revamp as soon as possible. The opposition is very concerned about the basic health care of people in the Northern Territory and urges this government to do whatever it can to provide adequate services.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to give the government's point of view on health services. Any issue that relates health services is always very emotive. The government is providing the best equipment and the best facilities that money can buy for Territorians.

Mr Bell: Nonsense.

Mr DONDAS: The member for MacDonnell can interject and say 'nonsense'. But let him identify one aspect of health services where Territorians are not getting a fair go. We are talking about a particular item of equipment which has run into some problems in the last few months. It is not functioning.

Let me speak about my experiences when I was Minister for Health about 10 or 11 months ago. There was a constant problem at the Royal Darwin Hospital in obtaining maintenance services for that equipment. When Dr Whitlocke established his surgery, it was a godsend for us because he was going to invest $1m of his own money to provide a service. Before he obtained his machine, he approached the department and advised that he intended to spend nearly $1m on a CT scanner. He asked whether the Department of Health intended to provide a machine capable of performing a full body scan. The department welcomed Dr Whitlocke's approach. His machine would be able to take a full body scan. I had discussions, not only with members of the Department of Health here but also with people involved in health departments interstate. They told me that it is not usual to have a full body scanner in a private surgery. More than once, people have needed to have a full body scan...

Mr B. Collins: We are talking about the head scan.

Mr DONDAS: It is a full body scan.

Mr B. Collins: Have you ever transported an unconscious patient with a drip in and a ventilator on? It is quite a procedure.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not.

The piece of equipment which Dr Whitlocke owns is probably one of the most advanced pieces of technology that we have.

The Leader of the Opposition pounded his heart out and had the audacity to say that we do not know what we are talking about.

Mr B. Collins: You don't.

Mr DONDAS: Dr Whitlocke's piece of equipment is one of the most advanced pieces of equipment in this country today!

Mr B. Collins: It is not.

Mr Smith: That is a lie.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the point that I am trying to make is that facilities are available. I was advised by experts in the department at that time that it was not necessary for the hospital to own a CT scanner provided that there was one in the district. It is not unusual to have medical equipment in private surgeries to which public patients may have access. The drive from Smith Street to the Royal Darwin Hospital is about 10 minutes, and I would consider that to be access.

There are problems with the maintenance and operation of the equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It has been operational for nearly 5 years now and is becoming outdated, presumably because of technological advances. Maybe it is time the department considered updating its equipment. There are 3 units and, on any 1 day, 1 of the 3 units could be working. The hospital needs more than 1 unit to enable maintenance to take place.

The matter of public importance raised by the opposition today is certainly something that we must be concerned about. But do we need an ambulance on every corner of every suburb in case of a possible accident? We do not! The important thing is to ensure that the services are available somewhere. I have a great deal of faith in the equipment provided by Dr Whitlocke. It provides an important service to the Northern Territory public.

Certainly, it is a private operation. In one case, this private equipment was used to substantiate a claim for workers' compensation. A certain person in Darwin had to wait 2 years for a determination on a back injury. We all know what back injuries are. Anybody who complains about a back injury is a malingerer; he is out to rob the system. This person had a genuine complaint but nobody would listen to him. He waited for the legal processes to take their course. He was able to use the services of Dr Whitlocke and his full body scanner. The Leader of the Opposition may be not aware that it scans from head to toe. It takes photographs of the body in sections like a sausage.

Mr B. Collins: I know what it does.

Mr DONDAS: Dr Whitlocke's machinery takes photographs from a person's skull to his feet.

This person was able to go to Dr Whitlocke and have the photographs taken. These were used later as evidence in court and it was proven that this person had a genuine complaint. I know what the Leader of the Opposition is thinking: 'What does this have to do with this debate?'

Mr B. Collins: What did you say?

Mr DONDAS: He does not have to say it. He is sitting over there with that deadpan look on his face as if to say: 'What in the hell is he talking about?'

Mr B. Collins: It takes photographs in sections, from the head down to the toe.

Mr DONDAS: The important thing is that the equipment is available. The Royal Darwin Hospital was established by the Commonwealth government. It is a full model of the Woden Valley Hospital. We all know how good the Woden Valley Hospital in Canberra is; we do not have to agree that the Woden Valley design is good for Darwin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, perhaps the equipment that we have is due for upgrading. At the same time, I know that the staff in the radiology department and the maintenance people are working very hard to maintain a high level of service. The matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition certainly does highlight that there is cause for concern. I think that it is a matter of public importance.

MOTION
Television Coverage of Sporting Events of National Significance to People in Country Areas

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that:

1. This Assembly recognises that -

   (a) there is a significant number of citizens of this country living in areas out of the range of normal city-based commercial television services whose continued presence in the areas in which they reside is of importance to the economic well-being of Australia;

   (b) a significant percentage of those citizens, in common with most other Australians, are vitally interested in sporting events of national importance;

   (c) the ABC television service is available to a significant number of those citizens and, in many cases, is the only television service so available;

   (d) in recent years commercial television interests have acquired the exclusive rights to many sporting events of the kind referred to, some of which were previously broadcast to country areas by the ABC television service; and

   (e) it is incumbent on the Commonwealth government in such matters clearly within its power to ensure that people in areas outside the range of eastern seaboard city-based commercial television services are provided with television coverage of sporting events of national significance at least equivalent to that available to their fellow Australians.

2. This Assembly is of the opinion that the Commonwealth government should -

   (a) require its responsible minister -

      (i) to direct the ABC to make all reasonable effort to obtain, directly or through commercial television interests for viewing, at least in country areas, a reasonable coverage of such sporting events; and

      (ii) to direct the ABC to accept for that purpose any reasonable offer by any commercial television interest to make such services available through the ABC; and

   (b) provide the ABC with sufficient funds to enable it realistically to carry out its obligations in this area as the provider of a national television service.

3. The terms of this resolution be transmitted to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Australia has attained an outstanding level of success in the sporting arenas of the world, and it is a record which has been built up proudly over many decades of international competition, despite the fact

that a vast number of the competing nations have populations far in excess of Australia's.

Names like Bradman, Lindrum, Carruthers, Cuthbert, Hoad, Landy, Lionel Rose, Gould, Ella and indeed Phar Lap who, to many Australians, was almost human, and many others are etched permanently in international annals of sporting history. The Territory, whilst a relatively late starter, has started to make an impression at both national and international sporting levels. Maurice Rioli and David Ross are Top Enders who have made their names in national football, together with Centralian Greg McAdam. Darren Welch and Max Hardy are Territorians with an international reputation in the world of baseball. Graham McGufficke has excelled in swimming and, of course, most recently, Susan Cassells has had success in the South Pacific Ten Pin Bowling Classic. These are a few of the Territorians who have placed the Territory's name firmly on the national and international sporting map. I might add that Susan Cassells will go on from the South Pacific competition as Australia's representative in the World Cup in Korea early in November and I am certain that all Territorians will wish her well in that competition.

It is little wonder then that, since our country is highly successful in the world of sport, Australians, regardless of their geographical location, wish to view sporting events live at both the national and the international levels. It is little wonder that approximately 750 000 viewers living in areas serviced only by Australian Broadcasting Corporation television, and with no access whatsoever to commercial coverage, believe that they have been shortchanged somewhat by the ABC which this year, with a budget of $395m, has not utilised fully the Remote Area Television Service (RATS) to bring to these viewers events such as the Wimbledon finals, the recent world heavyweight title fight and the traditional clash between Australia and England for the Ashes. I believe that the ABC has been derelict in its duty and has not discharged what I believe to be its moral and legal responsibility to the more remote areas of Australia. Given that the commercial stations which hold the rights to these events have made more than generous no-cost offers to the ABC for coverage of these events to allow the ABC to transmit them to areas not serviced by commercial television, I believe the ABC has been more than derelict in its duty, despite the massive interest in these and other events, and that it is sadly out of touch with the wishes of a vast sector of the Australian viewing public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to elaborate on 3 points: costs, technical aspects and areas not being serviced. The ABC argued at the start of the Ashes series that the estimated cost to bring the series via the Remote Area Television Service to the 750 000 ABC-only viewers would be around $120 000. Broken down to 6 tests with 5 days per test, this equates to $4000 per day, hardly a high or prohibitive cost factor compared to the number of viewers affected. In a telex to me, Mr Geoffrey Whitehead, Managing Director of the ABC, stated that it would be difficult technically to isolate areas for service via RATS, despite the fact that, recently, events such as the America's Cup, and the Olympic Games were brought in from overseas and 'isolated out' from the commercial stations for transmission into areas serviced only by the ABC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, concerning areas serviced only by the ABC, it should be noted that they do not only include towns such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy, but coastal communities such as Broome, Port Hedland and many inland towns in Australia. This point seems to have been lost on the ABC Board of Management. Many townships, just a few

hours drive away from some capital cities, are in the same position as the more isolated viewers of Alice Springs and other Territory towns. Concerning sporting coverage, we are, as I have said before, 'We of the Never-Ever' or at least the 'Hardly-Ever'. It is quite obvious that the ABC Board of Management suffers from an eastern seaboard mentality and is not aware of the needs, wishes and aspirations of the many residents in Australia who live east of the Blue Mountains. This is emphasised on a number of occasions. Australian rules, which has a huge following Australia-wide, is not televised live from Melbourne despite the fact that rugby is telecast live from Sydney on Saturdays, followed by a complete replay of the same game later that afternoon.

Mr Smith: It has the rights to televise it live.

Mr VALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no objection to rugby receiving that live coverage, and good luck to rugby fans in the Territory. Indeed, I enjoy a match like that too. In answer to the member for Millner, commercial stations such as Channel 7 in Melbourne have made no-cost offers to the ABC to take Melbourne football and transmit it live into outback areas not serviced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. It does not need to have the rights.

The ABC Chairman, Ken Myer, visited Alice Springs and Darwin recently. This should have been a good opportunity for him to discuss with Alice Springs residents their attitude to ABC television and radio services. However, most residents were unaware of his visit until they read about it in the newspapers the following week. It appears to me that, every time the ABC takes 1 step forward with management reorganisation, the Territory takes 2 steps backwards. Witness the fact that the Territory's one and only ABC board member lost her place several years ago and has not yet been replaced. Witness the fact that, despite the ABC's grand plans for autonomy for the ABC NT operation, it is sadly under-staffed, operates with poor equipment and is virtually unable to cover live events outside of the Darwin suburban area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me make it perfectly clear that my argument has not been with the management and staff of the ABC in the Northern Territory. These people could not have been more supportive and helpful, and I would like to pay tribute to them for their efforts on our behalf. In this respect, had it not been for the NT manager, Bob O'Sullivan, together with the financial assistance of the Northern Territory government, down-the-track viewers would not have had the opportunity to watch the fifth test from Edgbaston or to see the final match which will commence tonight at the oval. Of course, some of us now wish that we had not been able to watch the fifth test and I would ask honourable members to start praying for a win. Tonight we need to win this match to retain the Ashes. We will get nothing for a draw.

I regret that this cooperation has not extended to the federal level. In a recent letter to me, the federal Minister for Communications, Mr Duffy, said: 'The ABC is an independent statutory authority with sole responsibility for its programming decisions. It would be most inappropriate for me to attempt to influence the ABC in programming matters'. I have no argument with the ABC being completely independent in political and current affairs programming matters. However, while I can accept this concept, I cannot accept what followed several weeks later when Mr Duffy, in criticising Channel 9's coverage of the cricket and the tennis, told it that it had better lift its game or he would legislate to force it to telecast what he believed was appropriate.

As the ABC receives a large slice of the taxpayers' dollars, $395m this year, the question that many isolated viewers would ask of Mr Duffy is - and he has said that Channel 9's coverage of sporting events has been abysmal, particularly for country viewers - what of the ABC's coverage which has been non-existent with the Ashes series?.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a file that is feet thick on sporting events and, whilst most of my communications in recent years have been with the Channel 9 and Channel 10 organisations, all commercial stations have been more than generous with their no-cost offers to the ABC for access to major national and international sporting events. Their record speaks for itself and remote area viewers are most grateful for this generosity. In the coming months, there are a number of major national and international events which many people will wish to view. They include the rugby finals from Sydney and Brisbane, the Australian rules grand finals from Melbourne and Adelaide, the James Hardie 1000 from Bathurst, Australia's first ever grand prix from Adelaide, and the world heavyweight title fight from America in a month's time. It is to be hoped that the ABC will cover all or most of these events via the Remote Area Television Service. In some cases, no-cost offers have already been made and I am sure that, ultimately, access to all of these will be offered to the ABC. I fear that remote area viewers will again receive second-class treatment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can accept that there are residents in any community who have no wish to view sporting events and, to this end, Australia must now look towards setting up a separate sports channel which can concentrate exclusively on sporting events, thus eliminating disruption to other television programs. With the launch of the second Australian satellite later this year, this proposal, which I have already discussed with some of the commercial stations interstate, is one that must be examined.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are many people interstate who are in a similar position to the residents of Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. I propose sending copies of the terms of this resolution, together with the speeches of all honourable members, to the appropriate ministers in the states with the request that they support this approach to the federal government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that there are 2 things that the federal government needs to implement immediately. First, it should identify a specific amount of funding for the ABC for a remote area television service of national and international sporting events. I believe that that amount should be in the order of $5m to $10m. The federal government has already granted the Western Australian government $30m for the America's Cup and the South Australian government $5m to assist in promoting the grand prix. I believe that the federal government should also appoint to the ABC Board of Management a sporting representative from northern Australia, someone who understands more fully the problems of isolated areas. As I said, I have a file, which is feet thick, of correspondence and communications from the commercial stations to the ABC covering events from Bathurst to boxing and from tennis to two-up. Australia and the rest of the world in recent years have made dramatic advances in the field of telecommunications. But sadly, it would appear that people in the inland areas of Australia have reverted to the good old days of radio being the only form of communication.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting from paragraph 2(a) the word 'direct' wherever occurring and inserting in its stead the word 'request'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if the amendment is agreed to, I will support the motion. First of all, I would like to congratulate the honourable member on his drive and enthusiasm for this subject. He has sought and obtained more publicity on this matter than everyone else combined. Obviously, the matter ranks most highly with him. He has used the very little time that we have available to us on general business day to raise this issue. Not for him the problems of youth, broken homes, alcohol abuse; he shall be famous for the pursuit of late night TV. I have long awaited a decent radio service to which I could listen while driving around my electorate. Unfortunately, I have now been duped into watching night cricket. In the words of the immortal bard, I would say: 'If cricket be the food of life, rain on'. Over the last few days, I have spent more time watching rain-swept fields than cricket. As far as I am concerned, I am about ready to give it away.

Before this, the honourable member was one of that infamous trio on the CLP backbench who were better known for longevity rather than their spectacular rises. I would exempt from this the rose between 2 thorns who has had her rise and fall. The honourable member and the members for Sadadeen and Koolpinyah form that trilogy. The evenness of their days was a beauty to behold. The member for Braitling has now made a break from the pack; he has raced ahead. He has moved that this Assembly recommend that a minister of the Hawke government be given the power to direct the ABC. He has decided that political power will be the basis on which we govern the programming on the ABC. We will end the neutrality of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. We can liken this to the Chief Minister's latest move to take over the public service. It seems to me very strange that he wants a Labor minister to take control of the ABC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am going to resist the temptation. Never let it be said that advantage will be placed before principle with me. I find that there is much to support in this motion. If he accepts my amendment, I will support the motion. I note that the first paragraph says the continued presence of people in remote areas is dependent on those services. The thought of people actually leaving because they cannot watch a rain-swept Wimbledon or some game of aerial ping-pong seems to me to be incredible. Of course, if it were a game of rugby, that would be well worth waiting for.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, the federal minister is having a difficult time at the moment with decisions based on the use of the satellite, not the least of which relates to policy in relation to the Remote Area Television Service proposals. He faces a difficult situation, particularly in relation to the commercial service, because Australia has been split up into 4 zones - south-eastern, north-eastern, central and the western zone beam areas. Because of the lack of a large viewing audience, our central zone will be particularly difficult to support economically. There have been different pressures on the Broadcasting Tribunal since the inquiry in Alice Springs 2 weeks ago as to who will be granted the licence to operate the central zone beam. As was recorded in the press, the Northern Territory government has had to pledge some $2m worth of support to make that central zone viable.

When a decision is passed to Mr Duffy by the tribunal, he will have to decide whether to accept its findings. The tribunal may impose some riders as to the form and content of the licence. I suspect that may be the case because of the evidence given at the final inquiry. If he places restrictions on the licence as proposed at the inquiry, additional requests in terms of a motion of this type may make it extremely difficult for the licensee of the central zone to conform. I believe that possibly the same thing would apply

in relation to the ABC. Nonetheless, I still believe in a philosophical sense that the people of the outback have been seriously disadvantaged by the lack of any form of coverage, particularly television coverage.

I understand that this motion covers not only the people who are currently totally underserved but also the areas that are receiving radiated broadcast transmission in the trunk route areas which are also underserved in relation to sporting events of national importance. I stress the requirement that the events be of national importance. There has been some debate today in relation to sporting activities of all kinds. I believe it is quite clear in this motion that that is not the intent of the honourable member. The motion refers to sporting events of national importance. Events of that type have been denied to people in the major trunk route broadcast radiated areas for some considerable time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will finish my remarks when the major motion comes before the Assembly.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would urge all members of the Assembly to support the amendment proposed to this motion by the member for Stuart. For the sake of my electorate, I would very much like there to be unanimous support for this motion. For the sake of my electorate, I hope that that very small change to the wording of the motion is accepted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as all members of this Assembly would be aware, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation is an independent body. It is necessary that it be an independent body. For a minister to direct that body in relation to its programming would be a travesty of the ideals of the corporation. For that reason, I urge the sponsor of the motion to seek the support of his colleagues for the amendment that the member for Stuart has proposed.

I live in one of the remotest parts of Australia. We have very little communication with the outside world in general. Certainly, my constituents look forward to watching national and international sporting events on television. Sport plays a very large part in my community. It is probably the most sports-minded electorate in all of the Northern Territory. It has a very young population. People come from many parts of Australia and they are all very interested in sport. I find it very difficult to accept the reasons given by the ABC as to why it could not broadcast the recent Australian cricket tour of England. There would have been very little disruption to normal programming because the series was played after the usual broadcasting is finished. However, from correspondence I have received, the ABC's attitude has been that, due to technical and financial problems, it was unable to televise the Ashes series. I find that very difficult to accept.

In past years, the Remote Area Television Service has provided my community with a service. While it may not have pleased everybody in my electorate, certainly some live sporting events have been telecast. That has been available in past years. I am at a loss to understand why it is not available this year. I have been assured by commercial broadcasters that they are prepared to make programs available virtually free of charge to the ABC for broadcast over the Remote Area Television Service as it would not conflict with any of their viewing audiences. Obviously, they have problems with their advertisers. They would not want to make programs available to their direct competitors.

However, I must say a few words in support of the ABC. It seems to have become fashionable to denigrate public bodies such as the ABC and Telecom. It would also seem that, if the coalition parties ever regain the confidence of the Australian people and are returned in any subsequent federal election, they will be hell-bent on flogging off the public broadcasting system and indeed other public institutions within Australia. It would be an absolute disgrace if that were to happen. Certainly, it would be far more profitable to operate those facilities in the east coast belt, as the member for Braitling pointed out. It is certainly the least expensive area of Australia in which to operate. But the people in more remote areas would inevitably feel the effects of that. I cannot imagine any commercial broadcaster feeling any obligation to contribute to services in communities like Nhulunbuy. Similarly, Telecom plays a very large part in ABC broadcasting, particularly overseas transmission. I cannot see any commercial owner of Telecom feeling any obligation to people in remote areas of Australia.

I would ask the Chief Minister - and I have already written to the Northern Territory's MHR on this matter - to prevail upon those persons in the coalition parties who have some interest in the remoter areas of Australia to shed the concept of privatisation. These are extremely important services which enable all Australians to enjoy similar access to sporting events. Optimistically, it will not be contemplated further. We will not go down this privatisation road that Margaret Thatcher seems so hell-bent on pursuing.

Mr Tuxworth: It seems to be working.

Mr LEO: The Chief Minister has just said that it seems to be working. I point out that the demography of Great Britain is rather different from that of Australia. Furthermore, the area of Great Britain would fit into one of our states - Queensland - about 6 times. It also has a much greater population. To draw any parallels between the circumstances in Great Britain and circumstances in Australia is puerile to say the least.

The member for Braitling mentioned that the Minister for Communications, Mr Duffy, had made certain threats to Channel 9 concerning its purchase of broadcasting rights. This is a relatively new phenomenon in Australia. At one stage, all broadcasters, public and private, paid what was virtually a grounds fee. They could take their cameras into the stadium and telecast the event. It was possible to have 3 or 4 different camera crews at the one sporting event and they would all be able to televise it throughout Australia. However, with the recent commercialisation, it has become more profitable for sporting organisations throughout the world, notably football and cricket promoters, to sell exclusive rights. That makes it very expensive for broadcasters. They bid against each other and the winner inevitably demands that its exclusive rights be respected.

In conclusion, I ask the member for Braitling to accept our amendment. I do not believe that legally the Minister for Communications can direct the ABC. I do not think that morally he should be able to direct the ABC in these matters. For the sake of the unanimous support of this motion, I hope that he accepts the amendment.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am one of the fortunate few living outside the major Territory centres who is able to receive both ABC and commercial TV. Batchelor is on the very edge of the reception area from Darwin. I do not always have perfect reception, but it is available. There are, however, vast areas in the Victoria River electorate that are outside the range of either the ABC or commercial TV...

Mr Dondas: AUSSAT will help.

Mr McCARTHY: Don't bet on it. A lucky few have access to interstate ABC programs through INTELSAT. AUSSAT will, I am told, provide this service more to people living in remote areas. It is said, and it is true to a point, that people live in the bush by choice. They go there knowing the limitations and the hardships. Many are born in the bush and will die in the bush, but that is no reason why they should not enjoy the same services that are available to other Australians. Money is a limitation. I have no doubt of that, but it is not the main reason why these services are not yet available to people in the bush. Country people generally are not complainers and there are not a great number of them. If they were a larger group and a little more noisy, the money to provide services would be found.

The drawbacks of the bush and the new freedom for young people are having a profound effect on the continuity of family life in the remoter areas. Young people move away for their education or become attracted to the towns because of the services to be found there. Consequently, many of them do not return to work in the bush even on the family property. If entertainment was more readily available to them in the bush, it is likely that some at least would not leave permanently. The Northern Territory particularly cannot afford to lose young people from the land and the less populated areas. Rather than have experienced rural people move in great numbers to the city areas, we should encourage them to stay in the bush by promoting more intensive development and providing reasonable services, particularly communications services. Unfortunately, the Territory government does not have a great deal of say in relation to communications.

There is no doubt in my mind that the availability of major sporting events through the medium of TV will do much to alleviate the feeling of remoteness from the rest of the world that is experienced by country dwellers. Sport is an Australian past-time, probably the single subject most talked about by the average Australian. Ask someone in the Mall at lunchtime if he would recognise a senior politician, even the Leader of the Opposition if he were to walk by. More often than not, I suspect the answer would be no. But ask if he would recognise a member of the Australian cricket team or even a past member and the answer would almost certainly be yes. This would also be true of Australian rules players or players of any other code for that matter. Unlike politics, the interest in sport is widespread. People take the time to study the sports pages so that every well-known sportsman is recognised at a glance.

With the acquisition by commercial interests of TV rights to many, if not all, of the major sporting events, the availability of these events to many people outside the range of commercial television has been lost. I am not even sure that it will be available through the commercial TV interests who will have the licence to operate through the central footprint of AUSSAT. Undoubtedly, that will be a decision for the commercial interests involved; governments cannot make directions in that regard. However, the federal government can have some influence on the ABC by the provision of funds to ensure that the ABC has the ability to fund its services.

I do not support the amendment. I would support it if the original proposal from the member for Braitling did not carry a proviso that the federal government provide specific funds for the purpose of telecasting sporting events to remote areas. I support the motion and commend it to members.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not take up much time of the Assembly. I will simply concentrate on the amendment. I was interested in the member for Victoria River's reference to the fact that country people do not complain. That is a sure give away. Obviously, he was not born and brought up in the country.

Mr McCarthy: I very definitely was.

Mr B. COLLINS: Not the same country that I was brought up in. Where I came from, people did nothing but complain. It was either not raining enough or it was raining too much. Something was always going wrong.

The opposition supports the sentiments in this motion entirely. We agree with all of it except one word. If the amendment is accepted, the motion will have the unanimous support of the Assembly. I cannot understand what the honourable member thinks is being taken away from the motion by changing this word. We already know that the minister to whom this motion is directed will not do what the motion suggests he should. He has already given that information to the honourable member in writing. We are talking about the national broadcaster, not commercial television which is funded by advertisers. We are talking about the Australian Broadcasting Corporation which does not have a permanent charter for funding. Many people suggest that it should have some fixed proportion of the budget. I do not believe that is a practical proposal because governments of whatever political persuasion should never have shackles placed on them in terms of having to pay out fixed amounts to organisations such as the ABC. I find the suggestion commendable enough but not supportable. We are talking about the national broadcaster that receives its financial support from the government. We cannot support a proposition that the federal Minister for Communications should direct the ABC in respect of any particular matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, could I just suggest, with the greatest respect to the mover of this motion, the problems that we get into when we are talking about proposals such as this. I was extremely fond of an ABC program that had been broadcast on Sunday mornings for as long as I have been alive. I refer to Ralph Collins' Sunday Concert. I was a regular listener to that program for as long a I can remember. We now have Mike Friganiotis and country and western music. May I say that I like country and western music but I cannot stand the country and western music that Mike Friganiotis plays. I liked Sunday Concert and I was extremely angry when it was taken off the ABC. I was going to write to the ABC and demand that it be reinstated. I contacted the ABC and I was given background information as to why that program change was made. It resulted from surveys taken in the Northern Territory. There were consistent complaints from people living in isolated areas of the Northern Territory - and the ABC was virtually their only source of radio entertainment - that they did not like classical music. This was the strong majority view that was put. I live in the major city in the Northern Territory. I was unhappy about that program being taken off but that was the majority view. I can listen to classical music on tape or tune into ABC FM radio. Therefore, I did not pursue that complaint.

I simply point that out to indicate a basic problem with the national broadcaster. Nothing it can do will satisfy everybody. It is like politics. I know people who loathe non-stop sporting broadcasts. We know that the ABC receives many complaints from many Territorians, who live in places that receive only the ABC, about having to watch non-stop cricket or non-stop this or that. We have a motion before us asking the federal minister to direct the

ABC to concentrate in a particular area at a particular time on broadcasting a particular type of program. The first thing that would happen, if the minister was crazy enough to issue such a political direction to the ABC, is that everybody in the Territory who did not like watching that kind of thing, and with total justification, would say: 'That should not be a matter for political direction. The programming of the ABC should be decided by the people who are put there to make those decisions'.

That is the reason why I used Sunday Concert as an example of what I am talking about. We should not seek to direct the ABC in this way because we are only 25 people. Whilst we may be able to reflect the views of our constituents in many political areas, none of us would have the hide to suggest that we would be able to reflect their tastes in music or television or the arts. It would be very arrogant of to suggest that, because I happen to like classical music, that would be the view of the majority of my electorate. Of course it would not be.

Mr Speaker, I can remember the ABC doing interviews with the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and myself about our choices in music. The comment was made that I had chosen nothing more recent than the 18th century whereas the former Chief Minister had chosen a combination of Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly. Indeed, I still have those interviews on tape and they were well done. They simply reflect again that what you want to watch on TV or what you want to hear on the radio is a very personal matter. It is a bit presumptuous of us to tell the Minister for Communications that we want him to direct the ABC to concentrate on one form of broadcast.

The way it was done with Sunday Concert was that the ABC itself talked to Territorians. It found there was a serious complaint about this particular Sunday morning slot. People in the bush did not like classical music. The ABC made its decision despite the fact that it knew it would receive complaints. The honourable member for Braitling said that he complained when they took that program off. I am sure most of the people in the bush were in favour of the change. In this Assembly, we had a classic example of that. The Chief Minister interjected: 'The right decision too. You have no idea how many people wanted that changed'. I am sure that is true. Behind him, the member for Braitling said: 'And I was one of the people who complained about its being taken off'. That is exactly what I am demonstrating: there is a problem with the motion as it currently stands.

There is no question that we want the federal minister to lobby the ABC. We want him to go to the ABC and to say: 'I am lending my support to this motion from the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly for you to do so and so'. It will say: 'Thank you, minister. We will give your recommendation the weight that we think it deserves'. I have no doubt that the ABC would place great weight on a message like that from the Minister for Communications. However, it is quite improper of us to ask him to give a political directive to the ABC in a specific area of programming.

The sponsor of the motion, with the best of intentions, is narrowing his view too much. Whilst it may be very desirable to support this motion for what he particularly wants to see on television - and obviously that is what we all want to see - it would be creating a precedent which would be most undesirable for this Assembly to put its imprimatur on. It would be a most undesirable precedent to pass a motion asking the minister to give a political directive to the ABC in respect of its programming because, if such a thing happened in an area that we did not agree with, we would be the first people

to scream our heads off. We would complain about it and say that the ABC should be an independent organisation in terms of the decisions it makes, whether we agree with them or not. The federal Minister for Communications should have no greater role to play in respect of what is broadcast by the ABC than any other citizen of this country. The ABC should give whatever weight it wants to approaches made by him.

It is a serious matter. I say that with great regret to the mover of the motion because I do want to support it. However, I do not know of any other legislature in Australia that has ever sought to pass a motion enshrining political direction over the ABC. I think we would create a very bad precedent for the Northern Territory if we were the first legislature in Australia to do that. Unless the mover of the motion agrees to change the word 'direct' to 'request', or whatever other word he wants to insert which would bring about what he wants, we cannot support the motion.

Mr McCarthy: How about 'demand'?

Mr B. COLLINS: The word is 'direct'. I do not have to tell honourable members about the trouble the British Broadcasting Corporation got into recently over this matter. I do not have to tell honourable members the propaganda value that was made out of that. The national broadcaster in the Soviet Union had the absolute hide to broadcast for days on end the fact that the British Broadcasting Corporation was under political direction. I say with some degree of pride that the BBC would be on a par with Radio Australia in terms of the reputation it enjoys internationally. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union had absolutely every right to say it because that is what happened. Unfortunately, because of the fuss that was caused, that program received more publicity when it was finally broadcast than it would have received if the government had not taken such a shortsighted decision. I can say with some confidence that, in recent times, that is the only government in the free world that has even contemplated passing a motion in parliament enshrining political direction over a national broadcaster. The Soviet Union was a bit cheeky, I thought, but it made a great deal of hay out of that. It was proof positive that all the charges Britain made of state control of the media in the Soviet Union were equally applicable to Britain because it wanted to muzzle its national broadcaster and issue government directions as to what it would or would not broadcast.

I think the sponsor of this motion is narrowing his sights too low on this motion. I cannot agree with the precedent that we would set here. I would ask the honourable member to agree to the amendment. It will achieve the same end. If Mr Duffy agrees to it, he will make his recommendation to the ABC as federal minister. I am sure the ABC will give proper weight to his recommendation. But, quite properly, he will not - and I hope that any Liberal or National Party communications minister would not either - direct the ABC politically to broadcast or not to broadcast a particular program. I would ask the honourable member to reconsider his support for our amendment.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion and speak against the amendment. I do not do it lightly. I do not often find myself at odds with the Leader of the Opposition but this is one of those occasions. I will deal with the amendment first.

Paragraph 2(a)(i) says that we should 'require its responsible minister to direct the ABC to make all reasonable effort to obtain, directly or through commercial television interests for viewing, at least in country areas, a

reasonable coverage of such sporting events'. I must accept the premise that it would not be proper for a minister to say to a statutory organisation like the ABC: 'We do not think you should run this program. We do not think you should run that one late at night'. I do not take umbrage with that. But I am not talking about that sort of political direction so far as the ABC is concerned. I am talking about saying to the ABC: 'If you are broadcasting a program for 90% of Australia and it is technically possible for the other 10% to have it made available yet you do not want to do that because you find it is inconvenient, then I am directing you to find a way of making that program available to the other 10% of the people in Australia'. That is what I am talking about when I refer to the political direction that the minister should have over the ABC in so far as programming is concerned.

The member for Braitling is really referring to the fact that 90% of Australia had access to sports programming, such as the cricket and the America's Cup. Because the ABC did not have the rights, the money or whatever to provide that programming of its own volition in the Northern Territory, it said: 'It is too hard. We are not going to do it'. There comes the time when somebody in the government should say to the ABC: 'Where you are the only broadcaster able to provide the service, you will do it'. We are talking about national events that everybody else in the country believes ought to be broadcast, including the government. The ABC might say to the government: 'We cannot do it without extra money. Will you give us the extra money?' That is fine. If the government directs the ABC to do it with its existing resources, that is a matter for the ABC. I do not believe that the minister should tell the ABC to broadcast cricket, Yes Minister or the Hardie 1000 race. That is not reasonable. It is reasonable, however, that the minister should direct the ABC, where it is technically possible, to ensure that programs delivered to 90% of Australians be extended to the other 10%.

Several days ago, we discussed how the ABC was refusing to spend $6000 to provide a program to 50 000 or 60 000 people outside the urban centres of the Northern Territory. The other 15 million people in Australia received the program. I consider that, if it is good enough for 15 million people, if the ABC is the only organisation that has the technical capacity to provide the program and if the minister believes that it ought to be extended to all Australians, he should be able to direct the ABC to provide that service.

I wish to turn now to the satellite. We have had the most incredible performance by the government in the last 2 years. It began with direct opposition and abandonment of the satellite program because Australia could not afford it. Since then, there has been a policy change every month by Mr Duffy. With the satellite finally in the air, we are now arguing about whether the ABC or Telecom should use it. I believe that the minister should have the power to direct the ABC to use the satellite - if it is technically possible - to provide programs to everybody in the community where existing facilities do not enable them to receive them. What sort of a communications system do we have in this country where 15 million people living in urban areas are able to watch programs of any nature while those who live in remote areas cannot? The ABC, which could bring the programs to the remote areas, refuses to pay for it. It is beyond reason. To get an idea of just how far behind this country is in terms of using technology and satellites in communication, let me suggest to members that they go to the North-West Territories in Canada and see how things really work. The difference between the Northern Territory and the North-West Territories in Canada...

Mr B. Collins: My name is not Coulter or Hanrahan. I do not get trips to Canada.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that he can take a trip anytime he likes. He just does not want to travel.

Mr B. Collins: You would want me to stay there.

Mr TUXWORTH: He would look like the abominable snowman with a bit of frost. We could not take the risk of letting him go.

Mr B. Collins: Tux of the Yukon.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the difference between the North-West Territories and the Northern Territory is that here it is 40° above zero and there it is 40° below zero all the year round. The other difference is that they have the most incredible communications system in a place that is more remote than this. You can go into your hotel room and dial STD to anywhere in the world. You can get 4 television channels and 2 radio stations from the rest of Canada - all from the satellite. Yet, in Australia, we are mucking around as if we had invented the wheel. Instead of the ABC and other organisations seizing on a new medium to take their programming to everybody in this country, they are trying to find 30 000 reasons why they should not do it.

I think that, on the whole, the ABC does a really good job. Most of its programs are most enjoyable. I have the same feelings as the Leader of the Opposition about some of the programs. I wish they would take them off and never play them again, but that is a personal choice. I can turn the set off. However, it is essential that an organisation like the ABC, which has national support and large amounts of taxpayers' funds, carries out its responsibilities to the nation. It should use every technique it can possibly provide to take information to the community. A recent survey showed that 42% or 46% of people in the Northern Territory do not have communications comparable in standard to those in metropolitan areas. That is a crying shame. It would be even worse if we put the satellite up and then decided not to use it. We will still deprive those people of adequate communications. That is where ministerial direction of Telecom and the ABC is absolutely essential.

Mr Speaker, I support the motion. I conclude my remarks by saying that we have a great institution in the ABC. I have my complaints with it from time to time but so does everybody else. It would be in the ABC's interests for the minister, from time to time, to be able to direct the ABC and say: 'We believe that this is in the interests of all the people in this country and we direct you to do it. If you need extra money, we will provide that money'. The ABC has a charter to provide a national coverage. I consider that it ought to be directed, if necessary, to meet that responsibility. We will see incredible technological change in the next 3 years. Things that we have never dreamed of before will become available to us by way of the satellite. Organisations like Telecom and the ABC will resist change tremendously because it is the nature of people to resist change. In those circumstances, I think it is absolutely proper for a minister to have the authority to direct his organisation to use new technology for the advancement of all Australians, not only those who live in a city.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a few points I want to make in relation to this motion. I commence by observing the fact that there is a bipartisan approach about the essential aspects of the motion. Members of the opposition, particularly myself and the member for Stuart, are sincerely thankful for the efforts of the member for Braitling. Far be it from me to attempt to emulate the sporting metaphors of my colleague but I will attempt to box on. I often find myself playing on a sticky wicket to the deliveries from the honourable member for Braitling but, in this particular match, we find ourselves batting on the same side.

Mr B. Collins: I think that is enough, Neil.

Mr BELL: I promise. That is all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: In case I have not placed it on record, allow me to state my sincere thanks to the honourable member for Braitling for his efforts, and my thanks are pure and unalloyed. I think his efforts in this regard and in relation to many other issues of importance to central Australians have been sadly overlooked by members of the government. I will not make further comparisons. I have already done so at this sittings and to do more may suggest that my motives in doing so are somehow political. I would have thought that the new Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, who should have a particular interest in the broadcasting of sporting events in central Australia, would have been here for this debate. I am rather surprised to find that he is not here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think we should look for a moment at what is involved in spending scarce public resources right around the country to provide the best possible coverage. We have to be a little bit careful in urging the expenditure of federal government moneys. It is a 2-edged sword. In many instances, I believe that the Northern Territory government - and the Chief Minister provided us with an example today - urges unreasonable expenditure of federal moneys in circumstances where it is not at all fair in the context of broader Australian objectives that money be spent here. However, given the cogent argument that the member for Braitling has made for extra expenditure in the obvious public interest, I do not feel this is unreasonable. For that reason, I have no hesitation in supporting this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to support the amendment proposed by the member for Stuart and indicate my misgivings about the use of the word 'direct' in this motion. I have even deeper misgivings about the scathing attack mounted on this amendment by the Chief Minister. I spoke at some length last evening about the propensity of the Chief Minister to regard as of nought the independence of statutory authorities. As I mentioned, the Chief Minister was labouring under some illusion that statutory authorities were set up for commercial purposes.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is acquiring a more commercial aspect to its operations. Let us be quite clear that, if ever we had to pay on a per capita basis for what we see on television in the Northern Territory, we would run the risk of looking at black screens because the ABC has no advertising revenue. It is worth while noting the general lack of interest by commercial television in the Northern Territory because the population to derive revenue from advertising is not here. However, I digress.

I return to the point that the Australian Broadcasting Corporation be retained as an independent broadcasting authority. The Minister for Communications has said that he believes, and quite properly, that it is not his role to direct such independent statutory authorities. Having made my point about the desirability of independent statutory authorities, I close my remarks by once more commending the efforts of the member for Braitling in seeking to obtain for central Australians a more satisfactory coverage of the current cricket series in England. There are certainly members of my family who will take some pleasure that that is likely to be available to them in Alice Springs. I commend to all honourable members the desirability of supporting the amendment.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to pick up a point made by the member for Nhulunbuy regarding privatisation of the ABC. I would draw to his attention a program on the ABC recently when the Minister for Communications, Mr Duffy, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr John Howard, were interviewed about privatisation. It was made very clear that the opposition in Canberra and people throughout Australia had no intention of allowing the privatisation of the ABC. We would like it to remain as an independent, neutral broadcaster. I would not say it was always neutral. I am often incensed by some of the programs it broadcasts in its attempts to be popular. It is clear that no fair-minded Australian would want to privatise the ABC.

As far as privatisation goes, I think the Leader of the Opposition hit the nail on the head the other day when he said it was 'a snowballing movement'. Privatisation will snowball. The changes will be made in the manner that people will like and it will be good for this nation.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, there are a few points I would like to pick up and I take this opportunity of thanking honourable members for their support. I was a little disappointed at the member for Stuart who took a fairly lighthearted approach to what I believe is a serious topic. Whilst many people derive a tremendous amount of enjoyment from sporting events worldwide, I do not think the member for Stuart understands the frustration of the many thousands of inland viewers, particularly those in central Australia, who are denied access to sporting coverage. I can remember that, in his first speech in here, the honourable member complained about a lack of facilities in his electorate. If he went to places such as Ti Tree and Yuendumu, he would find that those people would like to see major sporting events televised.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nhulunbuy because he was of assistance when we were making early approaches to the ABC with 'requests'. The ABC is a national broadcaster and it has a national responsibility which it shirks. Its total budget of $395m is paid by Australian taxpayers and 750 000 of those people who contributed to that are not getting full value for their quid. I think it is a great tragedy.

I cannot accept the member for Stuart's amendment which he moved in a fairly jocular fashion. I could hardly understand what he was saying. He spent most of his time giggling about the whole episode. The motion requests that the minister direct the ABC to make all reasonable efforts. I refer also to extra funding for this type of function. The ABC would be given $10m and told that it is for Remote Area Television Service. It would be like a tied grant for roadworks. If the Minister for Transport and Works were given $5m to build a road in the Braitling electorate under tied federal funding and he did not do it, he would have to give it back. That is the proposal. I intend

to circulate a copy of this resolution and the debate to all isolated areas in the Northern Territory and it will be interesting to see the reaction.

Mr Speaker, I believe that all reasonable requests have been made to the ABC over a number of years and many of them commenced in my office. Let me give you one example. Last year, The ABC gave tremendously weak arguments concerning the reasons for not transmitting the Bathurst 500. At first it said it would be broadcasting the South Australian grand final and that it was not possible technically to broadcast part racing and part football programs. In the end, I phoned Peter Brock, with whom I went to school, and asked if he would approach the Prime Minister with a 'request'. The Prime Minister, the Hon R.J. Hawke, went to the ABC with a request and nothing happened.

Let me give you an example of how many 'requests' went to the ABC from the Northern Territory and other parts of Australia about coverage of the cricket. The Mayors of Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek all telegraphed or telexed the Prime Minister and the ABC. All of the members in the isolated areas, including the member for Nhulunbuy, and ministers made requests. Petitions were presented and last, and certainly not least, with our backs to the ropes and in desperation, I went to Dennis Lillee, Rod Marsh and Greg Chappell. They either contacted the Prime Minister or officers within his department with a 'request', and nothing happened. So much for 'requests'. How many 'requests' do we need to have the ABC take some action to carry out its moral responsibility?

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about ABC programs and the attitude of the ABC in the Northern Territory. No one could have been more reasonable and more helpful than the ABC in the Northern Territory. It realised there was a vast degree of interest in providing the cricket program and it put a 'request' to the ABC in Sydney. The shortsighted national board of management again refused to accede to that request. The ABC claims that it is a sporting station but 750 000 people in Australia believe that that is a misnomer. As I said before, those people have contributed a great deal of money for this type of coverage.

Two of the arguments that the ABC made at the time the telexes and letters passed between my office, the ABC and the federal government related to the cost and the disruption to its programs. However, the moment that Packer indicated he might be ceasing cricket coverage, the ABC stepped in and said it would broadcast the cricket from the first ball of the first over until stumps. Had it accepted the Packer offer, it would not have disrupted any programs because the cricket came on at 11.30 at night and yet, in the next breath, it had funding and was happy to cut out all its other programs. So much for its first argument holding water.

I do not believe that this motion directs the ABC in any political manner at all. It simply requests the ABC to take a much more responsible stance in relation to its coverage of sporting events.

Mr Ede: That is our word. Are you voting in favour of the amendment?

Mr VALE: The word is 'direct'. I am not voting in favour of your amendment. This is not an attempt to interfere with the so-called political neutrality of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. It is purely and simply an attempt to get the ABC to take a much more responsible attitude in its coverage of major national and international sporting events.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, in January or February, I walked into one of the bookshops in Alice Springs and picked this book. I thought: 'Hello, the ABC is going to telecast the cricket this year; we have got it'. The cover of the book reads: 'Australian Tour of the United Kingdom 1985'. There are some tremendous photographs of the ovals and action shots of the Australian and English cricketers. Unfortunately, the colour pictures contained in this book are the only ones that many thousands of ABC viewers across Australia received from overseas this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank honourable members for their support and also to pay tribute to a former New South Wales Sheffield Shield cricket captain, Alan McGilvray, who retires this year after many decades of providing tremendous commentaries and entertainment for Australian and overseas listeners.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 14
Mr Bell	Mr D.W. Collins
Mr B. Collins	Mr Coulter
Mr Ede	Mr Dale
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Dondas
Mr Leo	Mr Finch
Mr Smith	Mr Firmin
	Mr Harris
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Perron
	Mr Setter
	Mr Steele
	Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 138)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, there is no need to waste the time of the Assembly canvassing the arguments once again. This is not the first time that this bill has appeared in the Assembly. Indeed, all of the arguments were canvassed at some length on the first occasion that it was introduced. I will simply cover again the major features of the bill.

Section 32 of the act currently prohibits alteration of electoral rolls after 6 pm on the day of the issue of the writ. Clause 4 amends that provision so that alterations can be made up to and on the day on which the rolls close.

Clause 5 provides an amendment to section 43(2) of the act which provides that the writ will fix the dates for the close of nominations, polling and returns of the writ. Clause 5 inserts a provision so that the writ can give a date for the close of the rolls and requires that the date will be 7 days after the issuing of the writ.

Section 45 of the principal act sets out that close of nominations will be 7 to 21 days after the issuing of the writ and that polling day will be 7 to 30 days after the close of nominations. Clause 6 amends these periods to 11 to 28 days after the issuing of the writ for close of nominations and 22 to 30 days after the close of nominations for polling day.

Clause 7 amends the provisions in respect of mobile polling booths so that they apply only to locations where not more than 250 electors are expected to attend. Mobile polling is limited to the 12 days preceding polling day and the Chief Electoral Officer shall take such steps as he considers necessary to give public notice of polling locations and times. Currently, he has to take only such steps as he considers 'necessary or convenient'.

Clause 8 requires a mobile polling team leader to take such steps as are necessary to give public notice of a variation in a mobile polling time or location. Currently, the provision uses the words: 'necessary or convenient'.

We have just finished a rather lengthy debate on the problems of people in isolated areas in respect of broadcasting. The current provisions of the Electoral Act result in quite onerous problems for people living in the bush in terms of exercising their voting rights on election day. We know that our legislation allows for very short campaign periods. We also found in the last Territory election that, because mobile polling started a full week before polling day, some communities were in the invidious position of having polling teams arrive in their communities almost before they knew an election had been called. It was not democratic. It caused a great deal of injustice in isolated areas in terms of people properly casting their votes. The problems caused by times that the various mobile polling booths were available meant that, in some places, people simply did not exercise their votes because they were not at the place required. This bill, once again, tries to redress the situation, not in a way which will provide advantage for any political party in the Northern Territory, but in a way which will allow people who choose to live in isolated areas to have the same rights as people who live in the urban areas. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MINE WORKERS HEALTH PROTECTION BILL
(Serial 149)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill is aimed at providing some protection for the health of mine workers. I am sure that, given the recent debacle at the Warrego mine, no one will question the need for this legislation. The Warrego example gave us clear illustration of the invidious position of mine workers whose health is left in the hands of employers whose first concern is profit and

whose concern for the health of their workers is very low. We have seen that the government was unwilling to take any action to protect the health of those workers even though there was no doubt that there were great risks.

Everyone has the right to know if his health is being threatened by his job. I would not have believed that anyone could argue with that yet, in relation to Warrego, we had both the employer and the government refusing to hand over information pertinent to the health of the people working in the gold treatment works. Both the employer and the government failed to take any action to protect the health of workers when it was quite clear that a severe risk existed. Both the government and the employer played God with other people's health. It is not good enough to see government inaction in the face of these facts. The opposition is introducing this bill in the hope of rectifying that situation.

The bill provides for regular medical examination of mine workers and for regular atmospheric testing of mines. When I say 'mines', I include quarries and associated processing works. In addition, the bill gives mine workers the right to obtain copies of the records in relation to both medical and atmospheric tests. Provision is made in the bill for separate requirements to be laid down in respect of the intervals between testing and the parts and types of mine to be subject to testing. In a case like the gold treatment works at Warrego where frequent policing is essential, testing at shorter intervals can be required.

In the context of this debate, I would like to refer to the minister's answers to questions concerning Warrego. I must say that I am disappointed with the answers provided and, as is often the case, the answers raised more questions than they answered. My first question was: 'What tests for mercury levels were conducted by the Department of Mines and Energy at the Warrego gold room after the completion of renovations ordered by the department in 1981 up until June 1985?' The answer noted:'The best analysis for exposure to mercury contact by workers is the measurement of mercury in the blood. These tests were carried out by government hospitals or the company in addition to mercury and urine tests from 1979 onwards'. Regrettably, those results are not available or were not made available to me. That is precisely the point of this bill.

My second question asked for the results of those tests. I note that 5 sets of tests were carried out in 1981. Tests on 29 October indicated results from 2 to 11 times the threshold limit value. On 18 November, when the furnace was not in operation, readings were only slightly less than the TLV - 0.04 rather than 0.05. Subsequent tests in November and December 1981 used different techniques and are therefore not comparable. We have no information as to what are acceptable levels using the particular technique that was utilised in that set of tests. However, I would note that the 19 November tests showed levels of 0.12 and 0.14. A couple of weeks later, on 4 December, the levels were more than 10 times the levels in the previous set of tests. We have not been told this but we can guess that this is a matter for some concern. Over a period of a fortnight, in 2 sets of tests, one has shown levels 10 to 15 times the level of the tests that were carried out the fortnight before.

The next available test results were not taken a month or so after those very disconcerting results; they were not taken 6 months nor a year, nor 2 years later. They were taken some 33 months later in 1984. What were the results of those tests? They were all in excess of the threshold limit value.

In fact, they were up to 6 times the level permitted under the National Health and Medical Research Council standards. Those were the tests carried out in September 1984. We now have levels 6 times the threshold limit value. When were the next tests taken? They were taken 9 months later, in June 1985, and those returned levels of 20 times the threshold limit value.

My third question was: 'Did any results exceed the threshold limit value?' It was acknowledged that some results did exceed the threshold limit value and asserted that the mercury in the blood test is the most reliable. I repeat that those results, if they exist, were not made available to me and hence they have strongly indicated the need for this legislation.

Mr Speaker, the response to my question on the action taken by the minister shows up some interesting facts about the role of the department. Inspections over the past 5 years have invariably required improvement to the gold room, including rebuilding. However, these were directed on the basis of less dependable area monitoring rather than the medical evidence which continued to be monitored by the company. That information continues to be retained by the company. If inspections invariably indicated the need for improvement, why were inspections infrequent and why was the gold room not suitably improved or, alternatively, closed down?

A report from the Chief Operational Hygienist in December 1982 is illuminating. It reads in part: 'Rang manager at Warrego at 1330 hours to inform him of the test results. Was informed that both men had been removed from the gold room'. Mr Speaker, what tests? According to the minister's own advice, no departmental tests were administered in 1982. What results are we talking about? Why were 2 men removed from the gold room? Who are they and what is their current state of health? In a classic understatement, the memo also indicated that 'some thought should also be given to finding the source of the airborne mercury vapour and eliminating the problem'. The Warrego situation does not inspire any confidence at all.

In April 1985, again quoting from the answer to my question, the district inspector gave the following direction to the manager: 'Repeat tests are to be carried out urgently'. We are not told what tests are to be repeated because earlier advice indicates that there were no tests in the period from September 1984 to June 1985. The minister has some explaining to do. We want to know why no tests results were supplied to me for the period from December 1981 to September 1984. Were no tests done and, if not, why not? If they were done, why have they not been supplied?

In going through the documents supplied, it is quite interesting to see the delays. From December 1981, we have nothing until September 1984 when we have high results. After that, there is nothing for a further 15 months and then high readings. Some action finally was taken after the matter had been raised by the workers themselves and they had gone out on strike.

We should look also at the inspections because possibly they will give us a better indication of what was going on. It is very interesting when you read through that list because of the discussions that we had about the completion of the old gold room. In March 1982: 'It has been noted that no progress has been made on the crib-room facility in the gold room for 2 months'. In April 1982: 'A time target is required'. I am demonstrating why it has been necessary for us to introduce this legislation. It will give some power to the miners and their union representatives to obtain at least some of the information that they have been unable to obtain because of the

minister's inaction. We have found it necessary to broaden the powers so that the miners can get some information about their health. This is necessary because of the lack of inactivity by the current and former Ministers for Mines and Energy over a long period. We have had the case of Mr Karanovic who went to court in Victoria and was awarded a very substantial settlement because of the lack of performance by the company. We would have thought that this would have signalled to this government the need for urgent action and very close monitoring.

In December 1982, a Department of Mines and Energy official rang the Warrego mine to inform it of the test results and was told that both men had been removed from the gold room. We do not have the results of those tests. There are, however, certain things that we can gather from the episode. One is that obviously there were problems. You do not ring up urgently to tell people about test results and be told that people have been removed from the gold room if everything is all right!

What inspections were carried out after December 1982? We have not been provided with any details of any inspections from December 1982 to October 1984. That shows a neglect on behalf of the then minister which is nothing short of criminal. What about 1983? What about January to October 1984? When it had been found that it was necessary to remove people from the gold room, why did the minister simply allow the whole matter to be ignored? There were no visits from Department of Mines and Energy officers at all during that period if we can believe this report. On the other hand, has this report been doctored because it would show an extremely embarrassing situation of continued neglect in the minister's portfolio?

In April 1985, a need was felt to carry out repeat tests urgently. The previous ones that we have been informed about were in September 1984. I find it hard to believe that it was found in April 1985 that the September 1984 tests needed to be repeated urgently.

Let us look at another example to see whether the minister has been carrying out his functions correctly. I refer to correspondent and mine record book entries for Warrego from 1980 to 1985. We have various indications that mercury sampling was carried out in 1981. On 17 July 1982, the mine managers weekly record book inspection report refers to mercury sampling during a period when the minister told us there were no tests. December 1982 was the time when it was necessary to have 2 people removed from the gold room, presumably because their blood level of mercury was so high that they could not remain there. When is the next entry in this book? This book is kept so that a log of visits and inspections can be held. The next record after December 1982 is 10 July 1984. I find that to be nothing short of criminal. Either this report has been cooked or there has been criminal neglect.

Mr Speaker, because the opposition has been frustrated in its attempts to obtain answers, we have found it necessary to introduce legislation ourselves in an attempt to safeguard the lives and health of workers, and not only at Warrego. We are constantly hearing stories of very high levels of dust in quarries which are not being adequately monitored. I remind members that one of the chemists, presumably from the minister's department, found it necessary to go public with the figures that he found in June 1985. That is the main reason why we know now what is going on. If that person had not been so frustrated with the lack of activity on behalf of the minister, would people in the Warrego mine still be being poisoned today? Would they still be

suffering 20 times the National Health and Medical Research Council's limits of 0.05 mg per cubic metre? When we have these gaps from 1981 to 1985, it is quite obvious that the minister either is not interested or is not taking any action on the results which he has been given.

I will turn now to a more detailed look at the clauses of the bill. Clause 3 contains definitions. Members will notice that the definition of 'mine' is similar to that in the Mines Safety Control Act. This means that it covers not only mines per se but also quarries, prospecting operations and operations and works adjoining a mine, including treatment works. Clause 4 gives the necessary powers of delegation to the officers responsible for carrying out the tests under this legislation. Clause 5 requires the Chief Medical Officer to set up facilities for the regular medical testing of mine workers. This clause makes it compulsory for mine workers to undergo the medical examinations. It is also an offence for an employer to prevent attendance for examination or to try to persuade a worker not to go.

Clause 6 relates to the content of the medical certificate and clause 7 requires that a copy be furnished to a worker. Copies may be furnished to another person provided the worker gives his or her consent. In addition, clause 8 entitles the worker to any records of tests carried out in medical examinations under this legislation, as well as the results of other tests carried out by the employers. Clause 9 provides for atmospheric tests to be carried out in the mine at prescribed intervals. Clause 10 gives mine workers and their union representatives access to those tests. A regulation-making power in clause 11 enables the prescription of testing intervals for both medical and atmospheric tests and also the prescription of different parts or types of a mine for the purpose of medical examination. That means that any type of mining requiring more regular testing of workers can be differentiated.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would remind honourable members that this morning the minister said in response to my question that what he gave me was all he had. I find that very hard to believe. I find it very hard to believe that the department itself did not conduct tests. I think it obtained results which were so far above anything that was acceptable that it simply ignored the mine. I find it very hard to believe that it would do that unless there was some political direction. On the other hand, I think it far more likely that I have not been given the full story. I am going to pursue this matter until we find out what has been the record of the current and previous Ministers for Mines and Energy in looking after the miners at Warrego. I will pursue it until we find out the answers. In the meantime, I hope that this bill will provide workers in the future, right throughout the Territory, with at least some protection so that they can find the information they need to know. They deserve the same protection that is provided in any other part of Australia - very basic health and occupational safety measures. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Select Committee of Inquiry on NT Government's Contingent and Actual Liability

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that:

1. a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the Northern Territory government's contingent and actual liability;

2. the committee consist of 5 members, 3 to be nominated by the Chief Minister and 2 to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;

3. the committee have power to call for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place, and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and such interim recommendations it may deem fit;

4. the committee report to the Assembly by the first sitting day in 1986;

5. the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and

6. the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in standing orders.

Mr Speaker, I would suggest there is not a single person who witnessed the performance of our so-called responsible government in question time this morning who would dispute the urgent need for the establishment of this committee. Indeed, it is stating the obvious that a Chief Minister who, on 2 separate occasions that I can recall, has stated that he was about to or had laid all his cards on the table would have absolutely no hesitation in supporting the establishment of this committee. It is stating the obvious that, if the Chief Minister has placed all his cards on the table, he has absolutely nothing to fear from this committee.

The purpose of establishing the committee is obvious. It will have powers that are clearly beyond the scope of anything the opposition, with the restrictions placed on it in the Legislative Assembly, can do on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory in bringing the government to account over this matter.

Mr Speaker, there is one honourable minister in this Legislative Assembly, the Minister for Mines and Energy, who was inclined in years past - he has not done it very much lately - to say to the opposition that it has nothing to complain about because it can always use question time in order to elicit information. This morning was a classic demonstration of what nonsense that is.

Mr Perron: Put questions on notice.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, you would qualify for your old age pension waiting for answers to come back to questions on notice that the government does not want answered because it simply ignores them.

Mr Speaker, the people of the Northern Territory are entitled to know, and are still denied knowledge of, exactly what it is that the government is or is

not up to. The one thing that was demonstrated this morning is that the government certainly does not know what it is up to. We are wading out to sea in respect of the financial affairs of the Northern Territory. The government is drowning but appears to be living in some fantasy world of its own construction. On Territory Extra this morning, the Chief Minister had the gall to deny that there was a financial disaster in the Northern Territory. In response to a direct question, however, he was unable to provide any financial information because 'the government still is not in possession of it'. What a nonsensical performance that was. However, it was pretty consistent with the performance of the rest of his frontbench.

Mr Speaker, the Hansard of this Legislative Assembly reveals a very sorry story indeed in terms of the sheer incompetence of this government. We remember the history of the government's involvement in the casinos and it is all contained in the public record. The former Chief Minister categorically stated on many occasions, both inside and outside this Assembly: 'The government will not put one penny of government money into the casinos'. That was only a year ago but it seems like forever ago. The current Chief Minister said: 'There is no government money involved in the purchase'. The public record of the Legislative Assembly reveals a very sorry saga of lies, lies and more lies from start to finish. We still have not finished with the lying yet.

I said in the Assembly yesterday, and it bears saying again, that, in almost the first press statement he made after coming to office as Chief Minister, the current Chief Minister said to the people of the Northern Territory: 'No budget funds have been diverted from the Northern Territory's Treasury to pay for the casinos'. There was an admission in the Legislative Assembly that, as Treasurer, he had personally ordered that very thing to be done 2 weeks before he issued that press statement. The final revelation was that $21m of bridging finance, in fact, had been removed by the Treasurer tickling the till, putting his fingers into the money that he is responsible for on behalf of the people who put him where he is. Some of that money stuck because we ended up handing over a $2.5m gift, paying the interest on a $2m loan, waiving taxes and stamp duty and paying for consultancy costs. The list is endless. They call themselves financial managers. Today, we find that the standards of the casinos have been lowered.

It is with some interest that I ask the following question, and people should be told about it. What about the performance of Federal Hotels which this government kicked out of the Northern Territory? It is the oldest hotel chain in Australia. It celebrated its 100th year of operations in Australia this year.

Mr Perron: Did you get an invite to the celebrations?

Mr B. COLLINS: The Minister for Mines and Energy interjects once again. He was only too glad to tell us what wonderful people they were when the casino deal was first announced. He does not like swallowing his words.

On its 100th anniversary, it received congratulations from the Premier of Tasmania, a Liberal colleague of the former Treasurer. He talks about the need to compulsorily acquire $50m worth of private property and to kick this operation out of the Northern Territory and to replace it with the so-called high-roller operators who will refurbish the casino. We have already directly lost in gaming taxes alone more than that refurbishment would have cost. When you stick on top of that the $2.5m, the exemption from stamp duty and the

complete lack of gaming taxes, it is amazing. We heard the budget estimates for the next financial year. A grand total of $44 000 is expected to be realised in the next 12 months from both casino operators. Federal Hotels paid $3m in gaming taxes. Let us have a look at how badly it is doing everywhere else. I quote the message of congratulations to Federal Hotels from the Premier of Tasmania:

> 'As the Federal Hotels group celebrates its 100th birthday, it can look back on a century of achievement and leadership in the hotel industry in Australia. Federal is Australia's oldest hotel chain and its reputation for innovation and quality is a byword in the industry. While Melbourne is the birth place of the Federal chain, its strongest links have been forged in Tasmania. Federal has been involved in this state since 1956 and its success in Tasmania has set new standards for the tourism and travel industry throughout Australia. It was in 1973 that Federal Hotels took a step which placed it well ahead of its competitors. That was the year when the Wrestpoint Hotel Casino was opened in Hobart by the Federal group. That soaring tower has become a landmark which is recognised throughout Australia. Federal Hotels in Tasmania took a gamble and that gamble paid off. The success of the Wrestpoint Casino was such that Federal Hotels established a second casino at Launceston in 1982.
>
> The important role played by the Federal Hotels in this state was recognised last year when the Managing Director of the Federal Hotels group, Mr John Haddad, was named as the major individual contributor to the Tasmanian tourist industry. That award recognised the high standard, innovation and unique contribution made by Federal Hotels to the industry, not just in Tasmania but throughout Australia. My congratulations to Federal Hotels on the past 100 years. May the next century be just as successful.
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> Robin Gray, Premier'.

Mr Speaker, we also know that John Haddad has just been appointed as Chairman of the Australian Tourist Commission. Interestingly enough, just to show the bipartisan nature of statements made about Federal Hotels' operations, Federal Hotels this year was nominated by the Victorian government for owning and operating 'the most outstanding luxury accommodation hotel' in Victoria for 1985 - the Menzies Hotel in Melbourne. That is the company that this government kicked out to put us in the mess that we are currently in. We exchanged that competent group of managers, who were happily paying us very large sums in gaming taxes, for the mess that we are in at the moment. Talk about competent government!

Myilly Point deserves a mention in this debate. We have not had the time in the Legislative Assembly to raise it. We have had government feasibility studies and the Everingham proposal on high-rise office buildings, apartments, condominiums, marinas and a casino. The current Chief Minister publicly ridiculed the proposal. That is ancient history now. In fact, it is not ancient history; it is very modern history indeed. That is the amazing thing about it. Have a look at the Territory Digest of January 1985 produced under the inspiring new-age leadership of the Chief Minister. In fact, he gives us that message in this digest. That digest told us that Yulara was a hit. That

was 5 months ago under the leadership of the present Chief Minister. He would have us believe that it all fell apart in the last month.

Mr Speaker, we have a problem with Myilly Point. I will read from the casino agreement:

> 'The operators, Aspinalls and Greate Bay, each acknowledge that the tourist resort complex of which the new casino will form part is to be developed in accordance with the terms of the Heads of Agreement referred to in clause 2(1)(c). In the event a contract for such development is not executed within 5 years from the operative date, which contract must provide for the expeditious development of the new casino, the operators, Aspinalls and Greate Bay, upon 12 months notice, may terminate this agreement pursuant to the provisions thereof and with forgiveness of any and all amounts which may be then due to the Northern Territory Development Corporation'.

That is the barrel over which we have been put and I have referred to it again and again. We are committed to build a new casino on Myilly Point in the next 5 years otherwise the current operators of the casino, which is falling to pieces and for which we are already saddled with debts, are entitled legally to walk out, take their money with them and leave the bill behind for us to pay. That is not their fault. Good luck to them for being able to negotiate the agreement. It is this government's fault that we are now in this mess.

Given the current level of contingent liabilities and the panic-stricken statements that have been issued by the Chief Minister and the Director of the Northern Territory Development Corporation that the Northern Territory government will no longer underwrite any new major projects, and given that we have had the Chief Minister announce in the Legislative Assembly that the Sheraton Hotel in Alice Springs will lose money before it even opens its doors, one would have to say reasonably that there would be some doubt about seeing a 600-room hotel casino built on Myilly Point in the foreseeable future. That will hang over our heads every year between now and when building does commence.

I turn to central Australia and Yulara. All we were given in the Legislative Assembly was a raft of old reports going back to 1982, all of which I had seen before. We saw nothing that the government has received in the last 2 years. The Chief Minister would like everybody in the Northern Territory to believe the old 3-card trick; it is an amazing proposition. He says we are in this mess and the $27m we are ferrying to Yulara this year has to come out of education, health and every other item in the government's budget because the federal government did not build the Darwin Airport. What a load of nonsense!

Recently, the manager of JAL Airlines was interviewed on Territory Extra. He was embarrassed because he was asked a question that put him at odds with the Chief Minister on the actual impact of the current terminal on decisions taken by major airlines as to whether they would bring tourists here. I remember what he said only too clearly: 'Of course we would like a new terminal in Darwin. Everybody would. We would like a new terminal everywhere we go around the world. But, of course, the actual condition and quality of the terminal is not a major factor in determining whether we use this as a destination'. The major factors, of course, are the quality of the hotels, the attractions, the frequency of flights etc. Mr Speaker, of course a new

terminal should be built. But what nonsense it is even to attempt to suggest that we are in this mess because the work did not commence.

We had the absurd statement by the Chief Minister that the Sheraton Hotel project in Alice Springs has fallen apart in the last month. We are in the crazy position of having a statement in the Hansard that the Sheraton is a money-losing proposition before it has even been opened! This is because Sheraton revised its budget last month, to quote the Chief Minister, 'based on the Yulara experience'. Who is the boss of the Yulara Development Corporation? It is Otto Alder of the Northern Territory's Treasury. I am not casting any aspersions on Mr Alder; I have no doubt that he provided the government with advice and he cannot help it if it is ignored. The government simply cannot put this crazy proposition: 'Sheraton prepared a new budget last month. Sorry folks, instead of getting all our money back within 8 years, we are now up for at least $26m out of our budget for the next 8 budgets'. All that results from the fact that, last month, Sheraton prepared a new budget!

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory government has one of its own representatives as the head of the organisation that runs Yulara. Advice must have been given to the government over the whole period of Yulara's operation that things were going bad. The Chief Minister would have us believe - read his statement if you doubt that that is what he is saying - that, because of the new budget brought down by Sheraton in Alice Springs last month, everything has collapsed overnight. Nonsense! In that statement, he blamed the former Chief Minister by condemning him with faint praise, the airlines, the federal government and the tourists themselves. He blamed everyone except himself and his own government. I would like to know the answer to one question that the proposed committee could get in 5 minutes flat. When did the government first receive information, through the chairman of the Yulara Development Corporation, that things were going wrong?

I know the Chief Minister will support this motion because he has now said twice in the Legislative Assembly that he is a man who likes to put all his cards on the table. The table he can put them on is the one this committee sits behind at its first meeting. The government announced that the Sheraton Hotel is not viable. We have heard about a company that will take it over. We have absolutely no information on this company, despite the fact that the Chief Minister himself said that this company is the key to the government's rescue operation. He cannot have it both ways. He said to Territorians this morning, in here and on Territory Extra: 'You can have confidence in me. We are on top of this situation'. The key to the government's rescue operation is a company which the Chief Minister admitted in the Assembly this morning does not exist. Tomorrow, there will be 10 working days left for it to get its act together. On its last sitting day, he cannot give the Assembly any details of the company's composition, its shareholding, its directors or how it will raise its money. After the 3 attempts were made to obtain an answer, he finally said that he cannot talk about it because it is not there. That is the vehicle on which we are to ride into a new era of financial security.

What is his solution on how this company will obtain the money? That is in his speech too: 'One of the options we have to consider is that we use Treasury short-term cash balances'. There is a bit of a problem at the moment. The Chief Minister took his wheelbarrow down to the Treasury only a few months ago and filled it up with $21m for Henry and Walker. If he wants to do the same for Sitzler Bros, so that it can be paid $35m on 12 September - as it expects to be because it has built the hotel - he will have a bit of trouble. Since then, the wheel has fallen off the wheelbarrow.

The Chief Minister has done many stupid things politically since becoming Chief Minister but, if he really does take $35m out of the Northern Territory's Treasury, as he suggests he might have to, it will be the most stupid thing he has ever done.

Mr Speaker, all of the information is missing on the key component in the government's rescue program. How can the Chief Minister have the hide to expect anyone, of whatever political persuasion, to have the slightest confidence in him when he is telling us on the one hand that he is laying all his cards on the table and, on the other, deliberately withholding vital information about the financial mess that we are in? He proposes that we will rescue ourselves by virtue of this company and then refuses to tell us anything about it apart from the fact that it does not exist. He will give us no confirmation that he will not rob Northern Territory taxpayers' money to bail the Northern Territory government out of the mess that it is in. It is just not good enough. The proceedings during this sittings alone would justify beyond any doubt the need for the establishment of this committee. I predict that, in 2 working days of this committee's operations, having the powers that it would have to gain the evidence that it needs, we would be in a position to tell the Northern Territory people for the very first time the truth about our financial position.

Mr Speaker, in the absence of any government information, I will paint the scenario that we believe may become the reality. What seems to be a very real prospect is that the Territory Property Trust will split its assets into 2 parts: the Darwin casino and the Alice Springs casino. We have information that indicates that, in Darwin, the government has looked at the prospects of Pratts operating a casino facility of some sort at the Beaufort Hotel. We had a public denial of that from the Chief Minister where he rubbished opposition claims that there would be gaming rooms at the Beaufort Hotel. I would like to read out the basis of that opposition claim. I refer to a telex from the casino principals to the Northern Territory Development Corporation, dated 15 May 1985. It is to Ray McHenry from Mr P. Franklin:

'Dear Ray,

Your telex of 10 May regarding the facility at the Beaufort Hotel was discussed at the meeting of Aspinalls and Greate Bay in Atlantic City on 11 May this year. We would only wish to proceed with this casino venture if your government were completely comfortable with it and, of course, we think that the 6 points that you emphasise are reasonable. We will be pleased to progress the proposal for a casino at the Beaufort at our meeting on 21 May'.

I do not propose to read the rest of it because it is not relevant. That is a telex, dated May this year, proposing firmly that there will be a casino facility at the Beaufort Hotel. In July this year, that was flatly denied. I want to stress that the telex is to the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Is the Chief Minister now going to tell me that that is not an arm of the government? The facts are that it was considered by the government!

There is insufficient time in this debate to cover once again the numerous issues that need to be covered. One of the things that I would like to do in conclusion is to have a look at some of the matters on which we require answers. We are in the dying moments of the last day of this sittings and we have failed to obtain answers. We give the Chief Minister another opportunity during this debate to supply us with the information.

Is the Alice Springs casino to be sold? We know that, in the current climate, this will cause a drastic and radical rearrangement of the casino agreement. Will that casino be linked financially with the Alice Springs Sheraton? Will that combination be linked with the Territory Property Trust as it currently exists or with the shareholders of the trust? Has there ever been any correspondence with Pratts from the Northern Territory Development Corporation about a casino facility at the Beaufort Hotel? Is there any intention to link the Darwin Sheraton with the Darwin casino? Can the Chief Minister inform the Assembly of the government's involvement in the Beaufort by way of guarantees, indemnities, variable lease arrangements, contribution agreements and other similar arrangements? Will he inform the Assembly of the reasons given by both Aspinalls and Greate Bay for their simultaneous decision not to purchase those shares held by the nominee company of the NTDC? Will the Northern Territory government use $35m of public money to provide bridging finance as an interim arrangement while it puts together loans that will be then guaranteed by the Northern Territory government? Will the minister responsible for the Northern Territory Development Corporation inform the Assembly of any offered or actual guarantees or indemnities or variable lease arrangements or contribution agreements or other agreements that this government has given to any group in relation to the Myilly Point development?

There is one thing I would like to say in closing. Correspondence has been received from the Chief Minister confirming that the low-cost hostel accommodation on Myilly Point will be closed down in October this year. It is currently running at 100% occupancy rate. The alternative in Mitchell Street, where people are supposed to go, is currently running at 85% occupancy rate. It is still proposing to shut it down in October. Can the Chief Minister give me a valid reason in the current circumstances why that should happen? That is one decision at least that the government can and should reverse immediately because of the lack of low-cost accommodation in Darwin. I would like some answers to those questions.

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 6
Mr D.W. Collins	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr B. Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Firmin	Mr Leo
Mr Harris	Mr Smith
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mrs Padgham-Purich	
Mr Perron	
Mr Setter	
Mr Tuxworth	
Mr Vale	

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Select Committee of Inquiry on NT Government's
Contingent and Actual Liability

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the continuation of the debate on the select committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do this in order to give the Chief Minister the opportunity of demonstrating to this Assembly that he is not a liar. I inform the Chief Minister that, unless he places his cards on the table, he stands as a liar.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: He is a liar!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw that most unparliamentary remark.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not! It is our day!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would again ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I refuse!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition leaves me no choice. I name the honourable member for Arafura.

Mr Tuxworth: That is exactly what he wanted you to do, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr B. COLLINS: You do not leave us with very much option. Finish the debate.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, obviously, you do not have the support of the government. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition will resume his chair. I have named him.

Mr B. COLLINS: I do not have to leave. I have not been suspended.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have named the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr B. COLLINS: The government does not want to do anything about it.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, let there be no doubt about the government's confidence in your decision and its propriety. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the honourable Leader of the Opposition be suspended from the service of the Assembly.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 6
Mr D.W. Collins	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr B. Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Firmin	Mr Leo
Mr Harris	Mr Smith
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mrs Padgham-Purich	
Mr Perron	
Mr Setter	
Mr Tuxworth	
Mr Vale	

Motion agreed to; Leader of the Opposition suspended.

PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 142)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The effect of this amendment would be to remove completely section 16A of the Public Service Act which was inserted by this Assembly at its last sittings in circumstances identical to the debacle we experienced here this afternoon. On that occasion, the government absolutely disgraced itself by processing through all stages a very controversial piece of legislation which we subsequently proved to be ill-thought-out. The government itself had to move significant amendments to it within one hour and yesterday it moved further significant amendments to try to redress the damage that it has done to its own credibility and to morale in the public service.

To refresh your memory, Mr Speaker, that controversial section 16A gives the minister the power to direct an employee to take any action or step that the Public Service Commissioner may take by virtue of his powers under subsections 14(2) and 14(3). Last night, for the first time, we heard a clear statement of his reasons for taking that action. His reasons were that responsibility for the function of internal audit, under section 14(2), and for anti-discrimination, under section 14(3), had been taken out of the Public Service Commissioner's office and placed in the Department of the Chief Minister. For that reason, he felt that it was appropriate that the responsible person be somebody other than the Public Service Commissioner. We completely and utterly reject that decision taken by the government. I would like to read out section 14 which relates to the duties of the Public Service Commissioner:

> '(1) In addition to such other duties as are by this ordinance imposed on the commissioner, the commissioner shall take all necessary steps to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service.

(2) The commissioner shall take such action as he thinks necessary to ensure that all transactions by each department and prescribed authority involving public moneys are accountably made within the budget approved for the department or prescribed authority by the Legislative Assembly out of moneys appropriated or out of moneys that the Legislative Assembly estimates will be appropriated for the purposes of the government of the Territory.

(3) The commissioner shall take steps and may, by general orders, give directions to chief executive officers and prescribed authorities for that purpose, to ensure that there is no discrimination in employment in the public service of any person on the ground of that person's race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, creed, sex, marital status, political belief or security record, except where reasonable or justifiably required for the effective performance of the work to be undertaken in that employment'.

Section 16A, approved by this Assembly despite the opposition's objections, proposed to take 2 of those 3 duties away from the Public Service Commissioner and give them to somebody else outside the Public Service Commissioner's Office. The opposition believes there are 2 essential problems with this. One is related to the possible confusion that will arise between the powers of the commissioner and the powers of the person who is appointed by the minister under section 16A. Quite clearly, subsection 14(1) gives the commissioner a general power to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service. We have the potential situation where both the Public Service Commissioner and the person appointed by the minister under section 16A could have powers over subsections 14(2) and 14(3). That is a situation which has a number of potential difficulties and the opposition is not prepared to accept it.

The second major concern is that, without power over internal audit and anti-discrimination in employment, the commissioner cannot promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service as he is required to do under subsection 14(1). By taking away his powers under subsections 14(2) and 14(3), 2 of the essential tools he needs for the promotion of the effectiveness of the public service have been removed from him. In other words, section 16A offers the potential for the Public Service Commissioner to be left in a powerless situation. Real decisions about the operation and conduct of the public service will be made by someone else outside the Public Service Commissioner's Office.

Related to that is the fact that a person appointed by the minister can exercise the powers of the minister in relation to the functions in subsections 14(2) and 14(3). This means that the head of the Department of the Chief Minister, which by its nature and close daily contact with the position of Chief Minister is a more political position than others - and rightly so - will have quite extensive powers under subsections 14(2) and 14(3). The fact is that a public service head who, by his very nature, is in a highly political position, will have extensive powers under subsections 14(2) and 14(3) of the Public Service Act. That will create a tendency for the increased politicisation of the public service and public service procedures.

As well as that, within the broad confines of the powers in subsections 14(2) and 14(3), the opposition believes that the minister now has the legislative authority to give a direction that could refer to any personal

or management-related functions of the service. Those powers extend to matters such as the filling of vacancies, recruitment, promotion, separation and part-time work. The opposition believes that they are not appropriate powers for any minister of the Crown to have.

Mr Speaker, this amendment is proposed in order to remove the possibility of politicisation of the public service and to restore to the Public Service Commissioner his ability to have effective control over the operations of the public service.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) (COSTS IN PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE APPEAL TRIBUNAL) BILL (Serial 94)

Continued from 17 April 1985.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, responding to the proposition put by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in relation to this bill, there is no difficulty from the government's point of view concerning the intention of the opposition in this matter. There is one small issue that I would like to raise. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is trying to enact something that ought to be put into practice as soon as possible. I advise the Assembly that the member's intention is currently being achieved in another way through a set of judges' rules. The new rules that the judges are drawing up will embrace other matters that are important in relation to this issue.

I have discussed the matter with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We will not oppose the amendment but we will be moving a further amendment to invite defeat of clause 3 and add a further amendment at the end of clause 4 which would enable the effective words in the member's amendment to be removed as soon as the judges' rules are put in place. He has indicated his acceptance of that.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3:

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

As I mentioned, this results from consultation with the opposition.

Clause 3 negatived.

Clause 4:

Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 41.2.

This amendment will enable the proposal by the opposition to lapse as soon as the judges' rules covering these issues are put into place.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 85)

Continued from 17 April 1985.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Millner's bill is not dissimilar to the Liquor Amendment Bill introduced in 1984 by the honourable member for Stuart. The key aspect of each bill is the reversal of the automatic forfeiture provisions in section 96 of the Liquor Act. Prior to the amendment of section 96, the courts had discretion as to whether property seized in connection with an offence under the restricted area provisions of the Liquor Act should be forfeited. Like the amendment proposed by the member for Stuart, the current amendment proposed by the honourable member for Millner proposes to return discretion to the courts.

In 1984, when speaking to the bill proposed by the member for Stuart, I said the government had given very serious consideration to the suggested amendment and, in fact, recognised its good intentions. At that time, I said that I was quite sure that all honourable members recognised and deplored the extremely damaging effect which the abuse of alcohol had and still has on some Aboriginal communities. It is not necessary to restate the dreadful list of alcohol-related effects on Aboriginal health, education, welfare and general community harmony. It is necessary, however, to repeat 2 points made during the debate in 1984.

The first point is that the government believes the proposals will weaken the enforcement power of the restricted area legislation and that this is not the wish of most people who live in Aboriginal communities. During the last debate, I said the government does not accept that there is a general feeling in Aboriginal communities against the forfeiture provisions. Indeed, I said that all the indications drawn from the Chairman of the Liquor Commission were to the contrary. In the intervening period, nothing has happened which has caused a change in this opinion. Not one representation has been received by the Liquor Commission from an Aboriginal community asking for a change. On the contrary, the chairman continues to receive requests from Aboriginal people for even more strict enforcement of the dry area provisions. At the very least, the legislation should not be changed unless it is clear that the general opinion in Aboriginal communities is in favour of that change. At this time, there is no indication that the advocates for change are persons other than those most likely to lose their cars.

The second point made in 1984 was that the original amendment was made because the courts would not use their powers. There are strong indications that the forfeiture provisions are an effective enforcement measure but, if the discretion were returned to the courts, it is probable that relatively few vehicles would be forfeited. There are definite indications from police and health authorities that strict enforcement of a dry area lessens the degree of alcohol-related illness, injury and community disturbance.

Before the act was changed, magistrates had been approached by Aboriginal communities with requests for increases in court penalties. Giving discretion back to the courts would almost certainly result in a weakened enforcement of

the restricted area provisions of the Liquor Act. Some magistrates even now are reluctant to use their powers of enforcement. Some have been refusing to convict persons they have found to be guilty in order to protect the vehicle in which the alcohol was found. In a recent case, an Aboriginal man used his own car to transport alcohol into his own community which was a restricted area. The magistrate found the offence proved but also made the statement: 'I'm not going to convict you because, if I do, that car goes'.

I turn now to allegations that injustice either does or could arise from the automatic forfeiture provisions of the act. In making a decision in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, Mr Justice Nader said the act had 'the potential to become an instrument for quite a grotesque injustice'. Federal Court of Appeal judges concurred and recommended the urgent attention of the legislature. The difficulty with these comments is that the learned judges were not deciding on the general operation of the act. They had no information to support such comments. They were required only to make a decision on a very narrow point of law, turning upon the chairman's power to dispose of the forfeited vehicles. As a matter of observable practice, gross injustice is not occurring. It could only occur if the Chairman of the Liquor Commission completely ignored the intentions of the legislature so clearly set out in the second-reading speech when the amendments were proposed. At that time, the then minister, Ian Tuxworth, said:

> 'Mr Chairman, for the benefit of members, we are proposing that, if the person involved in the offence were convicted, there would be no discretion at all relating to the forfeiture of a vehicle. We are advocating that, where a vehicle has been confiscated which did not belong to the convicted person, and should rightly be returned to its owner, then the Chairman of the Liquor Commission should return that vehicle'.

It is interesting to note from the Liquor Commissioner's statistics that, for two-thirds of all forfeitures, no claim is made. Almost invariably, these were vehicles driven by the owner who was carrying liquor into a restricted area in which he lived. From the same statistics, approximately one-third of all claims are successful. In a recent Federal Court decision, doubt was cast on the ability of the chairman to dispose of the vehicle by giving that vehicle to its former owner. In effect, the judges said that section 101 did not allow such an action in that the section only provides for the disposal of government property according to the usual methods of disposal. The most usual method of disposing of government property is by public auction or tender. The judges recommended legislative change to correct this situation but, in practice, this is not necessary. The chairman can dispose of vehicles using prescribed administrative procedures dealing with the disposal of government property.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will now deal with the bill itself. In effect, clause 3 removes the offence of selling alcohol in a restricted area from the other offences set out in section 75. Clause 3 would increase the penalties for selling alcohol within a restricted area 5-fold. Currently, for a first offence under the Liquor Act, the penalty is $1000 or 6 months' imprisonment. For a second offence, the penalty is $200 or 12 months imprisonment. Clause 3 cannot be supported for several reasons. Firstly, by far the majority of offenders detected committing offences under section 75 are Aboriginal people who live in the restricted area in which the offence is detected. Secondly, in almost every case, the alcohol is not for sale but for the use of the offender and his friends. Thirdly, convictions are rare for selling liquor on

restricted areas. In most cases, the circumstances of the sale make proof very difficult to obtain. Fourthly, the penalties for selling alcohol in a restricted area are already quite high and it is unlikely that the courts would impose the current maximum, let alone a penalty 5 times higher than the current maximum.

The amendment proposed by clause 4 is unnecessary. It proposes a legislative amendment that is about to be handled administratively. The basic concept is good and, indeed, it has been the subject of consultation between police and the Liquor Commission for some time. Both authorities agree that a self-carbon book is the best method to overcome the problem. These books will be available soon to policemen stationed in restricted areas.

Clause 5, if enacted, would mean even a weaker enforcement than the old section 96 which gave discretion to the magistrates. Clause 5 not only would give discretion back to the courts but would also remove finally any possibility that a vehicle which is borrowed for the purpose of transporting alcohol could be forfeited. That not the wish of Aboriginal communities that have dry areas.

On the face of it, clause 6 is a reasonable amendment. In theory, there could be an injustice or an inconvenience arising from the fact that a policeman must, under section 97, deliver a thing under the Liquor Act to the chairman as soon as practicable. In such circumstances, the chairman then has no power to deal with that seized thing until the court has determined charges against the offender. In practice, however, such a circumstance is avoided by consultation between the police, the Liquor Commission and the owner of the vehicle. The policeman is able to use his discretion as to whether the vehicle is to be seized under the Liquor Act or simply used as an exhibit in the forthcoming hearing. Clause 6 cannot be supported in its present form.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government remains concerned at the serious problems caused by alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities. The government remains convinced that strong enforcement action is necessary to support Aboriginal communities in their efforts to deal with these problems. Unfortunately, the solution is not to be found in the amendments proposed by the member for Millner. These amendments simply back away from the real issues and so cannot be supported by the government. However, I will take this opportunity to announce the commissioning of a thorough review of the restricted area provisions in the Liquor Act.

After 3 years of restricted area of operation, the Liquor Commission conducted a comprehensive review of restricted areas. Now 3 years along the track, it is time to have another look at the total restricted area concept. I have asked for terms of reference to be drawn up to include a study of the effectiveness of dry areas, the effect of restricted areas on surrounding communities, the operation of the permit system and the operation of the enforcement provisions. This review will also identify the extent of community support for the restricted area concept. Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill is not supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is indeed a sad day. We have had the Supreme Court and the Federal Court of Appeal say that they thought there was potential for the law to become an instrument for quite grotesque injustice. The courts are saying that they would like to find some way around this so that a degree of justice can temper the law as it stands. However, the courts are constrained because the law is so clear. This is the case even

though it is at odds with the intention of the then Minister for Health, now the Chief Minister, as stated when he introduced the original amendment.

Before we go too much further, we should refer back to what the bill does because it is quite obvious that it was not understood by the Deputy Chief Minister. When he introduced this bill, the member for Millner said that it has 2 main purposes. The first is to split the offence of bringing liquor into restricted areas so that higher penalties can be imposed on those dealing in liquor. Bringing liquor into a restricted area for personal consumption would be the same. Bringing in liquor for sale would have a substantially increased penalty. The grog runner, who has been described as the merchant of death, is the main target of this legislation, not the person bringing in alcohol for personal consumption. I know of one case where a hot can of beer had rolled under the seat of a person's car. The vehicle was forfeited. When that sort of thing happens, we have grotesque injustice. The second major aspect deals with the issue of forfeiture of motor vehicles used to transport liquor into restricted areas. Currently, a vehicle seized in connection with an offence is forfeited automatically to the Crown. We are attempting to bring some rationality back into that situation so there remains an option for the courts to seize the vehicle, but it would not be mandatory.

Clause 5 gives the court a discretion on forfeiture in 2 circumstances: firstly, where the owner is the person convicted or, secondly, where someone other than the owner is convicted but the court is satisfied that the owner supplied the vehicle. That is a sufficiently wide interpretation of the law to ensure that the guilty will be punished. However, it is also the duty of this legislature to ensure that the innocent are protected. As was stated in my colleague's speech, this latter provision will enable the court to look at the owner's involvement and determine whether he or she had consented, passively or otherwise, to the use of the vehicle. It would empower the court to ensure that the innocent are not penalised and that vehicles are restored to their owners in appropriate cases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, clause 6 makes provision for the vehicle to be released pending trial where the owner has not been charged and the court is satisfied that the vehicle will be available at the time of the trial. I do not see how anyone can object to that. Let me go over the situation again. We have a situation where the owner was not even in the vehicle. Why should the owner lose his vehicle? Even if he does get it back, why should he lose the use of that vehicle for months? I can also tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the chances of getting back a vehicle are fairly remote. I know of one particular case where the owner-driver of the vehicle was acquitted of the charge of bringing liquor into a dry area. However, the person who was in the car with the owner-driver absconded on bail. That person was convicted ex parte but the owner-driver lost the vehicle even though he was found to be innocent. He still has not got it back. How can we say that that is anything but grotesque injustice? Who can put any other interpretation on it? This bill is making us a laughing stock around Australia. It is obvious that it is only the bloody-mindedness of the government which is stopping it from being amended.

Mr Tuxworth: It is helping a lot of people too. Why don't you think of your electorate?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am thinking of my electorate. I will refer in a moment to a number of communities and give some examples of their ideas on this particular bill. I put it to you that it would be rather ridiculous of me to be making this speech if it were against the will of my electorate. Don't give me any more of that rubbish.

Mr Tuxworth: You are capable of anything.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address his comments through the chair.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that my comments were addressed through you to those people who have the disgustingly bad manners to interject.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can refer you to an article in The Age of 28 August. The paper has picked up this particular law in the Northern Territory and it comments that it is quite obvious that grotesque injustice can take place under the act as it stands.

I want to refer to statements by Mr Justice Nader in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and by Judges Toohey, McGregor and Morling in the Federal Court of Appeal. We are talking about eminent jurists, Mr Deputy Speaker. They said:

> 'The consequences of amendments to the Northern Territory Liquor Act of December 1982 have the potential to become an instrument for quite grotesque injustice, and it is plain that the act requires the urgent attention of the legislature if situations are to be avoided in which gross injustice may be caused to innocent parties'.

If we do not amend this act along the lines the opposition is proposing or at least come up with some alternative amendments which will remove these gross injustices, this Assembly stands condemned. We have been given a clear indication by the Federal Court of Appeal that this matter requires the urgent attention of this Assembly. I find it incomprehensible that the government says that it will not take any notice of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, by virtue of section 96, the seized vehicle is automatically forfeited to the Northern Territory government on the conviction of a person for an offence in connection with which it was seized. The draconian section 96 was introduced to the act on 14 December 1982. Prior to that date, the magistrate had a discretion as to whether or not to forfeit the vehicle. We are talking about going back to that situation. I would like to point out to honourable members that some quite valuable vehicles have been lost. I know of some that have been worth over $10 000 each at the time that they were sold. In the southern region alone, I think a total of 149 have been forfeited to date. At an average of $7000 or $8000 each, $1m has been forfeited.

I put it to the minister that the government is not even getting good value for these vehicles. I have seen some of them. They were in reasonable condition but they were sold at auction at a very low price. In the last debate on this matter, the Deputy Chief Minister stated that people could buy them back. The actual case is that they are being purchased by secondhand dealers, speedway drivers etc. They are not returning to the Aboriginal communities. There is no provision in the Liquor Act for an owner of a vehicle to apply for the return of his forfeited vehicle. That is the sad truth.

I heard the ribaldry by which this amendment is being treated by the government. I would like it for a second to dwell on the case of Mr Loomey Jagamarra who is one of the more average Aboriginal citizens of the

Northern Territory. He was born west of Yuendumu and, as a young man, he came to live in Yuendumu. He has lived there for quite a number of years. Some years ago, he and his wife were both injured in a vehicle accident. In the intervening period, his family had been very keen to start up an outstation west of Yuendumu. One of the great constraints upon them was the fact they did not have a vehicle. After a delay of about 5 or 6 years, both Loomey and his wife received a payout on third-party insurance because Loomey was permanently crippled and his wife had suffered quite severe injuries. From memory, their combined payout was in the vicinity of $12 500. They decided that that was their chance. They bought a quite good secondhand vehicle for about $12 000 and they used it as a basis for setting up their outstation. They had a vehicle with which to transport water because there was no water in the outstation. They could also drive to the store which is an essential element of living on an outstation in central Australia.

They had the vehicle for about 3 months when a group of youths, whom I would describe as young hoons, knowing full well that Mr Jagamarra had no way of defending himself, took that vehicle off him. They drove it to town in spite of all his protestations because he did not trust them not to break the licensing laws. That is what they did. Not a lot of grog was involved, but one can will suffice. They were picked up, charged and duly convicted. Mr Jagamarra really had only one chance in all his life and that came to him as a just recompense for an accident suffered by him. He devoted to a community purpose the money that he received to compensate him for the loss of his ability to walk and for his wife's injuries. It is all very well for the Deputy Chief Minister to say that, in certain cases, vehicles will be returned. We have tried again and again to have his vehicle returned and we have been refused. I call that a grotesque injustice.

His Honour Mr Justice Nader made a decision in October 1984 in a case involving the Central Land Council. In that case, the owner of the property forfeited obviously had no connection whatsoever with what one of his staff members had done. I recall that the person responsible was not in Alice Springs at the time. However, when the chairman, the person who is in a legal sense the head of the land council, attempted to make a case to have the property returned, it was found by the courts that, under current legislation, the chairman has no standing to make a claim. Surely there should be a provision which will enable somebody who was not the driver of the vehicle and who had nothing to do with the fact that somebody took the vehicle to be able to make a claim. They talk about how few claims there have been. The fact is that people have no standing to make a claim.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Tuxworth, the then Minister for Health, indicated in the debate when he introduced the original bill that it would enable the prompt return of such a vehicle to the owner who was not involved in the offence. He further said: 'Where a vehicle has been confiscated which does not belong to the convicted person and it should rightfully be returned to its owner, then the Chairman of the Liquor Commission should return that vehicle'. In our view, that is what the amendment says. We are trying to put into law what the minister thought it did in the first place. It is pretty hard when you introduce a bill to do what the government wanted to do in the first place and it turns around and says that it will not support it.

Mr Hanrahan: We said we are having a review.

Mr EDE: That is something that I have heard before. The first time that this was raised in the Assembly that is exactly what I heard from the now

Minister for Industry and Small Business who was then the Minister for Health. At that stage, he said: 'We are having a review'.

Mr Perron: We are.

Mr EDE: For 12 months now, people have had to suffer under this legislation yet the indication is that we will continue to have a review. Is this the same review that was started 12 months ago or are we going to have another one?

Mr Perron: They do not have to have dry areas.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I refuse to be drawn by the half-smart, cynical comments of the Minister for Mines and Energy. We know his attitude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the point was raised that no communities have agreed to these amendments. I did not get these by going around individually to communities and asking them. I sent out letters asking: 'What do you think?' I have one reply here: 'Yes, I agree that the person who don't own the vehicle carting grog should be taken jail, but the owner of the vehicle should only get his car back. But the person who drove that car or vehicle should fine or taken to jail'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope you will forgive some of the broken English. These things come straight from the heart of people who are not very literate.

Here is another: 'We all agree with your attempts to change the Liquor Act and protect the innocent and heavily punish the guilty grog runners'. Here is one from Papunya: 'That is a very good amendment, Brian'. There is one from Lajamanu with pages of signatures: 'Yes, we fully support your ideas on this. It is wrong when they lose cars because of other people'. Another: 'The person carting grog gets fined $250 but the owner who knew nothing about it don't get fined. Let the magistrate give vehicles back to the owner'. Another: 'This is a good idea'. Here is one from a Top End community: 'We strongly agree that innocent people have been hurt by authorities when lending their vehicles to family. Also, we found that lots of now old people don't understand the law'. The people at Santa Teresa agreed with the proposed amendments. They especially did not want innocent people to lose their vehicles. Here is one from Numbulwar: 'On behalf of the Numbulwar Council, the undersigned wish you to know that you have our community support and we wish you success in your amendment'. There is a letter from a senior field officer in the Northern Land Council who has been travelling around the Katherine area. The Yuendumu Community Council said: 'We look forward with interest of successful pleading in this instance'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us have no more nonsense that there is no support in the communities for this. I am constantly bombarded with it as I travel around my electorate. I am sure that there would be virtually no community, in my electorate anyway, that would not agree with this. I do not have the resources to travel around the whole Territory. The government has those resources and has been on notice that this was a problem ever since it was first introduced and it continues to say that, at some stage, it will undertake a review.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, I advise again that the number of vehicles that have been seized in the southern region alone since 1 January 1985 is 27.

Mr Perron: It has not been much of a deterrent.

Mr EDE: That is a very good point, Mr Deputy Speaker, because figures do show that it is not a deterrent. It is not a deterrent because any law which grotesquely hurts the very people it is trying to protect is a law which gains the people's contempt. When a law gains the people's contempt, they do not see it as a deterrent but as an imposition. The imposition is hurting the very people that it is designed to protect. It is hurting the innocent and it is time that this legislature acknowledged that. It does not do what the government was attempting to do as was indicated in the now Chief Minister's original second-reading speech. It should be amended to do what it was supposed to do.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart's speech has not altered my opinion one iota. I can accept the fact that the legislation may create some hardships in certain parts of the community. The member for Stuart says that people have suffered under this legislation but many more people would suffer if it were weakened. As the member for Fannie Bay said, if those communities do not mind liquor in their communities, let them abolish the dry areas. The plain facts of the matter are that community after community support the vehicle seizure section and the dry areas.

The honourable member for Stuart made great play of a court decision and the court's criticism of the legislation. Let me make 2 things perfectly clear. The first is that we are the legislators. If we make draconian legislation, obviously we have to live with it and I am quite prepared to live with this legislation. Recently, I travelled around Aboriginal communities and I have had a completely different reaction from what the honourable member for Stuart has experienced. They are still totally in support of a vehicle seizure clause. Do you know why? Many of those communities do not have 1, 2 or 3 policemen; they have none at all and they are hours away from any police or legal support. They are concerned at the death, disruption and the disharmony that occurs and will continue to occur in these communities if liquor is able to be brought in freely. We are the legislators. If we made draconian legislation - this is draconian and I am the first to admit that it is - then we must stand by it.

Let me also make the point that courts, and indeed judges, have made mistakes in the past and will continue to do so. They are human like everyone else and will continue to make mistakes. I remind honourable members that, several weeks ago, a judge in the Northern Territory criticised the Catholic missions. I think the criticism was that they were havens for alcohol problems in the Northern Territory. Several days later a headline in The Australian read: 'Judge Apologises For Booze Slur on Church Missions for Blacks'.

Mr Bell: What total, absolute and culpable irrelevance, Roger.

Mr Coulter: 'Culpable irrelevance'. Now that's a beauty.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order! The interjections are becoming excessive.

Mr VALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the law of the land can only go so far in protecting the communities. It must assist the communities and then the communities themselves must become involved in enforcing that legislation. I know that, on a number of occasions, I have been told of a nod, nod, wink,

wink, borrow the vehicle and don't get caught and then that person will come screaming to the Liquor Commission and say he did not know about it. It is interesting to study the types of vehicles that have been seized in central Australia in recent years and where they have come from. They do not belong to private citizens. They are land council and legal aid vehicles. If the legal aid people and the land councils fire the employees involved, tap, tap, nod, nod, wink, wink, and they are back at work and the vehicles are impounded. The same applies with some of those communities. I accept that, in one of those instances cited by the member for Stuart, certain innocent people were hurt but it is also a fact of life that...

Mr Bell: Why don't you support the bill?

Mr VALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is also a fact of life that, if the member for MacDonnell's vehicle were stolen and used in a bank robbery, it would be impounded. He might not get it back for years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I had intended to be very brief. Any attempt to weaken this legislation will create utter havoc in the Aboriginal communities in central Australia. Whilst the member for Stuart and other members may have letters from some communities, I believe that a vast number of those isolated and small Aboriginal communities, with and without police reinforcements, still support the vehicle seizure clause. Let me quote from an article in the Centralian Advocate of 3 July 1985:

> 'Liquor Ban Cuts Death and Injury: SM praises Aboriginal communities. Alice Springs Magistrate, Mr Dennis Barrett, has commended Aboriginal settlements for trying to get something done about liquor problems. "Although complaints still come to magistrates, people living on these settlements can now get a peaceful night's sleep without being disturbed by drunken brawls and ravages through the settlements", Mr Barrett said. "Restricted liquor areas have greatly reduced the amount of traumatic injury and death". Mr Barrett was speaking in Alice Springs during a case in which he gaoled a man for selling liquor illegally to the Santa Teresa Mission'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I notice that one of the communities that did not submit a letter to the honourable member for Stuart was that of Willowra. The first case ever in central Australia involving grog running concerned Willowra. Stumpy Martin impounded the vehicle and then phoned the police at Ti Tree to come and get the men and the vehicle. He is still totally opposed to it, as are Ti Tree, New Camp, Alcoota, Utopia, Napperby and Mt Ellen outstation and so on. I could quote from 6 or 7 letters but, until someone can convince me that this legislation needs weakening, I will stand by what I said some years ago: this legislation is desired, sought and supported by a vast number of Aboriginals in central Australia.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot sit here and tolerate any suggestion from the member for Braitling or any government member that somehow we wish to encourage the consumption of alcohol in Aboriginal communities. They cannot suggest that, in some way, we want to weaken the very appropriate legislation of the restricted areas.

I heard the member for Sanderson interject and say: 'That is exactly what we want to do with this'. Of course, that is not true, Mr Deputy Speaker. In case I appear a little emotional about this, let me explain to honourable

members why I am so emotional. It is because I have known so many good friends of mine, Aboriginal people by and large, who have killed themselves with grog. Let me tell you about one young fellow who was in the first class of Aboriginal kids I ever taught in the Northern Territory. He was a bright young fellow, great footballer, great guitarist, happy, intelligent and articulate. Do you know where he is now, Mr Deputy Speaker? He has been lying in a coma for 6 months in Alice Springs Hospital. Nobody knows why although certainly it is alcohol-related. I will not go into all the details. I had never had the experience of going to see somebody in hospital under those circumstances, but I was so deeply depressed that, subsequently, I have been unable to visit him. He is only one example, Mr Deputy Speaker, and one that comes to my mind first. Without really trying, I can think of another 3 or 4 people who drank themselves to death before they were 40.

I remember getting up one morning when they were running grog from Glen Helen into Areyonga. I can remember sniffing the air and thinking: 'Goodness me, that is the sort of smell you get when you put a kangaroo or a rabbit on the flames of a fire - the smell of singed fur and flesh'. I looked around and saw that a bloke had had his face pushed in the fire. There had been dozens of flagons brought in the night before. Do not imagine that I have any desire other than to see the restricted area legislation work. I will not say any more about that. If the restricted area legislation is to work, it must be just.

My second point is that I would have thought that a few government members would have been concerned that more than 1 judge - and we had the idiot ravings from the member for Braitling that sometimes judges make mistakes - has commented on this. The judges have said that these sections require the attention of the legislature. When the judiciary comments on legislation in that way, I find it impossible to understand how that crowd opposite can sit and pay no attention to those comments. It is irresponsible. They stand up and talk proudly about constitutional development and statehood for the Northern Territory. They talk proudly about development and the way the Territory must go in years to come but they demonstrate no appreciation of their responsibilities as a legislature if they ignore those comments. I will tell you what is on their minds, Mr Deputy Speaker. They say: 'That is terrific. Bell and Ede have a problem. We can stand up and say that we are the ones who want the strong laws and they want to weaken them'. They simplify the issues beyond understanding.

I am pleased the Minister for Industry and Small Business, who is responsible for this act, has come back into the Assembly. Let me quote for him a letter that he read to the Assembly during the congruent debate last year. I will not read the whole letter. He read the letter on Tuesday 28 August. It is from Mr Gus Williams RIM who is the chairman of the Ntarria Council at Hermannsburg in my electorate. He began by quoting the letter and said:

> 'Mr Williams says in this letter: "We had drawn to our attention that there is the possibility of a move being put forward to soften the strict values which the Liquor Commission fought so hard to incorporate in the act"'.

I trust that, when the Minister for Industry and Small Business received that letter, he wrote back and said: 'The intention is not to weaken the law; it is to make it more just'. We want a strong law. That is why clause 3 puts in stronger penalties, particularly for selling liquor within a restricted area.

Let me tell you a story, Mr Deputy Speaker, in case you imagine that I am desperately keen to curry favour with my constituents by helping them to break the dry area laws. I received representations recently from 2 constituents. One of them said: 'We did not know that the dry area was there and my boyfriend drove the car into the dry area. It has been forfeited. What can I do about it? I was not in the car at the time'. That is a fairly difficult situation. I asked: 'How much grog was in the car?' She said: 'Oh, 6 cartons'. Do you know how much 6 cartons of flagons is, Mr Deputy Speaker? That is 36 flagons. That is 18 gallons of white wine. That is absolute chaos in glass. Mr Deputy Speaker, do not allow these people to convince you that we have any desire to weaken these particular laws in any way.

Let us be constructive about this because it needs a bipartisan approach. However, I will mention an electorate problem because I am lobbied by constituents, particularly in the Hermannsburg area, who tell me they have had trouble with this law and ask if I can help them. I also know the point of view expressed by Mr Gus Williams in that particular letter. He went on to say: 'If the confiscation of the vehicle is not used as a punishment, another provision must be substituted in its place, and be equally strong, to enable the community to live in relative peace and quiet in conditions in which everyone can benefit'. That is right, isn't it? I am pleased to see the Minister for Industry and Small Business nodding his head because that is what we should be working towards in a bipartisan spirit. I suspect that, in opposing this amendment for the second time, instead of going ahead with the review that was under way last time, the government believes that it will accrue some political advantage in Aboriginal communities by stamping around saying: 'The opposition wants to amend the law. We want the strong law but it wants to make it weaker. The Labor Party wants to ruin your communities by allowing a free flow of grog'.

Mr Dondas: That is nonsense.

Mr BELL: All right. It is 12 months and 1 day. The debate was on Tuesday 28 August, and I would like to know exactly what the minister has done in the intervening 12 months if it has been subject to review. I will repeat this because it needs to be said: if this legislature is criticised by the judiciary, we have to think about it. We are not seeking to make it a partisan issue necessarily but, by golly, the way the government is reacting at the moment, we do not have too much choice. We are trying to seek bipartisan support for a more just law, not a weaker law. I seriously doubt the government's motives in attacking this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in case you or anybody else is labouring under the illusion that I believe that there are no problems in sorting out whether an owner should have been aware that his vehicle had been used to break the dry area law, I can say without fear of contradiction that there are problems. I have seen the whole gamut of circumstances. It does not take the wisdom of Solomon to work out that the old people the member for Stuart was talking about have suffered a gross injustice. That is a clear case.

I am prepared to accept that the problem there is one of establishing intent. Consider the owner who says: 'My nephew took my car and went into Alice Springs. He came back with a car load of grog and the car was forfeited. You have to help me get it back'. The obvious question arises: 'Did you know that the nephew intended to bring grog back in it?' He says: 'No'. That is a real problem and, at the moment, it is a problem for the Liquor Commissioner. I know the sort of agonies the Liquor Commissioner goes

through in some of these cases. The point is that it should not be the Liquor Commissioner who deals with the matter but rather a court of the appropriate jurisdiction.

To return to the question of intent, if that same fellow comes to you in 6 months and says that his nephew has done the same thing again, you can quite reasonably assume that the uncle must have had a fair suspicion that the nephew was likely to bring grog back. I think that the law should reflect some of those subtleties. I think the law should be tough. The forfeiture provisions are good, tough provisions. I was going to say that it has been a deterrent but that has already been a subject for consideration by the people in my electorate. There are other obligations that make it difficult for them to say: 'No, you cannot have my car because I know you are going to carry grog in it'. There is no doubt in my mind that forfeiture per se is a suitable penalty but I do not believe that forfeiture should be such a black and white question. I do not believe the courts should be lenient but it should be the courts that determine such matters.

I mentioned the situation at Hermannsburg. The member for Stuart mentioned that he had received from Santa Teresa in my electorate comments about that particular law. Very interestingly, it is at Hermannsburg that many of these problems occur and that is because there is a police station there. It is interesting to note that, to my knowledge, there have been no alcohol-related homicides at Hermannsburg since the introduction of the restricted area. There certainly were before. It would be of great interest perhaps to obtain some statistics in that regard in case anybody is under any illusion about the impact of dry area legislation.

I should mention in passing that, to suggest that the situation is entirely free of violence, would be a serious exaggeration. Members will have heard on the news that there was a serious disturbance at Hermannsburg last week. A police constable, Graham Kelly, has been hospitalised. I visited him in hospital on Sunday and it is a matter of considerable concern to me that, for the second time in a space of about 12 months, he has been injured. I am quite happy to put it on the public record that those blokes put their bodies on the line at the point of crisis in order to police this legislation. They deserve every support.

I compare that situation at Hermannsburg with the situation at Santa Teresa where there is no permanent police presence. It is a matter of serious concern to me that, unlike Hermannsburg where there have been no alcohol-related homicides since the dry area legislation was introduced, Santa Teresa presents a rather different story. When visiting Santa Teresa several months ago, I was deeply upset to see so many people who were out of their heads. You get the feeling sometimes of a real derangement that is very difficult to describe. That was bad enough. What was even more a matter for concern was to see women and kids in groups in fear and dread of what is going on. I believe that serious consideration must be given to having a permanent police presence at Santa Teresa. I have written to the Chief Minister and I am deeply disappointed that he has not seen fit to put a permanent police presence at Santa Teresa. I hasten to add that there is already accommodation for police there and so no great capital expense would be involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would hate anybody on the government side to imagine that, because the opposition is sponsoring this bill, we want to weaken the restricted area provisions or to further expose Aboriginal people to the depredations of alcohol. That is the first point that I made. The second

point I made, which I want answered, is how can the government accept the sort of criticism this legislation has received from the judiciary and just laugh it off?

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the members for Stuart and MacDonnell spoke about the gross injustice that can arise as a result of the existing legislation. Indeed, the comments of Mr Justice Nader and the Federal Court need to be kept in mind when we are addressing the matter. We have kept this legislation on our books for years. I can remember the former member for Fannie Bay, Pam O'Neil, introducing a similar amendment years ago. In fact, I remember her objecting to these amendments when they were first introduced. We have kept on our books legislation that has been accurately described as unjust in a grotesque sense. That is a matter of real shame for the Northern Territory. It is all very well to say that the interpretation of the law will in some way be different to the letter of the law. That has not always been the case as has been amply demonstrated by both the members for Stuart and MacDonnell. When I hear people like the present member for Fannie Bay proposing that perhaps the solution would be to get rid of the restricted areas legislation, I am forced to wonder at the minds of some government members, that they would even contemplate visiting upon fellow human beings the absolute horrors that alcohol brings to those communities.

In my electorate, the owner of the local taxi company had his car impounded some years ago. He is no longer the taxi operator in Gove but the present operator faces similar dilemmas almost daily. Although he can instruct drivers not to do things, inevitably drivers will be working after hours. A driver employed by the taxi proprietor took alcohol into the nearest local dry community, Yirrkala. He went to court, pleaded guilty and got a $200 fine. The owner of the taxi lost the use of his vehicle for 4 months. Actually, it was 4 months before the case came to court. He had to wait another 2 months before he got the vehicle back from the Liquor Commission. He not only lost income from that taxi, but also had to sack other people who derived an income from that taxi. All in all, that particular exercise caused a great deal of injustice to a great many people.

I have some difficulty in understanding why the government continues to oppose these amendments. It has not proposed any amendments to the bills that we have introduced on this matter. There has never been any hint that the government intends, despite all of the pious nonsense we keep hearing, to amend the legislation itself. I have real difficulty in understanding how a government, particularly in Australia, can continue to keep on its books what has been fairly described as perhaps the most unjust legislation in Australia today. I would like one of those pious, sanctimonious wanderers through wonderland, who have very little to do with Aboriginal people, who have very little to do with confronting the problems that plague that 30% of our population daily, to defend the indefensible.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate that the government does not share the same sense of outrage and concern that the opposition has on this particular matter. The 2 members of this Assembly who are most in touch with the problems of this legislation, the members for Stuart and MacDonnell, are the 2 people who are the most emotional about this particular issue. It is clear that people who see the suffering that the present legislation causes to their constituents are the ones who are the most concerned and the most upset about this legislation. I would have thought that, on this matter, which is not a political matter in any sense whatsoever, this Assembly would have had a greater regard for the strength of feeling that

those 2 members have shown today. Instead, we have had a blithe dismissal of their firsthand experience of the gross injustice that is being perpetuated.

The gross injustice of it all was brought home to me when I considered that it is possible for a member of this Assembly to go to the carpark at the conclusion of today's sittings and find that his car has been stolen.

Mr Perron: He would go to the police.

Mr SMITH: Yes, he would go to the police straight away. The end result may be that the police would find that vehicle in an alcohol-restricted area. Perhaps the police could establish that the vehicle was driven there by a person who had alcohol in his or her possession. If they did manage to establish that, the honourable member concerned could kiss goodbye to his car. Mr Deputy Speaker, I put it to you that the member would feel outraged if that happened. I would feel outraged on behalf of the member if that happened. It is happening out there now! It has not happened to us here yet. It is happening to the owners of taxis in Nhulunbuy. It is happening to the constituents of my colleagues. Because it does not affect us personally, we do not give a brass razoo about the inconvenience caused to innocent people. Their vehicles, which quite often play a much more important part in their lives than our vehicles do in ours, are being taken from them. We just do not care because we do not have to suffer the consequences of this unjust law.

I wish to pick up a point made by the Minister for Industry and Small Business. He said that it was not a gross injustice that we are faced with but rather the court's interpretation of a minor technical point. He was operating on the basis that, if a provision is in the law, it cannot be unjust. Mr Deputy Speaker, I submit to you that that is not the point at issue here. Learned justices of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and of the Federal Court have said that this legislation has the potential to become an instrument for quite grotesque injustice. Justices Toohey and Morling said in the Federal Court that it is plain that the act requires the urgent attention of the legislature if situations are to be avoided in which gross injustice may be caused to innocent parties. Despite that, the government is not prepared to take any action to remove the gross injustice. I want to reiterate the point that this opposition is not interested in weakening the laws. We have proposed that people convicted of selling alcohol in a restricted area should face a greater penalty. That is in clause 3. Unfortunately, the Minister for Industry and Small Business did not seem to understand that.

We want to make a greater distinction between the offence of consumption and the offence of selling alcohol in restricted areas because we believe that, at present, the penalties for consumption are adequate but the penalties for selling alcohol need to be increased. At present, the person selling the alcohol faces a penalty much less severe than the person whose car he took without permission. How, in anyone's language, can that be called justice? It is quite clear that there is no justice at all in that particular instance. It is a shame that this government continues to refuse to do anything about correcting that grave injustice.

Until December 1982, the court had discretion to determine whether a vehicle would be forfeited or not. In December 1982, that discretion was removed. At the time, an amendment was proposed by the then member for Fannie Bay for the discretion to be left in. She withdrew that amendment on the understanding that another amendment would be presented by the responsible

minister, now the Chief Minister, which would give a discretion to the Liquor Commissioner in relation to the forfeiture of vehicles. That foreshadowed amendment was never proceeded with. In debates since December 1982, the government has argued on a number of occasions that the act as it stands provides for the exercise of discretion on this particular matter. It is quite clear that the existing act does not provide for the exercise of such a discretion. It is equally clear that, if we are to have a just system, it should provide for the exercise of such a discretion otherwise a large number of innocent people will be hurt.

I ask members of the government to support this bill. It will not weaken the existing penalties and we would not be party to any attempt to weaken existing penalties. It aims at creating a tough but a fair system which will focus on penalising the guilty party, not innocent people.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 15
Mr Bell	Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Ede	Mr Dale
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Dondas
Mr Leo	Mr Finch
Mr Smith	Mr Firmin
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Setter
	Mr Tuxworth
	Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MOTION
Standing Orders Committee Report

Continued from 6 June 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, as a new member in the Assembly, I was honoured to be on the Standing Orders Committee. I saw it as a means by which I could learn something about the rules and procedures under which this Assembly operates. In fact, I gained more than just an education on the standing orders; I gained an education in committee procedures as well. I was amazed at the methods the committee utilised in its operation. To all intents and purposes, there were no party divisions in the committee. It was a combined effort by members of both parties to try to examine the issues and to see how this Assembly could work more effectively.

I will never regret being on the committee because it gave me an insight into how a committee of this Assembly should work. It was also an education on how to change a set of rules. An old rule was compared to a new rule so that we could clearly highlight the change that was being made. Clear explanations were given of the justification for the change, contentious points were discussed and Senate and House of Representatives practice was

referred to. I have been involved in many long debates to change the constitutions of community councils. Simple changes became nightmares because of the lack of clarity and because every bush lawyer wanted to have his say. On this committee, nobody was actually qualified in law yet, because of the methodology, it was simple. We did not argue over extraneous matters; we were able to focus on the particular subject that was before us. Certainly, the next time that I am involved in amending a constitution for a community council or a community organisation, I will attempt to emulate the methodology that this committee used.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Assembly's congratulations should go to the Clerk and his staff for a job very well done. Congratulations also should go to my colleagues on both sides of the Assembly for the way in which they entered into the discussion and their desire to find common ground. It is essential that standing orders are not used to force things to happen; that would introduce an element into this Assembly which I would not like to see. We have a set of standing orders to which we all have agreed. We may not always agree with the way in which they will be used but we have agreed on the rules. We have agreed that the rules are there to be utilised. I think that that says a lot for the advantages of the committee system in a legislature and a lot for the legislature itself.

When these standing orders are accepted, I believe it is the intention of our Clerk to have them published in a format similar to the booklet containing the various acts that govern our existence. That really will bring home to all members what standing orders are and how they can be utilised for the benefit of worthwhile debate. Once again, our commendation and congratulations should go to the Clerk and his staff for the enormous effort that they have put into formulating our new standing orders. I have been amazed; I did not realise that we would achieve something of this standard. I did not believe that the methodology would be so professional. It really has been an eye opener to me to see how such matters can be handled in an extremely professional manner. I commend the new standing orders to honourable members. I recommend that this Assembly adopts them at this sittings.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not expect to be speaking in support of the revised standing orders tonight. I expected that that duty would have been undertaken by far more eminent members of the committee who, unfortunately, are unable to be here tonight.

There is no doubt that the review of the standing orders was timely and absolutely necessary. Procedural rules of any group or body grow and develop sometimes rather haphazardly. Therefore, it is necessary to review them to bring them into line with current practice and reality. Mr Deputy Speaker, I went on the Standing Orders Committee as very much the new boy. I did not really have a clue as to what it was all about. We were provided with rather voluminous drafts of proposals, laid down very clearly and very well. But they were so large that, for somebody who did not really know his standing orders very well, they were very difficult to absorb. It was a great learning experience for me. I had the opportunity to take part in that committee with very experienced members of this Assembly who were well versed in the current standing orders and were able to argue for and against some of the more contentious new provisions very well. As the member for Stuart stated quite rightly, the committee was very bipartisan in its approach. That was mainly due to the way that the proposed revisions to the standing orders were put to the committee. Thanks for that go to the Clerk and his staff who did an

excellent job. As the member for Stuart stated, it was a method that obviously came from long experience in putting this sort of thing forward and obtaining the best results.

The contributions of the member for Araluen, the now Special Minister for Constitutional Development, and the Leader of the Opposition in arguing the cases for and against various provisions proposed in the draft were extremely valuable to me in understanding the ultimate goal of the committee. Particular thanks should go to the Clerk for his untiring efforts in providing us with a practicable and workable set of standing orders. Without his contribution, this report would not be available today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw to honourable members notice that, by adopting this report, we will be adopting the revised standing orders. As the honourable member for Stuart said, hopefully that will happen tonight. I never intended to speak tonight and I do not think that there is a great deal more that I can add. I commend the report to members.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Communications Technology Select Committee Report

Continued from 6 June 1985.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to commence by placing on record my thanks to the other members of the select committee who worked with me on this very long, tiring and difficult task. Most of the select committee members came to the task without a great deal of background knowledge of the subject. We had to come to grips with the technical aspects of the subject. We also had small problems such as becoming conversant with the acronyms used for technical phrases. I would like to thank the members of the select committee for their efforts in trying to come to grips with the difficult problems as they arose and for the time and effort they put in over a 14-month period.

I would also like to place on record my thanks and the thanks of the committee itself to various staff who supported us, particularly the Legislative Assembly staff and our hard-working secretary, Mr Gadd. I would also like to thank the Department of Technology and Communications and its staff for their untiring efforts, particularly in the latter stages of our inquiry and in the writing of the report. In particular, I thank Mr Barry Chester who was involved in the writing of the final stages of the report.

This report encompasses all of the basic information required by anybody who wishes to bring himself up to date with the state of satellite communications, terrestrial communications, some other forms of computer-type communications within the Northern Territory and, to some extent, in Australia, and policy-making in Australia. I would like to touch briefly on the way in which the report is arranged. The committee's conclusions are in the front section of the report, followed immediately by its recommendations. Immediately following that is a glossary of acronyms and technical terms. As I said earlier, trying to keep track of the acronyms and technical terms was very difficult for us. I am sure it will probably be just as difficult for other laymen. Hence there is a glossary at the beginning. The chapters of the report speak for themselves. They relate particularly to

telecommunications technology and they cover telephones for remote areas, broadcasting via the satellite, government internal communications and computer communication strategies. At the back of the report, there are some policy statements from various groups such as AUSSAT, Telecom and the Department of Communications. Following that is a communications profile of the Northern Territory which was prepared by the Office of Technology and Communications and presented to us as evidence in May 1985. I will speak about that later.

There was comprehensive input to this inquiry from a wide range of people throughout the Northern Territory. The committee travelled extensively during the first phase of its evidence-gathering and visited a large number of outback and remote centres. We tried to gain as wide a view from those areas as possible. We sought views from minor centres, pastoral properties, Aboriginal communities, some outstations, some of the trunk-route towns and major mining areas. When we travelled interstate in the second phase of our inquiry, we visited most of the major capital cities and spoke to governments that were working towards solving their own communications problems. We spoke to some of the major mining and banking organisations, AUSSAT, Telecom, OTC, the Department of Communications and some manufacturing groups.

The major finding of the select committee report is that the people in the outback of Australia have been underserved by communications to a degree which you and I would find intolerable. Most members, particularly those who have remoter electorates, have a very good understanding of the problems of the HF radio-telephone network. Until the committee started to travel, we did not realise some of the difficulties that people faced as a result of their remoteness.

An incident in one Arnhem Land community touched me greatly. A woman there told us she had received a message via the radio-telephone to say that her mother was ill and possibly dying. By the time she managed to arrange transport from that remote community and travel to Sydney, she arrived in time to join with the family in bereavement after the funeral of her mother had taken place. The time between the receipt of the message and her arriving in Sydney was nearly 9 days. It is very hard to imagine anywhere else in the world where one would have that sort of difficulty. Obviously, there are such places, but it is hard to accept that, in this modern technological age, we have this problem in the Northern Territory.

We also found that there were considerable problems in terms of time lost. This time can be seen in terms of wasted expenditure and loss of working time, as evidence given to us in another community showed. In this particular place, government personnel use the HF radio network to which all people in the area have access via their radios. Sensitive issues were being discussed within the community and some issues were so sensitive that government personnel found themselves unable to use the HF radio service to contact their head office in Darwin. Rather than use the HF network, they drove some 200 miles to the Stuart Highway to the main Telecom corridor to use a pay-phone to speak to their employer, the Northern Territory government, so that their conversation was confidential. Considerable evidence was given that not only was this taking place at executive level but that the staff were doing the same thing on alternate days. You can imagine the amount of travel involved, the cost to the government and the loss of working time.

I would like to talk about the introduction of new forms of telecommunications into the Northern Territory which have been emerging over

the last few years. Telecom is installing what it calls the digital radio concentrator system, a terrestrially-based telephone system using microwave circuitry. It has released a profile plan of when the service will be available across the Northern Territory. Its plan is to have 1000 voice-linked circuits in place by 1990. The select committee found that, whilst this service is capable of doing what Telecom suggested, there will be problems in putting it into place within a reasonable time.

The committee found that access to a reliable demand-access telephone system should be available to all Territorians by 1988. To that end, the committee addressed itself to the possibility of satellite telephony. It found that, if it did not understand acronyms and technical terms, it would have problems in coming to grips with the policies that are in place today in the communications field. Members might be interested to know some of the legislation that is administered by the Minister for Communications that affects this area: the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act of 1983, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act of 1983, the Broadcasting and Television Act of 1942, the Broadcasting (Stations' Licence Fees) Act of 1964, the Overseas Telecommunications Act of 1946, the Postage and Telecommunications (Transitional Provisions) Act of 1975, the Telecommunications Act of 1975, the Television Stations (Licence Fees) Act of 1964, the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1905, the Wireless Telegraphy (Regulations) Act of 1970, the Radio Communications (Licence Fees) Act of 1982 and the Radio Communications (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1982. On top of that we have heard about the AUSSAT legislation.

To provide telephones via the satellite, the policies in place at the moment will run us into all sorts of problems such as common interest groups and the use of the satellite telephony under the Telecommunications Act which provides for Telecom to be the Australian terrestrial carrier. We also found a longstanding reluctance on the part of Telecom to use the AUSSAT satellite for its telephony. That was on the basis that it believed that the satellite and the provisions of the service via the satellite were too expensive even though it is a 25% owner in the AUSSAT satellite. The service that could be provided by the satellite did not meet the high standards that Telecom demands of itself. As well, it had a union problem. During the whole course of our inquiry, unfortunately, I do not think we ever managed to come to grips with this policy. In fact, it was put to me at one stage that trying to keep abreast of federal government policy in relation to telecommunications and satellites was like trying to nail a jelly to the ceiling with a 3-inch nail. I think that analogy is not too far off the mark.

Broadcasting problems again brought us to policy problems. The broadcasting mode, as most members would understand to some extent, relates mainly to the provision of television to remote areas for recreational use. Soon after the decision to use AUSSAT, it was decided to provide a service called HACBSS, the Homestead and Community Broadcasting Satellite Service, to remote communities via the satellite. The Minister for Communications decided at that time that it would also be helpful to have a commercial service.

It was originally presumed that the PAL system, which is the current mode of television signal reception in your house today, would not cover all of the minister's wishes. Therefore, there was research into the possibility of using a new broadcast mode which would expand the service. During the period of our inquiry, the research results led the Minister for Communications to opt for what is now called the MAC-B format, the multiplexed analogue

component, system B. It gave the Department of Communications the ability to decide on the use of the transponder in a mode whereby each transponder could transmit many and varied things. I will give you some idea of exactly what could happen with that mode. The transponder has the capacity to transmit 1 or more TV broadcasts, up to 100 2-way voice circuits or up to 64 million bites per second of data transmission and also 6 radio channels. At the time, I felt the decision to move into the MAC-B format was a good one. I still consider that it is probably a good format. However, there are some unfortunate spin-offs financially in moving to the MAC-B format.

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): I move that an extension of time be granted to the honourable member for Ludmilla so that he may finish his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr FIRMIN: MAC-B is a format mode which allows for the transmission of a television signal and 6 radio band widths. The reason for that method of transmission is that television can be transmitted in its video format with 2 radio channels being used for stereo sound reception. That left 4 radio channels on the MAC-B format. The format could then provide either 2 FM radio services, an FM service and 2 AM services or the channels could be used for the transmission of data or any combination of those formats. As I said a moment ago, there are some unfortunate spin-offs attached to that and these were not realised at first. One spin-off is the additional cost. The MAC-B format is unable to be received by television sets currently on sale within Australia. It means that a decoding apparatus needs to be designed and manufactured for use with the ground componentry dishes - the television-receive-only dishes - to translate that signal from MAC-B format received from the satellite to the PAL format so that one can see what is happening and hear what is happening after it has been through the decoder.

I have some brochures which are interesting to read. The HACBSS News 1 of March 1983 said: 'The prototype earth dish will be a dish of some 1.2 m diameter and is expected to sell for around $1000 and should be easy to transport, install and maintain on a handyman basis'. HACBSS News 3 of May 1984 said something similar: 'The retail cost of a basic earth station and indoor unit suitable for an isolated homestead will be at least $1000 in volume production quantities'. The Department of Communications News of January 1985 said: 'The HACBSS and the RCTS dish will cost about $1500 for a 1.2 m model and will be capable of receiving both ABC and commercial services'. The HACBSS News from the Department of Communications in March 1985 said: 'It is confidently expected that they will be approximately $1500 plus installation and delivery costs'. That was less than 6 months ago.

Of course, we all know now that the current quoted price by 3 of the 5 companies that will be marketing dishes of 1.5 m are $2450 including delivery costs, $2308 plus delivery costs and $2600 roughly, which probably will include freight, without sales tax being added. As I suggested, sales tax has been set at 20% on the outdoor components and 32.25% on the indoor components. In its report, the committee made a very strong request to the Minister for Communications that the sales tax be removed.

There is one factor in relation to the broadcast mode which we did not address although we alluded to it. I have since had an opportunity to look at it: the problems connected with the different zonal beams for commercial

television. The broadcast mode for the ABC section under the HACBSS system will be a national transponder delivery system and the same signal will be received on the common key around Australia. Unfortunately, the provision of the 4 zonal beams, as demonstrated in this brochure from the ABC, means that there are 4 different footprints to address from the satellite for the reception of commercial television and radio. The problem is that, if the licensees of those 4 zones do not come to an agreement to use a common key for the service and delivery of that signal, on top of fragmentation in existing services, we could have fragmentation in the delivery of the satellite service. The committee identified this as a problem for the Northern Territory. Decisions have to be made by people in the fringe or overlapping areas of the zone.

The fringe and overlapping areas of the zone impinge on the Northern Territory more than on any other area. The overlapping sections of our zone are in the north-western corner around Port Keats, to the south near Lajamanu, from the north-eastern zone moving into Borroloola and some of the gulf country, and certainly an overlap from part of the south-eastern zone into the lower parts of the central zone. The problem this causes is particularly in the area overlapped by the western zone. The western zone will receive both the ABC HACBSS service and the remote commercial television service, the RCTS service. This is a result of the launch of the satellite this week. It means that a large proportion of the Northern Territory in the corner that I mentioned, from Port Keats to Lajamanu and down to the border, will have a choice to make. They could decide that they want to receive the Western Australian commercial television service immediately and be keyed for that service. However, when the next satellite goes up, it will carry our central zone footprint. The key for the RCTS service is not the same. It will cost them considerable sums to change the key to receive the Northern Territory service. However, if the RCTS licensees can agree on a common key for their transmission of signals, those other overlapped areas would have the opportunity to look fortuitously at different zones as well as the HACBSS service. I believe that should occur.

I am running out of time and therefore I will wind up. Many different matters are addressed in this document. I believe it would be helpful for members of this Assembly to read the document in detail because it will it will be not only informative but will certainly give them a greater understanding of the Northern Territory and its communications problems.

One thing I would like to refer to before I run out of time is the Department of Communication and Technology's profile of the Northern Territory in the back of this report. The department spent considerable time putting together all the facts and figures on the remoter parts of the Northern Territory. To make the information easily understandable, it produced a map of communications and planning in the Northern Territory. This will allow anyone to see at a glance exactly the current state of communications in the Northern Territory and the location and dissemination of Northern Territory government staff. With those few remarks, I commend the report.

Debate adjourned.

INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING BILL
(Serial 150)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Industry and Employment Training Bill arises out of changes to the administrative arrangements announced by the Chief Minister on 21 December 1984. The bill will repeal the Vocational Training Commission Act and re-enact those provisions necessary to regulate the operation of the apprenticeship system in the Northern Territory. In addition, the bill will provide the basic framework for the Territory to participate in the outcome of the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs. In relation to traineeships and through the medium of an advisory council, it provides for input into future policies affecting industry development, training and employment by employer, employee and other interested organisations.

The Vocational Training Commission was established to draw together in a single organisation the functions of apprenticeship regulation, TAFE policy and planning, manpower, training needs analysis and labour market research. The commission carried out these functions with a degree of duplication remaining in the development and administration of post-secondary education. The Minister for Education has introduced amendments to the Education Act which streamline the administration of post-secondary education, reduce duplication and simplify the coordinating process. One of those amendments involved the removal of the function of planning and coordination of technical and further education from the Vocational Training Commission. The remaining functions of the Vocational Training Commission will be carried out by the Department of Industry and Small Business. The bill recognises the requirement for the ongoing administration and regulation of the apprenticeship system, the need to provide for the Northern Territory's involvement in future traineeships and the need within industry for consultation with employer, employee and other interested organisations in determining future employment patterns and requirements within the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, having the Department of Industry and Small Business as the equivalent of the state training authorities in other states and the Department of Education, through TAFE institutions and other units, as the medium for conducting some of the training requirements and resultant policies do not create an overlap of functions. In fact, such an approach simply allows the respective departments to provide a flexible response to a variety of requests from industry in fulfilling training needs. In particular, it allows industry the benefit of formulating specific training programs that satisfy needs at an operational level and then to consider educational aspects as a support factor that can be tailored to the practical situation.

In practice, the division of functions between the 2 departments can be defined further by the respective ministers in the unlikely event that such a definition is needed. The bill makes provision for the establishment of an industry and employment training advisory council to advise and make recommendations to the ministers on matters connected with training for industry and employment, including training in apprenticeship trades. Membership of the council will include representatives of government, employer

and employee associations. With the ability of the council to establish specific purpose committees, the bill facilitates the provision of a wide range of representative opinions to ensure that training for industry and employment are realistic, responsive to industry needs and effective.

Since the Commonwealth government released the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs, there has been much discussion between the Commonwealth, states and territories on the introduction of traineeships for industry. The part of the bill relating to training courses for industry and employment has been drafted to provide a basis for such traineeships as may be introduced as well as catering for the ongoing needs of apprenticeship training. A major part of the bill provides for the administration of apprenticeships and incorporates a number of changes agreed to by the government prior to the new administrative arrangements announced in December 1984.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Industry and Small Business has been mindful of the need for consultation and, through discussions with other government departments, industry and employee representatives and former members of the Vocational Training Commission, has prepared a practical and flexible piece of legislation. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

POISONS AND DANGEROUS DRUGS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 153)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act commenced on 1 October 1983. It was a major piece of Northern Territory legislation which introduced the National Health and Medical Research Council's uniform poisons standard to the Northern Territory. The act repealed a number of old pieces of legislation and codified their provisions. The registration of pesticides was not included in the act in 1983. It was considered that, as there was no manufacturer of pesticides in the Northern Territory, registration of pesticides was not necessary. However, the Department of Primary Production has advised the government that a form of pesticide registration is required in Northern Territory law to enable Australia to ratify various international agreements. One of these agreements is the Codex alimentarius which, amongst other matters, specifies acceptable levels of pesticide residues in food. The legislation will prevent the dumping in the Northern Territory of pesticides unacceptable elsewhere.

The bill provides a very simple form of registration by notice in the gazette. Since it is administratively, technically and economically impractical for separate Northern Territory registration of each pesticide, a pesticide cleared for registration by the Technical Committee on Agricultural Chemicals in another state or territory may be deemed to be registerable in the Northern Territory. The registrar has the discretion to register such a pesticide. As well, he may register a pesticide specifically for the Northern Territory. Conditions of use may be imposed on the pesticide.

Anyone who possesses or sells an unregistered pesticide shall be guilty of an offence. Moreover, a person who uses a pesticide contrary to its specified conditions is guilty of an offence. Thus, anyone who treats an animal foodstuff with a toxic substance would be guilty of an offence. The Registrar of Pesticides will be an employee of the Department of Primary Production and will be an appropriately trained scientific officer.

In addition to the registration of pesticides, this bill includes certain minor changes which have been introduced to rectify administrative and legal problems experienced since the commencement of the act. These include some additional specification of the records of drugs required. As well, clause 7 allows dental therapists to possess and use a specific dental anaesthetic. Similarly, that clause foresees the need for a registered Aboriginal health worker to hold supplies of a schedule 4 substance. The potential for abuse has caused an old restriction to be reintroduced. Clause 8 restricts the use of amphetamines to a person suffering from narcolepsy or to a child suffering hyperkinetic brain damage. Similarly, the use of poison containers for foods has been prohibited by clause 16. This provision makes it possible to repeal the Containers for Hazardous Substances Act. The 1983 act included all the provisions of this act except for this provision.

Recent changes to the National Health and Medical Research Council schedules have shown the need to amend certain schedules in part A in the same way as those in part B. These part A schedules are complementary to part B schedules. When an item is removed from part B, it must appear in part A. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BUILDING SOCIETIES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 154)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill constitutes the first amending legislation to the Building Societies Act which commenced in 1982. The Territory now has only 2 building societies, the Mutual Community Building Society and the Territory Building Society. However, the industry still makes a valuable input to the Territory as many Territorians who have housing loans can testify. These amendments are aimed at assisting the building society industry as well as rectifying a few minor problems of the existing legislation. The building society industry is undergoing a lot of changes at the national level following deregulation and other trends. At this point, I foreshadow that the Territory intends to keep up with these trends, and I consider it possible that there will be further amendments proposed later this year. Some of the proposed amendments stem from the deliberations of the Building Society Advisory Committee. I thank the committee for its valuable input into building society policy. I turn to the bill itself.

Clause 4 clarifies that the Building Societies Advisory Committee can co-opt outside persons to attend meetings of the committee.

Clause 6 varies the procedure by which an application for the change of rules is to be served on the registrar. Under the new procedure, if the

registrar is satisfied the proposed alteration is not contrary to the act, he must register it within 14 days. This imposes specific requirements on the registrar to do this.

Clause 7 repeals section 20 which enables the registrar to prepare model rules. It is unlikely that a new building society setting up would require model rules so this section is not required. However, it would not prevent persons attempting to establish a building society from consulting with the registrar about what should be the rules.

Clause 8 relates to the transfer of engagements of building societies and deals with problems that arose during the transfer of engagements from United Permanent to the Territory Building Society. Under existing legislation, there is doubt that documents transferring mortgages from United Permanent to the Territory Building Society to enable, for example, discharge, would not attract stamp duty. The government believes they should not attract additional stamp duty and clause 8(7) clarifies that this is so for any instrument or document executed or registered pursuant to the transfer of engagements from 31 January 1985. This would include documents arising from the transfer of engagements between the United Permanent and the Territory Building Society. Clause 8(8) enables the name of a defunct building society to be removed from the register following a transfer of engagements. Clause 8(9) clarifies that, following the transfer, persons whose accounts are transferred become full members of the society into which their accounts were transferred.

Clause 9 will enable building societies to engage in unsecured lending on a limited basis provided they fulfil certain criteria to be provided for in the regulations and are subject to certain conditions such as the size of the loan. This will enable building societies in due course to lend not only for a house but for the furniture in the house. As indicated, strict conditions would be imposed with the building society having to meet certain capital base requirements and only being able to lend a certain proportion of liquid funds. In addition, the amount loaned to any one member will also be restricted. It is hoped that this move will enable the building society industry in the Territory to better compete with the banks as they would be able to provide a total finance package.

Mr Speaker, clause 10 simply legalises what is occurring at present; that is, for loan approval letters to be picked up from the building society by successful applicants. Loan approval letters must be kept at the office for 5 days and can then be sent out by post. This notice, containing prescribed details, must be sent out before any of those documents are signed.

Clause 11 enables the amount of special advances to be fixed by ministerial determination. This will enable the amounts to be varied more easily. It is my intention that the relevant amounts be increased. Special advances are subject to certain restrictions which must be a prescribed proportion of advances.

Clause 12 amends section 34 to enable the proportions involved to be fixed by ministerial determinations. Clause 13 repeals section 35. Under this section, where a building society exercises its power of sale as a mortgagee and intends to finance the purchase, which is a special advance, the registrar must approve it. This is seen as unnecessary. When lending a large sum of money, the building society would exercise its own commercial judgment carefully.

Clause 14 enables percentages of required liquidity to be fixed by ministerial determinations. This would enable variations to be made easily to take into account the continual changing financial environment. This clause also varies the definition of 'liquid funds' to require funds on deposit with a bank to be redeemable before they can be considered as liquid security. It requires bond securities to be saleable.

Clause 15 enables building societies to borrow on letters of credit or promissory notes as well as from other sources. Clause 16 allows a building society to act as a collecting agent, such as for its subsidiaries, and, by clause 17, a building society will no longer be required to obtain the registrar's consent before joining an industry association. Clause 18 enables the amount of money that can be paid out to an estate by a building society to be determined by the minister.

Clause 19 allows the minister to consent to a majority of directors to be resident outside the Territory. This consent can only be for a short period such as during the building society's formative stages.

Clauses 20 and 23 enable a person charged with an offence to defend the matter on the basis that the offence was committed without his consent or that he exercised due diligence to prevent the offence from being committed.

Clause 21 varies the reporting requirements principally by no longer requiring certain financial information to be released to members which then became public. However, it will still have to be disclosed to the registrar. It is felt that disclosure of this information gives rival competitors an unfair advantage. The means of certifying accounts as true and correct is varied also.

Clause 22 gives the minister the power to consent to the use of the word 'building society' in the name or title of a body corporate other than a society registered under the act. This will enable the Australian Building Society Share and Deposit Insurance Corporation, for instance, to be registered as a foreign company in the Territory.

Clause 25 allows the minister, instead of the registrar, to fix any additional charges for making advances. Clause 26 enables the minister to determine certain figures or percentages for the purposes of the sections mentioned. As well as being more easily and quickly changed by publication of a determination in the gazette, they are public knowledge. When determinations are made pursuant to this section, copies will be sent to the relevant building societies.

Mr Speaker, this bill achieves some deregulation and should make the building societies' legislation easier to manage. At the same time, protection of the public remains one of its main features. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 146) and the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 145): (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in

regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages, and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately by the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 146)
STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 145)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of these 2 bills is to give effect to the 2 measures announced during the June 1985 sittings of this Assembly: that a duty be imposed on credit card transactions and on electronic debit transactions. The 2 measures are complementary.

In the past couple of years, some significant advances in technology have been utilised in the banking industry to carry out transactions which, traditionally, have required the creation of instruments. Members will be familiar with the automatic teller machines installed at most banks which enable the customer to conduct his banking business without entering the bank premises and, in many cases, without having to fill out deposit or withdrawal forms or to write a cheque. Stamp duty is a duty which is imposed on certain instruments; for example, cheque and other forms of bills of exchange. The use of new electronic technology presents a significant problem to this area of revenue.

Mr Speaker, I understand that at least 1 banking organisation proposes to have a largely paperless front office program in place by the end of this year. Indications are that this is merely 1 of a number of steps in the extension of new technology in the financial arena and it will necessitate a review of a number of traditional revenue sources. The erosion of the traditional stamp duty base, relying as it does on transactions evidenced by instruments, will result in a significant loss in revenue. The revenue implications of the growing use of these new techniques are being examined. The amendments to the stamp duty legislation before this Assembly are a preliminary recognition of the shift towards electronics as a means of conducting financial transactions, and will recoup some of the revenue lost through the reduced usage of cheques as a means of account payment.

Turning to the bills, stamp duty matters are dealt with in 2 complementary acts. The Stamp Duty Act contains the taxing provisions while the administrative provisions are set out in the Taxation Administration Act. As a consequence, when introducing new stamp duty measures, it is necessary to provide a specific head of duty in the Stamp Duty Act while providing for the mechanics of this collection independently in the Taxation Administration Act.

Turning first to the credit card transaction duty, the arrangements for the credit card duty are dealt with in the first schedule to the Stamp Duty Act. To a large degree, they follow the arrangements in force in both Tasmania and Queensland where this duty has been collected for a number of years. The duty will be imposed at the rate of 10¢ for each debit transaction.

The amendment to the Taxation Administration Act introduces a new division to cover the necessary processes for the calculation and collection of the duty. The amendment will require all credit card agencies operating or wishing to operate in the Territory, such as Bankcard, Mastercard, Visa and American Express, to register with the Commissioner of Taxes and to submit returns showing transactions entered into within the specified billing period. As indicated above, the duty payable on each debit transaction will be 10¢. The credit card agency will be able to recover an amount equal to the duty from the individual card holder.

In a similar manner, the taxing head for the electronic debit transaction duty is inserted into the new Stamp Duty Act. While the duty on electronic debit transactions in the Territory is venturing onto new ground, the duty, in many respects, is introduced largely to supplement stamp duty on cheques as a source of revenue. Many of the transactions which will not be dutiable are those which would have been settled by cheque previously. The Tasmanian government introduced a debit duty in 1983. In some respects, the amendment proposed in the bill now before the Assembly has been prepared by drawing on the Tasmanian experience.

Mr Speaker, advancing technology has posed a series of dilemmas for the government in respect of its potential impact on the traditional stamp duty arena. The facility for directly debiting bank accounts has opened the way for numerous paperless financial transactions. As I have mentioned, these are facilitated by the introduction of automatic teller machines. Of more importance, however, will be the increasing use of home computers, all of which offer some form of direct access to banking facilities.

The amendment proposed in this bill imposes a duty on consumer-initiated debits which are made by electronic means to an account maintained with a financial institution as defined in the legislation. Should a person carry on business in the traditional manner by use of a suitable instrument, then that transaction will not attract the duty. The duty is to be paid on the basis of a monthly return submitted by a financial institution which maintains liable amounts. These institutions will include banks, building societies and credit unions which provide automatic teller machines or similar facilities. These institutions will be required to be registered if they wish to operate in the Territory. Penalties will be incurred by an institution which operates in breach of the legislation.

As I have indicated, the electronic debit transaction duty and the credit card transaction tax are complementary measures and a single transaction will not attract duty under both heads. Where a transaction conducted electronically through an automatic teller machine or a point-of-sale terminal results in a debit to a bank account, it will attract duty under the electronic debit transaction head. Where the transaction is identified under a credit card account, it will attract duty under the credit card transaction head. Measures have been included in the legislation to ensure that duty is not imposed on debits made as a consequence of action taken by the relevant institution to recover the tax from the customer.

While there has been some discussion with the representatives of the affected financial institutions, the government is open to further discussions and input from institutions on the basis of the bills now before this Assembly. The final legislation will reflect any additional input which may be made in time for consideration at the next sittings of this Assembly. As there will be a number of financial institutions and credit card agencies

already operating in the Territory at the time the legislation will come into force, a transitional clause has been included. This will allow the relevant institutions a period of 1 month in which to apply for registration. During this period, they will be able to carry on business in the usual manner. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ENERGY RESOURCE CONSUMPTION LEVY BILL
(Serial 155)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that a number of revenue measures were foreshadowed at the June sittings of this Assembly, and I indicated at the time that a levy on the consumption of fuel and diesel oil would be introduced. The purpose of this bill is to implement that proposal. The bill provides that consumers of fuel oils that are commonly referred to as distillates are to pay a levy of $1 per 1000 L of fuel consumed if they use more than 10 megalitres in any 12-month period for other than transport purposes.

Mr Speaker, consumers of leviable oils, whose usage exceeds the threshold amount, will be required to register with the Commissioner of Taxes and submit monthly returns showing consumption during that month. The levy is to be paid on the basis of the non-transport consumption disclosed on the return. At the end of each 12-month period, there will be a reconciliation based on the total usage during the consumption year. If the consumer has made an overpayment, a refund of the amount overpaid will be made and, if underpayment is disclosed, then the consumer will be required to pay that amount.

The act is to be administered by the Commissioner of Taxes and, to this end, certain provisions of the Taxation Administration Act, which set out the administration and procedural powers of the commissioner, will be imported into this act. Special grouping provisions have been included to ensure that persons and companies do not split their usage to take advantage of the threshold arrangements and so avoid paying the levy.

The bill provides a power to make regulations for the purposes of the act. Therefore, it is expected that there will be some discussion on the bill before it is finalised and relevant matters will be discussed on the basis of the bill now before the Assembly. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 151)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, all states of Australia have their court of appeal constituted by their judges. Appeals for these courts of appeal lie direct to the High Court and not to the Federal Court. Given the constitutional development of the Territory, it is desirable, as a matter of principle, that the Territory be placed in the same position as the states. Through the minor amendments to the Supreme Court Act proposed by this bill, that desirable principle will soon be achievable.

Appeals from decisions of the Territory Supreme Court involving matters within Territory jurisdiction will soon be to Territory court of appeal and no longer to the Federal Court. While the decision to commence the appellant jurisdiction of our Supreme Court was largely based on the fact that, in the context of the Territory's constitutional development, it was an inevitable development on the road to statehood, that is not the only reason why this important step is being taken.

With the enactment of the Federal Court of Australia Act 1976 of the Commonwealth, appeals from decisions of the Territory Supreme Court lie directly to the Federal Court unless the High Court grants special leave to appeal directly to it. In practice, no such special leave is granted. Judges of the Territory Supreme Court, who held such office before 1 October 1979, were appointed as judges of the Federal Court in addition to their Territory commissions. Territory judges appointed since that day have not been appointed as Federal Court judges. The only Territory judge still permanently resident in the Territory, who is a Federal Court judge, is Mr Justice Muirhead. He is due to retire later this year.

Normally 1 Territory judge holding a Federal Court commission sits on the Full Court of the Federal Court when it hears appeals from the Territory. After the retirement of Mr Justice Muirhead, it will be difficult to maintain this desirable position. Mr Speaker, I would not like that remark to be seen as in any way disparaging of the Federal Court. The Federal Court has served us well, but I am sure that all honourable members will see the importance of having a Territory perspective in Territory appeals.

With the commencement of the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the obviously desirable situation of having Territory judges deciding Territory matters will be achieved. The decision to activate appeals provisions in the Supreme Court Act and the Criminal Code involved considerations such as the availability of a sufficient number of judges, cost implications, court rules, and court time and facilities. I am satisfied sufficient arrangements can be put in place to allow a system of appeal which will be more efficient than that which applies currently. Quite simply, the fact that Territory appeals will be able to be dealt with in the Territory will naturally mean less cost to the parties and time saved.

Discussions have been taking place for some time with the federal Attorney-General regarding Territory appeals. I believe that this government's proposal to activate the appeals provisions in Territory legislation is considered by both the Territory government and the Commonwealth government to be the most desirable option available. Following discussion, the Commonwealth recently amended the Judiciary Act of 1903 of the Commonwealth and the Federal Court of Australia Act of 1976. In short, the effect of these amendments will be that, from the date they are proclaimed, appeals from the Territory Supreme Court will no longer lie to the Federal Court. In addition, the High Court of Australia will have jurisdiction to hear appeals from judgments of the Territory Supreme Court, subject to special leave of the High Court being given.

The date to be proclaimed will be subject to discussions between the Territory and the Commonwealth governments and, obviously, will be that date that the Territory government advises is suitable for commencement of the appeal provision in the Supreme Court Act and the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act. Commencement will be a matter for discussion with various parties involved, but we are hoping to commence our appeal court as soon as possible.

I should add that transitional provisions are in place in the Commonwealth amendments which safeguard appeals which are instituted before the date of commencement of those amendments. As I have inferred, provision already exists in the Supreme Court Act and the Criminal Code Act for the court of appeal. In the case of the Supreme Court Act, the appeal provision allows for a court of appeal exercising both criminal and civil jurisdictions. Naturally, the Criminal Code provisions deal only with criminal appeals.

After discussion with the judiciary, it has been agreed that there should be a separate court of appeal; that is, a court of appeal exercising only civil jurisdiction constituted under the Supreme Court Act and a court of criminal appeal constituted under the Criminal Code. It is considered that the separation of the courts of appeal - that is, the civil and criminal courts - will allow for a more efficient operation of the courts. The approach is in line with that adopted in most other Australian jurisdictions. To give effect to this approach, minor amendments to the Supreme Court Act are required to ensure that the appeal provisions in the act relate only to civil matters.

The first provision of consequence is clause 2 which provides that the amendments shall come into effect on a date to be fixed by the Administrator in the gazette. As indicated, it is hoped that the provisions of the Supreme Court Act and the Criminal Code Act can be commenced as soon as possible. Obviously, this amending act should come into operation on the same date.

Clause 4 introduces a new provision, section 50A, which will simply ensure that the provisions contained in that part of the principal act relate only to civil jurisdictions and not to criminal appeals. Clause 5 removes the provision from the Supreme Court Act which relates only to criminal appeals. These provisions are otherwise included in the Criminal Code.

Mr Speaker, the amendments in clause 6 will allow for the judges to make Rules of Court under the Supreme Court Act in respect of the Court of Criminal Appeal. This is in keeping with the practice which has been adopted, wherever possible, that Rules of Court be made under the Supreme Court Act. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, during the fracas earlier today, a couple of broad statements were made by the Minister for Mines and Energy that I want to correct. In his attempt to justify the government's despicable act in cutting off debate on the motion that we had before us, he stated that it was normal practice to adjourn motions rather than debate them immediately. I

have checked with the record of the last 2 general business days. The last one was 17 April 1985 in which 3 motions were moved. One related to a perennial favourite of the Minister for Mines and Energy - a standing committee on expenditure. At the end of that debate, it states: 'Motion negatived'. The second debate was on equal opportunities and status of women. At the end of that debate, it says: 'Motion agreed to'. The third debate was on the tabling of papers relating to the Darwin casino and, at the end of that debate: 'Motion negatived'. On general business day of 14 June 1984, there was a motion for a standing committee on expenditure. Again, particular reference was made to it by the Minister for Mines and Energy and, at the end of the debate, the record states: 'Motion negatived'. On the same day, a debate on sex discrimination legislation terminated with: 'Motion negatived'.

Mr Speaker, I defy anyone to find in the history of this Assembly an instance when a motion moved on a general business day by the opposition has been adjourned. Certainly, there is no evidence. It was completely wrong and mischievous of honourable members opposite to attempt to justify their action today by saying it was normal. This day has marked a low in the life of this Assembly because the established practices of this Assembly were not followed by the government.

Mr Speaker, I conclude my comments by saying that the government had 3 weeks notice that we would bring on the debate on contingent liabilities. On 9 August this year, the Leader of the Opposition made a public statement, which was reported in the press, that that motion would be moved in this Assembly.

Mr Manzie: Do you think we watch everything he says in the press?

Mr Dale: We hang on every word.

Mr SMITH: Obviously you do, when it suits you.

Mr Speaker, it had 3 weeks notice yet this government was not prepared to debate this particular issue.

Mr Speaker, tonight I want to pay tribute to 2 prominent members of the Darwin community who have died since the last sittings. The first of these is John Ahmat. John Ahmat was born on Mebyuik Island in the south Torres Strait and he came to Darwin with his family in 1907. At that stage, they were a family of 4 brothers and 2 sisters. John Ahmat married Gladys Kouger and they had a large family of 9 brothers and 3 sisters, and it is probably fair to say that all of them are prominent members of the Northern Territory community. John Ahmat worked on the wharf for many years and then concluded his working life with the city council. He played football for Vesteys Football Club and, when it folded, he and his brothers were very prominent in starting the Buffalo Football Club of which you, amongst other people, Mr Speaker, are a strong supporter. As we all know, Mr Speaker, the Buffalo Football Club has a very proud tradition. A number of very prominent names have been associated with it and I think it would be of some pride to the Ahmat family to know that Ahmats still play for the Buffalo Football Club today. John Ahmat was a strong union man and a strong Labor man. He made a major contribution to life in Darwin and left a large and extended family who will maintain the Ahmat name and traditions very strongly in Darwin's continuing history.

Mr Speaker, the second person to whom I wish to pay tribute was Harry Hazelbane. Harry Hazelbane was actually a constituent of mine. A

friend of his has written a summary of his life which concludes in a very fine fashion: 'A very old Territorian passes on: Harry Hazelbane, aged 86'. I can do no better in my tribute to Harry Hazelbane than to read what his friend has written:

> 'Harry Hazelbane was born at Stapleton railway siding. His dad was a fettler. He worked for the Commonwealth Railways. His dad originally came from Germany; his mother was a fullblood woman from the Warri tribe. They had only one son. When Harry was old enough to attend school, his dad brought him into Palmerston (now Darwin). He was left in the care of a family named Cameron. His close friend at school was Maurice Holtze junior. When the Camerons went back south, Harry went to live with the Holtze's. Mrs Holtze drove both boys to school in a sulky every morning. She was a teacher at the Kahlin Compound. When he was old enough to leave school, Doctor Holtze employed him at the botanical gardens. He was with them up until 1919 when the Vesteys meatworks started operating. He and Maurice got jobs there. Harry was employed in the kitchen, Maurice went to the powerhouse. He served his apprenticeship with Vesteys. When the meatworks closed down, Harry went back to his old job with the Holtze's. He got married in 1925 to Martina Cubillo, another very old and well-known Darwin family. After the wedding, they went to live at the gardens just about where the Holtze Cottage now stands. Harry worked for a long time, after Holtze left Darwin, under 2 other curators, first Barney Allen and then Frank Slater. When he finally left the gardens, they had to vacate the house they were living in. They moved into a vacant house at the police paddock (now Stuart Park)'.

Harry too was a good footballer. He too played for the Vesteys team. In fact, there is a 1921-22 premiership photo in which he appears. Unfortunately, there are only 2 players in that photo who are still alive. One is Poncie Cubillo and the other is Willie Ahmat, and of those who have died, Harry was the last to pass on.

When the Vesteys team bowed out of the competition, Harry exhibited some good sense and went to join the Wanderers Football Club. As you well know, Mr Speaker, Wanderers have a very long and proud tradition in Darwin. He took part in other sporting events in Darwin. He stayed in Darwin right through the war and he was working on the wharf at the time that the Zealandia was blown up. In fact, his friend said that he was very lucky that he was not one of the victims when that ship blew up. When the family returned to Darwin, his last job was with the Darwin City Council where he worked until he retired. Harry leaves a widow, 4 sons, 9 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Mr Speaker, in some respects the deaths of John Ahmat and Harry Hazelbane reflect the passing of an era and it is unfortunate that it is the passing of an era that is not terribly well documented. There are a number of other part-Aboriginal people who have been in the Territory for most of their lives. A number of them are very old now and, unless we do something very quickly, the unique insights they have into the development of the Northern Territory will be lost.

I was fortunate enough to be able to speak to Harry Hazelbane on a couple of occasions and was fascinated by the stories that he had to tell. On a number of occasions, I attempted to interest the Oral History Unit in

interviewing Harry Hazelbane. Unfortunately, although members of the unit expressed some interest, they were never able to organise themselves sufficiently to do it. Of course, in Harry Hazelbane's case, it is too late. I have the unfortunate suspicion that the Oral History Unit is operating under some sort of culture bias. Its members place greater priority on interviewing Europeans, particularly Europeans who have been in positions of authority. I am not saying that those people should not be interviewed and their recollections recorded. But, by the same token, people like John Ahmat and Harry Hazelbane, who played an important part in the history of this town, should be recognised by the Oral History Unit to ensure that their recollections are preserved for the rest of us and the generations to come so that we get a feel for the real Darwin as it was seen through the eyes of all the different groups of people who lived in it.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I want to make a few comments on the TIO report which was tabled today. Despite a general improvement, there are a number of matters of concern that should not be overlooked. I note a $1.4m provision to cover continuing problems on inwards reinsurance which, when added to the $4.5m put aside last year, raises these total losses to $6m. It seems also that there is no clear indication of the extent of future claims under inwards reinsurance business. I look forward to the minister giving the Assembly more details on this.

I also note a reference to certain court proceedings in New South Wales. The Leader of the Opposition raised a question of legal proceedings in Sydney and in the United States on 24 April 1985. The Treasurer's response was to admit to proceedings overseas - he made no reference to the proceedings in New South Wales - and offered to supply information which has still not been received by the Leader of the Opposition. I call upon the Treasurer to make a statement on this issue, disclosing full details of all legal proceedings in relation to the problem of inwards reinsurance.

Mr Speaker, turning to the subject of motor accidents compensation, the ALP has expressed its very grave reservations about the arrangements the government has put in place to limit common law claims for personal damages following accidents. I think the compensation payments and benefits reflected in the act support our reservations. We have seen these payments reduced from $18m to $11m and I believe that, whilst the TIO may have straightened out its books, it is only passing off its liabilities on the community as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I note something that I raised last year which was dismissed out of hand by the Chief Minister. I refer to the claims fluctuation reserve. To cover the losses of the TIO last year, the government removed $1.6m from the claims fluctuation reserve which is designed to maintain a solvency margin of assets over liabilities. When I made a point of this in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said that I had made an assumption that there was no money in the fund. He said that that might have been the case when the report was written but that, on that day, 7 March 1985, the opposite might have been the case. The TIO accounts contain one difference from last year, and that is that there is no statement of a claims fluctuation reserve. It seems to have been emptied out last year and to have disappeared. I look forward to an explanation from the Chief Minister on this which I am sure will be interesting.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I would like to make some comments this evening about the operation of the TAB in the Northern Territory. We all know that the TAB was introduced to the Northern Territory in July this year.

Honourable members will recall that I am on record as not being entirely in favour of the introduction of TAB alone. I argued that perhaps it ought to have been introduced in a slightly different way.

However, on the basis of the financial implications of the introduction of a TAB, I was persuaded in my own mind to go along with that decision at the time. At this stage, I ought to point out something that I believe is causing the TAB to be in potential difficulty at this early stage. The introduction of the TAB brought with it a number of expectations in the minds of various people in the community. Of course, at that time, the Racing and Gaming Commission projected a $19.7m turnover in the first year. Race clubs had certain expectations in the first year as well and people within the racing organisations are looking for substantial returns from the turnover from the TAB, and rightly so. Of course, there is the industry development fund and, apart from that, the other funds that are expected to be distributed to the racing clubs after the first year. There are also expectations by the agency managers. These are people who placed themselves right behind the move to introduce TAB, made themselves available and went through quite substantial tests to be selected for the management of these agencies. They expect to earn a living through the TAB and that is based on the turnover and the projected increases over the coming years.

In fact, increase in turnover is an absolute necessity to achieve the budgeted figure of $19.7m because, as the Chief Minister said a day or 2 ago, we are holding a particular amount of money at this stage that is on budget. But 'on budget', in the early years, obviously means that we must increase the turnover over the coming weeks and months so that finally we end up with a total turnover of $19.7m for the first year. Turnover can be achieved only by punters betting with the TAB. We must encourage punters to put their wagers through the TAB machines rather than through illegal operators or, from the point of view of the TAB, rather than going to the Fannie Bay or any other race course and placing bets with bookmakers. We must encourage punters to bet with the TAB.

Mr Speaker, I want to make the point tonight that there is a spanner in the works of this operation at the moment. In my opinion, there is inefficient operation of the terminals which are taking the bets and processing them through the various computers so that the dividends are declared for the punters. The machines in use at present are called RT7 wagering terminals. I will give a little background on how we obtained these machines.

The RT7 terminal is an advanced version of the RT1 and RT2 terminals which are used extensively off course in Queensland and Tasmania and on course in New South Wales and Queensland. The RT1 and RT2 were manufactured by Realtime Systems Pty Ltd which subsequently was taken over by General Instruments Australasia Pty Ltd. The availability of wagering terminals is very limited world wide and lead times to purchase such specialised equipment are quite long. Therefore, the decision to use the RT7 for the NT TAB was based on the following: the success and reliability of the earlier models, the RT1 and RT2; its availability; its versatility; the Mark Read 4, and that is not the bookmaker, that is what the little slips that are put into them are called; keyboard entering; and its reasonable cost.

Since the implementation of TAB on 2 July, the performance and reliability of the terminal has been less than satisfactory. The main problems so far are what are known as read errors. That occurs when a customer marks horse 3 on

the ticket that he is putting across to the manager and, when the ticket is placed into the machine, the terminal reads number 5. That requires a correction to be made which takes time. There are print faults where the wrong details are printed on the ticket. There are guillotine faults when the equipment fails to cut the ticket from the one underneath it in the machine. It loses contact with the main computer which is a disaster because it just shuts down. If there is a queue of people waiting to place bets 5 or 10 minutes before a race is to start, I can assure you that they will be very angry. It must be remembered that they are accustomed to the very efficient methods of the off-course bookmakers in the Northern Territory.

From the fault reports received, analysis has been carried out at the ACT TAB and it is believed that the guillotine fault and loss of contact with the main computers are in the terminal firmware. I am told that that is the residents' programs and, in that area, a solution is imminent. I am suffering from a little lack of confidence in that as well although I have no technical expertise to support that statement. However, like a number of TAB punters or would-be TAB punters in the Northern Territory, I am becoming a little cynical.

Mr Speaker, I mentioned a moment ago that one of the considerations in implementing the RT7 was the timely availability of the product. The NT program was to begin after the terminal, that is the RT7, had been field proven in New South Wales. This is now only just off the ground, some months after the implementation of the NT TAB. The expansion of that system in New South Wales has been suspended after the implementation of 12 sites because of unreliability.

Mr Speaker, the management of the NT TAB and, for that matter, the Racing and Gaming Commission and, moreover, the minister responsible, the Chief Minister, have not let this matter pass them by. There have been several complaints over the months. I have a bet every Saturday and, frankly, I think that, as far as the machine is concerned, the system that we are using is quite clumsy. People who have had telephone accounts in other states will tell you that the jargon that you must use to place your bet in the Northern Territory is almost spastic relative to the way a bet is placed elsewhere. That, in itself, is causing a waste of time and efficiency in the eyes of the punter when placing a bet. The minister responsible has not been sitting on his hands over this matter, nor has the manager of the TAB. I will give some credit to the company, General Instruments, in that at least it has received correspondence from the Northern Territory, answered that correspondence and 1 of its senior technicians visited Darwin on 2 occasions to assist with adjustments and enhancements.

The fact is that the problem exists today, not 2 weeks ago, not 2 months ago. For a person who opposed the introduction of the Northern Territory TAB on its own in the first instance, I am as keen as any other person in this Assembly to see it succeed. I ask the company, General Instruments Australasia Pty Ltd, to fulfil a commitment it made in a letter dated 20 August 1985 addressed to the Chief Minister where it said: 'Our company will be most pleased to assist with the furthering of successful implementation of the terminals throughout the NT TAB, as it is as important to us to maintain a valid reputation as it is for the success of the NT TAB'. When we introduced the TAB to the Northern Territory, the opposition and the government knew that we were taking an enormous gamble. We were taking a gamble with an industry that, without the TAB, had proven that it was the greatest tourist attraction in the Northern Territory. The decision was

taken, and it was taken on the basis of an increased turnover on the TAB as the months and years went by. The entire viability of the racing industry in the Northern Territory and, to a very large degree, the tourist industry, is dependent, at this early stage, on the machines supplied by General Instruments Australasia Pty Ltd. I challenge it to come to the Northern Territory and fix up the problems or its reputation and our racing industry will go down the chute.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to comment on an answer I received from the Minister for Community Development this morning. My question related to the most important development that has been discussed in the rural area since I have represented that area. Of course, I refer to the subject of local government and rates. This subject has been bandied about for some time although little serious thought was given to it until the last couple of months.

The proposal for a shire in the rural area was introduced by a certain prominent member of the Darwin Rural Landholders Organisation which was very active after Cyclone Tracy. If my memory serves me correctly, the subject was raised in about 1975, and did not meet with much support from people in the rural area. Unfortunately, times have changed. The minister has said that it is inevitable that local government will come to the rural area and rates will have to be paid. The people there, including myself, have resisted this as actively as we can. My philosophical outlook is that, if I believe that a fight can be won, I will resist to the end. However, somewhere along the line, if there is an inevitability about the whole matter, then one does give in, though often not with a good grace. However, one must be sensible. If one gives in, one lives to fight another day - not that I am fighting with the Minister for Community Development of course. However, the inevitable has happened and local government and rating have come to the rural area. The minister said that the decision was taken in Canberra. Local government will be forced on the rural area because of the sales of freehold land there and because we are - he said - the third largest settled area in the Northern Territory.

I will not discuss matters regarding local government that I raised before. However, I would like to publicise certain matters that were raised at a meeting in the rural area last night. The meeting was quite lengthy and very constructive. It was attended by representatives from 13 groups and or areas in the rural area. At the end of the meeting, unanimity was reached on 2 main points. There was constructive discussion and 2 main points were decided on. This information has been relayed to the minister, both at a meeting he had this morning with representatives of that group and by myself. The most important point was that the representatives rejected out of hand any unimproved capital value rating system. They preferred a flat rate rating system because of its fairness to everybody living in the rural area. It was felt that it would not disadvantage any block owner in the rural area whereas unimproved capital value rating would. The flat rate rating system might advantage a few people but the unimproved capital value rating could disadvantage a great many.

Another advantage of the flat rate rating system put forward at the meeting last night was that, relatively speaking, we will not be paying a large sum in rates. The minister had said previously at several meetings that I attended, and also privately to other groups, that the sum the government was looking at raising in the rural area was in the order of $325 000. Whilst canvassing the virtues of UCV rating, he had said that, if the people could

come up with concrete figures to show that flat rate rating would produce the same amount of money, then he would look at that system. Last night, without too much trouble, the people at the meeting came up with a figure which was very close to $325 000. In RL2, there are about 1500 blocks. In RL1, there are about 2340 blocks. These figures are only approximate. If $104 to $105 was paid on blocks in the RL1 areas and half of that on blocks in the RL2 areas, the figure that the minister says he wants from the rural area would be arrived at. This would allow also for an old age pensioner rebate, which nobody had any argument in accepting last night.

The Minister for Community Development spoke about not applying a special commercial rate to businesses in the rural area and that was accepted without any argument last night. The subject of an urban farm rate was discussed also. The minister spoke of that reasonably favourably but it was decided last night that, with the low rates, it would not be really necessary to have an urban farm rate.

The representatives stressed again and again last night that they do not want a cumbersome local government system. They want something that is lean, hungry and pared to the bone. There is not a lot of money in people's pockets in the rural area to support excessive local government accoutrements. If expenses are cut to the bone, that will meet with the people's approval.

Many people commented on the unnecessary speed with which the minister wanted a decision on the matter. This was the most important decision to have been made in the rural area for many years. People had to make up their minds - every group in every area - in a matter of a few months. When the decisions of the meeting where conveyed to the minister, he said that he would like the representatives of those groups to go back once more to their groups and associations and for the area representatives to go back to their rank and file members. I did not really appreciate the minister's reference to 'rank and file'. Usually, it is a term associated with another political party. Nevertheless, we knew what he meant. He wanted them to go back to their rank and file members to obtain their agreement to the proposals made at the meeting last night. Those representatives have started to do that today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second point raised at the meeting last night was that the people wanted 5 members elected to the local government body with the mayor, or whatever the position is to be called, elected from within their ranks and not by community consensus. At first, the minister said that there would be 6 wards in the rural area. After talking with some groups, he reduced this number to 4. He has been amenable to a couple of proposals put to him during discussions, and I must give him credit for that. He listens for some of the time anyway. The people would prefer a 5-member council rather than a council with 4 or 6 members. They believe that 2 members should be elected from RL2 areas, 2 members from the RL1 areas and 1 member should represent a ward which would have RL1 and RL2 blocks. No boundaries were decided on last night. The meeting conceded that the officers of the Department of Community Development probably had rather more expertise and time to decide the boundaries.

The people from the RL2 areas felt that they would not be incommoded at all by a 5-member council with its leader elected from among its members. However, they felt that, if the leader were elected by community consensus, in all probability it would be a foregone conclusion at every election that that position would be filled from an RL1 area because more and more people are settling in RL1 areas. They felt that they would be disadvantaged.

The minister has not rejected these 2 important decisions outright but he wants the representatives to give him a decision by 9 September after consultation with their members. The most important issue was that of the rating system. The advantage of a flat rate over an unimproved capital value rate is that the people, through their elected members, would themselves determine the rate. If one adopts a UCV rating system, one relies on the Valuer-General. I do not doubt his honesty at all but one would rely on the Valuer-General to make valuations from time to time on blocks and we would have to accept his valuations. In 99.9% of cases, they would be accepted and the rates estimated accordingly.

A flat rate will not encourage unnecessary subdivision. It will encourage people to keep their farms intact. An unimproved capital value rating system can be unfair in that a development on the block next door, without any effort on your part, can increase your unimproved capital value. Many examples were mentioned last night where diverse uses of blocks situated next to one another would attract rates under a UCV system which would reflect disadvantageously on 1 neighbour and advantageously on the other. A flat rate does not work that way. If one wants to leave a 20-acre block to one's children, the flat rate system allows for the future better than the unimproved capital value rating system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been told that real estate agents are champing at the bit, hoping that an unimproved capital value rating system will be introduced in the rural area. They can see a great increase in development arising from that. I emphasise that development is not always to the betterment of an area. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I can envisage blocks being subdivided right, left and centre to the betterment of the real estate industry and I do not think this would work necessarily to the benefit of the rural area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is important that the minister stands by his word, and I think he probably will. He has said again and again that he is waiting for feedback from the people in the rural area. He is waiting to see what they want because that is what they will get. We are talking about a rural area extending from Berrimah to Acacia Hill and from Beatrice Hill to Lambells Lagoon. We are talking about a rural area extending to the 38-mile. No doubt there will be considerable development in the future in this rural area so it is important that a sound framework of local government, reflecting the wishes of the people, be incorporated from the very beginning.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): I wish to address a matter which is of concern to me. During this sittings, many remarks have been made in relation to my people by members of the government front and back benches. I refer to the kind of remarks that I believe the Northern Territory does not need. For example, the Minister for Community Development, in commenting on some problems concerning town camps, said that people are moving in from designated Aboriginal areas. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not aware what a 'designated Aboriginal area' is. Perhaps the minister could explain to the Assembly just what he meant by that description and whether he feels that Aboriginal people should be confined to certain areas of the Northern Territory.

If I understood some of his later comments correctly, he seemed to be taking a view that, by granting land rights to 30% of the Territory's population, there would be holding areas for Aboriginal people similar to the Kahlin Compound which was established during the early 1890s. Aboriginal people have as many rights as anyone else. The number of outstation

communities and the people living in those areas has doubled in the last 4 years. This was stressed by the Minister for Community Development. This fact refutes the minister's own claims that Aboriginal people are flocking into urban areas and creating town camps throughout Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and other major centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Community Development referred to the Chief Minister's comments that the Territory has a problem with Aboriginal people in terms of their contribution to the economy of the Northern Territory. By using selected statistics from a book, the Minister for Community Development claimed that Aboriginal people contribute very little and are a drain on the Territory's economy. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give one example. The Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, which is the area I come from, are major users of aircraft charter services. The many outstations fly in fuel and other essential items regularly at a very high cost to themselves. I am sure that various air service companies would collapse, along with taxi services in major communities, if it were not for the enormous use made of them by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. No doubt members of the government are not aware that many outstation communities choose not to receive unemployment benefits even though they have that entitlement.

The Minister for Community Development referred to statistics from a book entitled 'The Aboriginal Economy in Town and Country'. I believe there are many figures that the minister did not quote in his statement to the Assembly. I would advise the minister to look at this comment in reference to the same book. It says that the average level of formal education reached by Aboriginals is noticeably lower than that for the population as a whole. The Territory government has itself identified 3905 Aboriginal children who do not receive any primary education, and I am sure that the Minister for Education would agree with me on that. Funding for these children has been given to the Territory by the Commonwealth. Perhaps the minister will tell me when the Northern Territory government intends to spend some of the millions of dollars it has received in recent years to provide basic primary education? Perhaps he can also explain to me why a NT university will contribute so much to the economic development of the Territory whilst the basic primary and secondary education of Aboriginal children is not important in terms of economic development?

It is clear to me, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the government members in this Assembly are totally ignorant of the real situation in Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory. I recall the member for Sadadeen saying in this Assembly only a few days ago that he was not aware that, in some communities, the trainees are the only people available to provide basic health services. It is about time that some government members went out to Aboriginal communities to see for themselves the types of health, education and other services that are available, and the conditions under which my people live.

I also refer to statements made by the member for Braitling in this Assembly. He said that the permit system should be totally reviewed in view of the fact that vast amounts of government funding go into these communities. Mr Deputy Speaker, if I could take the government members to some of these communities, it would immediately become clear even to them that there is no evidence of vast amounts of money being spent in these places. In fact, those moneys come from royalties received from mining in the Northern Territory. Most of those mining operations are carried out in Aboriginal areas or areas that have been negotiated by Aboriginal councils.

Many outstation schools are a total disgrace, and I refer only to the physical structures and not to the work of the teachers. Some of the flimsy structures do not survive the wet season and the teachers have to start all over again each year. Honourable members would be aware of the fact that there is a cyclone threat each year in the Northern Territory. We have adequate facilities at Yirrkala and Alyangula in terms of educational institutions, but those are exceptions. It is easy for the government to hide from the public the appalling facilities at many isolated schools.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government has said that it is interested in training Aboriginal people to be teachers in their own communities. However, the Department of Education has terminated recently the contracts of some Aboriginal assistants at various schools in the Northern Territory, some of whom have worked in these communities for 20 years or more. I believe that the Minister for Education would be aware of that. What incentive is there for my people to complete years of training to obtain registration, when their contracts are renegotiated every 3 months? No relief staff are provided so that schools can release some of these teachers to attend Batchelor College. When they have completed their training, no accommodation is provided for them in their homeland communities. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Education is present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I invite the government to prove that it is genuinely concerned about my people, who make up 25% or 30% of the total population of the Northern Territory, and suggest that government members go out to some of these communities to make themselves aware of the conditions that exist at these places in terms of education, employment and general services that the government of the Territory has an obligation to supply. I want to see members of this government take some positive action in developing and strengthening the aspirations of my people instead of being derogatory and offensive in relation to those aspirations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, I wish to support the comment by the member for Millner asking that the government take positive steps to document the histories of some of the people in the Northern Territory, especially Aboriginal people. I believe that Aboriginal people have contributed a great deal even though it has been difficult to understand the white-black relationship in the Northern Territory as this was the last frontier. I would urge the government to ensure that at least some of our people are recorded in the history of the Northern Territory. In fact, I was very pleased to see the other day that the Northern Territory government has started promoting a book by Mr Fred Gray, formerly of Umbakumba. I believe that that sort of information will not only teach people in the Northern Territory about Aboriginal society, but also will help people to understand that they live in a multi-racial society. It will help us to accept each other better.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, before addressing the subject on which I wish to speak this evening, I would like to take up a couple of points raised a moment ago by the member for Arnhem. First, I would like to accept his invitation to visit his electorate, particularly some of the Aboriginal outstations. I would like to see and experience the conditions in which his people live which he described so ably. I have a genuine interest in improving the lot of people whom he claims are so disadvantaged. However, in saying that, I would like to point out to the honourable member that the government of the Northern Territory has a genuine interest in improving the conditions of all people, particularly the Aboriginal people, and spends a tremendous proportion of its budget each year - and, certainly, that is the

case with the Department of Education - on providing services and facilities for Aboriginal people. I do not accept several of the remarks that he made in that regard. However, if he would be good enough to organise a trip to his electorate at some stage, I would be very pleased to join him.

Having said that, I would now turn my attention to the great work of the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, in particular the Territory Tidy Towns committees throughout the Northern Territory. When I arrived in Darwin some 12 years ago, it was not an attractive city, particularly during the dry season when the grass is burnt off and the debris and rubbish can be seen so easily. During the wet season, it is a much more attractive place because everything is green and you cannot see the debris because it is underneath the grass. At that time, there was very little civic pride. Few people cared for their gardens. Commonwealth departments expended little or no money on beautification of median strips and urban parks. Rubbish abounded everywhere. I was amazed and disgusted because I had come from the garden city of Toowoomba where people really take a pride in their gardens, their parks and city beautification. It was quite a cultural shock for me to come to Darwin.

It was common to see cans, bottles and other rubbish and debris lying around shopping centres, in streets and along the highways. In fact, some years ago, I assisted the scouts when they had a contract to clean up the Stuart Highway from the airport gates to Howard Springs. That contract was tendered for annually and the scouts won it on 1 or 2 occasions. I do not believe that tenders are now called for that contract; there is a different system applying. However, on this particular occasion, we had several hundred volunteers involved and we had at least half a dozen trucks that made numerous runs to the dump. They were filled mainly with beer cans. The debris that was tossed out of car windows and lined our highways was quite incredible. In fact, it took us 2 days to do the job.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during the past 7 years, there have been 2 significant changes. Firstly, we have achieved self-government and our newly-elected Northern Territory government soon addressed itself to the beautification of our major towns and cities. Soon afterwards came the establishment of the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and its Territory Tidy Towns project. In the initial Territory Tidy Towns project, only a handful of towns participated. This year, there are no less than 68 towns and communities participating in the competition. That is quite an incredible change. It just goes to show how people in the Northern Territory have become far more aware of the necessity to beautify their towns and communities. The communities that have entered the competition this year cover the entire Northern Territory. In fact, quite a few of them are in very remote areas.

It is pleasing to see such a large percentage of the Northern Territory's population participating in beautifying our environment. When I read the list of towns participating, it reminded me of a well-known song, 'I've Been Everywhere Man', because there are so many towns involved. The range of groups involved include community service organisations, government departments and authorities, schools, businesses, local governments and progress associations. Territory Tidy Towns committees have been established in every community and have worked very well indeed during the past 12 months on their home-grown projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I first became involved in the Territory Tidy Towns project several years ago when, as a resident of Nightcliff, I became a member of the Nightcliff committee. I served a couple of terms on that committee.

After my election in Jingili, I was pleased to follow on from the work of the previous member, the Hon Paul Everingham, and establish a committee there this year. I am delighted to reflect this evening on the support that I have received from that committee and on the way so many citizens of my electorate have come forward to offer their services. They came from throughout the suburbs of Jingili and Moil. In some cases, at the time of joining the committee, they did not know each other. I have been impressed by the way that they have blended into such an effective team.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at this point, I would like to draw attention to the support and cooperation given by the Darwin City Council Parks and Gardens Department. In particular, I would like to mention Miss Wendy Petridge, the Darwin City Council beautification officer, who has indeed been most helpful. On 2 occasions, I joined officers of the council, Miss Petridge and aldermen to inspect the various parks and streets throughout the electorate. We have had quite a number of discussions since. It is very important to involve the council as well as the residents of the electorate because, without cooperation from all groups, it is not possible to participate effectively in the Territory Tidy Towns project and upgrade the area.

I am very pleased to report that the Darwin City Council cooperated and agreed to upgrade Wilson Park in Moil and Borella Park in Jingili. This work has now been completed. In-ground sprinklers, post-rail fences, seats, rubbish bins etc have all been installed. Last weekend, my committee supported this venture with a tree-planting project which was undertaken in both parks. Approximately 50 trees were planted in each park and the adjoining nature strips. As part of my committee's attempt to involve the community, a letter inviting residents' participation was letter-boxed in the immediate area. I was delighted by the response. Quite a number of residents appeared with their shovels to assist. It is very important that we have community involvement because that is what makes the Territory Tidy Towns competition work.

My committee has other projects in mind for this year's competition. In a week or so, we will plant trees on the nature strips along Jingili Terrace and Moil Circuit. Residents' participation will again be invited. I am confident that they will respond in large numbers. The Jingili committee is very keen to continue to beautify its electorate and will certainly continue to undertake similar projects as time goes by. I think that it is very important that we do not become fired up only in May of each year. We should be beautifying our electorates or towns progressively throughout the year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot conclude my comments without paying tribute to the excellent work done by the Casuarina Lionesses who have spent considerable time and effort in developing an adventure park in Moil. It is an adventure park which is suitable for young people with their BMX bikes. It has little hillocks, gullies, culverts etc where the children can have a lot of fun. I would also like to pay tribute to the Jingili and Moil primary school councils, together with the staff and students of both those schools. Both schools recently won prizes in various garden competitions and they have done a tremendous amount of work in beautifying their school grounds. In particular, at the Moil Primary School, there is a quadrangle which the school council re-landscaped and, subsequently, the students planted over 100 palms. It looks quite a picture at the moment. They certainly earned the shield that they were given by the Bougainvillea Festival committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very proud of the efforts of the residents of the Jingili electorate and their contribution to the 1985 Territory Tidy Towns competition. It has been suggested that we set up a progress association in the electorate. I fully endorse that recommendation. Once this competition has been completed, I intend to pursue that. However, in closing, I pay tribute to the efforts of this team. I wish them well in their future undertakings.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to answer a question and touch on one other matter.

The member for MacDonnell put a question to me the day before yesterday regarding the erosion problems in the pipeline easement between Palm Valley and Alice Springs. I had no knowledge of any erosion problems but I undertook to make inquiries and to inform the Assembly of the results of those inquiries. The pipeline was constructed in 1983 and the operators were required to adhere to environmental standards set in a preliminary environmental report which was furnished prior to the commencement of construction and reviewed by the Conservation Commission and the Department of Mines and Energy. In addition, with regard to the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline, power exists for myself and senior officers of the Energy Division to direct environmental rehabilitation work where this is considered necessary. In March 1984, following the summer wet season and an opportunity for regenerative growth, officers of the Conservation Commission, in company with Mr Harry Butler, made a detailed inspection of the pipeline route. As a result of that inspection, a number of recommendations were made for follow-up remedial action although I think it is fair to say that the general impression was that the construction crew had done a pretty good job of restoration initially. In any event, the comments were passed on to TNT Bulkships which was requested to carry out the necessary follow-up action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier this year, following the wet season, officers of the Department of Mines and Energy Environmental Inspection Branch, firstly on their own and subsequently in company with Conservation Commission personnel, again inspected the pipeline route. By and large, the recommendations resulting from the earlier inspection had been put into effect and it was considered that the general standard of regenerative growth was high. One area did cause concern and that was the right-of-way which has become something of a popular cattle run on Owen Springs Station. Ironically, the lushness of the regrowth is what attracts the cattle to the area.

In May 1985, construction of the Mereenie to Alice Springs oil pipeline commenced. The right-of-way for this pipeline is immediately adjacent to the right-of-way of the Palm Valley pipeline. Of course, this has meant that all existing erosion-control drainage systems on the southern side of the existing pipeline easement have been interfered with by the new right-of-way. As a matter of course, the crew constructing the Mereenie line will be instituting proper erosion-control measures to provide appropriate drainage systems to the south of the system constituted by the dual right-of-way.

In addition, positive steps have been taken with regard to the area popular with cattle on Owen Springs Station to which I referred. Agreement seems to have been reached for the fencing off of an area of some 3 km or 4 km of the easement on Owen Springs at the expense of the pipeline operators. It is possible some other solution may be found but, at this stage, fencing is the most likely one. Buffel grass supplied by the Conservation Commission will be sown in this area to bind the soil and the fencing will be removed

once the commission advises my department it is satisfied that the soil is sufficiently stabilised. Once the Mereenie line construction crew has finished its work and the restoration work is done, another inspection will be carried out after a season of rain to check the success of the erosion control measures installed. If further work is required at that point, it will be ordered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, once you have interfered with a natural system that has stabilised over thousands of years, it would be a vain man who thought that he could design a perfect restoration system in one go. For this reason, it has always been required by the government that my department and the Conservation Commission should keep close tabs on areas of environmental disturbance and to monitor restabilisation. The monitoring process will continue for some time and, of course, the obligations of the licensees as to environmental protection will remain as long as their licence is in force which is at least until the 21st century.

I want to touch on a couple of points before I sit down. The member for Arnhem expressed his disappointment at some of the things that have been said about Aborigines in the Territory. I would just like to say a few things about employment and Aborigines in the Territory, and I am talking about Aborigines who live in the remoter areas of the Territory rather than urban Aborigines. The member for Arnhem said the government has an obligation to do something about this unemployment. I guess that is true. Historically, I think governments have wrung their hands about what to do. Even if everybody on an Aboriginal settlement was educated to matriculation standard, what would they do? They live in areas where there are no employment opportunities. Any group of Europeans out in the sticks who are not in the vicinity of employment opportunities is in exactly the same situation as those Aborigines. It has the choice of either moving to centres where there is work or remaining unemployed.

The problem with the Aborigines in the Territory is that they are reluctant to move to the cities although there is a drift. I can understand their being reluctant and wanting to maintain their own lifestyle but they cannot maintain that and continue to be bitter about the fact that they are all unemployed. It is a fact of life. They will not have jobs, with the exception of the few opportunities that are internally generated. Everyone knows that money is spent on Aboriginal settlements and that money does create employment. If it does not, it should because a lot of the money is given to Aboriginal councils to run their sewerage systems, powerhouses etc so that they can employ their own people. Those opportunities must be maximised. However, there is a limit on how much employment that money can create.

I am reminded of the words of a gentleman whose name I will not mention. He said to me one day, when talking about the frustrations we feel in trying to grapple with Aboriginal problems, that maybe they just want to be Aborigines. He was really implying that perhaps we should not forever be out there with all sorts of government officers, schemes and things. Maybe they just want to be left alone to live a largely traditional lifestyle and perhaps we should think about that. Perhaps they do not want 3-bedroom brick houses and white picket fences and immaculate lawns; I am sure most of them do not. Perhaps they just want us to leave them alone. That could be done but, of course, you cannot do that and still accept abuse, as a government, because the infant mortality and disease rates are higher than anywhere else. A return to the natural lifestyle would present problems but it is a legitimate aspiration for an Aboriginal group to say: 'We reject the society out there.

We are going to pull the hatches down and no one can come in'. There are a couple of small groups in Arnhem Land who have partly done that. They have said: 'We do not want to hear from any of you people - doctors, sisters, teachers or dole cheque hander-outers. None of you'. I think that is their right.

When you think about it, living in a society like ours takes a fair bit of effort. We may not think about it much because we have lived in it since the day we were born but, to live in a mainstream society, you must conform to a range of social norms, otherwise you would be a complete outcast. I must confess the range of options is pretty broad as far as things like clothing and social behaviour are concerned but you still have to behave with propriety and do such mundane things as keep yourself shaved unless you grow a beard. You cannot do whatever you like; you have to be self-disciplined. If you want a job, you have to get up every morning. You hate it on many mornings but you go to work because, if you are not there, the boss will either sack you or give you a dressing down. When you go to lunch and you feel tired, you still have to go back. To keep your job, you have to go back to work. It is a pain and it is discipline. We all do it every day and it is a pain in the neck.

You have to worry about whether your kids will run off the rails and take drugs. You must ensure they are going to school and not wagging it. You have to worry about whom they are hanging around with. It all takes a fair bit of effort and, of course, much of that scene is as remote from a traditional Aboriginal as the moon. He does some of those things but in his own way. To try to tie that into the employment scene just does not work. I become cranky at references in the national press and in the Assembly that the government is not doing enough. People say that the Aboriginal unemployment rate is chronic and that the white unemployment rate is nothing compared to it. They are just not comparable because, if you had 50 white people in the bush where there is no employment, they would have a 90% unemployment rate too.

We will be grappling with these problems for the next 50 or 100 years. I certainly do not have any instant answers. I would like to hear from people who do. I am always interested to listen to the ideas of people like the member for Arnhem and others in the Assembly, who have considerable experience in remote areas, about what should be done. I would rather hear that than more criticism of what has been wrong in the past, and I agree with him that plenty has been wrong.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must say the Attorney-General has just exhibited a side of himself that I have never seen before. Perhaps that is a little unfair; I have never looked for it before. There is an enormous problem of how the Northern Territory can come to terms with 30% of its society: the Aboriginal people. Not all of them live in a traditional lifestyle but, certainly where I come from, a substantial number have a very traditional lifestyle. How we grapple with that is an ongoing and a very terrifying question for those of us who contemplate it. I will not take the minister to task on any of these matters. I believe he has expressed the frustrations that all of us must feel about what we can do.

More and more of these people are being asked to conform to our social norms; our lifestyle is encroaching on them with more and more force. The whole question of land rights and whether or not there should be mining on Aboriginal land is being examined. Indeed, Aboriginal people are questioning whether or not they should continue to rely upon the social security structures that we in our wisdom supply. It is a very difficult question. I

would not be crass enough to say that I have a crystal ball. It is a fact that there are people in my electorate whose lifestyles are being radically altered. In 30 years' time, the mine will close down there. I would like to believe that I will still be alive then but, unfortunately, my lifestyle will probably have led to my demise. The closure of that mine will produce radical changes in the lifestyle of that community just as its operation has done. The Aboriginal people in my electorate have aspirations for themselves and their children. What will they do when the mine is closed down? It is a very difficult question.

I am indeed heartened this evening that the Attorney-General at least perceives these tremendous conflicts which face our people in the Northern Territory. As I said, it is a side of him that I have never perceived in the past. I am heartened there is a minister who can get up in this Assembly and say there are monstrous problems confronting our population. We need to keep searching for answers. I would never be crass enough to suppose that I have a crystal ball or the magic answer.

It is a fact that Aboriginal people are changing and their needs and aspirations are changing. It is a fact that they and their lifestyles are under continuous threat. It is a fact that they feel continually threatened. The member for Arnhem said unemployment is high and the reason he said that is that Aboriginal people are accused daily in newspapers. Indeed, the editorial of this lovely rag carries it again: 'They are a blot on society; they contribute nothing'. When people are accused of those things, what can they do but point out that they cannot contribute? What else can they do? They have no chance of contributing! They have no education to contribute! They do not have the employment opportunities to contribute! What else can they do? This continuous barrage, this berating of a race, is beyond belief. It is emasculation of fellow human beings and I am pleased that at least one member of the government recognises the huge human problems that we are confronted with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise another matter that concerns the Minister for Industry and Small Business. I know he is in another place and I hope he is listening. My constituents are occasionally faced by delegations from business houses who come to Nhulunbuy and, I imagine, to other parts of the Northern Territory to expound on the virtues of keeping money in the Territory. We are supposed to keep the Territory going by investing in it. Small businessmen and consumers should feel that they are contributing to the Territory by purchasing goods here.

The Gove taxi service does not have one vehicle on the road tonight because the only parts it can buy for its vehicles come from Suttons Motors in Darwin. It cannot obtain parts for its vehicles. One vehicle required a replacement motor. It had to fly the motor for that vehicle from Brisbane simply because it could not rely upon a local distributor. Other small parts and components should have taken a day or an hour to arrive in Nhulunbuy. Indeed, if they had been ordered from the South Pole, they would have arrived there quicker! These parts have not arrived. If the Northern Territory companies expect to keep the respect of small businessmen such as taxi operators, plumbers and electricians who rely upon the ready supply of equipment, then they must be prepared to supply it on demand. If business people ring up Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne, they are able to obtain equipment on demand; if they ring up Darwin, they are absolutely frustrated. In this case, these people are going broke. They have very large overheads. They are obliged to keep staff on but they cannot operate because they cannot

keep their vehicles on the road. I suppose that they should keep more spare parts in stock but, if small business houses in places like Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and even Alice Springs cannot rely on Territory suppliers, they will look elsewhere. No matter what the Minister for Industry and Small Business says, they will look elsewhere. For the sake of their own livelihood, they will say: 'To hell with the Territory'. Who in this Assembly could blame them?

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not speak for very long.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to respond to what I consider to be a very political speech from the member for Arnhem. I certainly have no problem with his claim that conditions for Aboriginal people in many communities are less than desirable. I have had a fairly close association with Aboriginal people for the last 22 years. I speak with experience of the time when what are known now as very well-developed Aboriginal communities - for example, Nguiu on Bathurst Island, Pularumpi and Milikapiti on Melville Island and Wadeye at Port Keats - were very poor communities. No Aboriginal persons were living in other than very small tin humpies. Schools were old although well run. Certainly, they were not very attractive buildings. At Nguiu, there was one tap for about 1000 people. Those conditions were certainly poor and they had been like that for many years. If you go to Nguiu or to Wadeye now you will see the improvement in those conditions. Having worked with those communities over the last 22 years, I have been in a unique position to see major improvements come about.

For many years, we struggled to get better school facilities, better health facilities, better housing, improved work areas and whatever. It was a very slow process. It took many years and a lot of hard fighting to get the sort of conditions that we wanted. I can say quite definitely that the majority of those improvements have occurred in the last 7 or 8 years. The improvements to health, education and many other facilities in Aboriginal communities did not result from Territory funding alone. However, the responsiveness of the Territory set the pace. In fact, it speeded up improvement in those areas.

I would draw the member for Arnhem's attention to places like Batchelor College and the areas that the Territory government has developed to improve the education of Aboriginal people and to improve the facilities available to Aboriginal people. Batchelor College is something that we can all be proud of. The facilities, the types of courses and the improvements in courses and facilities result from moves taken by this government to improve the lot of Aboriginal people. I would refer the honourable member also to the Institute for Aboriginal Health in Katherine. The developments that have taken place there have been under the direction of this government alone.

I do not need to take up the member for Arnhem's offer of a trip around his electorate, although I would be quite happy to travel around those areas again. I have seen those areas. I have also travelled around many Aboriginal communities in the member for Stuart's electorate. I have seen some of his communities.

Mr Ede: I have seen some of yours too.

Mr McCARTHY: I am sure you have and I am quite pleased to accommodate you.

The conditions in many of those communities still leave something to be desired; there is no doubt about that. However, the majority of those communities that have been established for years have had very large sums spent on them to improve education facilities, health facilities, housing, workplaces and a whole range of things. Many of those facilities have not survived as well as they might. I have said a number of times in this Assembly that I am concerned about the amount of vandalism that takes place in Aboriginal communities. I have had responsibility for the repair of vandalism in communities that I have been responsible for. I have seen school buildings provided by this government at a cost of more than $0.5m requiring expensive maintenance within 12 months.

Mr Ede: Don't be simplistic.

Mr McCARTHY: I am not being simplistic; I am being realistic. Some communities have solid buildings, perhaps built from stone blocks, but there are always more fragile materials used such as glass, tiles and wood.

Mr Ede: Overcrowding! It is all fair play.

Mr McCARTHY: In these communities, overcrowding was not a problem, I can assure the member of that. The amount of vandalism is really quite frightening and very worrying to the people who live in those communities. They do not try to hide from it; they admit that there is a problem. The damage is quite horrendous. Recently, at one community, I stood at the counter where people were collecting unemployment benefits. I saw 250 people, who all appeared to be under 30, collecting unemployment benefits. In that same community, people were trying to employ locals to work on a building project and it was very difficult to get any takers.

That brings me to a problem that has existed in Aboriginal communities for years. It is one that needs to be looked at very carefully. It is almost impossible to employ people effectively in Aboriginal communities because of the numbers. At the community that I spoke about, there were only 10 temporary positions available at that time. Therefore, 240 of the 250 people picking up unemployment benefits had no possibility of gaining work. There was nothing there for them to do although there was a lot of rubbish around the community. If it were my community, I would want to do something about it. Employed or unemployed, I would certainly want to clean it up.

We do not stress strongly enough that the responsibility rests with the people who live in these communities. It is not my responsibility nor the honourable member for Stuart's responsibility but the responsibility of the people who live there to look after their communities. People have left good jobs in communities. In one case, a trained Aboriginal teacher was fed up with the fact that he had worked daily for many years while people of his own age were collecting unemployment benefits and making him feel silly. He left his job against the wishes of his principal. He was able to go straight to the local unemployment office and claim unemployment benefits immediately. Even when the principal made the office aware that there was a position waiting for him, nothing was done. That man collected unemployment benefits for some time. Fortunately, he became tired of it. He realised that it was better to work and went back to work after 8 or 10 weeks. That matter has been raised in a number of places; I have raised it at the CES office in Katherine. Aboriginal people have been able to collect unemployment benefits even though jobs have been available in their own communities. A blind eye has been turned in relation to this matter.

The member for Arnhem referred to outstations as those areas where temporary schools blew away each year. The growth of outstations is enormous. I understand there are over 250 outstations currently in the Northern Territory. No state has anywhere near that number; Western Australia is the closest with 60. We are seeing new outstations formed almost daily. I go to outstations in my own electorate and I am told that the government must give them a variety of things. I do not make any bones about it: I say that the government does not have to give such things. I went into one outstation community not so long ago. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs had provided $200 000 worth of machinery such as tractors, ploughs, harrows etc. Not one of those machines had been used. The tractor was used but not to drag the machinery.

I was told that the government ought to give this and that. There was a whole range of items. They were doing reasonably well. Better than average outstation housing had already been provided. They had showers with solar hot water and a number of other facilities. I suggested that they attempt to establish a garden. They had the machinery to do it and they could grow almost anything there because the soil was good. They said that they had tomatoes and they took me out to the back of the house and showed me one tomato plant. I think it fell from a seed. I will admit that at one house there were some sweet potatoes.

I am not attempting to be critical of Aboriginal people; I am trying to state the facts. I state these facts quite freely in the communities in my electorate and I am not howled down; the people know it is true.

Mr Ede: They just walk out.

Mr McCARTHY: They do not walk out. They accept it because they know that I will always state the facts and not slide around them as you do.

The population in some areas can never be fully employed in communities and there is even less chance in outstation communities. Quite honestly, I believe that this government is doing all that it possibly can with the money available to provide the sorts of services that the member for Arnhem claimed his people were not getting. I think that he said the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory was 30% of the total population. I dispute that; it is more like 23% and falling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give it away now because I have used up my time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am going to take a bit more notice of the comments of the member for Fannie Bay, not because he has had any knowledge of the subject that he has been discussing but because, as a minister, he has a bit of impact on policy. His statements were extremely crass. However, they need a fairly detailed rebuttal and I do not have the time to do that tonight. I will definitely be doing it at the next sittings.

The reason I rise tonight is to discuss the Lajamanu school. I would like to register my concern at the intention of the Northern Territory Department of Education to downgrade the status of the Lajamanu school from band 4 to band 3, effectively reducing its resources, its standing in the community and its ability to provide quality education to the people of Lajamanu. Time and time again, we see the Northern Territory government victimise a particular section of our community, a section which could benefit from a little more understanding and a little more rational consideration. From his comments, it

appears the Minister for Education cannot manage to consider the special needs of schools and the need for a little flexibility in the way the system delivers education to our children.

From comments the minister and his staff have made, the intention to reduce the status of Lajamanu school to band 3 is solely on the basis of enrolment numbers at the school. This is either a very naive assessment of this school's needs or a deliberate move to undermine the efforts of a sincere and dedicated teaching staff and a very involved community. If this decision was made out of naivete, I must stress that there are many other factors that need to be considered in determining the formulae for community schools. I will come back to the matter of enrolled students and attendance shortly.

My first consideration is the special requirements of these isolated schools. Let me note some of these. Firstly, there are the extra duties that are incumbent upon an educational leader in the bush. Secondly, there is the complexity of the socio-economic variables. Thirdly, there are many special programs. Fourthly, there is limited or no access to services such as emergency teachers. Fifthly, the principal is solely responsible for the education of the entire community. Sixthly, there are the harsh, remote conditions the teachers have to work under. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to go into each of these in a little more detail.

The first point I mentioned was the extra duties incumbent on educational leaders in the bush. In a typical urban context, the children, their families and the teachers for the most part share important common assumptions about the nature of the educative process and the function of western education. Equally, in the typical urban context, the values underlying the educative process are supported and reinforced by the predominant values of the immediate surrounding world. In a traditionally-oriented Aboriginal community, the western educative process is often implemented by young, white, monolingual, monocultural teachers. I do not knock them for that; they are doing their very best in a difficult situation. They often have no specialist knowledge of what Aboriginal education is all about. There are no shared assumptions between the people who are being taught and the people who are teaching. There is no common assumption of what education is all about. It is sometimes referred to as culture shock. Young students coming out of Sydney or Melbourne schools are suddenly confronted by a situation where not only are they very new teachers in new schools, they are also confronted by cultural shock. This is one of the problems that the head teacher has to confront.

Community liaison is a very high component of the teacher's work in bush schools. It is not simply a matter of getting to know people. Frequently, he has to work through a whole cultural process of trying to understand what the people are on about and to try to rethink his own cultural ideals so that he can get on the same wavelength as the people in the community. Only then can he begin to make some headway with what he is trying to do. Such abilities are seldom found in a young head teacher. It is obvious that what is needed is a mature and experienced head teacher - somebody in band 4. It is obvious that the savings by reducing Lajamanu school to band 3 would be relatively small. Even over a long period, the destructive effect would be great. I submit that, in the short term, this would be a false economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the points that I want to make is that we have been told constantly about an austerity program. Within the context of this austerity program, I would like to mention to honourable members the vacancies

that were advertised on 13 August 1985. Here we have one for an executive level 3 position at a salary of $37 918 to $39 466, plus all the extras. Let us have a look at what this person has to do: 'Establish and maintain procedures for clearing all communications which have implications for public and staff relations, including news releases and interviews'. It is very obvious that the department has real problems trying to sell to the people of the Northern Territory the complete mess that it has made of the education system. It needs to spend another $40 000 to try to get around this problem. It is very hard to think that the reason this money needs to be spent is because positions are being eliminated in the bush, at the sharp end of the stick where they are needed.

I want to examine one more aspect of what this particular person will do. He will prepare and edit copy and prepare ministerial speeches. I will not comment on the need or otherwise for the minister's speeches to be upgraded or downgraded but I reject the notion that, while he is spending $40 000 to upgrade his own speeches, he is prepared to knock Lajamanu school down to a lower status. I think that is a case of unbalanced priorities. There is possibly a feeling that we can con the public because we do not get down to the real nitty gritty of what we are about.

Let us consider the induction of new teachers. These people have real problems. They come to a new situation and they need a lot of assistance. It is incumbent upon the principal of that school to help those people to get through that early stage of learning what the Aboriginal educative process is all about. That requires much more work from the principal in the bush than would be required of a principal in an urban school. I am talking about the extra needs that exist in a bush school to justify a higher status than an urban school.

I want to talk a little more about the coordination and management of the special programs. I would like to go through some of these special programs because, at Lajamanu itself, there is an enormous range of them. There is the bilingual education program which is one of the most impressive that I have seen anywhere in the Northern Territory. They are really starting to get their act together and are on the brink of producing something good. I have seen the way the program is developed to include children aged 2 and 3 and then upwards through the school program. It was introduced in April 1982 and it is now starting to bear fruit. It cannot be accomplished in a couple of years.

Then there is the RATE program. There are a large number of students who want to undertake the program and become teachers. I have said before in this Assembly how important it is to have Aboriginal people teaching their own students.

There is also the literacy worker program which has 11 students. They are developing a Walpiri curriculum which will be used not just in their own school but also at Yuendumu and right through the Walpiri country as we develop the schools in the area.

There is also the post-primary program. There are 17 children at the moment enrolled in Years 8 to 10. There is no alternative for those kids. They do not have access to Yirara or Kormilda because, if you have post-primary facilities, you have to use those facilities.

What about the program for impaired-hearing students? Mr Deputy Speaker, more than 50% of the Lajamanu children have significant hearing loss. In fact, some 75% to 80% have glue ear. If a child had that problem down south, he would be in a special school where there would be 8 to 10 students in a class. The simple fact that a child cannot speak English would warrant placing him in a class of about 10 to 15.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am running out of time. I would like to point out that what was said about attendance and enrolment was wrong. There are not 180-odd children attending. The enrolment has increased from 60% to close to 80%. This school is really showing some great advances in education and it should be assisted.

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

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, before addressing the issues raised by the last few speakers, I would like to raise several matters in relation to my own electorate. I believe that it is very important that I make these comments. Much has been said about our tourist industry. I have some particular concerns.

The first relates to a focal point in Darwin - the Smith Street Mall. The issue of public behaviour and litter is a hardy perennial and it is time to raise it again. After all the work that has been done to make our mall a showplace, nothing is more disappointing and annoying than to see it undone in a matter of minutes by unsightly and unseemly behaviour. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you walk up the mall, you will be confronted on many occasions by many people lying about in various stages of undress. Of course, people are entitled to use a public place for their enjoyment. With this in mind, I question why some of the behaviour is tolerated. There is public drunkenness, foul language and littering. All of these things should be controlled. It is reassuring that, in the past, we have seen the occasional policeman on foot patrol. There is no doubt that the police presence does wonders for community well-being. I would also say that a tremendous amount of good work has been done by the people responsible for the management of the mall. But there is a need for all of us to become involved and to support their efforts.

The council has a set of mall bylaws but I am afraid that those bylaws are very weak. There are bylaws in relation to vehicles and bicycles not being in the mall and yet motorcycles and bicycles generally are ridden up the mall. We also have a very serious dog problem in the mall. Unfortunately, the bylaws bring into question the actual power that council officers have to remove those animals. Under bylaw 4(7), a person shall not, without the permission in writing of the Town Clerk, bring an animal into the mall. According to bylaw 4(8)(a), the provisions of subclause (7) do not apply to the bringing into the mall of a dog which is at all times under the control of a person by means of its being held in his arms or on a chain or leash. The problem is that many people who frequent the hotel in the mall tie their dogs to the trees that abound the mall. Unfortunately, when officers approach the people who own those dogs, they must argue their case that the dog is not under effective control.

It is quite clear that the problem of dogs in the mall and the smell of the mall itself must be addressed very seriously. The council must change the bylaws so that officers are able to control what happens in the mall. It is one of the best malls that I have seen in Australia. It is definitely an attraction to the main city area. If we are supporting tourism, then we must do something to ensure that the mall is cleaned up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some weeks ago the Darwin City Council decided to place a sign at the entrance to the casino. It reads 'Mindil Beach'. I feel that that move has caused a great deal of confusion in the community. The road where the sign is placed leads to a building; it does not lead to Mindil Beach. I am not going to become involved in the issue of the name of the casino other than to comment that it is my view that persons, companies or associations have the right to choose what name they wish for their business, building or whatever. My concern is that the council, through its disagreement with the name that has been given to the casino, has seriously put at risk the identification of Mindil Beach. There has never been any argument that Mindil Beach is Mindil Beach. I cannot understand the council putting forward that view. I can assure members that, if anyone did try to change the name of Mindil Beach, there would be an uprising. There is no doubt about that at all. My concern is that the road leading to Mindil Beach is not identified in any way whatsoever. It is not until you have actually turned from Gilruth Avenue into Maria Liveris Drive that you come across a finger sign indicating where Mindil Beach is. The difference of opinion that the Darwin City Council has in relation to the naming of the casino must not be allowed to mislead the public as to where Mindil Beach is. Everyone should be able to clearly identify the position of Mindil Beach. I suggest that the council should reposition that sign at the start of Maria Liveris Drive. It is totally misleading to have the Mindil Beach sign positioned at the entrance to a building. I urge the Darwin City Council to move that sign.

Whilst speaking about signs, I would like to refer to signs which have caused a great deal of confusion to the people of my electorate. I refer to 4 signs that have been positioned on the corner of Knuckey and Mitchell Streets. I am sure that honourable members would have seen them. They are big red signs. On those signs are printed the words: 'Give Way To The Right'. All those signs do is create confusion. Indeed, it is a very serious and dangerous situation. I understand that there have been a number of accidents at the intersection - not serious accidents but nevertheless accidents. Before obtaining a driver's licence, people learn that they must give way to the right. Here we have signs which very clearly spell out that rule. Seeing a sign which spells out a basic rule of the road can have an amazing effect on a driver. I can sum that effect up in one word: confusion. The council should rethink the placement of those signs if it wants to identify either Mitchell Street or Knuckey Street. To have 4 signs with the words 'Give Way To The Right' is most confusing. I would call on the council either to give a very good reason why it has positioned those signs there or to remove them.

The same thing applies to 'Give Way' signs or 'Stop' signs at T-junctions. There is a rule which says that the traffic on the terminating road at a T-junction must give way yet we see 'Stop' signs and 'Give Way' signs on those particular terminating roads. I can understand the need to put 'Stop' signs or 'Give Way' signs when there is a hill at one of those intersections or where the rule itself is varied. There is an example of that at the end of Mitchell Street at the Esplanade. The positioning of signs in that manner creates confusion for drivers. It causes dangerous situations to arise. I would ask that the council and perhaps the Road Safety Council rethink the positioning of all their signs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in recent months, the members for MacDonnell and Stuart have taken their fair share of liberties in criticising the staffing of schools in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, especially schools in their own electorates. Whilst I applaud any member of the Assembly who takes the trouble to alert me to any instances of perceived

inequity in schools in his electorates, I request that those same members take the trouble to ensure that they get the facts straight before crying wolf. The members for MacDonnell and Stuart are past masters at crying wolf and will eventually pay the penalty.

The main issues raised by the 2 members revolve around the reduction in staff numbers in some schools. The member for MacDonnell, in particular, has been less than complimentary about the current practice of staffing schools on a formula applied to attendance plus 15%. He has also been responsible for misleading people into believing that schools are staffed only on this basis and that no special needs of individual schools are taken into account. Nothing could be further from the truth. As I have stated during this sittings, Northern Territory schools are staffed on the basis of formulae which are equal to the best if not better than those of the states.

It is only logical that, when student numbers at any given school decrease, and the indication is that the decrease will remain fairly constant, then the staff numbers allocated to that school must also decrease. The major problem that the Department of Education has to face emerges when the attendance rate of the school is examined. Most urban schools have an average attendance rate of 90% or more. In other words, it can be assumed that most children enrolled at that school will attend each day. In this case, the school is staffed on the basis of enrolment; that is, attendance plus 10%. The situation is different, however, in some Aboriginal schools where the pattern of enrolment and attendance figures is vastly different. I do not believe that the Northern Territory government should be responsible for staffing schools for the benefit of students who, in effect, do not exist. It is this point of view that the member for MacDonnell, in particular, fails to understand. Over the last 6 months, the attendance rates at certain schools have been abysmal. Take for example the attendance rates at Yuendumu. In February, an average of 73% of students enrolled attended school each day. In March, the attendance rate dropped to 72.5%. By May, the attendance rate had shrunk to 68%. This decline continued into June when average attendance dropped to 60%. A further example of such a fluctuation in attendance rate was 71%. This improved to 75% in March, declined to 63% in May and, by June, had dropped to 50%.

Is it necessary to repeat what I have stated before? Why should the Northern Territory pay for staff to teach non-existent students? The staffing arrangements for Aboriginal schools are very generous despite the sometimes appalling attendance rate. The Department of Education staffs those schools which have an average attendance rate of less than 85% on the basis of average attendance plus 15%. This means that a school with an enrolment of 100 would have an average attendance of 65. Staff will be provided as if 80 and not 65 students attended school each day. This also means that each school is more than adequately catered for, in terms of staff numbers, to cope with the handful of days when 80 or more students attend.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member is aware that, if average attendance rates increase and remain stable, more staff will be provided. I continually repeat that. It is unfortunate that the member for MacDonnell cannot grasp this small piece of elementary knowledge. Similarly, he consistently refuses to accept that, in comparison with urban schools, rural schools receive a very generous Northern Territory Public Service staff allocation. I think that it is appropriate to provide members of this Assembly with some basic statistics which hopefully will settle this matter once and for all. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will have to leave it there because I have run out of

time. I can assure honourable members that I will finish this saga at the next sittings.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I listened with great patience to all the other speakers and I am sure you are very happy that I should have my time. When the opposition benches do not have a very good argument, shades of doubt are cast upon proposals. The Leader of the Opposition this week was saying that there is not too much evidence to suggest that privatisation makes things more efficient. I would just like to put into the public record, and I hope that he will read it in due course, some facts on a particular study done in New South Wales by transport planning consultants, Travers and Morgan. It contains a comparison between the public bus service and private buses. I am sure you will be absolutely fascinated by some of the results:

> 'If private operators received the same level of government subsidy as the public, they would provide a free bus service 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. If the private sector ran the government buses at current frequencies and fare levels, they would reduce the annual deficit from $100m to $10m'.

Our opposition says that we waste money. What about its Labor colleagues in New South Wales: a $100m deficit on their buses! The public buses cost $3.20 per kilometre to run. The private buses cost half that amount. Every government bus costs about $60 000 a year more to operate than a private bus. The government employs 1 specialist mechanic for every 2 buses; the private system employs 1 mechanic for 10 buses. That is a 5-fold increase in output. For every public bus on the road, there are 4.7 employees; for every private bus, there are 1.4. The public bus system suffers from high manning levels. The point that this study makes is that many other government-run services would provide similar statistics if comparisons were made. This same basic disease permeates many of these services: our health system, our welfare system and indeed the trade union movement.

In the public sector, your livelihood or survival does not depend upon your performance. There is an insurance there. The government guarantees, and so the necessity to perform is not there. Such services do not perform. This is a stark difference, and I agreed with the member for MacDonnell last night when he talked about the chill winds of private enterprise. People in the private sector have no choice: they either perform or they go broke. This study shows the difference between the huge costs of a public service - in this case the bus service - compared to a privately-run operation in New South Wales. It is the difference between people who are propped up, guaranteed and given a nice, warm, cosy existence and people who are brave enough to tackle the chill winds.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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