

PART II

THE QUESTION PAPER

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II.
Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.
An asterisk preceding an entry in the index indicates
that an answer has not yet been received.

From 28 February 1984

Forestry - 1981-82 Expenditure

1 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSERVATION

1. How much of the \$2.05 million spent on forestry in 1981-82 went on
(a) research activities outlined on pp. 19 and 20 of the Annual Report of the Conservation Commission for 1981-82; (b) Melville and Bathurst Islands operations; (c) Murgarella operations; (d) Darwin district operations; and (e) central Australia operations?
2. Of the \$2.17 million for park development how much went to (a) Darwin; (b) Alice Springs; (c) Katherine; (d) Tennant Creek; and other centres?
3. Was any planting done at Melville and Bathurst Islands in 1981-82?

From 6 March 1984

Upgrading of Dump and Wambiaia Camps

2 Mr EDE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What steps are being taken to provide basic facilities to the Dump and Wambiaia camps in Tennant Creek?

Electric Lighting - Warrego-Tennant Creek Intersection

3 Mr EDE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Given that ore traffic from east of Tennant Creek to Warrego is due to commence in the near future, will he advise when the Warrego Road-Tennant Creek intersection will be supplied with electric lighting?

Upgrading of Stuart Highway

4 Mr EDE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Do plans exist to upgrade the Stuart Highway between the Seven-Mile Homestead and the Three Ways in order to reduce congestion on this relatively densely trafficked section?

Police Investigation into BTB Eradication Campaign

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

On 27 February, he issued a statement in respect of the Territory's BTB eradication campaign. He said that, as a result of an ongoing review of the BTB program, funding for destocking was to be suspended. Is it true that at least part of this ongoing review consists of an investigation by the Northern Territory Police Force into allegations of massive fraud in the allocation of destocking moneys which, of course, come from both the Northern Territory and the federal governments and, if so, exactly what is it that the police are investigating?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, during November or December, certain persons from outside the Northern Territory made allegations of impropriety relating to the use of BTB program funding. Those allegations were made to the Director of the Bureau of Animal Health. Subsequently, and during my absence on leave, that matter was raised by the federal minister with my colleague, the Attorney-General, who was sitting in my chair at the time. As far as I know, investigations are being conducted by the federal police into those allegations but, at this stage, I have no knowledge of the substance of the allegations. From day one, the Northern Territory has made itself available to assist the Commonwealth investigations in any way that it can. So far as I am aware, there is no connection between the internal review in our own department and the investigations being carried out by the Commonwealth at this stage. At a recent meeting in Perth of Ministers for Primary Production and Agriculture, I raised the matter with the federal minister to see what progress was being made. His advice to me at that stage was that he would let me know.

Commencement of Community Welfare and Juvenile Justice Acts

Mr DALE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

When will the new Community Welfare and Juvenile Justice Acts come into operation?

ANSWER

Those 2 acts, which were passed in this Assembly late last year, were the most significant social reform in the history of self-government in the Northern Territory. The government has given top priority to bringing them into operation. The need to set up administrative systems, arrange statutory appointments, rewrite operation manuals, train staff and make all the other necessary administrative arrangements is a major undertaking. The government has convened a high level interdepartmental task force to overview and direct the implementation phase of the legislation. My own department has the principal role in this. Implementation is proceeding and it is hoped to commence the acts in April.

Police Investigation into BTB Eradication Campaign

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

He said that the investigation was being conducted by the Australian Federal Police and then referred to an investigation being carried out by the Commonwealth. I have been advised, quite specifically, that the investigation

is not being conducted by the federal police but by the Northern Territory Police Force. Could he confirm that?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I confirm that the investigation was sponsored by the Commonwealth minister. It is being overseen by the Commonwealth police. As I understand it, there were some areas of investigation over which the Commonwealth police had no jurisdiction and we offered complete cooperation with the inquiries. I make the point that, from where I sit, if there has been any impropriety at all, this government has a responsibility to clear the air.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, as minister responsible for the police in the Northern Territory, I seek to clarify the position. My colleague, the Minister for Primary Production, is correct in that the Commonwealth instituted investigations through the Commonwealth police. However, the Commonwealth police found that they lacked jurisdiction and, at some time in the recent past, referred the investigation to the Northern Territory Police Force. As I understand it, and I have received nothing more detailed in this matter than a briefing, the investigation is continuing and no results are yet to hand.

Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is he aware of press reports and claims made by the Australian Council of Local Government Associations that the federal government's 2¢ per litre fuel tax, designed for use in the Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program, has now been indexed and that, as a result of this indexation, the additional money so raised will not be channelled into the national road building program?

ANSWER

I am aware that the national association of local governments has expressed this very accurate view. It is also a subject which was raised at the last Australian Transport Advisory Council meeting which I attended in Sydney last week. It is a matter that needs to be looked at in conjunction with the review which is necessary to the Road Grants Act which, of course, Mr Speaker, you would be very familiar with because you were Minister for Transport and Works for some time. The concern that is rightly expressed around the country relates to the growing disparity in relation to the levy in the Australian Bicentennial Roads Act of 2¢ per litre for both motor spirit and distillate having regard to the fact that the last federal budget brought indexation of the levy into effect. The position at the moment is that the 2¢ ABRD component is 22.16% of the total on each litre - about 9.027% per litre levy. As 6-monthly indexation occurs, quite obviously the percentage which is being returned to the states - and in this case the Territory - in respect of levies through the bicentennial roads program will become less and less as time goes by.

Based on the 4.3% indexation rate, between the 1983-84 financial year and the 1988-89 financial year, when the bicentennial road program is due to terminate, there would be a net loss to the state and territory road systems throughout the Commonwealth of some \$200m in respect of funds which are taken from the taxpayer under the guise of a levy. Of that amount, \$5m would flow to the Northern Territory during that period. Again, it has been brought to light that this taxation by stealth which the Commonwealth introduced in its last budget across a wide range of areas which are subject to duties and excise is

just another method of taxation which puts money in the pockets of the Commonwealth and does not go to the states and territories as it was envisaged originally that it would.

In respect of levies being applied to excise and duties, particularly on fuel in this case, it is a matter on which I think the federal Minister for Transport, Peter Morris, has some sympathy. Certainly, I gained that impression from the minister at that meeting although I do not purport to speak for him. However, I am quite sure that he has in mind the desire of Ministers for Transport to see as much money as possible go to national roads and I am quite sure he will be making representations to his colleagues along those lines. It is a matter which was deferred at the ATEC meeting to a special ATEC meeting in July for the purpose of finalising the arrangements for the new states road grants scheme. We hope regard will be given to the continuation of the bicentennial roads program in its present form. The view put forward by the Territory in respect of the states road grants scheme is that it remain very much as it is at the moment until the termination of the bicentennial roads program. It is our view that the national objective in respect of national highways should have been achieved by the end of 1988. It would seem logical that a complete review of the State-Commonwealth-Territory arrangements for funding on roads would be due then rather than in July of next year when the states road grants scheme comes to an end. I hope I have not been too convoluted, Mr Speaker. The short answer is that we are pressing the Commonwealth for it. The Commonwealth minister is aware of the inequitable situation and I am quite sure he is addressing the problem.

Police Investigation into BTB Eradication Campaign

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

I refer to his previous answer. We need some clarification. He said that the review that was being conducted was completely separate from the police investigation. Could he clarify whether federal funding has been suspended as a result of the review or as a result of the police investigation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as I recollect, I did not allude to federal funding being suspended. I said that there was a review and a suspension by our administration. There has been no suspension of federal funding that I am aware of at this stage. Everything is going as it ought. The review is quite separate from any activities that are being conducted by the federal minister.

South African Ambassador

Mr BELL to Mr SPEAKER

Under whose auspices is the Ambassador for South Africa present in the Assembly today?

No answer given.

Purchase of Point Stuart Station

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for LANDS

Can he confirm that the government has purchased Point Stuart Station and, if so, what is the government's intention in regard to the property and, in particular, the abattoir?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the Territory Development Land Corporation negotiated the purchase of the Point Stuart and Carmel Plains Stations with the receiver. The Conservation Commission land corporation already owns the adjoining property of Wildman River Station. Now the opportunity presents itself to have a look at that very interesting area of the Northern Territory with a view to its sensible and most practical use.

The government proposes to evaluate Point Stuart Station, including Carmel Plains, with a view to setting aside suitable areas for tourism and recreation. We have made much play of the government's tourism policy and the future we see for tourism in the Northern Territory. One of the very important aspects of the Northern Territory which is attractive not only to locals but to people interstate and overseas is the magnificent country that exists along the north coast of the Territory in those very wet areas. Point Stuart Station also contains some of the most attractive and well-preserved rainforest that I have ever seen. There are very extensive mangrove areas and wetlands which are breeding areas for waterfowl and the like. We will be interested in preserving those areas under the Conservation Commission's control for conservation in its truest sense.

Australia faces many difficulties in coming to grips with the problems that buffalo present to the BTB eradication campaign. We must make some very important decisions on what to do about the buffalo herds. These feral herds are the cause of a great deal of heartache in relation to disease eradication. There are a number of areas on both Wildman River and Point Stuart Stations which would be ideal for buffalo domestication, leading to buffalo breeding properties. This would get away from the suggestion that we hear now and then that the only solution to the eradication of disease in buffalo is to exterminate them all. Let's hope that it never comes to that. Certainly, to preserve a clean herd of buffalo and breed from them for a buffalo industry, we will need a number of properties which have characteristics suitable for their domestication and breeding. We see these properties as being ideal.

The most interesting matter at present is the future of the abattoir at Point Stuart Station. Honourable members will be aware that the biggest buffalo slaughtering abattoir in the Territory is on Point Stuart. We are proceeding to have a suitable area around and including the abattoir excised from the property with a view either to selling or leasing it as soon as possible. The intention is to have the abattoir operating during as much of the coming dry season as possible. I understand it is likely to take 10 weeks to make the abattoir operational after a new owner takes it over. It will require a fair bit of money spent on it during that period. The top priority at present is to excise the abattoir with a view to having it taken up and used this coming dry season.

Purchase of Point Stuart Station

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

In view of his statement that the purchase price paid for this property was sufficient to cover debts and in view of my estimate that this would mean an expenditure of at least \$2m, could he advise how much public money was spent by the Northern Territory government to acquire this property?

ANSWER

I made no reference to the price paid for the particular property. I said

that a price was negotiated with the receiver. I undertake to provide that information to the honourable member during the course of this sittings. I cannot give him an accurate figure at this stage but will provide it as soon as it is established.

Permanent Part-time Employment

Mr HATTON to CHIEF MINISTER

Will he advise the Assembly of the stage now reached with regard to the introduction of permanent part-time employment in the public service?

ANSWER

The introduction of permanent part-time employment was a platform of the Country Liberal Party in the 1980 election. We moved during the course of the last term of office to introduce permanent part-time employment into the public service. Indeed, consultations were held with the unions long before 1980. In fact, I think consultations commenced in 1978 or 1979 between the then Public Service Commissioner, Mr Norm Campbell, and the unions. At one stage, it was understood that permanent part-time employment had been agreed to by the unions but, unfortunately, when it came to the actual implementation, it transpired that the unions did not want to see permanent part-time employment commence in the Northern Territory Public Service. I understand that it is possibly unique in public services throughout Australia for this type of employment to be introduced, although there may be some similar arrangement currently in the South Australian Public Service.

Honourable members will recall that, during 1983, there was a long and acrimonious exchange between the unions, the Public Service Commissioner and the government which resulted in proceedings before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission which were protracted over many months. Frankly, it amazes me that such a thing comes within the jurisdiction of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission since it would seem to be a matter of policy and legislation. The Conciliation and Arbitration Commission upheld the government's right to introduce permanent part-time employment. I would have thought that the role of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission would have been better confined to determining the terms and conditions of such employment. Be that as it may, on about 20 January this year, the commission rejected the unions' applications to have permanent part-time employment stalled once again and the staff associations did not appeal against the decision within the time limit set for them to do so. However, during the arbitral proceedings, even though we had thought that a set of principles had been agreed on years ago, an agreed set of principles was formulated and now forms the basis for a set of administrative instructions which, I think, have been issued by the Public Service Commissioner.

The introduction of this form of employment is not opposed by all unions. In fact, it is welcomed by some as providing a kind of employment more suited to the needs of some of their members within the community. But, it is strenuously opposed by others. I believe it will bring a new flexibility to the Northern Territory Public Service and continue the forward-thinking, progressive approach to employment that has characterised the office of the Public Service Commissioner in the Northern Territory since the formation of this service in 1977.

Emergency Landing Strip at Nyirripi

Mr EDE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Is he aware that the people of Nyirripi have been working for many years, mainly with their bare hands and without government assistance, to build an emergency landing strip? Is he prepared to reward this outstanding example of self-help by assisting in its completion?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no information regarding that matter but I would be quite happy to obtain it and provide it to the honourable member before the end of this sittings.

Funds for \$1-for-\$1 Scheme

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

At a recent school meeting in Alice Springs, it was alleged that the \$1-for-\$1 scheme had run out of funds. Is that the case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this year, strain has been placed on the \$1-for-\$1 budget but we will meet that commitment to the tune of \$3000.

Casino Causeway at Alice Springs

Mr HANRAHAN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is he aware of recent criticism of the structure known as the casino causeway, Alice Springs, in particular its damming effect during flooding? If such criticism is substantiated, what will be done about it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member is correct. A damming effect, if one can express it that way, is caused by the casino causeway which would obviously be worse if the hand-rail was left in an upright position. Every time there is a flood, the hand-rail goes down. The damming effect is not as serious as the general community likes to think. The area of the Todd between the Wills Causeway and the Gap flows down a fairly steep slope and local residents would be aware of the rapidity with which the channel water runs down the Todd River. There is, however, an effect towards damming by the causeway crossing. When the hand-rail is down, this causes the water level behind the causeway crossing to rise to about 300 m near the Kemp Street intersection with Leichhardt Terrace. Beyond that point, hydrological examination has indicated no change in the level of the water surface at all. It is significant to note that, of the areas of concern that were brought to my attention after the last floods, the people represented by a deputation from Kemp Street seemed to be the ones most affected by and concerned about it.

Clearly, a review of the position has to be considered. While floods seem to occur once every 20 years, to the extent where that area of Kemp Street would be significantly flooded, it would probably be 1 in 100 years. It seems to me that we are having a 1 in 20 years flood every year at the moment and this year there have been 2 of them. People have been saying that a drought is due now.

It is not coming, thank goodness, and we can expect perhaps that there has been a climatic change and that this sort of thing will continue for some time into the future. Please the Lord that it does because it is excellent for the pastoral industry. As a result, the government has recognised that the causeway has an adverse effect and has commissioned a full study into the feasibility, technical and cost aspects of a proper bridge somewhere in that area to serve the whole of the region. Another causeway would do nothing but exacerbate the problem and would not provide year round access to that area. We want to dam the Todd deliberately by way of a recreation and flood mitigation lake but that has been blocked well and truly for the time being at least. That is the key to the whole thing. The creation of the flood mitigation lake would provide a complete answer to the problem. Nonetheless, having regard to the fact that that is well down the line, if it happens at all, and having regard to all the circumstances at the moment, the government is investigating the option available to it to put in a high-level bridge at an appropriate place.

Because the honourable member has an interest in flood problems and access problems to the new racecourse estate - that is, the Emily Hills Estate - I point out that we are looking at 2 projects there. One is the relocation and upgrading of a causeway-style access facility. This would allow water to flow through freely and also provide access to the Emily Hills Estate. There are 2 options available. One is where the existing causeway is but, because it is very close to the Gap, it could possibly cause some hydrological problems. Logically then, one would go further downstream to avoid any potential bottleneck at the Gap area. In addition, we are looking at a connector drain system to prevent the backwater-type flooding which is occurring in the Emily Hills area. Mr Speaker, 3 areas are being examined by the government; east-west access to the north of the Gap and east-west access to the south of the Gap, coupled with a series of drains to alleviate flooding in those areas.

Electricity Subsidy to Nhulunbuy Residents

Mr LEO to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Has any review of last year's decision to withdraw the electricity subsidy to residents of Nhulunbuy been conducted by NTEC or by his department?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware that the honourable member wrote to my office before Christmas on this subject. Yesterday, he tabled a petition in relation to the same issue. I am happy to tell him that I will be discussing the matter with NTEC at the first opportunity. I hope that it will be possible to provide an answer that will be satisfactory to him.

Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

Since the so-called Hill Report has recommended against the completion of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line, can he inform the Assembly of the work so far completed on the line and the future of such work?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth cooperated on a great deal of work to establish the infrastructure necessary for the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link and that work was commenced some 2 or 3

years ago under the Fraser government. From memory, \$10m was allocated for that purpose. This has been expended over the last couple of years. Nothing has been completed although 1000 km of the 1450 km alignment of the line has been finalised: Alice Springs northwards for 770 km to pretty close to Newcastle Waters; from Katherine northwards to Burrundie, about 130 km; Adelaide River through to the outskirts of Darwin, a further 100 km; and about 190 km of this alignment has yet to be pegged. Of the remaining 450 km, trial surveys have been undertaken for the Burrundie-Adelaide River stretch and the greater Darwin area for which 3 trial routes have been surveyed, including 2 involving a crossing of the Elizabeth River. Only the Newcastle Waters-Katherine section has yet to be surveyed. Detailed designs for the first 200 km north of Alice Springs have been completed and ballast sites have also been selected. The final environmental impact statement is being compiled and it is expected that it will be completed within the next few weeks. Expenditure to 31 December last totalled \$7 337 463, the majority of which was expended on surveys and associated works.

TIO's Loss

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

What effect is the TIO's loss of \$3m on motor accident compensation for the year 1982-83 likely to have on premiums and or benefits in that area?

ANSWER

The loss is likely to have a significant effect on benefits and or premiums. At present, the government is looking at a series of options and hopes to make an announcement on these very shortly. I point out to honourable members that one option is to increase the premium for a class 1 vehicle - that is, the average family sedan - from the current \$151 to \$204 per annum.

BHP Offshore Oil Discovery at Jabiru

Mr HATTON to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

BHP's discovery of oil at Jabiru has been well publicised. Can he give this Assembly a progress report on development in that area?

ANSWER

As the honourable member said, the discovery has been well publicised. I think there was an article in last night's paper which indicated that the results on the Puffin fields that are associated with the Jabiru discovery were not as promising as people had hoped. Nevertheless, the development of and exploration of offshore oil are gaining momentum and will continue to do so. I have been advised that BHP is conducting more seismic work and is involved also in three-dimensional seismic interpretation which is a very expensive method of interpretation.

The level of expenditure during this period will be enormous. BHP has indicated that it must drill at least 8 or 9 more holes in order to establish the hydraulics of the field and extract the resource in the most economic fashion, both for itself and for the community as a whole. I am very keen to see that the exploration is carried out in a manner which ensures that every last drop of oil is extracted from the field and that we do not become involved in the quick-buck syndrome which some companies adhere to when they discover a very good oil flow - they are quite happy to pump it as fast as they can in an

effort to get a quick return and a cash flow. BHP and ESSO, who have been partners over the years, have never indicated that this has been their policy. However, in the interests of the Territory, I believe we should be working closely with the companies to ensure that today's enhanced oil-recovery techniques are utilised in this exploration period so that we obtain maximum recovery from the field.

I believe BHP is planning to present to the government and the business community of Darwin its perception of what the increased activity will mean over the next 2 years, and what spin-off there will be for the community. That initiative is a welcome one and should provide a good basis of understanding for local business. I had hoped at the next sittings to be able to present to the Assembly a very detailed paper on the work being carried out between the companies, the NT department and the federal department, with particular emphasis on what is happening, where we are likely to be going in the next 2 or 3 years and what impact that activity will have on the Darwin region.

Police Investigation into BTB Eradication Campaign

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

I have been given advice that, because of the complex nature of the allegations in respect of the alleged fraud in connection with the allocation of destocking moneys, they require the attention of a specialist stock squad. Could he advise the Assembly of the capacity of the Northern Territory Police Force to conduct such an investigation?

ANSWER

I have every confidence in the capacity of the Northern Territory Police Force to conduct this or any other investigation. In fact, I would not think that this investigation would be particularly complex in relation to matters of law. It may be complicated by reason of distance and remoteness. Obviously, the allegations have been made in respect of abattoirs in remote areas and probably pastoralists in remote areas.

Mr B. Collins: You have to know one end of a cow from the other.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I cannot conceive how knowing anything about cattle would have any relevance in relation to this matter, other than whether cattle should be sold at a particular price, which is information readily available from people in the industry. To the best of my knowledge, no police force is of itself expert in cattle prices.

No doubt, this investigation will be carried out by the Northern Territory Police Force in the same manner that it has tackled many complex investigations in the past. I note its success in probably the most complex investigation yet undertaken in this country during this century. It achieved that by seeking the assistance of consultants. Frankly, I do not know whether it needs the assistance of consultants or not because the Commissioner of Police does not contact me every time he receives a complaint. At the very best, he informs me of progress in relation to matters that become contentious and which I should become aware of when they are raised in the political sphere. Quite frankly, that is the way I like it. I like the Police Force to run with a minimum of political interference, which is apparently unlike the honourable Leader of the Opposition who would be down there checking the incoming complaints every morning...

Mr B. Collins: I just want to know about the Stock Squad.

Mr EVERINGHAM: ... and giving personal directions as to how each and every one should be handled. What sort of administration of justice and law and order would we have in that sort of situation?

Mr B. Collins: The sooner you go to Canberra, the better, I think.

Mr EVERINGHAM: For you, certainly.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory Police Force is conducting an investigation. The commissioner has alerted me to the fact that such an investigation is going on. In the last couple of years, the Police Force has recruited to its ranks a qualified barrister, a qualified chartered accountant and a Bachelor of Commerce. Of course, we already have considerable forensic expertise. Indeed, one of the country's most renowned forensic experts was recruited from New South Wales recently. Within the ranks of the Northern Territory Police Force, there is the capability to cope with most eventualities. Where a capability is lacking, it has full authority from the government, and funds are made available readily to hire whatever expertise is needed. As has been seen in the past, we go overseas to get the expertise if it is necessary and not available in this country. I thoroughly resent any imputation that the Northern Territory Police Force would not carry out such an investigation diligently.

Eye Specialist for Alice Springs

Mr VALE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Is he aware that the lack of a locally-based eye specialist is creating problems for many people in Alice Springs and can he give any indication as to when an eye specialist will be hired by his department and based in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

The question of an ophthalmologist for Alice Springs is a perennial one, similar perhaps to the question often asked by the former member for Nightcliff regarding research into jinny crabs. Honourable members would be aware of difficulties the Department of Health has in recruiting ophthalmologists to the central Australian region. In fact, the department has to advertise overseas to recruit ophthalmologists because it is very difficult to attract people of that profession to the Territory. I am happy to advise the honourable member for Braitling that we have employed an ophthalmologist who will be starting in Alice Springs on 2 April 1984. We are recruiting another ophthalmologist from Hong Kong who will be arriving to set up a practice in Alice Springs around August. In the meantime, it is the department's intention to fly ophthalmologists into Alice Springs every 6 weeks and they will carry out the necessary consultations.

Mr Speaker, we have had problems with the provision of an ophthalmologist to Tennant Creek. When we have one in Alice Springs, he is available to go to Tennant Creek for 2 or 3 days at a time and see about 30 or 40 people on each visit. It is a problem and I am happy that the department has taken the necessary action to recruit an additional 2 ophthalmologists in the Northern Territory. Hopefully, this will alleviate the problem raised by the honourable member for Braitling.

Inquiry into Chamberlain Case

Mr BELL to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Given the fact that some of the officers involved in the recently concluded inquiry into the Chamberlain case were involved in the initial inquiry, can he advise what steps have been taken to ensure that the findings are not influenced by the conflict of interest which must inevitably arise where these officers are investigating allegations which, at least in part, reflect on the reliability of the initial inquiry which was their own work?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the best way I could answer would be to repeat the last 2 sentences that the Chief Minister said on the matter. I refer the honourable member to the Hansard report.

Casuarina High School

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Work has recently commenced at Casuarina High School to convert an existing covered area into an air-conditioned facility. What administrative and management arrangements will be made for this facility?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand that the matter is still under discussion. I believe that the school council is setting up a subcommittee to look at management prospects for that particular facility and will be calling on potential users to have input in those deliberations. Advertisements will be placed in the newspapers asking potential users of the facility to come forward. I understand that the facility will be completed in May.

Closure of Darwin Primary School

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Could he advise why the announcement to close Darwin Primary School was not made at the end of the last school term to give parents the opportunity during the school holidays to consider what they would do for their children instead of leaving it until the parents and children had come back from holidays?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Darwin Primary School issue has been debated at length in the community. Also, it will feature in a debate later today. Does the Leader of the Opposition believe that an announcement of that decision to parents before the school closed would have helped the matter? I believe the timing of the decision was unfortunate but there was no alternative.

Crocodiles

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

In view of recent sightings and the capture of a 3 m crocodile, what is the Conservation Commission doing to ensure the safety of people visiting such popular areas as Buffalo Creek?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member gave prior notice of this question so I have the information that he seeks. The Conservation Commission is very much aware of the crocodile nuisance around popular swimming areas in the Top End. Commission officers have attended in response to every incident where crocodiles have been sighted in view of the safety measures necessary to protect the public in those areas. In relation to the Buffalo Creek area, the Conservation Commission is considering the installation of an automatic recording device and traps. Not only would this provide Conservation officers with time to work in other areas but it would facilitate the recording of crocodile populations in those areas. I assure the honourable member that not only is the crocodile situation in Buffalo Creek being monitored carefully but other waterways around the Top End, which are popular with the public for recreational purposes, are also being monitored.

Flooding in Emily Hills Subdivision

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS

What action will flow from his department's report into the flooding problem in the Emily Hills subdivision in central Australia?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no specific information before me on this matter. However, I undertake to obtain it for the honourable member and will provide it to him during the course of this sittings.

Flooding in Vicinity of Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr DALE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Is the Conservation Commission doing anything to alleviate the flooding and silting-up of the creek in front of the Royal Darwin Hospital and is this flooding and silting-up affecting the fauna and flora along the banks and surrounding the creek?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, on taking up my duties as Minister for Conservation earlier this year, I had occasion to visit this area and discuss the problem with Conservation Commission officers. Certainly, a problem exists there. The creek has silted up, especially around the supports of the bridge. The Conservation Commission will be advising that certain action be taken. It does not have any direct responsibility for the particular area. I think it is a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has gone. In this case, the siting of the Royal Darwin Hospital comes into the question, as does the siting of certain roadworks and the level of certain roads in that area.

I think one of the short-term answers to the problem would be to flush out the drains with high pressure hoses and thus remove the silt from the subsurface suburban drains. The silt around the supports of the bridge would have to be removed by hand. Flushing of the subsurface drains cannot be carried out until some time in the Dry. At the moment, the high water level in the creek precludes any action. Whilst we cannot resite the Royal Darwin Hospital, the lesson is that, before any major public works are undertaken - and there will be major public works undertaken in the future around Darwin and other centres in the

Territory - deep consideration must be given to ordinary things like drainage. It is only now, because of the good Wet, that the problem of drainage in this particular creek has arisen.

Regarding the flora and fauna downstream from this problem area, there has been no damage to the environment. It is a problem which must be considered by several government departments. I will keep the honourable member informed of progress in this matter.

TIO's Loss

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

In view of the fact that the TIO's \$2.2m loss in the general insurance area obviously has been known for some time, would he indicate when he expects the investigations on possible legal action against former employees to be completed?

ANSWER

The internal problems that the TIO experienced were a result primarily of the activities of some former senior staff members. Investigations have been going on for some time. Expert auditors have examined the procedures and documentation of the operations of the TIO. It was not that long ago that the gravity of certain problems became apparent as did the fact that certain persons could possibly be blamed for those problems. Recently, the matter was referred for a legal opinion as to whether further action should be taken in that regard. Whilst it certainly had been known that we were facing losses in the general insurance area of the TIO, a legal opinion has only recently been sought. I think that answers the honourable member's question.

The nature of insurance is such that insurance companies, by and large, attribute all the claims that are assessed in a particular year against that year's income from premiums. Even though a claim may in fact not be paid out for some months or several years in some cases, the actual loss is assessed when the claim is made and a dollar figure is put on it. It is attributed to that particular year's income from premiums. That is why it is possible to have a loss on paper which may not affect the liquidity position of an insurance company for a considerable time. It is not as if the situation came to light instantly. The matter has evolved over a period of time and has been treated very seriously by the TIO Board and myself. We hope that, in due course, justice will be done.

Alice Springs Lake Inquiry

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Will he undertake to make available to the members of the Alice Springs lake inquiry the working model which demonstrates the flood mitigation effect of the proposed Todd River Dam and, further, will he undertake to make available a videotape of the Snowy Mountains authority's scale model of the actual lake for their edification?

ANSWER

Quite obviously, the government will make available to the inquiry everything that it believes the inquiry ought to have made available to it, particularly if that advances the cause of what we think is the logical solution to the problem. Of course, it will also provide a recreation facility.

The answer to the question is yes. However, I am aware that the inquiry has indicated, either in private or public somewhere, that its results show that it does not need to do a great deal of engineering research of its own motion. A great deal of engineering research has been done by officers of the Territory government over some years. Nonetheless, the visual impact of those dual displays is quite significant. One tends to wonder if professional people are persuaded by pretty visual displays, as opposed to people like myself, who are not trained in the understanding of engineering matters. It is an excellent display, the video film in particular. I will make arrangements for that to be available should the inquiry so wish. Obviously, we cannot force upon it things that it does not wish to see.

School for Nyirripi

Mr EDE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is he aware that nearly 300 people living at Nyirripi have been waiting and fighting for some years for the establishment of a school and can he advise when a school is planned for that area?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no information on that question with me but I will provide it to the honourable member in this sittings.

Rehabilitation of Sewerage Reticulation

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I understand his department is currently undertaking the rehabilitation of some sewerage reticulation. Is he aware of similar schemes that may be necessary throughout the Darwin area?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, certainly I am aware of other rehabilitation programs which are necessary. In some of the older areas of the city, such as Stuart Park, the sewerage systems have been in for many years. Porbably, they were not designed with longevity in mind. They are not of the sophistication found in the older areas of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and so on. Over the years, they have deteriorated. It is a long-term project and a very expensive one. Necessarily, it will involve a great deal of disruption to peoples' day-to-day lives, including transport modes and flows. Worse still, of course, it can involve the requirement of access to private properties. Where private property access is involved, it is undertaken with the maximum amount of care, consideration and consultation with landholders.

Elsey Cemetery Archway

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What progress is being made with the replacement of the entrance archway to the historic Elsey cemetery?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unable to give the details requested, but I will ensure that the honourable member has an answer some time during this sittings. The

Conservation Commission is active not only in the environmental situation regarding native flora and fauna, but in preserving certain historic places around the Territory. I feel certain that the site mentioned will come within the gambit of its operations.

Discount Air Fares for Overseas Visitors

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TOURISM

Has he any additional information or any comment to make concerning the recent announcement by the federal Minister for Tourism concerning discount air fares for overseas travellers in Australia?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is difficult to make any additional announcement. In fact, these concessional air fares came into operation last Friday on the domestic airlines. For the information of all honourable members, what the honourable member for Braintree is talking about is the new concessional fares available to overseas visitors to Australia and the comments that I made at the time they were announced by the Minister for Tourism, Mr John Brown. At this stage, I would like to say that I think that Mr Brown is taking a very positive attitude to tourism. I want to try to work with him as closely as possible.

I welcome the initiative but, as I said, it does not go far enough. When it was boiled down - and it took some days to boil down - it was essentially a new wrinkle on an old face. Concessional fares of up to 30% have been available to overseas visitors to Australia for some time now. With the announcement by Mr Brown, concessions will be 40% or slightly above in some cases. In other cases, the movement will be in the order of 3%. I readily concede that any improvement is better than none. The announcement of these new concessions in Australia were cosmetic because it is not Australians, unfortunately, who will be able to use them; it is overseas visitors. By and large, they will be sold overseas.

The problem is that, in the overseas marketplace where Australian tour operators and representatives of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission will be trying to entice visitors to Australia, there is a much more competitive scene than in this country. There are far many more destinations for a start. In the United States, which is an important market for Australia and an important market for the Northern Territory, the concessions that are offered by all the airlines are so much better than these concessions. Unfortunately, I feel we do not really have any leverage on this new package which will enable it to be readily marketed to the potential visitors to this country.

What we needed, at least at the outset, was something dramatic like a fair cut across the board of 50% even if it were only for 6 months. That is something you can talk about; you cannot talk about 2.7% or 10.3%. Whilst I compliment Mr Brown for working at it, I do not think it will get us very far. I notice that, by and large, the travel trade in Australia has reacted in a fairly restrained fashion. What has been done is welcomed. It will certainly not work to our disadvantage but I do not think it will work very much to our advantage. We must do even more. The domestic airlines in Australia must be persuaded that it is essential in their own interests as well as the interests of this country that they contribute more to attracting people from overseas.

Mr Speaker, as I pointed out to Mr Brown, it is incredible that Ansett has equipped its Boeing 767s with a third seat in the cockpit. As I understand it, it is the only airline in the world that is flying with 3 people in the cockpit of the 767. This costs an additional \$3m in equipment for the aircraft before it comes off the assembly line and I understand that it costs at least \$0.25m a year in terms of wages and so on. Of course, that is feather bedding and is the other thing that is keeping Australia's air fares artificially high. I believe

that the government should be taking a fairly strong stance with the airlines and with the Australian Federation of Airline Pilots because, if there is one association that needs the Augean stables cleaned out, I believe it is the Australian Federation of Airline Pilots.

Traffic Signs on Stuart Highway

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

There has been considerable disruption to peak hour traffic by slow-moving vehicles between Palmerston and Darwin recently. Can he advise me when the 'Keep Left' traffic signs will be erected on the dual carriageway between those 2 centres?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I assume the honourable member refers to those sorts of signs that we quite often see on interstate roads which have words to the effect 'Keep Left Unless Overtaking'. I assume that is the type of wording he is referring to. Signs to that effect are at present under manufacture and we anticipate that they will be installed within 2 months.

On the general question of signs, no doubt a number of members in this Assembly, and indeed people in the gallery, might think, 'Oh my God, not more signs'. A view is held widely within the community that we have a plethora of signs around our roads. My attitude is that signs should be placed only where they are essential in the interests of safety. Whether or not it is really justified to place further signs on the Stuart Highway for the sake of a smooth flow of traffic when the key question of safety is not at issue would be very debatable. In Alice Springs, between the Gap and the top end of Todd Street, there are some 96 signs of which 38 are in the Gap area alone. Alice Springs is a tourist town. People like to see the town in as natural a form as possible and without a forest of signs surrounding it.

Mr Speaker, the other question concerning signs relates to advertising. Currently, the government is looking at a policy in relation to advertising signs. Clearly, there is a conflict between the business community and such organisations as the Tourist Commission which believes that, as far as possible, our highways should be free of signs. We have competing interests. The private sector believes that advertising of its premises for local customer identification is important; for example, for people who come into town with broken windscreens.

Mr Speaker, the question of signs is one that the government is examining. Personally, I believe that signs of a traffic nature should be used only where the interests of safety are served very clearly by the direction of those signs and not otherwise. Nonetheless, I can understand the position of private enterprise in wanting its facilities and wares advertised. I would imagine that I would be able to report back to the Assembly on this issue, which may seem minor on the face of it. However, I believe it to be quite important for a place that is now holding itself out to be a tourist mecca. I speak not just of the Centre, where I come from, but indeed the Top End as well. I hope to be able to report, perhaps at the next sittings, on what the government will be doing on this matter.

Ombudsman's Report on Investigations into Complaints against Police

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

What action, if any, does the government propose to take in respect of the recommendations contained in the Ombudsman's report on the conduct of investigations into complaints against the Northern Territory Police Force?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, before I say anything about this, I should read the last 3 paragraphs of the Ombudsman's report. I recollect some media reports of comments by the Ombudsman in his report. I assure honourable members that I have had lengthy and detailed consultations with the Ombudsman and the Commissioner of Police in relation to this matter and, if you do not mind, Mr Speaker, to highlight the situation to honourable members, I will read the last 3 paragraphs on pages 17 and 18 in the Ombudsman's report.

Whilst my inquiries in this complaint found no evidence that the Chief Inspector operated in other than a genuine manner, and the end result of my investigation was essentially the same as arrived at by the Police Force, I remain with the question: Is this what the public has a right to expect - that a branch of the Police Force will investigate itself?

Of course, he is not talking there of a branch of the Police Force investigating a branch of the Police Force. In this particular case, it was the Detective Chief Inspector in charge of the CIB investigating the alleged misbehaviour of certain members of the CIB.

On the other hand, the Commissioner holds to the view that officers are responsible for maintaining the discipline of their subordinates. To remove this responsibility could be counter-productive, although it might alleviate the suspicion of patronage. The greatest skill in the area of criminal investigation almost invariably rests with members of the CIB: in any event, having regard to the size of the police force, it is difficult to assign an investigation to an officer who does not have, or has not had in the immediate past, a professional or personal association with the suspected member.

I remain of the view that such administrative management of an investigation of a complaint against the police places the credibility of the investigation in jeopardy. Whether or not the economics of enhancing the credibility can be justified is another matter, and one for government.

Of course, Mr Speaker, the Ombudsman himself has placed the credibility of that investigation beyond doubt because he said in the first few lines that I read out: 'the end result of my investigation was essentially the same as that arrived at by the police force'. When I first received this report for presentation to Cabinet before presenting it to the Assembly, I sought comments on the particular case from the Commissioner of Police. I think it is appropriate in this case to read out the Commissioner of Police's report to me, although I could do it in the adjournment this afternoon. It is 2 pages.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to that part of the Ombudsman's report concerning complaints against police. As I have advised previously, time has now effectively tested the Ombudsman's Act in its relationship to complaints against

police. After considering the views of both the Commissioner of Police and the Ombudsman late last year, Cabinet approved that the then existing arrangements between the Commissioner of Police and the Ombudsman in respect of the review and oversight of police investigations be rescinded and adopted a policy for the future whereby the commissioner would continue to investigate all complaints against police, with only those files which were relevant to the Ombudsman's investigation pursuant to the Ombudsman's Act being supplied to the Ombudsman.

Of course, Mr Speaker, you and other honourable members will realise that the Northern Territory is probably still unique in this practice. It is certainly not the case in New South Wales. Of course, an election has been called there and the big promise is that there will be an Ombudsman to investigate corruption. Here in the Northern Territory, anyone who is aggrieved with the police can go directly to the Ombudsman. Complainants will be advised in writing by the commissioner of the results of the police investigation into their complaint and be further informed that, if he or she is not satisfied with the police investigation, they may require the matter to be referred to the Ombudsman by the commissioner. I am aware that the commissioner holds firmly to the view that complaints against police must be thoroughly investigated for the purposes of maintaining public confidence.

Mr Speaker, I stress that this new policy is not a departure in any sense from the existing strict requirement that complaints against police must be competently and thoroughly investigated but it does ratify an effective procedure which accords with the legislation. I am advised by the commissioner that the remark by the Ombudsman that, in at least 7 of the referred complaints, the consumption of alcohol appeared to be a factor relating to the complainants and or the witnesses involved.

The Ombudsman's observations concerning delays by complainants in lodging their complaints is a pertinent one and is a problem that hampers the efficient investigation of the complaints. The time delay mentioned by the Ombudsman is generous in relation to one organisation which lodged complaints months after the event and, in addition to this, often placed restrictions on police interviewing the complainants.

The final part of the Ombudsman's report relates to police investigation procedures into complaints against police. The Ombudsman refers to the complaint of alleged menacing and threatening conduct accompanied by acts of physical violence and the discharge of a firearm as highlighting the need for the commissioner to review investigative procedures. In considering this, it needs to be understood that, generally, complaints against police fall into 2 broad categories: firstly, alleged breaches of police discipline, such as the failure to observe police procedures, general orders and instructions relating to the good order and discipline of the police force; and, secondly, alleged breaches of the criminal law by police officers, such as assaults. As a general rule, investigation of breaches of discipline, whether they come to notice by way of complaint or through the normal police supervisory process, is the responsibility of the relevant police commander, while the investigation of criminal offences, other than minor offences, lies within the expertise of the Criminal Investigation Branch.

In regard to allegations of breaches of the criminal law, an additional requirement was introduced recently. All such investigations files are referred to the Solicitor-General for certification by the Crown Prosecutor that the investigation was thorough and that an offence or disciplinary charge is or is not warranted. Nowhere else in Australia that I know of does that practice exist. It would be ridiculous to suggest that police should investigate

breaches of discipline by 2 different sets of procedures, depending on how the breach of discipline came to notice. This is particularly so when police supervising officers may have detected a breach of discipline prior to the lodging of a complaint on the same matter.

It is important that I say at this point that, although some complaints against police may relate to alleged criminal offences by an individual police officer, there have been no complaints relating to institutional or organisational corruption within the Northern Territory Police Force. If there was ever such a complaint or an indication of such activity from any source, the Commissioner of Police would make special arrangements to investigate the matter. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I want to keep that record as it is.

The commissioner is familiar with the recommendations of the Stewart, Williams and other commissions and committee reports on organised crime and the investigation of police corruption. Returning to the particular complaint raised as an example by the Ombudsman, the commissioner recognised at the outset that these allegations were of a serious criminal nature and he commenced the investigation into the complaint immediately.

In situations where the allegation is made against a member of the Criminal Investigation Branch, a dilemma arises. Officers who have the greatest skills in this area are almost invariably members of the CIB themselves. Therefore, if a senior CIB investigator is assigned to investigate a complaint of a criminal nature against a CIB member, there exists the potential for the accusation to be made that the inquiry was thwarted because of patronage. On the other hand, if an officer from another area of the force is assigned to the investigation, there exists the potential for the accusation to be made that the investigation was inconclusive because the officer was less competent.

The commissioner is not prepared to sacrifice efficient investigation of a serious criminal offence for cosmetic reasons. I think that is the nub of the whole thing, although there were, in this particular case, certain circumstances such as everyone being busy on the Chamberlain investigation and other things. In this particular case, the investigation was assigned to the Detective Chief Inspector in charge of the CIB because he was the most competent available officer. Some may consider it unfortunate that he was also the supervisor of the members against whom the complaint was made. It needs to be emphasised, however, that he was not investigating the malpractice of his own branch, as suggested by the Ombudsman, but was in fact carrying out an investigation into alleged serious criminal offences, by 2 individual members of the Criminal Investigation Branch. Even if the complaint had been substantiated, the acts of 2 individual members could not in any way suggest malperformance, maladministration, corruption, conspiracy or incompetence in the management of the Criminal Investigation Branch or reflect upon the Chief Inspector or upon the management of the Police Force generally. In any event, it should be noted that the Ombudsman reported that his extensive investigation found no evidence that the Chief Inspector operated in any other than a genuine manner and the results of the Ombudsman's investigation were essentially the same as that of the police inquiry.

The commissioner recognises that these inquiries need to be carried out promptly and effectively and without suggestion of departmental bias, and he does not argue against the basic philosophy of the Ombudsman that justice must not only be done but should be seen to be done. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to assign officers who have no direct personal or professional contact with members under investigation, especially if those members have had several years service in a variety of commands and positions. In point of fact, the

Ombudsman and the Commissioner of Police are not far apart in their views of what would be an ideal arrangement. However, it is in their independent perceptions of what is the inevitable compromise which would be practical under the circumstances that their opinions diverge. The commissioner points out that, of course, it would have been better had he assigned the investigation of the particular allegation mentioned beforehand to an officer who was independent of the CIB command. But the level of major and serious crime in the Northern Territory is such that the assignment of investigation is frequently determined by who is both competent and available by contrast with a selection based on competency and independence. At the time this particular investigation arose, investigations of a number of murders and other serious crimes were in progress. The commissioner feels that, at the time in question, he actually had Hobson's choice in appointing an investigator.

In the search for a reasonable compromise between what is ideal and what is practical, the personnel establishment estimates for an internal investigation unit or, at least, an upgraded inspectorate, have been put as high as 15 members, all of whom would need to be competent investigators. The situation is that the operational strength of the entire Darwin CIB is currently 33 members. When one reviews the relatively minor nature of the vast majority of complaints against police, even if they were all true, compared with the extraordinarily high levels of major and serious crime in the Northern Territory - I think there were 140 complaints last year - a diversion of resources is clearly not justified under the circumstances. By way of example, the particular complaint to the Ombudsman, had it been capable of being substantiated, would have amounted to an assault by the 2 detectives. Apart from many other crimes under investigation at that time, a significant proportion of the investigation capacity of the force was employed in an Alice Springs murder inquiry of unusual complexity, the investigation of certain aspects of the Chamberlain case and confidential inquiries into an alleged criminal organisation responsible for the theft of millions of dollars worth of property. This is not to minimise the importance of a thorough investigation of the complaint against the police, but it must be remembered that an extended investigation by the Ombudsman's office did not produce substantially different results from the police investigation. The Ombudsman's criticism is therefore one of principle.

Mr Speaker, I think it can be appreciated by all honourable members that the Commissioner of Police recognises and respects that principle and, in all possible circumstances where he can, will practise it. But, in these particular circumstances, it was impossible and I do not think that any injustice has been done as a result.

Crown Lease for Gardens Hill Development Pty Ltd

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

Is it a fact that no Crown lease has been issued to Gardens Hill Development Pty Ltd for Lot 5299 Town of Darwin despite the fact that intention to issue such a lease was gazetted almost 2 years ago on 26 March 1982?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is a fact that no lease was issued to that particular company.

Alice Springs Abattoir

Mr VALE to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Can he advise whether he has had discussions with the owners of the Alice Springs abattoir, whoever they might be, with a view to determining whether that abattoir will open for this killing season?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, late last year, I had discussions with the lessees of the abattoir about their intentions for this season. The lessees and the owners had not agreed totally on the conditions for operating the abattoir. They were not able to give me any indication at that stage as to whether their difficulties would be resolved and they would in fact be operating the Alice Springs abattoir. In the meantime, a further issue has arisen, of which honourable members may be aware, that relates not to who will operate the abattoir but who will pay for the electricity account outstanding, to the tune of about \$100 000 - an account that has been carried by NTEC for over a year.

Mr Robertson: There is also the water.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Minister for Transport and Works interjects that water is also a consideration. I am not totally au fait with that but I am aware that there has been a problem.

The short story is that, over the past 12 months, NTEC has pressed the owners and the lessees for the payment of moneys outstanding for electricity consumption. Those requests by NTEC for payment have not resulted in the \$100 000 being paid. During the course of the year, small amounts of money have been paid on a regular basis to keep the power on. At the end of the season, NTEC disconnected the works from power with the understanding that it would not be reconnected until the bills were paid.

I might add that, at this stage, my colleagues and I were advised of the circumstances and, without any reservation at all, I have given NTEC an instruction that the accounts are to be paid before the works are reconnected. I do not see any argument whereby we can allow the electricity consumers of the Northern Territory to pay for bad debts that appear to be on our books because defaulting companies do not pay their bills. The people who own the works and the lessees are involved at the moment in an academic argument as to who is responsible for the bill. My position is that the consumers of the Northern Territory are not responsible and that the owners and the lessees should sort out their problems and pay the account and then the power will be reconnected.

For the benefit of the member for Braitling, I cannot give him an undertaking that the operators of the works will be the same people as last year because they have not yet made that decision themselves. If last year's consumption is not paid for, it is not the government's intention to reconnect the works at all because we would be adding \$100 000 to the total bill of consumers all over the Territory and that is not a reasonable proposition.

Tracy Village Complex

Mr DALE to MINISTER for LANDS

Darwin City Council has leased from the Commonwealth Department of Administrative Services Lot 4868 Town of Nightcliff, commonly known as Tracy

Village complex. The land is occupied by the Tracy Village Social Club with a bar area and bistro restaurant, a betting shop, various other shops, the Wanguri Family Centre creche, a community hall, a swimming pool and the Pandanus Holiday Centre. The lease on this land expires in March 1991 - in just 7 years' time. What action does the government propose taking to obtain secure long-term tenure over the land or, alternatively, does it have a contingency plan to re-establish the facilities when the lease is terminated without compensation in 1991?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I remember the machinations of the then Lord Mayor of Darwin to obtain from the federal government a more secure form of title over the area which was formerly a construction village for the northern suburbs of Darwin following Cyclone Tracy. I was Minister for Lands at the time and, in concert with the Lord Mayor, tried to encourage the federal Minister for Defence to agree to a lease for a period longer than 10 years. Despite the arguments we raised about the possible need for this land, we failed to have any additional period added to the lease. We failed in any attempt to have the area of land transferred to the Northern Territory government or to the Darwin City Council. Everyone proceeded from that point in the full knowledge that there was a lease which had an expiry date in 1991.

The council chose also to proceed with construction of a caravan park in that area. I think there may have been some hope in everyone's heart - and perhaps there still is today - that reason would prevail in the end and that the respective Commonwealth instrumentalities would comprehend that its activities can proceed without disruption for a period of 10 years on land which is in fact a buffer zone around a defence communications facility. The land itself is not specifically required for facilities. If activities can carry on for 10 years without disruption, then one could reasonably argue that they should be allowed a further period of time.

I undertake to raise this matter with the relevant federal minister. I presume it will still fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Defence. I will ask if he will examine the matter and reconsider the possibility of transferring titles to the area concerned either to the Northern Territory government or to the city council, or perhaps issue a new lease for an extended period of time. In the event that that is not successful, over the next few years the various parties will have to look at what alternative arrangements will be made following the expiry of the current lease in 1991. Certainly, at this stage, we do not have any contingency plans about relocating the facilities. It would cost a great deal of money as they are well established now. One would hope that reason would prevail. However, I have already asked for a draft submission to the federal government to be prepared asking if we cannot resolve this matter without having to resort to considering relocation expenses.

Crown Lease for Gardens Hill Development Pty Ltd

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

Has the Crown lease been offered to Gardens Hill Development Pty Ltd for Lot 5299 Town of Darwin and, if so, has it been accepted or rejected?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I recall that an offer was certainly made to the company concerned. Such offers are made at the same time as gazettal notices appear in the newspaper under the direct land grant scheme. To my knowledge - and I have

not seen files on this matter for some time - the company has not accepted the lease.

Apprentice Employment Scheme

Mr HATTON to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Last year, it was announced that, to increase the number of apprentices in training in the Northern Territory, a scheme would be introduced requiring the employment of apprentices on government contracts. Has the scheme been introduced and, if so, what are its requirements?

ANSWER

The scheme to which the honourable member for Nightcliff refers was set up after a great deal of consultation with industry. I understand this scheme was introduced in November last year. The requirements of the scheme are to be included in the notices to tenderers for government construction and maintenance contracts. The scheme requires that contractors and also subcontractors employ a prescribed minimum number of apprentices for contracts over a set monetary value. I also understand that, where contractors are unable to obtain apprentices, they may approach the Master Builders Association in order to employ apprentices from its group apprentices scheme. Alternatively, I also understand that employers may provide on-the-job training for apprentices and there are indentures to government departments or authorities. This scheme is continually under review by the Vocational Training Commission. I understand that some problems are being experienced by the Master Builders Association with the group apprenticeship scheme. This was raised with me by another government member. The scheme itself is continually under review. It is being monitored on a regular basis by the Vocational Training Commission.

Darwin Rural Fire Management Plan

Mr COULTER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What is the present situation in relation to the Darwin Rural Fire Management Plan commissioned by the government last year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I know this question is very important to the honourable member because he lives in the rural area. Fire management and fire control in the rural area is very important, especially in the Dry. The Conservation Commission commissioned a consultant to report on the present position of fire management and control in the rural area and to make recommendations on what should be done to improve the situation. This report has been prepared and will be considered by government in due course. After that consideration, certain actions will be initiated.

I would like to draw to honourable members' attention that, for the people who live in the rural area, fire management and control is very important, especially in the Dry. People who have lived in the rural area for the last 10 or 15 years would know that fire management has improved because of closer settlement and because people there are very concerned about the damage that fire can do and, in most cases, take precautions themselves. When the report is presented to the Assembly, it will be appreciated by all people in the rural area because, from my first reading of it, it takes a commonsense approach to the subject.

Police Officers involved in the Chamberlain Case

Mr BELL to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

I preface my question by reminding the Attorney-General that there is no connection between this question and any previous question that has been asked this morning. Were police who were involved in a directive capacity in the inquiry into the allegations made by Messrs Ward and McNicol in relation to the Chamberlain case also involved in previous inquiries into the Chamberlain case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as I indicated in my statement to this Assembly on Wednesday last, that is indeed the case. It was pointed out that among the police involved in investigation of the Ward-McNicol allegations were police who had knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the collection of the original evidence, and had been involved in the collection of the original evidence. I think the Chief Minister has indicated this morning that, because of the size of our Police Force, inevitably police officers within the CIB are familiar with just about every matter which comes forward.

When we have something as complex as the original investigation into the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain, it would be fair to say that almost every police officer involved in CIB activities would have been involved at some stage or another. Indeed, from memory - and this is more a question for the Chief Minister than myself - about half of the Police Task Force was involved in that investigation. I thought I had made it quite clear in my statement, and in the adjournment debate last week which I directed to the honourable member who seems to have been offended so much, that each and every piece of evidence relating to the Ward and McNicol allegations was provided to the Solicitor-General. It was not the police who determined whether or not, based upon the allegations of Ward and McNicol, a prosecution should lie. It was a decision of the Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory after looking at the evidence provided by investigating police officers. There is a quite distinct difference between that and the tone of the honourable member's press release which was issued, I assume, on the night of our little sparring match in this Assembly last week.

Mr Speaker, the information provided by the investigating police - that is, police investigating the Ward and McNicol allegations - was provided in detail to the Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory. It was the Solicitor-General who weighed up the value of that evidence based primarily upon transcripts of tape-recordings, voluntarily entered into by the witnesses and the people who formed the basis of the theories of Ward and McNicol. It was on the basis of those transcripts that the Solicitor-General formed his opinion.

Mr Speaker, if it aids the honourable member for MacDonnell at all, I am willing to make available to him in my office the information which was available to the Solicitor-General. I do not think the honourable member would want to go through the full details. It consists of several thousand pages. It occupies 3 of those large folders which are about 4 inches thick and is written in English, the only language that I understand. There are 3 or 4 of those. If I had wanted to speak French, I would have gone to live in France. To be serious - and it is a matter which I hope that the honourable member takes seriously - he is welcome to have a look at that information, but I do not want it to leave my office. However, as he is shadow spokesman for matters pertaining to law, he may have a look at them. I am quite sure that, when he does, he will find that the basis upon which the Solicitor-General arrived at his opinion would be the same basis as that on which he would share that opinion.

Conveyancing Guide

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

Is there any reason, legal or otherwise, that would prevent a competent person producing a 'do-it-yourself' conveyancing guide relevant for people in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there is no reason that I am aware of that would prevent a person putting together such a document. Indeed, there has been concern for some years over the charges incurred by people who go to professionals for conveyancing. My understanding of the subject is somewhat limited. However, there is nothing in law in the Northern Territory that prevents a person from doing his own conveyancing. If the honourable member cares to follow this matter further, he should perhaps direct his question to the Attorney-General.

Biles Report

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Has his department taken any initiatives on the recommendations for improvements in Groote Eylandt communities as a result of the Biles Report on Groote Eylandt prisoners?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this matter has been before the government for a number of years. It goes back to the days when a Sergeant Gilroy produced a report similar in essence to the Biles Report. The Department of Community Development is looking closely at the Biles Report. At this stage, I inform honourable members that I shall be travelling to Canberra on Friday for discussions on this matter with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Holding, and a number of other people. As a result of those discussions, I should have further information on which to base decisions in relation to Groote Eylandt and the Biles Report.

Re-accreditation of Diploma in Welfare Work

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In the recent adverse findings of the panel appointed to assess the award of an associate diploma in welfare work at the Darwin Community College for re-accreditation, to the great discomfiture of students in my electorate, the panel identified management as a major problem in the department. Can he advise whether an external consultant or consultants have been appointed to assist in the development of a new proposal as recommended by the re-accreditation panel?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not able to say categorically whether or not a person has been appointed for this particular job. I will obtain the information and give it to him later today.

Ranger for Gove and East Arnhem

Mr LEO to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Has provision been made for basing a ranger in Nhulunbuy to service the Gove and general east Arnhem area?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member has written to me on this subject. A letter is on its way to him on this matter. The stationing of an officer of the Conservation Commission at Nhulunbuy is not something that can be considered in isolation. There is an important conservation consideration in that area because dieback was discovered there at the end of last year. Before an extra officer is appointed to the staff of the Conservation Commission, consideration has to be given not only to the situation at Nhulunbuy but to the overall situation in the Conservation Commission. Whilst I cannot give the honourable member a direct answer now, his request will be considered.

Geriatric Ward in Alice Springs Hospital

Mr VALE to MINISTER for HEALTH

In view of the fact that the Hetty Perkins Hostel in Alice Springs and the Old Timers' Home in Alice Springs are both full, will a geriatric ward be opened at the Alice Springs Hospital?

ANSWER

There is no intention to open a geriatric ward at the Alice Springs Hospital but it is the government's policy, wherever possible, to provide aged people with private accommodation. The question of that accommodation being made available is subject to discussions taking place at the moment with the Commonwealth Minister for Health who has the responsibility for issuing the nursing home licences. Alice Springs has a very high proportion of nursing home beds. I believe that the Alice Springs community is very well served and it is not the intention of the Department of Health to provide that service at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Department of Health Contracts

Mr EDE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Has an inquiry been initiated into the approval of contracts in the southern region of the Department of Health?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable member to place that question on notice. I am not quite sure which contracts within the Department of Health he is talking about.

Aboriginal Outstations

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What is the government doing to provide essential services and funds for TMPU activities to those Aboriginal outstations and pastoral groups which

continue to be disadvantaged by the Commonwealth's attitude on not transferring funds for this purpose to the Northern Territory government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in September 1983, the government approved an additional \$2.7m to extend the scope of the Town Management and Public Utilities program. This funding was to cover a widening of functions for the 3 community government councils beyond the present narrow TMPU definition, the introduction of a measure of TMPU funding for municipal-type services to designated developing communities which are considered to be in the greatest need - communities such as Kintore - and expenditure on essential services and capital works of a minor nature on certain outstations and pastoral properties which were not catered for in the approved capital works program. This program for the present year is well under way and it includes over 200 projects in over 80 locations.

Taminmin High School

Mr COULTER to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he advise when stage 2 of Taminmin High School will be completed?

ANSWER

Stage 2 involves standard classrooms as well as an agricultural facility to the value of \$1.75m. The only section that will be completed by the beginning of the second semester is the agricultural facility. Stage 2 will be completed by the beginning of the 1985 school year.

Community Government Councils

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

How many community government councils have been established under part XX of the Local Government Act and what are the government's plans for the establishment of further councils at remote Aboriginal communities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there have been 3 community government councils successfully established under the Local Government Act: the Lajamanu Council at Hooker Creek, the Angurugu Community Council at Grootë Eylandt and the Milikapiti Council at Snake Bay, Melville Island. Three other communities asked for community government councils to be established: they are Belyuen, Pularumpi at Garden Point and Nguu at Bathurst Island. The establishment of each of these new councils is expected by the middle of the year provided the communities are quite satisfied with all the aspects of the proposed scheme. There is no intention to establish a community council at any community unless the community is fully aware of all the responsibilities involved and fully understands what the community council concept is.

Larrakeyah Primary School Renovation

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Will Larrakeyah Primary School students be shifted to the old Darwin Hospital later on this year while renovation work takes place at Larrakeyah Primary School?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the issue of where the students will go during the upgrading of that particular school was left up to the parents on the Larrakeyah school association. There were 3 options initially. The first option was that the children from that school be dispersed among other primary schools in the Darwin area whilst renovation work was carried out to upgrade that facility. For years, the children in the Port Darwin area have been attending schools with substandard facilities and I have pressed continually to have those facilities upgraded and that is being done. The second option was that they remain at Larrakeyah school whilst the work was being carried out. That would be a disgrace because the children would not be able to work under those conditions. The third option was that they be allowed to take up facilities in the old Darwin hospital whilst work was carried out. My understanding at this stage is that the Parents and Friends Association of the Larrakeyah Primary School has taken up the option of moving to old Darwin hospital during the upgrading of the Larrakeyah Primary School.

Air-conditioning of Rapid Creek Primary School

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Following the government's decision to air-condition classrooms in other Darwin schools, will it undertake to air-condition classrooms at Rapid Creek Primary School?

ANSWER

The government is looking at upgrading all schools as far as air-conditioning is concerned. When a decision has been taken, I will report to the Assembly.

Northern Territory Development Corporation

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

What incentives does the Northern Territory Development Corporation now offer to attract new businesses to the Territory and to encourage expansion and growth of existing businesses?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think I have answered this question in this Assembly. From memory, I think a question was asked by the Opposition Leader. The circumstances of the case govern what the Northern Territory Development Corporation or the Territory government is prepared to offer by way of incentives for attracting a business to establish in the Northern Territory. Our main criterion in judging whether we want a business to establish in the Northern Territory or not is how much employment it will generate directly and indirectly. I think it could truthfully be said that we would be prepared to do anything from giving free land to a tax holiday depending on the nature of the employment created by the particular proposal. For instance, to give an idea of some incentives that have been given, I believe that a rendering plant has been established down at Hudson's Creek and we gave a grant to the people who were setting it up. There is a new bottling plant or canning plant being set up by some company. We gave it a grant of about \$100 000.

These grants are conditional. Firstly, they do not get them until they

actually put some bricks and mortar on the ground. If they do not trade for a certain period and employ people for a certain period, then there is a mortgage or other security over the property and the money has to be paid back. After about 5 years, the grant becomes unconditional. The term depends on the conditions laid down by the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Those are a few examples. It is horses for the courses and we will crawl a mile over broken bottles to get something which will offer 1000 jobs. That sort of proposal, if it ever came, would probably cause such jubilation that we would give them a 10-year tax exemption.

Executive Officer of Yulara Development Company

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I draw the honourable Chief Minister's attention to this advertisement in the Weekend Australian...

Mr Everingham: I cannot see it.

Mr BELL: ... for the position of executive officer with the Yulara Development Company. Is he aware that the previous executive officer of the YDC continues to be employed by the Conservation Commission? Did the Chief Minister or any other of his ministers issue instructions that this previous incumbent should no longer perform his duties and, if so, why?

ANSWER

I have not seen the advertisement so I cannot really comment on it. Perhaps it could be sent over to me in a hurry and I will have a quick read of it. As far as I am aware, no other minister has directed the deployment of anyone involved with the Yulara Development Company.

Mr B. Collins: Just a quick squizz.

Mr EVERINGHAM: I will, thanks. I did not read the Weekend Australian this weekend. Mr Speaker, I know nothing of this advertisement. Frankly, I am really not aware of what is happening within the Yulara Development Company. It does not now come within my portfolio area. The promotion of Yulara comes within my area of influence through the Tourist Commission. About that I am naturally interested and concerned. I have had discussions as recently as yesterday with the Chairman of the Yulara Development Company and the Chairman of the Conservation Commission regarding the transfer of a person from the Yulara Development Company to the Tourist Commission. Nothing has been finalised about this. There is nothing sinister about it. It is all to further promotion of Yulara. About its executive officer, I am terribly sorry. I will find out what devilment is on and try to provide an answer to the honourable member before the end of the sittings.

Family Counsellors in Alice Springs

Mr VALE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Can he give me an assurance that 2 positions of family counsellor in Alice Springs will be filled at an early date and a third position will be filled shortly after?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Department of Health employs 3 social workers at Alice Springs Hospital. In late 1983, 1 of them resigned and, just recently, another has resigned. As I understand it, advertisements and recruiting procedures will commence as soon as possible. I am at a bit of a loss to understand what the honourable member refers to by a third social worker. It is my understanding that there were 3 social workers, 2 have resigned and 1 is still working at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Doctor for Galiwinku

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

Is the Department of Health considering placing a full-time doctor at Galiwinku?

ANSWER

At the moment, the Department of Health provides medical services to all the northern and centralian regions. There is a doctor employed through the community association at Kalano for whom the Northern Territory Department of Health provides some financial assistance. Arrangements have just recently been made to provide the same arrangements with the Gagagju Association in the Oenpelli region. A doctor has been appointed by that association with some funding from the Northern Territory government. With regard to Galiwinku, at this stage I am unaware of any approaches to the Department of Health for a doctor to be placed there.

Rating Base Structure of NT Councils

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Has he given consideration to the Else-Mitchell Report which directed its inquiries into the various options open to councils in the Northern Territory to vary their rating base structure? If so, what is the current government attitude to the request by the Darwin City Council to vary its rate base to incorporate a minimum rate?

ANSWER

The Local Government Act review is currently in progress and it is addressing the various rating options available to councils. I would like to quote from an extract from a report by Justice Else-Mitchell on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Rating Valuation and Local Government Finance. Justice Else-Mitchell said:

In areas where a high proportion of the assessments are thought by councils to be bearing an inequitable low share of the total rate burden and the rate is levied on the unimproved value of the land,

it would be better to face up to the relative merits of rating on improved or assessed annual values rather than to prop up the existing rating system by attempting to graft upon it a system of minimum rates.

Mr Speaker, the various forms of rating - unimproved capital value, improved value, site value, assessed annual value or a combination of unimproved capital value etc - are all under review at present. In the course of the review of the Local Government Act, these options are being considered to enable councils to exercise their responsibility in deciding upon the most suitable and equitable rating system for their areas. It would be unwise to treat any one aspect of the rating system out of context or in isolation without considering the full impact of this and other considerations in reviewing the act.

Replacement of Aboriginal Liaison Officers

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Will the Conservation Commission place any further Aboriginal liaison officers in the positions which became vacant at the end of last year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unable to supply the detail the honourable member seeks. However, he can write to the Conservation Commission himself. If he does not want to do that, I will make inquiries on his behalf and let him know the details.

Daly Waters School

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Has he given consideration to the establishment of a school at Daly Waters?

ANSWER

I have given consideration to a school being established at Daly Waters. The problem that we have at present in relation to Daly Waters is that there are only 6 children of school age who would be able to attend that particular school. I am sure that members would agree that that is not enough to establish a school. However, I have directed the department to continue to monitor the situation at Daly Waters. If the numbers indicate that a school is necessary, we will establish one.

Alice Springs Subdivision

Mr HANRAHAN to MINISTER for LANDS

Will he advise a timetable for the development of Sadadeen stage 3 and the proposed Dickson Road and Mt John subdivisions at Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, construction of Sadadeen stage 3, which will provide approximately 124 residential allotments in Alice Springs, is well advanced. In fact, it should be completed in about a week. The Dickson Road subdivision is being surveyed at present and a development plan for the proposed subdivision

has been prepared. It is intended to invite proposals from developers by the end of March and to complete the subdivision by December this year. The honourable member also asked me about Mt John. I advise him that the Department of Lands is reassessing the Mt John area at present, as far as subdivision is concerned, with a view to looking at where we should go in the future in Alice Springs. I will endeavour to keep him informed of progress on that matter.

NT Hospitals Pharmaceutical Prescriptions

Mr EDE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Are Northern Territory public hospitals still writing pharmaceutical benefit scheme prescriptions for outpatients? If so, does he know the practice is both contrary to the Medicare agreement and a form of double-billing to the Commonwealth government because the Territory government tax-sharing arrangements include a provision for Northern Territory hospitals to supply drugs?

ANSWER

The question asked by the honourable member for Stuart is quite a complex one. I will try to provide as much detail as I can, although it would probably be better if he were briefed by officials from the Department of Health. I will provide the information that I have to hand. At the last conference of Health Ministers held in Sydney, the federal Minister for Health, Dr Blewett, stated that there were several practices that were being carried out by the various states but that he would leave it to the states. In fact, I would like to quote from the transcript of the meeting. It is important to the overall attitude of the Northern Territory government. Dr Blewett said on page 39:

One of the problems here of course is that very different policies are pursued in different states, plus the fact that I do not think that there is any debate here that the inpatient in the hospital will be provided with drugs without charge. So we are really dealing with one element; that is, the outpatient's provision of drugs. It might be that subsection (x) provides us with a cover for that outpatient treatment under sections 1 and 3: 'shall not include dental treatment, and any other services may be agreed to between ministers'. So if a particular minister wishes to exclude drugs in relation to outpatient treatment, then that could be done.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory Department of Health, in so far as the Medicare agreement is concerned, had pointed out that there was a discrepancy in the definition of 'patient'. We thought that the definition of 'patient' was an 'inpatient' not an 'outpatient'. It was a proviso of the Commonwealth Department of Health and its minister that we would be able to do whatever was in place prior to the setting up of Medicare. We have corresponded with the federal minister on this particular point. Recently, I received a response from him. It was sent to me on 28 February and was received in my office on 5 March:

I refer to your telex message of 10 February 1984 concerning provision of drugs for outpatients at recognised hospitals. I can appreciate that some interpretive problems could be faced in the implementation and early administration of the arrangements under the Medicare agreement. However, in this instance, the objectives of the various clauses in the agreement which refer to drugs are as follows: hospitals are not obliged to provide drugs to outpatients

(definition of outpatient treatment at page 13 of schedule B); however, where drugs were, prior to 1 February 1984, provided to outpatients, the state is to endeavour to see that this service continues after 1 February 1984 (clause 6.8, page 28); where a hospital does provide drugs to outpatients, it may do so from its own stock either free or, with the approval in writing from the Commonwealth minister, at a charge (clause 9.7, page 35); recognised hospitals may not, except in emergencies, write pharmaceutical benefits scheme prescriptions for any patients - inpatients or outpatients (clause 6.3(d), page 26).

The reason for this latter, clause 6.3(d), is to prevent a situation arising where the Commonwealth is in fact paying twice for the same service. The identified health grant to the Northern Territory, paid under the tax-sharing arrangements, is based on a Commonwealth share of the overall operating costs of the Territory's public hospitals. This amount clearly includes a component covering the provision by hospitals of drugs. The use by hospitals of Commonwealth pharmaceutical benefits scheme prescriptions, instead of drugs from their own stock, transfers a further cost to the Commonwealth.

In view of the provisions of the Medicare agreement that has been signed by both our governments, I would ask that your public hospitals revert to their pre-February 1 practice of supplying drugs to outpatients.

Mr Speaker, we issued NHS prescriptions for all private patients on discharge and private outpatients. Thus, there is still a grey area. This has existed since the introduction of Medicare and the signing of the Medicare agreement. We are now corresponding further with the Commonwealth Department of Health, through its minister, to try to clarify the situation. We are quite sure that the Commonwealth minister was not aware that we were charging prior to 1 February.

Employment for School Leavers

Mr COULTER to CHIEF MINISTER

What levels of response have there been to the government employment initiative for school leavers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it was advertised widely that, in 1983, the government attempted to set up schemes to absorb as many school leavers coming out of our secondary schools last year as possible. I must say that, to some extent, the response to the schemes from Northern Territory school leavers has been very disappointing. Despite widespread publicity and material being displayed and sent to every secondary school well before the closure of school at the end of 1983, it was necessary for the Public Service Commissioner to write to individual school leavers earlier this year to try to draw some response from them. The situation is as follows. A total of 150 base-grade entry positions were set aside in the Northern Territory Public Service for school leavers. To date, there have been 58 starters. There were 57 apprenticeships available and, to date, there have been 54 starters. There were 93 traineeships available and, to date, there have been 65 starters. The applications for Northern Territory government scholarships have been disappointing also. The way we are going, it

will take us a long time to build up the numbers of local teachers that we want for our teaching service. The number of scholarships on offer is 80. That, of course, is for the teacher training scholarship at the Darwin Community College. There is a financial supplement of, I think, \$3000 a year by way of student support and there is a guaranteed job at the end of the course. For the 80 scholarships on offer, only 47 applications have been received.

In the finance and administration area, things are looking better because, for 50 traineeships offered, 51 applications have been received. But you can see, Mr Speaker, that only in that one area has there been any likelihood of filling the government's target. Our continuing publicity directed towards these schemes has not drawn a significantly greater response. I rather feel that, at this stage, I should be giving directions to the Public Service Commissioner that those traineeships and scholarships should now be made available more widely than to school leavers. I think that school leavers have had a fair chance. It must be close to 4 months since the end of school last year. There are other people in the community who would probably like to avail themselves of the opportunity. I think that, within the next week or so, I will be directing the Public Service Commissioner to make opportunities available on a wider community-orientated basis.

ADMA Farmers

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

What is the current situation relating to ADMA farmers; that is, their numbers, the contract situation and the potential cropping for the next season?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can advise that 4 farmers have planted substantial crops for this year. Two farmers, who have had continuing differences with the ADMA for some time, have planted some crops but not as extensively as they would have planted last year. If the honourable member wants the details and acreage of the crops, I can provide that. I am able to say that prospects prior to the last couple of weeks were good and the farmers were heartened that they would have a good yield. I understand that it is so wet in that area at the moment that it is very hard for anybody really to appreciate what will happen. In fact, it is so wet that the field day, which was scheduled for next week or the week after, has been cancelled because the area is inaccessible. If the honourable member has any particular interest in a crop, the expected yield or data on any particular farm, I would be happy to give that to him outside the Assembly.

Portability of Housing Commission Loans

Mr DALE to MINISTER for HOUSING

How many applications have been received under the recently introduced portability of loans measures applying to mortgages administered by the Northern Territory Housing Commission? Have any of these been approved and, if so, how many and when?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the member gave me notice of this question so I have the details for him. As at 17 February 1984, the Housing Commission had received 9 formal applications for loan transfers under the loans portability scheme introduced on 1 January 1984. More than 200 serious inquiries have been received regarding this scheme.

Drainage at Marrara Sporting Complex and Rapid Creek

Mr COULTER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Is she aware of any problem with the drainage between the Marrara Sporting Complex and Rapid Creek?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I inspected this area with officers of the Conservation Commission shortly after I took up the duties of Minister for Conservation. Following consultation with officers of the Conservation Commission and after inspecting the site myself, I am quite aware that there are problems associated with drainage discharge into Rapid Creek from the Marrara area. A major drain outlet exists from the access road to the sporting complex. This collects run-off from the complex area and adjacent residential areas and discharges towards Rapid Creek. Some erosion has occurred and remedial action will be necessary. Some remedial action has been taken already, but not very much. The matter has been taken up with the Department of Transport and Works and some preliminary designs for ground stabilisation structures have been prepared. The Conservation Commission is developing a strategy to reduce specific problems. As soon as this information is available, I will provide the honourable member with further advice. Coupled with the drainage problems on the Marrara side of Rapid Creek, consideration is being given to what could be a problem if it is not attended to; the drainage on the other side of Rapid Creek. This will be addressed when the whole question of relocation of Darwin Airport is resolved.

Interest on Loans to Yulara Development Company

Mr BELL to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What is the shortfall between the predicted returns from the Yulara project and the interest bill on borrowings by the Northern Territory Yulara Development Company for this project? Who will meet this shortfall?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think the honourable member mentioned this yesterday when speaking to the bill that I presented to the Assembly. The information that he requires is of a complicated nature and I do not have the figures in my head. I will endeavour to obtain the information and supply it to the honourable member in the near future.

Closure of Ward at Gove District Hospital

Mr LEO to MINISTER for HEALTH

I ask the minister to deny rumours that the Gove District Hospital is to close one of its wards, given that there has been absolutely no community consultation on this matter?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there is no plan to close one of the wards but, during the last 6 to 12 months, we have had a series of medical superintendents situated in that location. It is a difficult area in which to maintain a high level of efficiency. The senior medical officer at Gove Hospital must have the expertise to do minor surgery and caesarian operations etc. To maintain a high level of

efficiency in a very small community tends to result in a high turnover of medical personnel. Under the supervision of successive medical superintendents, beds have risen from 30 to 40. The Department of Health is now reducing the number from 40 to the correct figure of 30.

Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What progress has been made on the Rum Jungle rehabilitation project near Batchelor?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to give a full answer to this question at this stage. I will do a bit of quick research and I might attempt to answer the question later on during question time.

Sealing of Roads to Ross River and Hermannsburg

Mr HANRAHAN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is there a program to complete the sealing of the access roads to Ross River and Hermannsburg?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, obviously there is a program to carry out these works but all such programs are subject to normal budgetary considerations. We plan to complete the sealing of the Alice Springs-Ross River Road by the 1985-86 financial year. In respect of the Hermannsburg sealing, which is Larapinta Drive and its extension, we hope to have completed the road between the 73 km and the 98 km mark from Alice Springs by 1984-85. The completion of the project is scheduled for the 1985-86 financial year. But, they are subject always to budgetary considerations which include Commonwealth grants under the State Road Grants Act which are somewhat up for grabs at the moment.

Uniform Legislation on Securities

Mr SMITH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Under the Commonwealth uniform securities industry legislation, organisations such as the Litchfield Corporation have to meet certain requirements before they can operate as merchant banks. Can he explain why the Northern Territory is not participating in the uniform scheme when the rest of Australia, that is the 6 states and the ACT, have taken the necessary steps and when the formal agreement to set up the uniform code contains specific provisions to enable the Territory to become a party?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. The truth of the matter is that the companies and securities meetings are meetings of members of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General who meet separately for the purposes of the particular function. The function was denied to us by that body some years ago. We were not invited to join it. The position at the moment is different, Mr Speaker. Through the present federal Attorney-General, Senator Evans, the Commonwealth has invited the Northern Territory to join that

committee and, thereby, we would be able to participate in the very things to which the honourable member refers.

However, because we were not invited initially to join in the companies and securities meeting, the function, in terms of funding, was not transferred to the Northern Territory. In other words, each function of the Northern Territory, as taken over from the Commonwealth, has been funded. We have been granted base-line funding in respect of those transferred functions. But, because of the lack of invitation at the time, no additional funding has been made available to the Northern Territory to carry out this fairly expensive process. The Chief Minister, who would know more of this than I, indicates that the staffing required to participate would be something like 16 in the office of the Registrar of Companies. Quite clearly, that would be a significant burden upon the Northern Territory coffers. I have written to the federal Attorney-General, thanking him for the belated invitation to join and asking him to ask his colleagues, both in Finance and Treasury, what they will do about providing funds to the Northern Territory in order that we may participate. We have been very firm on this from self-government. We do not take on additional functions, which are currently the province of the Commonwealth, without additional base-line funding with which to carry out those particular functions.

Apprentices in Training in Northern Territory

Mr HATTON to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I refer to the question I asked yesterday. Could he provide the current figures for apprentices in training in the Northern Territory and how they compare with those for the previous year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand that there has been an increase in apprenticeship training this year. It has been a slight increase. Some 1123 apprentices are in training at present. I do not have full details available for the honourable member at this time. However, I indicate that the majority of those apprentices are training in the metal and electrical trades. Mr Speaker, I will provide the honourable member with the information at a later time.

Forestry Operations on Bathurst and Melville Islands

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What is the current government position on the forestry operations on Bathurst and Melville Islands? Is the Conservation Commission monitoring the continuing growth rate of the trees at Bathurst and Melville Islands and is the current policy still one of a care-and-maintenance basis or are further plantings envisaged?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition placed a question on notice regarding this. If the written answer has not been sent to him yet, it will be dispatched in the immediate future. I do not know the exact details. As I understand it, work is progressing on Melville Island at Pickertaramoor, and not only on a care-and-maintenance basis. I will not go into details of which I am not certain. When the honourable member receives the reply to his question on notice, he will find the details that he seeks expressed quite clearly.

Palm Valley Natural Gas for Alice Springs Powerhouse

Mr VALE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Can he advise whether or not the Alice Springs powerhouse is taking its original estimate of natural gas from Palm Valley and, if not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I hope that we are taking considerably less than the original estimate as that would mean that the Northern Territory Electricity Commission would make great savings as a result of the smaller account. I understand that the conversion of diesel generators in the Alice Springs powerhouse is running behind schedule and is not being completed at the speed which was originally intended. I understand also that the conversion of the diesels is expected to be completed this year. In fact, it will be done as maintenance is carried out on the generators throughout the year. I have no knowledge as to whether the utilisation of gas vis-a-vis diesel is up to expectations. It is no better nor worse than we had anticipated. In the long term there is no doubt that there will be enormous savings for us because the move by the federal government now to index excise will be an impost that the Northern Territory will find very hard to handle over the years to come. The sooner we get away from imported fuels and become self-reliant on our own energy sources, the better for the Northern Territory in the long term.

Survey on Senior High Schools

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he report on the outcome of the survey conducted late last year to determine the views of the public in relation to senior high schools?

ANSWER

I cannot at this stage. The survey to which the honourable member refers has been collated by the department. I understand that, within 2 to 3 weeks, I will be receiving a Cabinet submission on the results of that particular survey. Until that detail is available and Cabinet has considered that position, I am unable to comment further.

Hospital Charges for Pharmaceuticals

Mr EDE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Given that the federal Minister for Health has indicated that double-dipping has been going on and is still going on and given the need to maintain the Northern Territory government's credibility with the federal government in its dealings over financial matters, is he willing to issue instructions to the hospitals to revert to the pre-Medicare arrangements for outpatients while negotiations are continuing?

ANSWER

As I understand it, no person in the Northern Territory is being disadvantaged at the moment regarding pharmaceuticals. I would remind the honourable member that I mentioned to him earlier that discussions were held and further arrangements made with the Commonwealth Minister for Health. At the same time, I remind him that all we are doing in the Northern Territory is the same as what is happening in New South Wales.

Gosse Bluff

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I preface my question by referring him to Gosse Bluff, known to geologists as a historic crater and known to the Malbungka family and perhaps other people at Hermannsburg as Tnarula and to the Pitjantjatjara as Anarula. Is it the Northern Territory government's intention to alienate this particular area?

ANSWER

I cannot give the honourable member for MacDonnell an immediate answer to his question. I have been having discussions with officers and we hope to have further discussions with Commonwealth officers. It may be that, as a result of our discussions with Commonwealth officers, it could be possible that there will be amendments made to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act which will preclude the necessity for the Northern Territory to alienate Gosse Bluff or any other particular area. At this stage, I cannot say with any certainty whether we will be alienating Gosse Bluff or any other area of the Northern Territory to preclude claims being lodged thereover. I can say that it is the policy of the Northern Territory government, in a general sense - and it is certainly a principle we would like to adhere to but by force of circumstances are prevented from doing so - that public purpose land and national parks should be held in right of the Crown for the benefit of all the public. Offhand, I cannot say whether Gosse Bluff is a Conservation Commission national park or not but, if it is a Conservation Commission national park, then I believe that, in principle, it should be held by the Crown for the public in general.

Araluen Arts Centre

Mr HANRAHAN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Could he inform the Assembly of the status of construction of the Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs and comment on any delays experienced during this phase?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, from memory, I think the project is about 70% complete. It is about 6 weeks behind schedule. We have had some rather unusually wet weather and that is a contributing factor to the delay. Certainly, we have had disruptions to our all-weather rail and not-all-weather road systems. I think that would make the completion date about the end of April. We hope that the centre will be substantially completed in time for the Apex convention. It is still the intention of the Association of Apex Clubs to use that venue. I believe that it will be at a satisfactory stage of completion by then. Certain architectural and engineering difficulties which were detected in the building have been overcome. The problem of water getting into the orchestra pit has been solved. After the very recent heavy rains, there was little sign of water intrusion. There is a place within the complex loosely referred to as the cellar - which I do not believe is a cellar; it is certainly not a wine cellar - which is still admitting water. That architectural or engineering problem needs solution. The consulting architects are addressing themselves to that and I am hopeful that they will have a solution shortly.

Local Government Act Review

Mr EDE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

When is it anticipated that the review of the Local Government Act will be completed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I cannot give the honourable member a definite date but I can assure him that the matter will be dealt with before next year.

Enterprise Mine at Pine Creek

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

When will the Enterprise Mine at Pine Creek commence and what impact will it have on the township?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can tell the honourable member probably as much as he already knows. I would like to advise other honourable members who, I am sure, would have a great interest in any development that will affect the Northern Territory and provide jobs. The principals of the organisation have been to see me and, I believe, have held a series of meetings in Darwin with people involved from both the mining industry and the supply side. They have also had on-site meetings and discussions with people in Pine Creek about the impact. They have also had discussions with senior government personnel outlining the impact that they think the mine will have on Pine Creek and the various services that they would like to draw from the town. I can advise honourable members that they have sought clarification from the government on how they might use Northern Territory electricity supply for their operation instead of putting in another powerhouse in the Northern Territory which is becoming a very costly burden to anybody who runs one.

The impact of the mine will be important. As I said yesterday in my Address-in-Reply speech, although it is not a large-scale mine by any standards, it does provide us with the confidence and impetus to explore further and perhaps find bigger ore bodies that will last for many years. If there is anything that the government can do to encourage the companies or provide assistance within reasonable bounds, then we are prepared to do that. At this stage, the companies are still proceeding with discussion and presentation of their environmental impact study in order that the mine is developed in an orderly fashion with the support of the whole community.

NT Government Statement on Relativities Review

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Will the government provide to this Assembly the basis for its reported statement that the Northern Territory would lose up to \$30m if forced into state tax-sharing arrangements after the current relativities review?

ANSWER

I would certainly be prepared to have a document prepared which outlines the various calculations and scenarios which result from the Commonwealth

unfortunately deciding unilaterally, despite the wishes of the Northern Territory and all the states of Australia, that the Northern Territory should be included in the relativities review to be conducted by the Grants Commission. It will commence forthwith and report to the Commonwealth government by March next year. Such a paper will take longer to prepare than this Assembly is likely to sit during this period. I will endeavour to have the paper available as soon as possible.

Drivers Licences for Diabetics

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he advise if his department has any proposals which will require diabetics to undergo a medical examination in the Territory prior to obtaining a driving licence?

ANSWER

Obviously, the department has to consider this question, reluctant as it might be in that consideration. It not only concerns diabetics but also people who suffer from such unfortunate afflictions as epilepsy and like diseases. Obviously, the prime consideration must be, firstly, the safety of the public using roads and, secondly, of no less weight, the quite reasonable desire of people suffering from such diseases to have mobility. It is bad enough to be afflicted with an illness without being deprived of your means of transport as well. The position ideally would be that the registrar, upon detecting or knowing that a person suffers from such a disease, would make some other arrangements to have the licence perhaps suspended. Of course, that is not the law at the moment. I do not really know whether it ought to be. After all, I think that most people would tend to cooperate anyway. The arrangement which would be entered into would be to have the person who is suffering from such an illness go to his own doctor or a doctor appointed for the purpose by the registrar for appropriate medication. That doctor would then sign a certificate to say that the medication has stabilised the illness to such a point that, in his belief, an attack is unlikely to occur while the person is driving a motor vehicle.

Obviously, very serious accidents could result from a seizure or an unfortunate bout of illness while a person is driving on a public road. The department will be publicising the position to make people who may be suffering from these sicknesses aware of the requirement and desirability of personally having it treated and the desirability of having a certificate issued to the person who is an applicant for a licence or renewal of a licence to establish in the mind of the registrar that the illness has been stabilised. Of course, this is no different to the situation that applies to pilots. Obviously, those persons have to undergo medical examinations. There are certain illnesses which prevent the holding of a licence without a certificate from a doctor saying that an occurrence is unlikely to happen which would inhibit that person's ability to control the rather lethal piece of machinery that he is driving or flying.

Crematorium for Darwin

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

Could he advise the current position with the establishment of a crematorium in Darwin?

ANSWER

I am not exactly sure that this question comes under my portfolio as Minister for Lands. I would come into it if any person who proposed to build a crematorium in Darwin was seeking Crown land. The options are open to any proponent to purchase land and have it suitably zoned or rezoned, and to proceed with building a crematorium. The extent that my portfolio covers this subject is very limited. I suggest that the honourable member redirect the question to the Minister for Community Development. He would be the appropriate minister because he looks after local government, cemeteries, cesspits and so on. As such, I would suspect such an establishment would fall into that category.

Crematorium for Darwin

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, I redirect the question.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will have to make inquiries to see if this area comes under my area of responsibilities. I will advise the Assembly accordingly when I obtain the information.

Executive Officer of Yulara Development Company

Mr BELL to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

I refer the minister to comments in this Assembly yesterday in relation to recent advertisements for the position of executive officer with the Yulara Development Company. Was the previous executive officer removed from his position at the minister's direction?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable member to direct his question to the Chief Minister who has some information on this matter.

Yulara Development Company

Mr BELL to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

I would like to rephrase my question, Mr Speaker. Has there been any communication whatsoever in relation to this matter between the minister and the head of the Conservation Commission?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, if the honourable member saw all the correspondence and other paperwork that comes across my desk, he would understand that I am not able to give him an answer to that question.

Hospital Pharmacies

Mr EDE to MINISTER for HEALTH

In view of his rather extraordinary statement earlier that nobody has been disadvantaged by the new arrangement, which categories of patients who were able

to get drugs from hospital pharmacies last year are now unable to get drugs from hospital pharmacies?

ANSWER

I ask the honourable member to place his question on notice.

I will provide the Leader of the Opposition with some information regarding crematoriums. As I understand it, there is an application...

Mr B. Collins: Assuming the drugs fail.

Mr DONDAS: ...for a crematorium to be established.

Mr Speaker, if he wants the information, I am happy to give it. If he wants to interject, I will sit down and he can write all the letters that he likes and it will probably take him a couple of weeks to find out.

An application has been placed before the Department of Lands for a crematorium to be located in the northern suburbs.

Fauna sent to Zoo Negara

Mr COULTER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

In view of the interest which seems to have been shown in this Assembly in bird life recently, particularly sparrows, what was the purpose of Yarrowonga Zoo sending 2 blue-ringed kookaburras, 2 red-collared lorikeets and 6 magpie geese to Zoo Negara in Malaysia recently?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question. Obviously he knows of my personal interest in the Yarrowonga Zoo which is not very far away from where I live and where the Leader of the Opposition used to live some years ago. In his list of fauna that was sent to the Zoo Negara in Malaysia, he omitted to mention 2 antilopine wallaroos. The gift of native animals from Yarrowonga Zoo to the Zoo Negara in Malaysia was the result of negotiations between the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Zoo Negara and the Northern Territory government. The common and native north Australian species involved in the recent shipment were donated to Zoo Negara on the basis that it was generating goodwill between the Northern Territory and our northern neighbours. I hasten to add that it is the Northern Territory's wish to maintain friendly relations with our northern neighbour in respect of not only financial matters but also cultural matters and, in this case, flora and fauna matters.

Barramundi Fishing Plan

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

When will the Department of Primary Production release its barramundi fishing plan to replace the buy-back scheme which concluded on 31 December?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the issue of licences for the next barramundi season has been delayed 1 month. Most fishermen have been issued with temporary licences pending an announcement on the buy-back scheme. The new buy-back arrangements

have been approved by Cabinet and we are getting them ready for an announcement in the near future. I think most people in the industry will find them very acceptable.

International Hotel in Alice Springs

Mr HANRAHAN to CHIEF MINISTER

What is the present position regarding the construction of an international hotel in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand that work has commenced on the construction of the international hotel in Alice Springs to be operated by the Sheraton chain. There were statements yesterday regarding financial arrangements for the Yulara project. Of course, these matters concern me because the Territory Development Corporation rather than the Conservation Commission is in fact the guarantor of the Yulara development project. The Northern Territory Development Corporation is also involved in the financial arrangements for the international-standard hotel in Alice Springs being erected by Central Australian International Hotels Pty Ltd and to be operated by Sheraton. Of course, the corporation is involved also in the financial negotiations and arrangements in respect of the proposed international-standard hotel to be erected in Mitchell Street in Darwin, again to be operated by Sheraton.

It was my intention in the course of this year, probably at the next sittings, after all negotiations have been concluded in respect of the Darwin project, to present a full and detailed financial statement to this Assembly as to the contingent liability that the Northern Territory would in fact be up for on a worst-case scenario with these projects and hotels and on the expected scenario. We have done studies at various levels of occupancy of the various properties. We have various figures that could be apposite.

In any event, in relation to the international hotel at Alice Springs, the Northern Territory government signed the documents for the construction, fitting out, completion and operation of an international-standard hotel at Alice Springs on a site adjacent to the present casino. It is believed by the Sheraton organisation, which will be operating the hotel, that it will complement the Yulara project and of course the Sheraton Hotel at Yulara. It is being developed by Central Australian International Hotels Pty Ltd which has entered into a construction contract with the Jennings organisation. The building is expected to be completed within 20 months of commencement and I believe that is has been commenced. The owner of the hotel, at completion of construction, will be the Australian Industries Development Corporation, a Commonwealth government statutory authority which trades as a merchant bank. It is contributing a sum by way of equity into the project. May I say that it does not give its money away. Development finance is being provided by Westpac and negotiations for the long-term financing are continuing.

The Territory, by itself and through the Northern Territory Development Corporation, is providing various guarantees to the AIDC and the financiers. The government is gratified by the faith shown in the future of tourism in the Territory by the various organisations involved in the project, especially by the Sheraton organisation which has signed a 20-year management agreement in respect of the hotel. I believe that Sheraton's movement into the Territory has been noticed not just in Australia but overseas and has been regarded as a significant move by international airlines. Of course, Sheraton stands to make

money out of the management agreement and we hope that it will. Central Australian International Hotels stands to make some money if the project is successful. Even if the government had completed the project itself, we would have still been paying similar management fees and so on to whatever project coordinators we employed. AIDC stands to make a fairly healthy return on its investment.

I recall from the agreement that, within 8 years, it is hoped to find a more permanent end owner. We believe that 8 years should be sufficiently long because experience elsewhere has indicated that the first 5 years of operation of these large hotels is generally a testing period. When servicing of capital and so on is taken into account, it takes about 5 years or so for them to get into the black. Basically, I think you could say, Mr Speaker, although I cannot provide the figures here this morning, that is where the Northern Territory government is standing behind these various projects.

I think I spoke about foreign banks' involvement in Yulara yesterday. We cannot attract Australian finance into the project. Generally speaking, I am hopeful that we might be now interesting Australian banks in long-term financing of Yulara. They would not touch it last year. The syndicate is comprised totally of foreign banks. This is because there is no financial track record for this sort of project in the Northern Territory and, in my experience, Australian financial institutions only back sure things. We have to ensure that these projects succeed to establish the track record that will get similar projects off the ground in the future in the Northern Territory without government support.

Women's Affairs Shopfront Information Service

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

During the December 1983 elections, the government undertook to establish women's affairs shopfront services in Darwin and Alice Springs. What has been done to implement this commitment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, a few days after the election, I convened a meeting of the coordination committee to implement the various commitments that the government had made in the course of its election campaign. Those were expressed principally in the policy speech that I delivered. As the honourable member for Ludmilla so rightly says, one of those commitments was that the government undertook to establish women's shopfront information services in Darwin and Alice Springs. The Office of Women's Affairs was asked to proceed with the planning of the 2 shopfront centres pretty well straight after the election. Of course, that office has had problems recruiting staff but staff are now firmly in place. That office has initiated contact with the property officer in the Department of Transport and Works to find suitable accommodation in Darwin and Alice Springs. It is not anticipated that that will be very difficult. Members of that office expect to liaise with the Department of Community Development regarding the management and administration of the shopfront centres. I anticipate that we should see the establishment of these 2 centres within about 3 months. I cannot recall the details but I seem to remember something being said to me by the Director of the Office of Women's Affairs in January or February to the effect that they were making contact with the Commonwealth in relation to some information service that the Commonwealth was proposing to provide. I think the suggestion was that we should operate in tandem with the Commonwealth, somewhat along the same lines

as the Northern Territory Ombudsman does. He does the Commonwealth Ombudsman's work in the Territory for him. I fully support that concept. Whilst I was in Adelaide a couple of weeks ago, at the time the Hill Report was announced publicly by the Minister for Transport, Mr Morris, I took the opportunity to visit a women's information service operated by the South Australian government out of the old South Australian Public Library. What I saw there impressed me and I hope that the Northern Territory women's information shopfront centres can operate as effectively.

INDEX TO QUESTIONS
1 March - 7 March 1984

Aboriginal -
liaison officers, replacement 34
outstations 29
ADMA farmers 37
Alice Springs -
abattoir 24
casino causeway 8
eye specialist 12
family counsellors 33
Hospital, geriatric ward 29
international hotel 47
lake inquiry 15
powerhouse 41
subdivision 34
to Darwin railway 9
Apprentice employment scheme 26
Apprentices in training 40
Araluen Arts Centre 42
Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program 4
Barramundi fishing plan 46
Bathurst and Melville Islands, forestry operations 40
Biles Report 28
BTB Eradication Campaign, police investigation 3, 4, 5, 11
Casuarina High School 13
Chamberlain case, inquiry 13, 27
Community government councils 30
Community Welfare and Juvenile Justice Acts 3
Conveyancing guide 28
Councils, rating base structure 33
Crematorium for Darwin 44, 45
Crocodiles 13
Daly Waters school 34
Darwin Primary School, closure 13
Darwin Rural Fire Management Plan 26
DCC, re-accreditation of diploma in welfare work 28
Discount air fares for overseas visitors 18
Dollar-for-dollar scheme 8
Drivers' licences for diabetics 44
Elsey cemetery archway 16
Emily Hills subdivision, flooding 14
Enterprise Mine at Pine Creek 43
Fauna sent to Zoo Negara 46
Forestry, 1981-82 expenditure *1
Galiwinku, doctor 33
Gardens Hill Development Pty Ltd 23, 25
Gosse Bluff 42
Gove District Hospital, closure of ward 38
Health Department, contracts 29
High schools, survey 41
Hospitals, pharmaceutical prescriptions 35, 41, 45
Housing Commission, portability of loans 37
Jabiru offshore oil discovery 10
Larrakeyah Primary School, renovation 30
Local Government Act, review 43
Marrara sporting complex, drainage 38
Nhulunbuy -
electricity subsidy 9
ranger 29

INDEX TO QUESTIONS
1 March - 7 March 1984

NTDC 31
Nyirripi -
 emergency landing strip 8
 school 16
Ombudsman's report on police 20
Permanent part-time employment 7
Point Stuart Station 5, 6
Rapid Creek Primary School, air-conditioning 31
Relativities review, NT government statement 43
Ross River and Hermannsburg, sealing of roads 39
Royal Darwin Hospital, flooding 14
Rum Jungle rehabilitation project 39
School leavers, employment 36
Securities, uniform legislation 39
Sewerage reticulation 16
South African Ambassador 5
Stuart Highway -
 traffic signs 19
 upgrading *1
Taminmin High School 30
Tennant Creek -
 upgrading of dump and Wambiaia camps *1
 Warrego Road intersection, electric lighting *1
TIO's loss 10, 15
Tracy Village complex 24
Women's affairs shopfront services 48
Yulara Development Company -
 executive officer 32, 45
 interest on loans 38