

**NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

6

Tuesday 15 September 1987  
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND MINES

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# **NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

## **Fifth Assembly First Session**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Roger William Stanley Vale</b>
<b>Chief Minister</b>	<b>Stephen Paul Hatton</b>
<b>Opposition Leader</b>	<b>Terence Edward Smith</b>
<b>Deputy Chief Minister</b>	<b>Raymond Allan Hanrahan</b>
<b>Minister for Lands and Housing</b>	
<b>Minister for Conservation</b>	
<b>Minister for Tourism</b>	
<b>Treasurer and Minister for Local Government</b>	<b>Barry Francis Coulter</b>
<b>Minister for Mines and Energy</b>	
<b>Minister for Industries and Development</b>	<b>Marshall Bruce Perron</b>
<b>Attorney-General</b>	<b>Daryl William Manzie</b>
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<b>Minister for Health and Community Services</b>	<b>Donald Francis Dale</b>
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<b>Minister for Transport and Works</b>	<b>Frederick Arthur Finch</b>

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**PART I**

**DEBATES**



## DEBATES

Tuesday 15 September 1987

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

### RETURN TO WRIT Division of Barkly

The CLERK: Honourable members, I lay on the table a copy of the decision of the Election Tribunal dated 30 July 1987 to the effect that the election for the electoral division of Barkly held on 7 March 1987 was void. I also lay on the table a return to the writ issued by His Honour the Acting Administrator Mr Justice Nader on 17 August 1987 for the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral division of Barkly, certifying the election of Ian Lindsay Tuxworth.

Mr Ian Lindsay Tuxworth made and subscribed the oaths required by law.

### PETITION Crocodile Management at McArthur River

Mr HANRAHAN (Conservation)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition in the form of an address from 195 citizens of the Northern Territory concerning the management of crocodiles in the McArthur River. I move that the address be read to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; address read.

To the Minister for Conservation, the honourable Ray Hanrahan, on 5 August 1987, a public meeting was held in Borroloola to discuss the management of crocodiles in the McArthur River. The following resolution was passed: 'The meeting resolves that the Conservation Commission culls, by trapping or killing, crocodiles 15 km either side of the Burketown Crossing and that, should the expense be too great, contractors be brought in to do the culling at government expense'.

### MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received message No 3 from His Honour the Acting Administrator:

I, John Anthony Nader, the Acting Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to appropriate certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year ending 30 June 1988.

Dated 11 September 1987  
J.A. Nader  
Acting Administrator.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88  
(Serial 58)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

I place on the table Budget Papers Nos 1 to 6 and, in doing so, I have the privilege of presenting the Northern Territory's tenth budget.

Mr Speaker, I will be presenting the facts and figures of the 1987-88 budget. I also invite attention to a detailed analysis of the Northern Territory economy which has been prepared as part of these documents. Budget Paper No 6 is essential reading for any citizen who wants to take an interest in the Territory and who wants to know the facts. The analysis shows continued internal economic growth and strong export growth, both actual and potential. The foundations of the next decade have been laid and the path ahead, I am pleased to say, is one of justified optimism. That is the message I want to place before the people of the Northern Territory. It is time to break the shackles of the past and an over-dependence on the whims of Canberra-based politics. Now is the time to leave behind the post self-government obsession about what is due to us from the Commonwealth. It is time for Territorians to take charge of the Territory's destiny.

This year's budget represents a culmination of a series of tight years. It finetunes those decisions announced in the June Economic Statement made necessary because of the reduced resources available to us. The proposals announced at that time have now been developed and finalised. The necessary climate now exists to allow Territorians to get on with the essential job of development. The 1987-88 budget continues the responsible policy of allowing no deficits. We will not pass on to future Territorians debts caused through lack of fiscal discipline. It is a realistic, practical and forward-looking budget which will prepare the Territory for exciting growth in the 1990s.

There are, however, reduced funds available to the Territory in this budget, primarily because of the state of the national economy. The nation's trading position, in particular, remains weak as a result of continued low export prices. The terms of trade imbalance, high interest rates, low private investment and an unacceptable federal deficit have required public sector restraint. The Commonwealth's response, contained in its May Economic Statement, was for reductions to the states and the Northern Territory of \$1000m in general purpose payments, \$373m in special purpose payments and a further \$1000m in reduced borrowing allocations. As a result, the Territory's total receipts from Commonwealth sources have fallen by 10.1% in real terms as compared to 7.5% for the states. This is, in real terms, a reduction of over \$100m. The most significant fall was in general purpose capital payments which dropped from \$131.9m last year to \$87.7m, a 33% reduction. The Territory's semi-government borrowing limit this year is \$65m, down from \$86.3m, reflecting the global borrowing limits set by Loan Council.

These reductions in Commonwealth payments came after 2 years of severe budget restraint in the Territory. Although total public sector expenditure showed a moderately healthy growth over that time, this growth was largely attributable to expenditure on the Channel Island Power Station. If the costs of this project are excluded, public sector growth has been, at best, modest. In the period 1984-85 to 1986-87, public sector outlays grew by only 2% in real terms.

The fall in revenue from the Commonwealth has not been matched by an overall rise in the Territory's own revenue sources. Intense activity in the mining sector has led to increased revenue from mineral royalties but other areas, such as payroll tax and stamp duties, are likely to do no more than maintain real values. The Commonwealth Fringe Benefits Tax has had a detrimental effect on the Territory's revenue sources. The motor vehicle industry is an example of the erosion of the Territory's tax base.

The 1987-88 budget totals \$1211m, a 3% reduction in money terms on total appropriations last year. Total public sector expenditure is \$1549m, which is also nearly 3% less in money terms. In real terms, public sector expenditure will decline by more than 10% in 1987-88. This is no reason to don sackcloth and ashes. Rather, it requires us to become more efficient in the use of our resources, to do more with less and to accelerate our policy of expanding the private sector's role in the Territory's economy.

I must emphasise that, in the development of this year's budget, there were valid competing claims for the limited resources available. Clearly, not all could be satisfied. The government determined that decisions should be made having regard to our future goals of development and greater self-sufficiency. There is no doubt that the Territory's revenue base must expand and that the private sector must be allowed to flourish. This budget seeks to achieve economic growth and it contains no new taxes. For sound and proper reasons, there are increased charges in 3 areas, and I will deal with those later. Our prime focus is to encourage growth in the economy.

Clearly, government has a responsibility to look beyond the short term, and this is what we have done. Sufficient resources have been allocated to ensure adequate standards in the social service areas, but emphasis has been given to those areas which will produce future wealth and prosperity for the Territory. This is the budget strategy for 1987-88. An important element of this strategy is to make room progressively for the private sector. The Territory has been dependent on the public sector for far too long. It is time for us to mature and to promote a higher private industry profile as we pursue our goal of greater self-sufficiency and take up our role as the seventh state of Australia.

For example, in the last 3 years, the public sector in the Territory has provided 47% of all houses compared with 10% provided by the public sector in the states. We are aiming for state-like levels of private-sector involvement. The Territory government has established the necessary base so that the construction industry can play its proper role, leaving the provision of welfare housing to the government.

Moving to the economic outlook, I will now deal with the tremendous development opportunities opening before us. The Territory is on the verge of the most dramatic period of its development, even taking into account the years of rapid growth immediately following self-government. The prospects are real, the future is assured and it is up to Territorians to take best advantage of the circumstances.

Tourism is one of the Territory's lifelines for future development. It is an area in which the Territory has a comparative advantage over the rest of Australia and, despite the growth that has occurred, huge potential remains. The government will continue to promote this growth. There has been remarkable expansion in tourism in 1986-87. Approximately 750 000 people travelled to the Territory spending about 3 million nights in commercial accommodation and a similar number in private accommodation. The number of

travellers has grown at an average annual rate of 13% since 1981. There has been a major expansion of accommodation in that time, with an increase of 147% in hotel, motel and guesthouse rooms. Last year, hotel and motel revenue was \$41m and it has increased by 23% per year since 1980.

Kakadu National Park is expected to have 195 000 visitors in 1987, a 47% increase on 1986. This trend is increasing and, in the month of July alone, there were 48 000 visitors to Kakadu compared with a total of 47 000 in the whole of 1982. The number of visitors to Ayers Rock has been growing rapidly, especially since the sealing of the Stuart Highway from South Australia. From 1960 to 1975, the growth was 6% a year. From 1975 to 1984, it was 10% a year and, since Yulara became available to accommodate tourists, the growth rate has been in the order of 20% a year and is rising. To cope with the rapidly-increasing demand, the Yulara group is converting some existing staff accommodation for tourist use. The first of these units will be available in 1988. Other budget accommodation is being expanded for use later in the year. Significant pressure has been put on existing infrastructure as a result of this growth. We must ensure that the Commonwealth does not limit the number of visitors or our ability to provide suitable facilities in our major national parks.

The tourism industry has come of age and the Territory government no longer has to become involved in major accommodation projects to the extent that it has in the past. I am pleased to say that the private sector has shown its confidence in the future of Territory tourism through investment and, in 1987-88, a number of important projects will commence or be completed. These include: the Coral Bay Wilderness Lodge at Cobourg Peninsula at a value of \$6m; a new hotel in Darwin on the corner of the Esplanade and Daly Street for \$16m; a \$13m motel at Jabiru, to be owned by the Gagudju Association and operated by the Four Seasons group; and the Darwin Atrium Hotel on the Esplanade at a cost of \$12m. A major resort development, to be partly owned by the Central Land Council, will be constructed at Kings Canyon for \$13m and there will be \$14m major expansion of the Alice Springs casino.

Mr Speaker, mineral and energy development makes up the biggest industry in the Territory by far, and that is a situation that will continue in the long term. It contributes 18% to the Territory's gross domestic product, significantly more than in any of the states. Territory production totalled \$850m in 1986 and production in 1987-88 will increase well over the \$1000m mark. Like tourism, it is an area where the Territory has a comparative advantage, and yet our vast resources are still under-utilised. I state with certainty that foreshadowed developments will substantially increase the Territory's value to Australia as an exporter and supplier of minerals and energy.

The continuing high gold price is encouraging further intensive exploration throughout the Territory, and 5 new goldmines have been opened recently. New and substantial mines will begin production in the near future. Western Mining has known reserves of \$280m at the Goodall Mine and the Mt Bonnie Gold Unit Trust has \$200m at the Tanami project in central Australia. The Coronation Hill project, a joint venture between BHP, Noranda and EZ Industries, has known deposits of gold and platinum estimated at \$750m. Drilling results indicate such estimates are on the conservative side and promising deposits are also being identified nearby in the South Alligator valley. The joint venturers will complete an environmental impact study early next year, and I am confident that this exciting project will begin production in the current financial year.



Looking further ahead, the McArthur River project is being examined as a joint venture between Mt Isa Mines and an overseas participant. This project would be the world's largest silver, lead and zinc mine, involving more than \$2000m in capital investment. Right now, ore samples are undergoing analysis in Japan to determine the appropriate technology which will unlock these valuable minerals. Mt Isa Mines has been given until the end of April 1988 to finalise joint venture arrangements.

Substantial exploration for uranium is continuing throughout the Top End in the expectation that Australia will eventually take up its rightful position as the world's major exporter. Many significant uranium deposits are associated with valuable quantities of gold and platinoids, and it is to be hoped that these minerals, which are in keen demand throughout the world, will be developed in the immediate future. I believe that the Northern Territory must lead Australia into the real world of energy to the year 2000. Australia cannot continue to ignore nuclear energy while the rest of the world converts progressively to nuclear power generation. No new energy source is likely to have a significant impact in the next quarter century. We have the raw material. The next logical step must be to process our own ore so that we progress from a humble position as a resource supplier to a fully-fledged production centre. Australia can make a significant and worthwhile contribution to non-proliferation and world peace only through complete participation in the nuclear fuel cycle. I am encouraged by the Commonwealth's recent decision to update the 1984 Slayter Report on Australia's role in the nuclear fuel cycle.

With the decline of oil and gas production in Bass Strait, the Timor Sea is now Australia's most prospective hydrocarbon area. The Territory's role as a major energy resource producer is assured and we are on the verge of a boom in offshore oil and gas. Two major rigs are now operating in the Jabiru and Challis fields which will be producing 60 000 barrels of oil a day by the end of the year. A record \$120m was spent in exploration and production in 1986, and that figure is expected to exceed \$180m in 1988. More acreage in the Bonaparte Basin and the Arafura Sea will be opened for exploration after December. Further drilling is taking place in the Jabiru and Challis fields and the important Petrel 4 gas field will be drilled by March next year.

I am pleased to say that the government is moving vigorously towards its objective of establishing Darwin as a major production centre for oil and gas. In this context, contracts will be signed within weeks for the establishment of a joint venture gas stripping plant at Palmerston City Gate. This facility will produce about 10 000 t per year of LPG and 7000 t of LNG. Stage 1 of this plant is due to be commissioned in late 1988 after construction estimated at over \$15m.

In Alice Springs, Centre Gas Pty Ltd intends to start natural gas reticulation to the town later this year. Gas will be sourced from the TNT Bulkships pipeline which takes Palm Valley gas to the Alice Springs power house. Initial markets targeted include the hospital, hotels, motels and restaurants, laundries and office buildings. Initial capital cost of this facility will be about \$500 000. Centre Gas has plans to extend its services to houses and suburbs. Supply of Centralian gas to South Australia is now being actively considered by the South Australian Natural Gas Task Force. This could involve the supply of more than 30 petajoules per annum, enough to satisfy South Australian demand and to supplement existing reserves into the next century.

Opportunities for local business and suppliers will continue to develop as a result of the offshore oil and gas boom. These should not be underestimated, but it must be said that Territory business needs to gear up for those opportunities. Things will not just fall into place automatically. The government is therefore organising a seminar for Territory business on 21 October, during which leading figures in the oil and gas industry and representatives from the Australia Mining Industry Council will detail industry requirements.

Primary and secondary industries are the third cornerstone of the Territory's economy. Exciting developments are already occurring and, as with the tourism and mining sectors, there is potential for greater expansion.

In fishing, the provision of basic infrastructure and the efforts to promote more active utilisation of a wider range of species have set the scene for greater landing and processing of fish products in Darwin. Negotiations are currently under way to open a major processing and cold store facility in Darwin. Conversion of fish products to pet food is being trialed. Last year, in excess of \$20m-worth of fish were landed in the Northern Territory but the consultants, Norgaard, have estimated that the value of the fishery resource in northern waters is \$100m. The industry has expanded recently with the discovery of scampi and red carid prawns in waters to the north of Melville Island. The full extent of the field is being assessed to determine the scope and nature of appropriate management.

The pastoral industry is already well developed with a value of production in excess of \$100m. However, the completion of the BTEC program will place the industry on a firmer footing. There will be better access to markets, improved beef quality and better husbandry as a result of the campaign.

Agriculture is still in its infancy but, with only a fraction of the Territory's arable land presently under cultivation, it clearly has the potential to expand quickly. It is pleasing to note that the Top End is now self-sufficient in grains. In horticulture in particular, the Territory supplies early season and out-of-season markets in Australia and overseas. Territory production has increased from \$1.1m in 1981-82 to \$6m in 1985-86, a 23% increase per annum. However, conservative estimates predict that it will rise to \$40m by 1990-91, an increase of more than 7 times on the last 5-year average, due to new and maturing plants.

Important examples of horticultural development are table grapes and cashew nuts. Territory table grapes mature 4 to 6 weeks earlier than elsewhere in Australia and can therefore command very high prices. More than 75 ha in the Ti Tree district are under cultivation and production at full development is expected to have a value of approximately \$10m. An exciting commercial development of cashew nuts at the Wildman River is being investigated. Significant research plantings are showing encouraging results and further plantings are expected. This is another area where the Territory can gain market advantage.

Secondary industry is also an area which is likely to expand. There are very significant opportunities in secondary processing of our plentiful natural resources. Through skilful use of new and appropriate technology, the Territory will be able to gain considerably. For the Territory to realise its potential in these areas, we must identify and establish expanded markets. To this end, Nortrade has been actively pursuing opportunities in the South-east Asian region.

I now turn to major construction activity. In addition to the projects already identified in mining and tourism, other major construction projects are being undertaken by the private sector. These include stage 1 of the new \$20m 14-level office tower to be built by the Territory Insurance Office on the site of the old police headquarters in Mitchell Street. Construction will commence next month and is to be completed by July 1989. A twin-towers luxury accommodation and office block on the Esplanade commenced recently, and the \$25m project should be completed within 18 months. A new \$5.5m government administration centre will be built in Katherine. The 2-storey building in First Street will be finished by July next year.

This budget contains savings from the full-year effects of the 19 March 1987 administrative arrangements in the public sector. A number of smaller functional areas were amalgamated to form larger departments, allowing rationalisation of overheads and facilities and the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Departments and authorities have been given maximum staffing levels within which to operate. This will encourage better planning and create a ceiling for staff costs within each financial year. The maximum staffing levels are at least 600 less than previously approved. This reduction reflects efficiencies achieved through amalgamation and continued public-sector restraint. As part of the efficiency measures, a program has been established to improve information available to government. More attention will be given to the classification of expenditure by function. This will improve accountability and enhance resource allocation decisions in preparation for the 1988-89 budget.

Computing is another area where there have been significant achievements within the public sector. The Territory maintains a relatively centralised computing system resulting in increased economies of scale. In order to ensure continued economical use of computing resources in the Territory, procedures are being developed in 1987-88 which will require all systems to be more fully investigated and proven before being implemented.

Mr Speaker, I will now deal with the specifics of the budget. The Northern Territory Tourist Commission will receive \$13m to increase the number of visitors to the Territory. This will be achieved through marketing, advertising and the operation of tourist bureaus both nationally and internationally. Aboriginal involvement in tourism will further increase with new initiatives identified for the production of an Aboriginal tour guide, provision of promotional subsidies for Aboriginal tour operators, festivals and a national Aboriginal art award. A feasibility study on the development of an Aboriginal culture centre has received funding.

The government also supports the tourism industry in other ways. Considerable funds are directed towards the development of tourist destinations. In 1987-88, \$2m is provided for sealing of the Kakadu Highway along with \$790 000 for roads and other infrastructure at Litchfield Park. The Berry Springs Zoo will have an injection of \$1.1m this year to enable this world-class facility to be opened by December 1988. At Kings Canyon, the government is providing water and road works to the boundary of a major private facility.

The role of the Territory government, through the Department of Mines and Energy, is to provide the framework for the realisation of the Territory's enormous mineral potential. We have moved to reduce the amount of red tape confronting explorers and entrepreneurs. We have adopted a one-stop-shop approach, which means an explorer can go to the one counter in the one building to do business with the Territory government as against more than a

dozen departments and authorities in some states. That leaner bureaucratic mechanism will be further refined in 1987-88. Extra staff will be located in the department's Titles Branch to facilitate faster movement of exploration lease applications and to ensure the current backlog is cleared by December. This is needed to deal with the intense activity created by strong growth in the goldmining sector. Nevertheless, the Department of Mines and Energy will operate in 1987-88 with a real staff reduction of more than 10%, reflecting the government's policy of seeking greater efficiency and moving more departmental functions to the private sector.

An interesting initiative in this budget will be the formation of a gold squad. Liaison with the industry shows that significant gold revenue is being lost to the Territory through illegal mining and other fraudulent activities. In conjunction with the mining industry, a gold squad consisting of 2 trained police officers will be established. Expenditure on mines and energy is \$14.7m, a 23% increase on last year. However, most of this increase is attributable to the new Commonwealth-funded program for the rehabilitation of Rum Jungle South.

In the industries and development sector, total expenditure on this amalgamated function of agriculture, fisheries and industry development is projected to rise in 1987-88 to a total of \$45.7m. This includes a number of important programs. The largest item is \$16.3m for the continuation of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign. The program moves further north this year and it is anticipated that these diseases will be virtually eliminated by 1992, with long-term and positive implications for the pastoral industry and its export markets.

Other major budget items include additional Commonwealth funds of over \$1.3m through the Rural Adjustment Scheme and the provision of \$700 000 in drought relief loans, largely offset by a reduced allocation for drought relief subsidies following relief rains in southern areas.

The government will continue to promote and foster the development of secondary industry in the Territory, specifically through Nortrade and the Trade Development Zone. Nortrade, the government's trade and marketing arm, has had considerable success promoting Territory goods and services both overseas and within Australia, and its program for 1987-88 is intended to capitalise on that success. This year's budget allows 7 overseas trade missions and ongoing promotions interstate.

The budget allocation for the Trade Development Zone is \$5m, down from over \$7m last year, partly due to a reduction in capital works funding from the budget. Total expenditure will increase by \$3m, however, with further construction of factory space being undertaken this year by the private sector.

Fisheries is another important industry in the Northern Territory. Our emphasis continues to be directed to management of this valuable resource so that it is protected in the long term. The barramundi buy-back scheme will receive \$109 000 this year to retrieve gill net entitlements. Research to develop a plan of management for scampi and red carid prawns will be undertaken during 1987-88.

A great deal of the Conservation Commission's activities are directed towards tourism and these have already been mentioned. However, there are other valuable projects which often receive little recognition. A number of bicentennial projects have been undertaken. Appropriate facilities and

restoration works costing \$204 000 are to be completed at the Victoria Settlement to enhance its use as a tourist attraction. At Arltunga, an historic goldmining town east of Alice Springs, a \$273 000 restoration project will be undertaken to allow visitors to view mining methods of 100 years ago beside an 1987 mining venture. At Hermannsburg, 7 original settlement buildings are being restored at a total cost of \$500 000 which will provide the Ntarrria Council with a basis for a tourist industry. In Alice Springs, \$97 000 will be spent on providing live-in facilities at the Telegraph Station to enable local schoolchildren to experience a lifestyle similar to that at the turn of the century.

The Power and Water Authority is of particular importance as 1987-88 is the first full year of operation of that authority. Total expenditure by the authority is estimated to be \$314m, an effective \$41m decrease from last year. Of this amount, \$83m will be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund.

There are a number of significant issues in the authority's budget, the most important of which is the completion of the \$225m Channel Island Power Station with an \$18m final payment this year. Two major projects to be completed are the expansion and modernisation of the Alice Springs Power Station at a total cost of \$13m, most of which will be spent in 1987-88, and completion of the \$33m Katherine Power Station which commenced generation of power on 20 August this year. Two other significant projects now under investigation are the high voltage transmission lines from Darwin to Katherine and Darwin to Jabiru. Detailed discussions are being held with private entrepreneurs to construct and operate the transmission lines for profit, consistent with the government strategy of privatisation where possible. The projects will proceed only if they are economically viable.

The budget reflects the changing nature of electricity costs as a result of the conversion to gas and, in particular, the use of Channel Island Power Station. In fact, recurrent costs are higher in 1987-88 as a result of the combined influences of full depreciation and interest on capital funds, and the relatively high base level of lease charges for the gas pipeline. However, this position will improve progressively as consumption increases and losses incurred in power generation reduce from the current high base.

We are fortunate in 1987-88 to have the Commonwealth subsidy, promised by the Prime Minister in 1985, return. This \$47m subsidy reduces the net impact of these higher costs in 1987-88. The current subsidy arrangements expire at the end of 1988-89. Even with the subsidy, an additional \$17m will need to be borrowed in 1987-88 under the special borrowing arrangements agreed with the Commonwealth to fund the electricity operating deficit. Appropriations for electricity operations also include \$14m for the continued supply of power to remote communities.

In regard to the water and sewerage operations of the authority, the budget reflects the first stage of the rationalised operation through amalgamation of the power and water functions. The disciplined commercial practices of the former NT Electricity Commission will be applied to the provision of water and sewerage services. As a result costs, other than for capital works and repairs and maintenance, are expected to fall slightly in 1987-88. Despite these savings, there will be a \$19m operating deficit in water and sewerage services. The budget includes increases in water and sewerage charges to bring them in line with charges in the states. There will be a 10% increase in sewerage charges. A flat rate of 30¢ per kilolitre will be adopted for water charges, replacing the previously two-stepped system.

Lands and housing is another area where there have been significant changes as a result of the new administrative arrangements. In 1987-88, there is a reduction in the level of expenditure. Appropriations to the Department of Lands and Housing, which exclude expenditure by the Housing Commission, will fall by \$4m. Of this, \$1m is primarily the result of efficiencies made possible by the absorption of the Housing Commission management into the Department of Lands and Housing. Savings have been possible both in salaries and administrative expenses.

The budget provides \$130 000 for the first stage of the Archer recreational complex at Palmerston. The land acquisition program is \$3m lower than last year, reflecting the reduced demand for land by the government and the private sector and the need for restraint in this year. Nevertheless, \$1.2m will be spent acquiring 71 residential blocks in Katherine, 27 of which will be sold to the Commonwealth. Land will also be acquired in Darwin to facilitate road links to Palmerston. Similarly, in Alice Springs, over \$1m will be necessary to acquire land to improve access to the city centre.

Housing Commission expenditures are projected to fall by \$41m in 1987-88. In part, this is a reflection of the effects of one-off transfer payments but real reductions are occurring, consistent with the \$20m cut announced in the June Economic Statement. With regard to the transfer payments, there were 3 one-off transactions in 1986-87: \$12m of high interest loans were rolled over to reduce the cost of interest to the Housing Commission; consistent with the intention announced in last year's budget, \$15m of Housing Commission mortgages were taken over by the Employers Superannuation Trust Fund and these receipts were used to redeem \$15m of Housing Commission debt; and a \$4m debt to the Commonwealth was repaid.

The budget includes provision for a 10% increase in Housing Commission rents. Under arrangements agreed with the Commonwealth, rents must rise with cost and this increase is the direct result. The combined effects of rent increases and the increase in housing stock will produce \$5m in additional rental income in 1987-88.

The reduction in capital works spending has already been announced in the June statement. These reductions have been possible because significant achievements have been made and appropriate standards established in particular areas. Nevertheless, \$205m will be spent on capital works in the Northern Territory in 1987-88. \$59m will be spent on repairs and maintenance and construction of roads. Several major roads started last year will be completed this year. In Darwin, Tiger Brennan Drive will be paved and sealed from Reichardt Road to Hook Road and a dual carriageway will be constructed on McMillans Road from Lee Point Road to Mueller Road. In Tennant Creek, the Stuart Highway will be reconstructed near the Devils' Marbles. In the Katherine region, 28 km of the Victoria Highway will be reconstructed and realigned and, in the Alice Springs region, 21 km of the Stuart Highway and 9 km of the Ross Highway will be reconstructed, including the Trephina Gorge Road to the park boundary.

In addition, a number of new roads will commence this year including expenditure of \$3.5m on reconstruction of 20 km of the Barkly Highway, \$2.6m on reconstruction of 2 stretches of the Stuart Highway near Alice Springs and a further \$4.9m near the Plenty Highway turnoff, \$4.3m on reconstruction of 23 km of the Stuart Highway north of McLaren Creek, \$1.8m for the construction of a dual carriageway in Vanderlin Drive to Patterson Street and, in Alice Springs, \$1m for a dual carriageway in Larapinta Drive from George Crescent to Millner Road.

In capital works spending on housing, consistent with the decision announced in the June Economic Statement, 205 new dwellings will be commenced in 1987-88. Total capital expenditure will include a \$9.6m program to upgrade older Housing Commission accommodation. The Housing Commission has approximately 30 major unit complexes throughout the Territory, of which 15 are more than 20 years old and require substantial maintenance and upgrading. Detached housing is generally of a good standard. However, about 1500 of the oldest dwellings, which do not have facilities in line with current standards, have been identified for upgrading or replacement. This work is particularly labour intensive and will transfer activity from new construction work to maintenance.

In other areas, projects to be commenced this year include the construction of a combined police, fire and emergency service complex in Katherine for \$3.5m, construction of headworks to service stage 2 of the Mt John Valley tourist precinct in Alice Springs for \$1m, \$6.7m on the Royal Darwin Hospital for upgrading of the air-conditioning system and fire protection, \$830 000 in Borroloola for the construction of a rural health centre, \$3.7m for the final stage of the pipeline duplication for Darwin's water supply, and \$894 000 for the construction of a reticulated sewerage system at Gapuwiyak.

The 1987-88 capital works program includes also an extra \$3m for minor new works in the Darwin region. A review of the impact of the cuts to capital works indicated Darwin was being disproportionately affected and the selective injection of this extra cash on labour-intensive projects in Darwin will supplement the income of small contractors.

While there has been a heavy emphasis in this budget on the development needs of the Territory, the government has not overlooked the services it must supply to the community. I will deal with these in some detail now.

The establishment of the Department of Health and Community Services was one of the significant changes in administrative arrangements introduced earlier this year and will provide a coordinated and comprehensive range of community services to all Territorians. The budget decisions reflect the emphasis on innovative community-based alternatives. There has been an expansion in funding for the Department of Health and Community Services of 8.3% to bring the total allocation to \$194.5m in 1987-88. The most significant area of new expenditure is the introduction of the revised nursing career structure designed to encourage senior, well-qualified nurses to remain as bedside nurses. Previously, advancement beyond a particular level could be achieved only through a transfer to nursing administration. We believe that this will greatly enhance patient care and give proper recognition and remuneration to an essential group of dedicated staff. The cost is \$7.6m in 1987-88, although \$780 000 of this relates to payments in respect of 1986-87.

The first-tier national wage case decision will account for almost \$3.2m of additional departmental expenditure in a full year. A substantial part of the increased funding is dedicated to supporting the existing network of integrated health and community services, which includes an extensive range of grants to community organisations. These grants total \$13m in this financial year in line with one of the government's principal aims. These programs are targeted at streamlining administration and improving individual and community well-being to reduce demands on costly institutional care. The government has earmarked funds in health and community services to honour election commitments, with an emphasis on community care. \$635 000 has been allocated to boost the respite and residential care facilities for disabled people.

Full-year recurrent funding will amount to \$780 000 in the following 3 areas: respite care on evenings and weekends for children up to 5 years of age, support for community organisations to develop full-time residential care facilities for socially-incompatible disabled adolescents and adults, and additional residential care for severely physically and intellectually disabled children.

Funding for psychiatric services will be increased by \$245 000, and \$507 000 in a full year. In Alice Springs, a specialist team will be established to access psychiatrically-ill and intellectually-disabled people who are behaviourally disturbed. In-patient facilities and treatment will be expanded and a community psychiatric service, with emphasis on families and children, is to be established. The funds also provide for substantial upgrading of hospital and community-based psychiatric programs in Darwin. An additional 14 staff will enable treatment in the Territory for patients who require intermediate to long-term care. Delays will be reduced in treatment for emotionally-disturbed children with developmental problems. An Aboriginal mental health care consultant will also be appointed. Legislation is being developed to provide guardianship of behaviourally-disturbed people, many of whom are intellectually disabled. The Renal Dialysis Unit in Alice Springs will receive an additional \$143 000 to double the number of days on which dialysis sessions are available. The full-year effect of this expansion will be \$240 000.

The government is continuing its strategy of community-based correctional services. This year, \$550 000 has been allocated to establish 2 rural venues for prisoners. The first of these establishments is proposed to be situated in the Litchfield National Park. A further \$600 000 is set aside in the capital works program to provide facilities and prisoner accommodation. The Department of Health and Community Services will act as contractor to the Conservation Commission, with inmates engaged in developing the park and installing tourist infrastructure such as walking trails and barbecues. Investigations are under way in the Alice Springs and Barkly regions to identify a suitable site for the second facility. Recurrent full-year funding for both venues will amount to \$900 000.

Facilities for juvenile offenders will be expanded in the 1987-88 budget. \$130 000 is allocated to establish another facility as an annexe to the highly successful wilderness camp at Wildman River. This funding will also cover the cost of upgrading and strengthening the staffing contingent, primarily at Malak House which was given full statutory juvenile detention status earlier this year. In 1988-89, these 2 initiatives are estimated to cost \$260 000.

Moving to the police, fire and emergency services, departmental funding has been increased by \$2.9m including \$800 000 for repairs and maintenance, to a total of \$49.7m. Police strength is to be increased by 53 to provide a greater police presence in the community. Some 27 officers are to be recruited in 1987-88 at a cost of \$760 000 and the remainder the following year. An amount of \$185 000 has been provided to equip the new Police, Fire and Emergency Service Training Centre currently under construction at Berrimah.

In education, we have seen in this year's enrolment figures the success of the junior and senior college strategies. Retention rates in Darwin are now similar to those in the rest of Australia. The enhancement of tertiary education opportunities no doubt has contributed to this outcome. A number of significant capital works items will be completed this financial year. The primary and secondary schools at Katherine East should be operational next



year to cope with the expansion resulting from the Tindal development. Stage 2 of Sanderson High School and the upgrading of music and science facilities at Nightcliff High School will be completed. New works and works in progress on Aboriginal communities total \$3.4m. \$380 000 will be spent to expand the teaching and video production wing of the Alice Springs College of TAFE and a further \$240 000 is available for expansion of the School of Tourism and Hospitality. Transportable accommodation will be installed at the Darwin Institute of Technology to cope with increasing student numbers, and the internal road system will be upgraded to facilitate easy and safe access to the complex.

In 1988, the University College of the Northern Territory will be entering its second year of operation. Second-year science subjects will be introduced, to be followed by third-year subjects in 1989. All 3 years of studies in arts were introduced in 1987, consequent to the transfer of Bachelor of Art students from the Darwin Institute of Technology. New areas of science to be introduced in 1988 include biochemistry, statistics and remote sensing. Law is an area of study which has attracted more students to the University College than any other. \$150 000 will be provided to introduce second-year studies.

Turning to Territory revenue, in this year's budget, there has been a number of changes to the presentation of the Territory's own revenue sources. In line with the establishment of the Power and Water Authority, revenue from water and sewerage services will be received directly by the authority rather than being paid into the Consolidated Fund. This is matched, however, by a reduction in the appropriation to the authority. There are also changes in the transfer payments from the Housing Commission to the Consolidated Fund, as I explained earlier.

Revenue from Territory taxes and charges is expected to total \$164m in 1987-88. This is a \$20m reduction on last year, primarily as a result of the changed water and sewerage receipts. After this is taken into account, in money terms there is little change from last year, although there has been a change in the mix of the revenue source. The new fuel tax and the tourism marketing duty will provide an additional \$7m and \$250 000 respectively this year, and a total of \$10m in a full year. A \$10m decline is expected in land revenue as a result of a reduced program this year. Interest received on cash balances is also down, and revenue from payroll tax and stamp duties should be maintained in real terms. Significant revenue increases are expected in mining royalties of 53%, in casino taxes and fees of 43% and 33% from the TAB.

It was foreshadowed in the June Economic Statement that the government was seriously considering a land tax and a fire service levy. I am pleased to say that these measures will not be introduced this year.

In conclusion, I have sought to present a real and optimistic picture of the economy of the Territory and its future direction rather than simply to list the regions and the departments which have been the recipients of the annual distribution of available cash. It is a fact that 1987-88 is a year in which cash is in relatively short supply. This financial year will be dominated by the Territory government's need to achieve greater efficiencies from its limited resources. At the same time, however, it is a year in which the Territory must prepare itself for the great opportunities that are beckoning. Rapid growth in the mines and energy sectors has begun and will accelerate quickly. Tourist numbers are expanding at a rate that requires urgent further private investment. Our traditional primary industries and the emerging horticultural industry will continue to provide balanced growth to our economic development.

The Territory government has played its proper role since self-government in directing its energies to these development areas. Nine years of hard work has awakened Australia and the world to the Territory's strategic resources. This work must continue. The Territory government must continue to act as the facilitator of economic growth so that the private sector can take advantage of the opportunities that are now available. In this way, the maximum benefits will accrue to all Territorians. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPERS  
Documents Relating to Division of Barkly

Mr SPEAKER: For the information of honourable members, I lay on the table the following papers relating to the decision of the Election Tribunal of 30 July 1987 to the effect that the election for the Division of Barkly held on 7 March 1987 was void: (1) a copy of the advice on the position of Mr Tuxworth given by the Department of Law following the declaration of the Election Tribunal; (2) a copy of advice received from the honourable T.E.F. Hughes QC; (3) a copy of a letter from the Attorney-General on the matter addressed to myself and dated 6 August 1987; and (4) a copy of a letter which I wrote to Mr Tuxworth relating to the matter.

Honourable members will understand that I had no option but to act upon the advice and cease Mr Tuxworth's entitlements as a member of the Legislative Assembly forthwith. Since then, some criticism has been made of my requiring that the Barkly electorate office be closed. It was suggested that the cost of closing the office was \$5000. That is not the case. The cost of closing the Barkly electorate office was \$572. However, that expenditure was more than offset by the savings made in the closing of the office. The closure of the office actually saved more than \$2500 in rent, staff salary, electricity and telephone charges. However, let me emphasise that I did not close the Barkly electorate office to save money. I had no option but to close the office temporarily in the light of the legal advice given to me.

At the time the officers of the Assembly closed the premises, they carried out a stocktake which is an annual requirement for all government premises and equipment. This procedure safeguarded the interests not only of the taxpayer but also of Mr Tuxworth.

STOCK ROUTES AND TRAVELLING STOCK AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 23)

Continued from 7 May 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the bills provide that 3 copies of waybills will be required. Mr Speaker, I might start again. The opposition supports this very simple bill which will improve the procedures required under the act. It will have the same effect but will reduce the problems in administering that section of the act relating to waybills.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that this legislation provides for the making of 3 copies of waybills. That is where he is wrong. It is 1 original and 2 copies. I drew this mistake in the principal act to the attention of the minister, the then member for Elsey. I am glad to see that, finally, the Department of Primary Industry has come around to rectifying the small mistake in the wording. Again, it is like the gestation of an elephant. I do not have any argument with the

amendment before us. I think it makes proper, grammatical sense. I am only sorry that it has taken so long to get the officers in the Department of Primary Industry to come around to thinking grammatically.

I have something of a problem with the intention in the legislation which was mentioned in the minister's second-reading speech. He said: 'The effect of designating an offence as a regulatory offence is that, in a prosecution of the offence, it is not necessary to prove intention'. To my way of thinking, that means the person has to prove his innocence, which I do not think one should have to do. That may be applicable in Europe but, in my understanding, it is not the way we work in Australia. I can only hope that, in the administration of this act, the goodwill of the officers of the Department of Primary Production are brought to the fore and one does not have to prove one's innocence in relation to any transgression against this act.

I have to commend the activities of the stock inspector in the rural area where we live. He is getting everybody into the way of making out waybills when stock are sold and travel on the roads. This applies not only to cattle, which many people think of as stock, but all other stock covered under the act. I can only commend him for his activity even if I do perhaps forget from time to time to fill out these waybills. However, I do it eventually.

The legislation has my support provided that the minister can assure me that my interpretation of his second-reading speech is incorrect, in that a person will not have to prove his innocence and the Crown will have to prove his guilt if he does offend against this act. A requirement on a person to prove his innocence is not the way we do things in Australia.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak briefly on this bill. Section 18 of the Stock Routes and Travelling Stock Act provides for issue of waybills for the movement of stock, with subsection 18(1) defining stock to which waybills are applicable. Subsection 18(2) provides for the issue of waybill books by the Chief Inspector of Stock and the need for waybills to be made out in the prescribed manner by the owner of the stock intended for movement. Section 21 of the act was intended to prescribe procedures and requirements to be followed by owners of stock, the use of waybills and to set penalties for offences relating to non-compliance or the misuse of waybills. In practice, I believe, it has been found that requirements for use of waybills are not adequately defined, particularly with regard to the distribution of completed waybills and the ability to impose penalties in relation to this section of the act, if this were necessary.

The amendments proposed clarify the intent of section 21 of the act. They provide for penalties for non-compliance, and such clarification will be of assistance both to the industry and to the relevant departments. Insertion of clause 3 will provide for the imposition of penalties for persons breaching provisions of the act for which no specific penalties apply. I understand that the industry is generally in support of these amendments and I support the bill.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, the only issue raised in relation to the bill was mentioned by the member for Koolpinyah who disagreed with clause 3 which makes this particular offence a regulatory offence. She felt that was not in accordance with Australian law. Of course, honourable members will be aware that she is not correct in that regard. Indeed, very many regulatory offences are covered by laws in the Northern Territory. From recollection, I think that the traffic area, in particular, is one that is very heavily laced with regulatory offences. The onus of

demonstrating the commission of a crime is different in relation to a regulatory offence as compared with a non-regulatory offence. The idea is to streamline the system of processing people through the courts and so on so that cases are dealt with more quickly. The point the member has raised is not worth making a big issue about one way or the other because it certainly is not unique to this piece of legislation. It is the sort of offence that can be made a regulatory offence quite easily, thereby saving the taxpayer a whole heap of dollars. It is not important enough to make a big noise about.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

STOCK DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 24)

Continued from 7 May 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is another simple piece of legislation and again the opposition supports it. It increases from 48 hours to 7 days the minimum notice a person must give before importing stock to the Territory from elsewhere in Australia. It says that this notification must be given either to an inspector or a prescribed authority. Previously, notification was given to an inspector only. It allows the Administrator to make regulations with respect to the fixing of tags to stock for the purpose of identifying the holding from which the stock came. It allows for regulations to prescribe penalties of \$1000, previously \$200.

Mr Speaker, as I said, these are simple amendments. They bring the Territory in line with some of the practices in the states and the opposition supports the bill.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak briefly in support of the amendments to the Stock Diseases Act. I believe they will simplify administrative arrangements for persons involved in the importation of stock into the Territory and provide for the establishment of a register to record the tagging of stock.

As regards the importation of stock, the present process is defined under section 24 of the act and is so outdated and inconvenient that, as the minister has already indicated, it is no longer applied. The proposed amendment will facilitate more convenient and practical requirements for importers of stock and bring the Territory into line with the practices employed in the states, whereby health certificates are issued by authorised persons operating in the state from which the stock are acquired.

The second part of the bill proposes an amendment to section 48 of the act to facilitate the establishment of a register to record the use of tags used in the identification of stock and to clarify and define necessary procedures. Mr Speaker, you would be aware of the benefits which have followed from the establishment of the brands register in the many years since its inception. I believe that the establishment of a tagging register for stock may be of similar significance in the area of disease control and the management of livestock. Considerable expense is being incurred in the area of disease control in stock, and the proposed amendments to the act will ensure that the

identification of stock and the ability to trace the movement of stock will further reinforce efforts to control stock diseases in the Territory. It is my understanding that these 2 amendments have broad support from the industry and, when implemented, will assist people within the industry and those servicing it. I am happy to support the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, when anybody talks about stock diseases or primary industry in this Chamber, it seems that they only refer to the pastoral industry. I would like to think that honourable members understand that primary industry involves more than cattle.

In responding to the minister's second-reading speech, I will be tactful without being very frank. I have seen better. It is not a very good second-reading speech although, if the minister had written it himself, it might have been a bit better.

Mr Bell: Are you applying for re-admission, Noel?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I can say anything I like now.

I took exception to the minister's remark that it 'is essential for the protection of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory that a mechanism is available to prohibit or restrict the importation of stock'. I know this legislation refers to the pastoral industry but nowhere in his second-reading speech does the minister talk about any other type of stock or imply any interest in primary industry other than the pastoral industry. I consider that a gross oversight.

The minister also said: 'There must be a mechanism available to restrict the importation of stock suspected of carrying a disease or of originating from a declared disease area, especially if the suspect disease is of an exotic nature. They are the worst kind'. I suppose that is true, but I do not think it very relevant in the context of the second-reading speech. The minister went on to say: 'There is a need to provide for a system to allow normal purchase transactions by pastoralists wishing to import breeder stock in the Northern Territory'. I am not arguing with that at all. All I am saying is that farmers in the Northern Territory do not only have cattle. I cannot stress strongly enough that primary industry consists of pigs, horses, goats, bees and a variety of other animals which are classified as stock under this act.

I would like to ask the honourable minister a question. In his second-reading speech, he said: 'The interstate health certificate, which is completed and certified by qualified personnel in the state of origin of the purchase, simplifies the whole operation of import in these circumstances'. He was referring to the fact that a health certificate will only be necessary to accompany stock that are imported into the Northern Territory. I do not have any argument with that at all, but I would like to know who the qualified personnel will be. Will that person have to be a veterinary surgeon employed by the state Department of Health or can it be a private vet in any state?

The forms that have to accompany stock that are imported into the Northern Territory have been very cumbersome to administer. I believe that they are a waste of time because nobody pays much attention to them even when they are filled out correctly. One had to give notice of when one would be bringing the animal into the Territory, the nature of the animal, the means of transport, where it was coming from and where it was going to. I imagine that all of this was for the sole purpose of checking where the animal would enter

the Territory and where it would be domiciled in the Territory. On the few occasions that I have imported animals or birds into the Territory, I filled in the appropriate form giving the details required. However, no check was made. I do not know whether spot checks are undertaken or not. Nevertheless, I agree that this legislation will make sense because it will streamline the importation of stock into the Northern Territory.

In his second-reading speech, the minister went on to say: 'Under the existing provisions contained in section 48D, tail tagging of stock for disease control purposes is not clearly defined and the proposed amendment will remove what is perceived as an anomaly'. Mr Speaker, I would like to correct the English of the person who wrote the second-reading speech. I would not use the word 'anomaly' but 'omission' because it is not mentioned in section 48 which relates to regulations.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen) : Mr Speaker, some years ago, when the proposal that, for the purposes of the Stock Act, bees would be considered as stock was considered in this House, one had vague pictures of people droving bees with stockwhips. It seemed to be a bit of a joke at the time, but the prevention of diseases getting into Territory beehives is a very important one for beekeepers.

Honourable members may not be aware that the Territory is the only place in Australia which does not suffer from the 2 types of brood disease, the American and European, which can wipe out bees. Bees are difficult animals to transport. If beehives from interstate were checked and certified as being free from disease and flown to the Territory, there would not be many problems because there would be no chance of infection occurring en route. If bees are transported by truck, you cannot lock them up for 24 hours and seal them off. If the weather is warm, you will find that very few bees are left alive when the containers are opened up again. It is necessary to travel for a few hours, most probably until sundown, and open the containers. The bees will fly out and do what bees normally do. They will mix with the native bees which may have a disease.

I was interested to learn from a beekeeper that the old tale that I learnt at school that bees know their own hive and never go to another hive is not true. Stranger bees will be accepted; they will not be killed by the soldier bees if they are carrying a load of pollen or nectar. They could enter and infect a beehive that was on its way from Adelaide through to the Territory. This is causing a problem and giving concern to beekeepers. They believe that, if the disease comes to the Territory, it will affect honey production. It also affects horticulturists who find that a plentiful supply of bees in their own hives can greatly increase the yield of crops. The size of a crop is increased: the greater the pollination, the greater the number of seeds and the greater the size of the fruit. It is not an unimportant problem.

I believe one of the beekeeper's concerns is that, because of the disease in the south of Australia and the problems it is causing, many southern beekeepers and, no doubt, some from Queensland as well, are looking to the Territory as a place to which they could bring their bees and set up again. However, there is a particular danger. I have been told through correspondence with the minister that entomologists are supposed to check the hives when they arrive, but are entomologists available on tap, as easily as that? Is there one in every centre? Bees cannot be sealed up in the beehive for hours at a time. They would need to be checked and tested as soon as they arrived. I see it as a difficult problem. The beekeeper I spoke with felt that the only real solution was to ban the importation of hives from any area

of Australia where the bees are affected. It would be a pity if a fledgling industry like beekeeping and honey production, with its very important side effects for the horticultural industry, should be destroyed by diseases getting into Territory hives.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah asked if private veterinarians can issue certification under this legislation. As I understand it, she was referring to the place of origin of stock which might be coming to the Northern Territory. My reading of the situation is that it would require an officer of a state government or statutory authority to provide a signature. Whether a state of origin has some delegatory authority so that such a power can be conferred on a private veterinarian, I am not entirely sure and therefore I cannot answer her question specifically. However, my understanding is that, normally, it would be a requirement that the state authorities issue the necessary certification.

The member for Sadadeen introduced the subject of bees. Indeed, bees are declared stock under our Stock Diseases Act and we take quite seriously the fact that 2 particular diseases affect bees in Australia. For one of them at least, I believe that the Northern Territory is the only place in Australia where the disease does not exist. However, as with stock, prior to the importation of bees into the Northern Territory, a certificate is required from state authorities that there has been an inspection of the bees to be moved to the Northern Territory and that they are considered free of disease. Likewise, upon their arrival in the Northern Territory, there is an inspection.

Mr Collins: Whereabouts? In Darwin or Alice Springs?

Mr PERRON: I point out to the honourable member that there are methods of treatment or elimination in relation to the diseases in bees whether it be the American brood disease or the European brood disease. In one case, I understand there is a solution by way of treatment of the hives to get rid of the disease and, in the other case, there is no known treatment and the hives are normally destroyed by burning. So there are methods of eliminating the disease if it is under control. At present, the Northern Territory bee industry is a fairly small one. Bees that are being brought into the Northern Territory in hives have to comply with the necessary inspections at both ends of the process and we will endeavour to have bees that are brought to the Northern Territory selected from areas in the states where the disease is not common.

No doubt, I will continue to correspond with the honourable member if he feels that there are questions that have not been answered adequately in our recent correspondence with him. However, the legislation before the House today is designed primarily to update the administrative arrangements that are applicable to the movement of cattle and other stock, but primarily cattle, in the Northern Territory. It brings the procedures more into line with the current practice with the control of diseases such as brucellosis and TB.

There is a very extensive trace-back system throughout Australia, which is partly developed in the Northern Territory. The system has proved invaluable in tracing the origins of beef containing excessive levels of pesticide. The extensive system of trace-back now undertaken in this country enables individual animals to be identified according to the property from which they came. This is now being done throughout the country to minimise the effect of DDT and other organo-chlorides which have been detected in Australian meat exported to the United States. Australia is attempting as quickly as possible

to quarantine those areas which have been producing meat whose pesticide levels exceed those allowable in the United States. This is being done to protect Australia's very valuable beef export industry.

I thank honourable members for their interest in this important legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to outline very briefly the legislative program and some of the procedures that will occur over the next 5 sitting days. A glance at the Notice Paper will inform honourable members that we have a very light legislative program. Tomorrow, it is intended to deal with the Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill and the Traffic Bill as well as Notice No 1. The remaining 2 pieces of legislation, the Supreme Court (Rules of Procedure) Bill and the Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Bill, will be dealt with next week.

Mr Speaker, 9 ministerial statements will be delivered over the next 5 sitting days. I have requested the cooperation of ministers to ensure that the Leader of the Opposition is given a copy of each statement in advance, with reasonable notice, so that we will be able to debate the ministerial statements in full and take them completely off the Notice Paper. I note that tomorrow's ministerial statement on recreational fishing has already been circulated to the Leader of the Opposition by the Minister for Industries and Development.

The second-reading debate on the Appropriation Bill will commence when the Leader of the Opposition delivers his reply on Thursday morning. The government's intention is, if possible, to complete the second-reading debate at these sittings.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting that we have moved the adjournment at a reasonable hour. There are no cocktail parties, but there is a great deal of interest in tonight's federal budget. During the last few sittings, we have been adjourning very late at night and I think this is an excellent opportunity for honourable members to deliver an adjournment speech and still be home at a reasonable hour.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I would like to report to the Assembly on my recent attendance at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Kuala Lumpur. Mr Speaker, this morning I spoke to you in your capacity as Chairman of the local branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association but I must now make a more public report for honourable members.

As a legislature which governs a population of less than a quarter million persons, the Northern Territory is entitled to attend the Small Nations Conference. I was the only Australian representative at that Small Nations



Conference and, as far as I was concerned, it was the most productive session of the entire conference. Rather than delivering messages from national parliaments, the Small Nations Conference debated a very wide range of extremely interesting topics. These included global medical problems such as AIDS and drug abuse, economic problems and how developing countries - and the Northern Territory should be seen as a developing part of the world - can best share information on technological improvements in relation to horticulture and agriculture. Inevitably, these debates ran over the allotted time and consumed much of the day, but they were certainly productive.

I do not know how many other members have been able to attend CPA conferences. It is the first full CPA conference that I have been able to attend. I would recommend to all members that they attend a CPA conference if they are given the opportunity. At the very least, they will be exposed to interesting influences and, at most, and this is certainly true in my case, attendance at such a conference will give them a broader view of the Commonwealth and possibly the world.

The hosts for the conference were the Malaysian government and its member states. They were excellent hosts. Malaysia is a remarkable country which is entirely different to Australia. It has its problems. Its internal dynamics are as broad if not broader than those of Australia. No delegate to the conference could say that he was not provided with whatever facilities were required to conduct his business at the conference. I note that the Northern Territory will host to the Pacific conference next month. I hope that we can provide equally excellent facilities to those provided in Kuala Lumpur to the delegates who attend that conference.

Members may not realise that the President of the Australian Senate, Senator Sibraa, is the President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The next annual conference is to be held in Australia. A number of pre-conference tours will occur before the plenary sessions. I look forward to seeing some of the people whom I was fortunate enough to meet in Kuala Lumpur a few weeks ago.

Mr Speaker, there is an extensive amount of paperwork relating to the conference. I have made that available to yourself. If any member would like to read it, I would suggest that he ask the Speaker for whatever he is interested in. If there is any part missing, I will endeavour to track it down and make it available to interested members.

This morning, I asked a question of the Minister for Mines and Energy relating to the Validation (Mining Tenements) Bill which was passed at the last sittings of the Legislative Assembly. I have been led to believe that that bill has not been assented to. I hope that the minister can deny that.

Mr Coulter: It has been assented to.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, if it has been assented to, what has been put to me is possibly irrelevant and incorrect. I will be listening with great interest to the minister's response to my question because a number of serious charges have been made in relation to the passage of that legislation.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, this morning, I was asked a question by the member for Jingili in relation to the Police Ministers' Conference dealing with the proposed commission of inquiry into Aboriginal deaths. The honourable member asked if I could provide advice on how many Aboriginals had died in police custody in the Northern Territory. I was not

in a position to provide an answer this morning but I did undertake that I would supply that information.

I now have a comprehensive summary of the circumstances surrounding deaths in custody. As I said this morning, there are serious issues associated with disproportionate arrest and protective custody rates for Aboriginal people and the alcohol problems that, in many cases, are the root cause of that. However, to put the matter in context, it is important to understand the fundamentally excellent way in which the Northern Territory authorities are dealing with a very difficult social and correctional services problem.

In the period under review by the royal commission, 3 Aboriginals have died whilst held in custody in police cells. On 21 November 1980, a 55-year-old man died in the Alice Springs cells after being taken into protective custody the previous night. The coroner made an open finding as to the cause of the injuries resulting in the death. The coroner stated that the deceased died of the effects of an acute left subdural haematoma sustained 2 to 3 days prior to death and this was superimposed on an old hygroma sustained some time previously. The deceased had a blood-alcohol level of 0.224% at the time of death and the coroner estimated that the level was in the range of 0.334% and 0.38% at the time that the deceased was taken into custody. The coroner found that no blame could be attached to the police force.

On 19 November 1984, a 25-year-old man was taken into protective custody and subsequently detained in the Katherine police cells for 6 days for the non-payment of fines. The post mortem revealed that the deceased died of acute alcohol withdrawal syndrome.

On 21 March 1985, a 31-year-old man died in the cells after being taken into protective custody at Elliott. Although the deceased was involved in a stone-throwing incident with other inmates, this did not contribute to the cause of death. The coroner found that there were no suspicious circumstances. Death was due to natural causes being cardiomyopathy.

Two Aboriginal people have died after being transferred from police cells to hospital. On 3 March 1986, police conveyed an unconscious 35-year-old man to the Tennant Creek Hospital. The man discharged himself from hospital and refused further treatment. The police later located the man and took him into protective custody. The man was later taken back to the hospital where a second X-ray revealed a skull fracture. Subsequently, the man was evacuated to Alice Springs and then to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. A person was charged with murder, later reduced to manslaughter, but the jury was unable to reach a decision on 2 April this year.

On 26 March 1987, a 30-year-old man was taken into protective custody. An attempt was made to release the man the next morning but he requested to be allowed to sleep on and this was acceded to. Checks were conducted until 9.10 am when difficulty was experienced in waking him. The man was taken to hospital where he was admitted to the intensive care unit in an unconscious state. He did not regain consciousness and died on 2 April. A post mortem revealed the cause of death as intracranial haemorrhage and malignant hypertension. A coronial inquest is set down for 29 October 1987.

On 20 December 1986, a 39-year-old Aboriginal male was taken into protective custody and transferred to the former McLachlan Street sobering-up centre and subsequently died in his sleep from acute and chronic alcoholism. A coronial inquiry is yet to be held.

There have been 2 further deaths in prison, both apparently suicides. On 16 June 1980, a 24-year-old Aboriginal male met his death in Alice Springs Prison where he intentionally hanged himself. The deceased was on remand after having absconded on bail, necessitating his extradition from Western Australia. The deceased had been charged with the attempted rape of a 2-year-old girl and had been apprehended initially by other Aboriginals. On 5 July 1985, an Aboriginal male hanged himself in Darwin Prison while on remand. The man refused to identify himself as Aboriginal, insisting he be classified as coloured. The coronial inquiry has not yet been finalised.

I point out to honourable members that, were it not for police intervention, the number of Aboriginal people who have died from the effects of excessive alcohol consumption, and injuries sustained in fights, would have been far greater. In the period to be reviewed by the royal commission, some 37 414 Aboriginal people were arrested for a variety of offences and held in custody for differing periods of time. Approximately 112 693 Aboriginal people were detained in protective custody. Included in this figure are 12 667 people who were placed by police in sobering-up facilities. This is indicative of the serious alcohol problem that exists in sections of the Aboriginal community. Including persons arrested on warrant, it is estimated that some 160 000 Aboriginal people were held in police custody in the period since January 1980. No Aboriginals committed suicide whilst in police custody. It ought to be noted that police attendance at an incident results in medical treatment as an alternative to custodial action on thousands of occasions.

Mr Speaker, those statistics and that information should provide a subject for sobering thought to members and those who would seek to make some cheap headline capital from some issues that have been debated in the last couple of weeks. We are facing a very serious social problem in the Northern Territory, quite apart from the obvious massive expenditure that is incurred in trying to deal with it. Quite obviously, the mechanisms that are in place are fundamentally successful, but I would ask people to think about exactly what is occurring, to put it into perspective and to recognise that, in any cases of death when persons are in custody, matters are dealt with by way of a coronial inquiry and are subject to the most rigorous examination through the legal processes. That is not to say that there should not be inquiries into the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody. I simply ask honourable members to keep issues in perspective and to recognise some of the serious social problems that the Northern Territory has.

One should not assume that a royal commission will improve significantly in any way the situation facing the Northern Territory. For some time the Minister for Health and Community Services, the Attorney-General and myself have all been trying to address the very serious economic and social problems that are causing so many of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory to find themselves with such chronic alcohol and related problems that lead them to be placed regularly in protective custody. It is not a question of whether the police and correctional services people are doing their work properly. The issues are far deeper and they need something other than a royal commission. They need an approach that will address some of the real and fundamental social and economic problems that are facing the Aboriginal people, particularly in the Northern Territory.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I was very pleased to hear that the federal government has acceded to the wishes of Vietnam veterans and will provide a couple of Hercules transports to fly them down to the long overdue welcome home parade in Sydney to be held on 3 October. That

is good news. It is something the federal government should have agreed to a long time ago. A tremendous effort had to be expended in order, finally, to persuade it to agree. Congratulations must go to the Chief Minister in getting that through.

Some considerable time ago, when some Vietnam veterans from the RSL Club in Alice Springs approached me for support to attend the march, they made a request that the 30 or so from Alice Springs be provided with Territory ties - the sporting tie - to act as a badge which would identify them as Territorians. On their behalf, I wrote to the Protocol Unit which agreed at that stage but asked that the veterans wait for a bit. However, as a result of the tight financial situation, it appears that the Protocol Unit does not have money for such niceties.

Of course, it would not be fair to provide ties to only the 30 veterans from Alice Springs. The whole Territory contingent of Vietnam veterans should have them. The feeling was financial assistance with travel to Sydney was possibly more important than ties, Territory flags, flag badges and bits of paraphernalia which they could swap with their mates. However, I would ask the Chief Minister to consider the situation. These fellows will appear on TV. There will be Australia-wide coverage by all TV stations. If they can be identified as Territorians by their Territory ties, which they are keen to be, they will give us tremendous promotion down south and I am sure that memorabilia that they can pass on to friends and so forth will encourage those friends to come to the Territory and we will get our money back many times over.

I do not think of this as simply a mercenary exercise - far from it. I am greatly in support of the Vietnam veterans. They have been treated shamefully and it is to our shame that they have had to wait 25 years since that war started to receive a welcome home from the Australian people. Now that the onus for providing finance to get them to Sydney has been accepted by the RAAF, I would ask the Chief Minister to make a gesture to acknowledge what these people did for us. From my experience of flying in Hercules transport planes, the issue of earplugs would be useful because they are very noisy aircraft to fly in. That aside, I would ask the government to consider equipping these fellows with ties, Territory flag badges and Territory flags to capitalise on publicity for the Territory, to make our veterans feel important and, in a sense, to recognise them as Territorians who did their bit for this country.

This morning in question time, I asked the Minister for Mines and Energy why he vetoed my request to view a video made quite a number of years ago by the Snowy Mountains Authority concerning the then proposed Telegraph Station lake. At that time, the Snowy Mountains Authority made scale models of the Telegraph Station area and the town of Alice Springs. It carried out flow studies by running water over the model and arrived at some significant conclusions regarding Alice Springs. I venture to say that most people in Australia and most people in Alice Springs, seeing the blue skies of central Australia and the Todd River as dry as a bone, would find it hard to comprehend that there could be catastrophic floods in Alice Springs. However, the truth is that the Snowy Mountains Authority found that a flood of dimensions which could be expected to occur once in 100 years would be catastrophic to Alice Springs.

The authority calculated that such a flood would put 2 m of water in Bloomfield Street and 2 m of water in Lindsay Avenue. Members who know the town will realise that these locations are a considerable distance away from

the river itself. I estimate that there would be water at least 3 m deep in the centre of town. There is a big drop from the Telegraph Station through to the Gap so the water would not simply be idling its way through; it would be moving with tremendous force. In fact, I have been told that recent studies have suggested that there would be something like \$50m worth of property damage in Alice Springs in the case of a flood of proportions which statistically can be expected to occur once in 100 years.

The exciting aspect of the study - and I have spoken about it in the Assembly before as, no doubt, I will in future - is its finding that, if a dam wall were built above the Telegraph Station where the hills form a ring, the damage caused by such a flood would be reduced to the level caused by a 1-in-15-years flood. Members will appreciate what that means if they realise that the flood which occurred in Alice Springs in March 1983 had a 1-in-13-years probability. That caused some property damage and 2 people were drowned. One can imagine the extent of devastation, loss of life and trauma in a 1-in-100-years flood.

To understand how the dam would reduce the flood, members should visualise a garden hose. If water flows in one end at 5 litres per second, it will flow out the other end at 5 litres per second. However, if a balloon-like bulge occurs in the middle of the hose, the flow at the other end will be less than 5 litres per second. It could drop down to a mere trickle. If the tap is turned off, the bulge containing stored water would gradually contract, expelling water. The effect is simply to slow down the flow; it is a natural phenomenon.

A problem has arisen in relation to the proposed dam site and it concerns sacred sites which are very real to certain people in Alice Springs. I was talking to a member of the Sacred Sites Protection Authority recently. He said that members of the authority appreciate the potential flooding problem. They have said that, if a lake goes ahead at one of the other gorges - which is being mooted - they would see that as a sign of good faith. They would then not object to the government building a dam wall at the Telegraph Station, with the capacity to let the water out afterwards. That disappoints me in one respect because the Telegraph Station site is within a mile of the top of Todd Street and people who have shanks's pony as their only means of transport would be able to enjoy the recreational lake. It would be the biggest lake of all those proposed and it would be close and convenient to the town. However, if we cannot have that site because of federal government heritage provisions, in spite of financial constraints, I believe that it is now time to talk again to the Sacred Sites Protection Authority and the traditional owners about the possibility of building a dam wall which would protect the town of Alice Springs.

In the early 1980s, the cost was estimated at around \$10m. Against the construction cost, we must consider that we would be protecting the town against damage that could be in the region of \$50m as well as inestimable value in terms of human life. Therefore, I urge the government to look into this matter to determine whether further negotiations can resolve the problems which have so far blocked the construction of a dam wall which would preserve the town of Alice Springs, even if it means going cap in hand to the federal government to seek funds.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this afternoon, I would like to speak in a serious vein. I have read the recently published booklet 'Northern Territory Directory of Resources for Women' and I believe its publication is a gross waste of time, resources and money. It is also one of

the most blatant examples of sexism that I have ever seen. It is quite obvious that a great deal of work has been put into the production of this booklet, but I believe that the work has been misplaced. It has been carried out at the direction of a minister who is too weak to assess the real situation of sexual equality, is prepared to be led by the nose by whoever speaks loudest or longest and who believes that his political survival may depend on buying the votes of a certain group of articulate women.

Whilst the booklet was quite informative up to a point, I regarded it as an insult to my intelligence, initiative and general nous. I believe many other reasonably intelligent women would think likewise. This booklet has been printed for those women who are at the lowest common denominator in intelligence, who are too dumb to seek information by reading a newspaper, telephoning someone, asking someone with a shred more intelligence than themselves or walking into one of the plethora of shopfront information bureaux for women.

Because they do not live in the real world where women are women and are proud of it and are not always making excuses for their lack of performance by blaming it on unequal opportunities, the compilers of the booklet fail to understand that the women to whom this book is directed are those women who would have trouble reading and comprehending it anyway. They are probably the end result of a public education system which, as a matter of fact not fiction, turns out many students lacking basic educational skills.

Mr Speaker, I come now to the booklet and its contents. There is a statement in the frontispiece which says that the booklet details resources for women. The word 'resources' is a trendy term in itself. Why not organisations, clubs or associations, or is that too plain speaking? To me, the phrase 'resources for women' implies an exclusion of men. If I were a man, I would object most strongly and vociferously about equal rights and demand the printing of a directory of resources for men. I suppose I will have to exclude present company but, these days, most men are weak sisters and wishy-washy sheilas who are too frightened to speak up for their rights for fear of being hauled off to court for being unfair to women, and so they are walked over by all those aggressive, high-heeled or sandalled women all in the name of new thinking, progressive policies and equal rights. I believe it is a leftover from the days of a traumatic childhood with a dominant mother figure who had to stay at home, in the socially-accepted way in those days, when she had the ability to do other things as well and with a father who was a shadowy self-effacing inseminator: a sort of black-widow-spider situation.

I would suggest that quite a few honourable members here are really doormats for raucous women's groups to walk over and leave the detritus of their ideas behind before they walk over them again on the way out. A kinder way to think of 3 or 4 honourable members is as old-fashioned, chivalrous and nice, with gentlemanly ways. They accept whatever women say and do as gospel, because they still place women on a pedestal. In cases like these, women are tolerated as the 'little woman', someone to be humoured and placated. In both cases, these women are having a lend of the men and the men don't know it. Perhaps 1 or 2 of them will wake up from their Rip-Van-Winkle sleep of self-complacence one day, but it will be too late: they will all be black-widowed by then.

Considering the booklet, 'Northern Territory Directory of Resources for Women', by page 15, 30 or more organisations had been mentioned that men could belong to but no female exclusivity was mentioned anywhere. If men can belong to something like the Casuarina Family Centre or the Bereavement Support Group, why specify in the title that the directory covers resources for women?

At page 53, I found the most objectionable notice, one sponsored and actively encouraged by this CLP government, for more and more people in the community to join the Darwin Gay Society. I know a community is made up of many sorts and types of people of varying sexuality. This is a fact and cannot be argued against, and I acknowledge it. I have no objection at all to the private practices of these people but, whichever way you look at it, these people are not normal as ordinary, heterosexual people are, men and women who have families, babies and children. They are a non-species-producing, by inclination or by surgery, and as such should not rate a mention let alone all the encouragement this government gives to them.

If the government trots out the equality bit to refute what I am saying, or the good Christian bit, I say to government members that they had better take a very hard look at themselves because, if they consider not actively encouraging gays and lesbians is speaking against equality for these people, then they are all slipping down the path to a complete rebuttal of all things normal and they will end in a morass of the creepy crawlies of chaos and the weird self-annihilating ideas of anarchy. They will become so confused they will not know the end part of their anatomy from their elbow. Such will be the course of the CLP government. Its members are picking up every trendy idea, hoping to win popularity and attract votes from queers whilst forgetting that ordinary men and women form the majority and you cannot fool them - they will not vote for the CLP.

Mr Speaker, I now ask each minister: has he taken this book home and shown it to his sons, daughters and his wife for their opinion? And, as the government is trying to do to in wider community, has he encouraged them to become a lesbian or a gay? I bet they have not. I believe the government has lost its way in a forest of spurious calls for government assistance. It has no backbone and no firm policy on majority-accepted views of conservative family life, ideals and expectations. By the CLP government putting its imprimatur on the socially aberrant behaviour of gays and lesbians and by its encouragement publicly of their activities, it lays itself wide open to the charge of morally and adversely influencing many of our young people for life, young people who would otherwise be normal.

I asked if honourable ministers had shown this book to their families. I bet they have not. From their objections, I do not know whether they have or not but, if they have not shown their families this book and encouraged them to join the Darwin Gay Society, why are they encouraging the rest of us to become as queer as \$3 notes?

I would now like to draw a comparison between this 'Directory of Resources for Women' and a booklet called, 'Who's What Where?'. Both are published by the Department of the Chief Minister, both contain lists of organisations, both cost quite a bit to publish and both cover much of the same ground. One is put out by the Office of Women's Affairs, the other by Protocol and Public Relations. Is it a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing? To the average citizen who takes the trouble to read through both of these booklets, it is money, time and resources wasted, but more positions filled in the Chan Building to boost the failing and flagging ego-consciousness of the Chief Minister by placing more and more staff around him - and hang the expense. Personally, I prefer the 'Who's What Where?' booklet and, as a coda to my remarks on the insertion of the advertisement on page 53 of the directory for us all to become gays and lesbians, my vulgar sense of malapropism makes me draw honourable members' attention to the following 2 advertisements and comment on their ill-advised consecutive placing.

To summarise, I consider I am being talked down to by the printing of this directory. I believe that the people who created it consider me a second-class citizen, in need of metaphorical crutches to think and act, and that the government's encouragement of gays and lesbians is an insult to normal people, among whom I include myself. As a consequence of this, I have had a meeting with the Ombudsman regarding the inclusion of the encouragement of this group of people in this government publication as offending against normal community standards.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, honourable members will be aware of the retirement of Mr Justice O'Leary, for medical reasons, and I am sure members find that most regrettable. His Honour was appointed to the Territory Supreme Court in 1982 and succeeded Sir William Forster as the Chief Justice in 1985. His Honour brought with him a wealth of experience in the law and legal education. He graduated from the University of Sydney and practised as a barrister and solicitor for many years in New South Wales and the ACT. His Honour was an acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea immediately prior to his appointment to the Territory Supreme Court.

In his eminent career, Mr Justice O'Leary has given lengthy service to the legal profession and to legal education. He has held appointments as President of the Law Society of the ACT and President of the Law Council of Australia. For many years, he was a lecturer at the Australian National University and founding director of its legal workshop.

His Honour has given distinguished service to the Northern Territory. In 1986, he presided at the first sitting of the Territory's Courts of Appeal - an historic occasion. He and his wife, Pat, have contributed much to community life and their efforts in the Territory will be missed. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members, Mr Speaker, when I thank His Honour for his service to the Northern Territory and wish him and his family well for the future.

Mr Speaker, honourable members are also aware of the recent appointment of Mr Justice Asche as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, upon the retirement of Mr Justice O'Leary. Mr Justice Asche was appointed to the Supreme Court in April 1986, following a distinguished career in law and education. He graduated from Melbourne University and practised at the Bar, initially in Queensland and then in Melbourne for many years. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1972. During this period, His Honour was a part-time lecturer at Melbourne University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

His Honour was a judge of the Family Court of Australia from 1976 until his appointment to the Territory Supreme Court. He has held a number of appointments and offices in education and family law. He was Chancellor of Deakin University from 1983 until May of this year and, upon his retirement from that office, was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. His Honour's continuing involvement in education is reflected in his current position as Chairman of the Council of the University College of the Northern Territory. The Territory is indeed fortunate to have the benefit of his background and expertise and I am most pleased that he accepted this appointment.

Mr Speaker, I think it might be appropriate at this stage to make some comments in relation to something which I find a most frightening development in Australia today, and that is the proposition by the federal government regarding the introduction of an Australia identity card. The Australia Card proposal is one which the Territory government is opposed to, and opposed to



most firmly. There has never been any occasion when we were in agreement with the proposal.

I have stated publicly that the government will not be giving access to the federal government to our births, deaths and marriages records for use in implementing the identity card. This stance is based on the fact that the identify card has the potential to be used by governments and their administrations to monitor the day-to-day activities of ordinary Australians.

The federal Labor government has adopted the position that the identify card will help cut down on abuse of the social welfare system, on tax fraud and on organised crime. In fact, I was castigated publicly by Senator Bob Collins for daring to speak against the concept of the identity card and I was accused of assisting organised crime. I found it most enlightening that, on that particular evening, Mr Frank Costigan QC was interviewed on the 7.30 Report on the ABC regarding his view of the Australia Card. I think honourable members would agree that there would probably be nobody in Australia who has a better knowledge of tax cheating, fraud and organised crime than has Mr Costigan as a result of his inquiry into the Painters and Dockers Union. Mr Costigan was quite adamant that there were already in train provisions in the tax system and the legal system to crack down on social welfare and tax fraud and organised crime. He pointed out in great detail that the Australia Card would do nothing to assist governments to cut out tax fraud or to fight organised crime.

The Prime Minister, in particular, claims that opposition to the proposal is invalid because the federal government will not allow the system to be manipulated in a manner which would infringe on the rights of Australians. The Territory government believes, and I certainly believe, that that is an absolutely ridiculous contention. It is a simple fact that politicians and bureaucrats come and go and whatever they say and whatever the Prime Minister says now will not be binding in a few years time. In short, the federal government does not have the ability to make its guarantees stick. I think we have seen an example of just how watertight the system is when, over the last couple of days, we have had confidential documents from the Health Commission waved around on television and spoken about on the air. The confidential details from those documents related to how the Australia Card could be utilised to intrude into the daily lives of Australians.

This means that, if the Australia Card proposal is implemented, Australians must live with the knowledge that, ultimately, it will be used by governments and their administrations in ways that are different from what is proposed now. Legislation is changed every day and so are political priorities.

Mr Bell: Introduce a statement and we'll all debate it.

Mr MANZIE : Mr Speaker, I would like to hear from the member for MacDonnell on this particular issue because any person who states that a government can guarantee what future governments might do must be naive. That is something that I did not expect to hear from the member for MacDonnell.

There is also the case that the Australia Card proposal would impose the socialist ideal on the Australian public. The proposal would give the state supremacy over the individual and the ability to monitor individual behaviour. The rights of the individual would be totally overcome by the ability of the state to have information and be able to monitor and, in the future, manipulate individual Australians. That is a totally abhorrent philosophy and it is one which has no place in our democratic society.

It must be stressed that, in adopting this stance, the Northern Territory government does not resile from its responsibility to fight organised crime and any contention by the federal government or members opposite that, by refusing to allow access to records for the identity card, the government may be supporting organised crime is both ridiculous and juvenile. It is a fact that, for many years, the Territory government has been involved in the exchange of information and records with a centralised bureau regarding crime statistics, fingerprints and criminal activities of offenders around the country. We will continue to be involved in that process in our fight against crime.

Territorians and Australians should be aware of the proposal of the federal government. It would have been laughable 10 years ago to suggest that all Australians would have to carry an identification card, that all Australians would be required to register, to lodge details of all financial transactions and to produce the card for the sale of any property. Australians would not have even considered the concept 10 years ago yet today we have a federal Labor government in the process of implementing a national identity card system.

I find it unbelievable that the rights of Australians and our ability to act as individuals are about to disappear and that we are not hearing very much from very many people. I would like to hear from members opposite. I would like to hear what the member for Stuart has to say and how he expects many of his constituents to get on in 10 years time when they are required to produce identification cards in order to receive their pensions or unemployment benefits because they will not be able to do it. What will happen then? What will happen in 15 years time if you cannot produce your card on demand? Will you go to jail or will you be counted as a non-person?

We do not know the answers to those questions. We do not know what governments will be like in the future. However, if they move along the lines of the federal Labor government, we can imagine what it will be like because we have examples in overseas countries of the situation when a state is more important than the individual. We have only to look at places like the USSR where individual restrictions on citizens are things that we would not contemplate in this country. This Australia Card will provide a means whereby the government will have central control of all the actions of individual Australians and the ability to monitor what we do, where we go, how we do it and how much we pay for it. The possibilities for the future are frightening and I believe anybody who supports this system deserves to be condemned by every free-thinking Australian.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak tonight on a matter that I raised in question time this morning in relation to Soapy Bore. Soapy Bore is a community of some 70-odd people near what used to be Utopia Station and which is now basically administered by the Urapuntja Council. There is a new school there which, I believe, would have 25 students. Unfortunately, there is no water.

Mr Speaker, the problem is not unique to Soapy Bore. It took a number of years for Ammaroo, a community of some 400 people, to obtain a decent water supply. I am indebted for a note which has just been passed to me that, at the last count, the population at Soapy Bore was 86 people. That is a fairly considerable community in my electorate, which is typified by large numbers of small groupings of people, all of whom are trying to develop their own local area and an economy which will allow them to escape from poverty. It was only a couple of years ago that I got the government to utilise federal funds to

provide a decent water supply at Ammaroo. For years before that, the whole community took second place to the school. This community of almost 400 people received the overflow from the school's water supply. If there was a heavy demand for water at the school or if the teachers were away on holidays and arrangements had not been made properly for pumping, the community went without. Thankfully, Mr Speaker, those days are gone for Ammaroo. I hope that they are gone forever although I noted last time I was out there that the reticulation system was thoroughly inadequate. Water was being reticulated only to points around the community, not to actual houses. People in the northern suburbs of Darwin would not put up with that situation, but at least Ammaroo has limited access to water.

As I said earlier, Soapy Bore is a community of 86 people with some 25 students wishing to attend the local school. Soapy Bore is only 50 yards from the Sandover River. As you know, Mr Speaker, the Sandover's underground water resources are among the most extensive in central Australia. In fact, the water survey carried out in the mid to late 1970s described the area as having one of the best concentrations of near-surface, high-quality water anywhere in central Australia and it was claimed to have the potential to support a very considerable citrus industry. There are no problems about the availability of water or its quality as there are at other locations in my electorate.

The problem is that the old station bore, which is still being used to supply water at Soapy Bore, struck a granite boulder 25 m to 30 m down. Because there were a large number of station bores up and down the creek, sinking another bore was not worth while and it was equipped as a low-production bore between Currajong further down and the old soakage bore on the other side of the road. It was not particularly significant in the days when it was just cattle country. However, we are now talking about a community of people, including the Jones family. These people have set up a very good community there. They are planting perennial crops and growing grapes and fruit trees as well as garden produce. The water supply, however, is completely inadequate for pumping up the rise behind the community from where it could be reticulated with pressure. We have been trying for a number of years to get another bore sunk within about 20 m of the existing bore so that a windmill can pump the water up to a squatter tank on the rise and it can be reticulated back down through the community.

As I said this morning, funding was actually approved for the project in 1985-86. It was approved on the basis of a costing done by the Department of Transport and Works and one would have thought that would have been the end of it, that the project would have gone ahead and, in 3 to 6 months, the community would have had a decent water supply. What happened, however, was that the Department of Community Development intervened at that stage. I believe, although I am not absolutely certain, that it was during the period when the current Treasurer was attempting to run the Department of Community Development. That department introduced consultants into the picture.

When the community wanted to get the money to develop the water supply, somebody came out with 2 pieces of paper. In one hand was a thing called 'acceptance of grant' and in the other was a thing called 'appointment of consultant'. The community was told this was part of the enormous responsibility of controlling its own development. It was given the grant and told to accept the consultant who, of course, had already been determined by the Northern Territory government.

Mr Speaker, I put it to you that some of these very simple jobs became extremely expensive jobs. The consultants did not take the plans from the Department of Transport and Works and say: 'Righto, we will go ahead and do the job'. They went off in a great flurry with invoice books and time clocks running and attempted to re-invent the wheel. This happened time and time again in my electorate. The skills were there in the Department of Transport and Works, not just to construct facilities but also to maintain them. Over the years, we had developed a very considerable body of public servants who knew exactly what was going on in the community, who knew what was appropriate, who knew what would work and what would not work and who had a good relationship with the community. They were all thrust aside while we ended up with consultants. Sometimes they even came from Sydney - I think that was what happened at Anningie. What would a consultant from Sydney know about a Mexican dam at Anningie? He knew absolutely nothing.

Mr Dale: What would you know?

Mr EDE: I would know considerably more about dams, Mexican dams in particular, than the consultant from Sydney. The fact is that, by the time they had done their initial consultancy, the consultants had spent so much that there was not enough money left to do the job.

Mr Dale: There is no water out there.

Mr EDE: No water, Mr Speaker! He is saying that there is no water in the Sandover region. What an absolute load of rubbish!

Mr Dale: At Anningie.

Mr EDE: There is plenty of water in the creek at Anningie and, if the minister would like to leave this place and come out with me and have a look, he would find that there is adequate water there if only the government would use the Mexican dam proposal instead of trying to develop all sorts of strange reasons why it is not appropriate. Why does the government have this blindness to an appropriate solution to the problems of those people? Why does it continue to find excuses for not developing the water supply at places like Anningie? The minister responsible now wears 2 hats: health and community services. He should realise that the 2 are linked. He should realise that it is costing something in the vicinity of \$50 000 per year to look after Anningie people who are in hospital because of water-related disease. What happens? The minister continues to say that he will not look at an appropriate solution!

Back at Soapy Bore, thanks to the then Minister for Community Development's brilliant new idea of using consultants, the community still has a totally inadequate water supply. The money allotted for the project went to consultants and various people who wanted to re-invent the wheel instead of getting on with the job and supplying the community and the school with adequate water. The school has been there for months and months. It cannot open and it cannot operate effectively because there is no water.

Mr Dale: That is right. That is what I said.

Mr EDE: Exactly, the water is about 20 m below the ground. All they had to do was put a decent pump on it, pump it up to a tank and reticulate it to the school and to the community. The water quality there is excellent. I have drunk the water time and time again. It has been tested and has been found to be completely within World Health Organisation parameters. We know the

problems that we have had with some aspects of the WHO classifications for water but, as you know, Mr Speaker, the water at Soapy Bore is excellent, as it is throughout the Sandover.

What has happened is that that community has gone for year after year with no water because all members of this government wanted to do was to try to scrape some more money off the top for their mates in high-powered consultancy firms. They did not care that that meant that Territorians were going without water. Members on this side of this House battled with the federal government on behalf of those Territorians to have money passed to this government so that it could provide those water supplies. We find that that money has been scraped off to go into their mates' pockets and not used to perform the function that it was originally intended for. As a result, today we still have people dying of gastroenteritis and people going blind from trachoma. We have all the waterborne diseases under the sun. One has only to look at some of the health statistics to realise how terrifying it is to be a person growing up in one of those communities and knowing that the chances of your children and yourself surviving past the age of 45 and the chances of not going blind are pretty meagre.

Mr Speaker, why does a community like Soapy Bore have to go without water year after year when the funds were allocated? If you have a look at today's budget, you will find there is no mention of Soapy Bore any longer. It does not appear under works carried forward. It is not under new works. It has disappeared. What has happened? Is this what the deal is? The government puts them on the program and runs them there for a few years. It attempts to gain a bit of kudos over it by moving into the public arena and saying: 'Look what a great job we are doing. Aren't we doing a marvellous thing? We have \$Xm there and we are trying to do something about the environmental health of Aboriginal people'. But what happens then? It slips off the back. This whole thing - revotes, votes, cash allocations, non-votes and whatever - occurs and then it disappears. The programs do not get done, but 1 thing remains constant: people fall sick and people die. They are real people. They are not figures. They are people, genuine honest people like the Joneses, who are attempting to carve out a decent life for themselves at Soapy Bore, and they are not the only ones.

I have talked before about Anningie. I can name the same problem in community after community and it is the blackest mark against government, because this government does not care. It has decided that it is able to muddy the waters and sidestep the question and it has decided that Territorians living on those communities do not rate. We heard the Treasurer say that he would wipe out programs for communities of less than 50 people, but even he did not say he would wipe out water supplies. Yet here we have communities of far more than 50 people and what has happened? They do not have adequate water, and people are still dying.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether I should raise this particular subject. I intended to refer to an election which occurred on 11 July, the federal election, but I do not think I should raise this particular subject because, as we all know, the previous speaker, the member for Stuart is a failed campaign director from the recent Barkly by-election and he became very emotional a moment ago. I do not know whether the poor fellow could actually stand the strain. I will proceed anyway because he is a fairly resilient sort of chap and I am sure he will be interested in what I have to say.

On 11 July, there was a federal election and the Northern Territory had the misfortune to elect, as its member of the House of Representatives, Mr Warren Snowdon, and that is a matter of history. Mr Snowdon was elected as the House of Representatives' member for the Northern Territory, representing the Australian Labor Party. Mr Snowdon was elected 2 months ago and, since that time, we have heard very little from him other than some comments on several very narrow and aligned issues. Of course, those comments referred to Aboriginal issues and they are dear to the heart of the member for Stuart. We have heard him talk about the compact or the treaty which the Prime Minister floated a week or two ago. We have heard him talk about conservation issues and we have heard him talk about mining issues. He is very strongly opposed to mining in the Northern Territory, particularly uranium mining. I am not quite sure that he is in favour of Pine Gap either, but perhaps the member for MacDonnell can enlighten me about that a little later.

Mr Snowdon has these very narrow issues in mind for the Northern Territory. I would like him to tell us about other things that he is interested in with regard to the well-being of Territorians. The Australia Card is a case in point. I would like to know what he thinks about the Australia Card. Let him come out and tell us all about that. However, that is not what I want to talk about this evening. I mention those issues in passing, because I would like to hear considerably more from Mr Snowdon about his philosophy and what he will do for the people of the Northern Territory.

I will come now to the particular issue I want to raise. Immediately after the election, Mr Snowdon occupied an office which had been occupied for the 3 previous years by Hon Paul Everingham, the previous member of House of Representatives for the Northern Territory. I know what it is like to take over an office that was occupied previously by somebody else. It is very difficult to obtain the services of a sign-writer and therefore you have to occupy the office for a few days, or perhaps a week or 2, before you can engage a sign-writer to replace the sign - in this case from 'P.A.E. Everingham, Member for the Northern Territory' to 'W. Snowdon, Member for the Northern Territory'. The Territory is so prosperous these days that it is sometimes difficult to obtain the services of tradesmen immediately.

I am an understanding sort of a fellow and I can understand why Mr Snowdon might use some ALP signs, campaign posters, 'Warren Snowdon, ALP candidate for the Northern Territory' and display those on a temporary basis to identify his presence in that office. However, 9 weeks down the line, we see ALP campaign signs still sitting in the window of Mr Snowdon's office. I am wrong, Mr Speaker. That is not Mr Snowdon's office; that office belongs to the government of the Commonwealth of Australia and it is the office of the representative of the people of the Northern Territory. Mr Snowdon has to realise that he is not occupying an ALP office but the office of the representative of the Northern Territory in the federal parliament. Nevertheless, we still find campaign posters sitting in his window, and I think that that is totally out of order. He has had ample time to have the existing signs removed. In fact, Mr Everingham's name has been removed, and he has had adequate time to have his own name painted there. It is totally improper for ALP campaign posters still to be displayed in the window of the office of the member of the House of Representatives for the Northern Territory.

I feel so incensed about this that I intend to write to the federal Minister for Administrative Services to point out this discrepancy and ask him to have those signs removed because they are totally improper. Mr Snowdon has to realise that he is a representative of all people in the Northern

Territory, not only the members of the Labor Party. There are many people out there who require his services who did not vote for him and who belong to other political parties. When they walk in the door of his office, they will expect him to handle their inquiry in a totally bipartisan manner. It is totally inappropriate for those signs to be there and I would like to see them removed forthwith.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, following my perceptive questions this morning, there are a couple of issues I want to raise with the Minister for Lands and Housing. I am sorry he is not here to respond to these here and now. I am quite sure that the denizens of the fourth estate who beam down on us from the gallery above will be able to carry these questions to the minister in fulsome detail and, hopefully, get some answers because I am quite sure that the minister will do whatever he can to avoid answering them in this Assembly.

Honourable members will recall that, in question time this morning, I asked the minister whether he would table the Valuer-General's valuation of Block H at Finnis River and the honourable minister's monosyllabic answer was no. I draw the attention of honourable members to the clear implication of that answer that a Valuer-General's valuation of Block H at Finnis River has been done. In June, on advice from the then Minister for Lands, I said that Block H was valued at \$675 000 by the Valuer-General. I am sure that the member for Casuarina will confirm that that is the case. I am pleased to see that, by the nod of his head, the member for Casuarina concedes that \$675 000 was the Valuer-General's valuation of that particular block.

My point is this. I want to know why there has now been a registered transfer of that particular block of land for \$100 000 less than that valuation. I draw honourable members' attention to an extract I have from the Department of Lands registering transfer No 193777 on 9 September 1987. That was less than a week ago and I have been paying particular attention to the government's transactions in this regard.

Mr Coulter: Rubbish! Somebody gave you something.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the opposition has been monitoring the government's decisions in this respect, and there are many questions that need to be answered.

The first question is why the government sold that block of land for \$100 000 less than the Valuer-General's valuation. I do not think I need to add any more to that question. We have agreed that, on the information provided to me by the member for Casuarina, the Valuer-General's valuation was \$675 000. The member for Casuarina has already accepted that as the figure. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will agree that the government has a question to answer. If it has sold this block for \$100 000 less than the Valuer-General's valuation, at a price which is 80% of that valuation, the people of the Northern Territory will want to know why. That is my first question.

My second question relates to the next extract, and I will give the registration number for anyone who wants to write it down. The registration number is 193778 and it is a mortgage to the Northern Territory Land Corporation. Mr Speaker, I am sure that you have a mortgage over your block of dirt in Alice Springs, as I do over mine. Unfortunately, I was not able to get a loan through the Commonwealth Bank with whom I was then saving and I went across to the Bank of New South Wales, as it then was. I was very fortunate enough to get a loan, probably at the same interest rate as many

other members who took out mortgages at that time: 13½%. Honourable members will recall that there has recently been an increase of 2% in home loan interest rates. Presently, negotiated home loan interest rates are about 15%.

The other banks that have had mortgages on this particular property include the ANZ Bank and the National Australia Bank. My first question is: if the Northern Territory Land Corporation is going into the business of providing mortgage finance, why hasn't that been announced under some new government policy? How many other mortgages is the Northern Territory Land Corporation financing for entrepreneurs? I am quite happy to be proved wrong but I believe that this practice is at least unusual. Perhaps there is a precedent for it and perhaps a member of the government front bench will stand up and tell us about other cases in which the Northern Territory Land Corporation has provided mortgage finance on various properties for various purposes. It is only 3.55 pm and not many government frontbenchers have spoken. I am sure there is plenty of time for them to explain this matter. My second question is: how many other mortgages is the Northern Territory Land Corporation involved in? My third question is: why is it providing mortgage interest rates of 13.5%? I find that quite extraordinary. I have not met Mr Venturin but I look forward to doing so because, if he is able to do a deal like this, he must have something about him. If I were able to shake hands with him, I might be able to get the Midas touch as well.

We have some other questions about this and some other issues we would like to raise but, for the moment, I will just challenge anybody on the government front bench who has not spoken in this debate today to stand up and answer those 3 simple questions. First of all, why was the transfer of Block H at Finnis River only registered on 9 September when the former minister told us the purchase was in February? I see the poor old member for Casuarina has an attack of amnesia.

Mr Manzie : How many transfers have there been?

Mr BELL : For the benefit of the Attorney-General, who is taking an interest in this, I can tell him exactly. There have been 3 transfers in 12 months. The first transfer was to Mr Anictomatis on 29 October last year. The next transfer, on 11 November, was to the Northern Territory Land Corporation and the transfer registered less than a week ago was to Input Pty Ltd which, I understand, has some corporate connection with Mr Venturin's interests. For the benefit of the Attorney-General, those are the changes. I challenge any frontbencher to stand up and answer those 3 questions. First of all, why was the transfer only registered last week? How many mortgages ...

Mr Coulter : It was transferred on Friday of last week.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the Treasurer's interjection. I will be interested to hear him comment on this.

Mr Coulter: Don't hold your breath.

Mr BELL: As recently as this morning, his colleague said that it happened in February. Let me just quote from what his colleague said this morning: 'I am not prepared to give the member for MacDonnell any more time over the issue simply because he has made an outrageous accusation in this House without any substantiation of fact. I am well aware of all the pertinent details concerning Finnis River Block H. They are certainly above board and I am quite prepared to tell honourable members that the block was sold subsequently



in February this year'. Why was the transfer registered only after I made inquiries with the Department of Lands? I suggest that the coincidence is a little extraordinary. If that coincidence is extraordinary, I suggest that the mortgage dealings of the Northern Territory Land Corporation are unprecedented anywhere in this country and probably in the western world.

My third question is why is the government, through this Northern Territory Land Corporation, providing interest rates of 13.5% to speculative investment?

Mr REED (Katherine) : Mr Speaker, I rise tonight in the adjournment debate to pay tribute to Mr Holder Adams, a prominent member of the Tiwi Aboriginal community who met an untimely death in a motor vehicle accident on Melville Island on 16 June this year. Holder Adams was a well-known and respected member of the Northern Territory community who served with the armed forces on coastwatch duties during World War II. Rightly proud of this service, he maintained membership of the Darwin RSL Club up until the time of his death. He was a member of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission's Territory Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for a period of more than 8 years. It was through his membership of that council that I was fortunate enough to develop a friendship with and a high respect for Holder Adams.

As a member of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Council, he attended his first meeting on 28 February 1979 and achieved the distinction on that council of attending every meeting of the council over a period of more than 8 years. He was active during council meetings and always spoke strongly on those issues which particularly affected the people whom he represented. Mr Adams was well respected by his fellow members and by all those with whom he came in contact. I believe that he will be greatly missed. It is people of the stamina and character of Holder Adams who have done so much to cement good relationships between the people of our diverse community. I wanted to put on record this afternoon those few points in a tribute to a fine gentleman.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr REED: While I am on my feet, Mr Speaker, I would like to mention the fact that I took the opportunity last Saturday to visit the Gurig National Park and to travel to the Victoria Settlement where the Conservation Commission is undertaking some works to clear up the area, to restore some of the remains of the settlement and to protect them from encroaching vegetation. I was particularly pleased to see in the budget papers today an allocation of some \$204 000 to conduct further works at that settlement.

The settlement is of particular significance in relation to the history of the Territory. It was a very trying time for the people who lived there for a period of some years in extremely difficult circumstances. They were faced with the ravages of a climate with which they were completely unfamiliar and with diseases such as malaria. I think that the Victoria Settlement has great potential for tourism and the future of the Gurig National Park. It is pleasing to see that, through cooperation between the Conservation Commission and the traditional owners, the area will be protected and available for people to visit so that they may appreciate some of our very early history.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS  
Irradiation of Food

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 199 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that no irradiation of food be permitted in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, the petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate because it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory in parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned citizens in the Territory respectfully sheweth that there is widespread community concern about the proposal to commence irradiation of food in Australia. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the parliament of the Northern Territory will ensure that no irradiation of food be permitted in the Northern Territory, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Community Concern at Yulara

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 266 citizens of Yulara relating to facilities and community issues at Yulara. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of Yulara respectfully sheweth that they are concerned over the following community issues: the safety of residents; the lack of recreational and child-care facilities for children; the allocation and maintenance of accommodation for permanent residents; the high cost of goods and services; the inadequate ambulance service; the membership and constitution of the Town Advisory Board; the low strength of the police force at Yulara; and the fear of victimisation that has prevented some people from freely expressing opinions on community issues. Your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly constitute appropriate action to remedy these problems and specifically guarantee the democratic election of some residents to the Yulara Town Advisory Board and the right of all citizens in Yulara and the Northern Territory to freely express opinion on community issues, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I was referred to by the member for MacDonnell in relation to an interjection recorded in Hansard. I hope that Hansard can correct the matter. The member for MacDonnell cited myself, as Treasurer, as making the interjection. It is simply an indication that the member for MacDonnell cannot see across the other side of the road.

Mr Bell: You change seats so often that it is a bit hard to tell.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Recreational Fishing in the Northern Territory

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, in November 1985 the then minister for Ports and Fisheries, the present Chief Minister, made a statement to this Assembly on the development of the Northern Territory fishing industry. He referred to a full-scale study of the recreational fishery which he had initiated. I now table that study, the short title of which is 'Fishing Territory'.

I believe it is now appropriate to make a further statement on the government's resolve to determine the status of the recreational fishery and the initiatives it has taken to develop it. I do not think any member here would deny that recreational fishing is a major component of the Territory way of life. Equally beyond question is the fact that many tourists are attracted to the Territory simply to go fishing.

Although the Territory is gaining a reputation for a diverse range of quality sport fishing, the focus of recreational fishing remains the barramundi. We are fortunate in the Territory to have the best barramundi fishing in the world. A spectacular sportfish and highly regarded table fish, the species is very much the trademark of the Territory angling scene. The Territory's barramundi stocks are also the basis of an important commercial fishery, one which has required careful management over the years. Unfortunately, when 2 such diametrically-opposed sectors compete for the one resource, the inevitable result is conflict.

In the past, organisations representing both sides have been vocal in their demands concerning the management of the fishery. On the one hand, amateur fishermen have blamed commercial fishermen for any perceived decline in both numbers and size of fish. They believe there is no room for commercial barramundi fishing and would prefer to see it regulated out of existence. On the other hand, commercial fishermen believe their livelihood is threatened by the largely unregulated growth in the recreational fishery. They are adamant about their contribution to the Northern Territory economy and the steps they have taken to protect the resource.

In all such conflicts, ignorance has played its part, ignorance of the integral features of the resource over which they are fighting and ignorance of each other's positions and aspirations concerning the pursuit of their livelihood and recreation respectively. Of course, this ignorance is only found among a vocal proportion of each group which tends to lay most of the blame at the feet of its competitors when the fishing is not as good as it used to be. Naturally, not everyone feels the same.

The government's aim has always been, and still remains, to maximise the economic and social benefits of the fishery to the Territory consistent with biological and conservation factors. In other words, we want to utilise the resource but we also want to ensure that the stocks are not depleted. It is for that reason that a complete review of the barramundi fishery was commenced in 1985 as a basis for determining a long-term management plan.

The task force which undertook the review recommended that there was a continuing need for research effort, particularly in relation to the recreational fishery. It also saw a need to apply management procedures that would take account of the balance between recreational and commercial fishing in the long term. The recreational fishery was to have significant economic value for the Northern Territory and it was recommended that an extensive

survey of recreational fishing participation and expenditure should be undertaken in order to develop a detailed assessment of the extent and value of the fishery. Although the task force recommendations were directed specifically to the recreational barramundi fishery, the government decided to take an all-embracing approach and commissioned private consultants to conduct a comprehensive roadside survey into the Northern Territory recreational fishery. The survey, which was funded by a grant from the Northern Territory Fishing Industry Research and Development Trust Account, was recently augmented by a wider study of recreational fishing in the Northern Territory by a consultant working hand in hand with the then Department of Ports and Fisheries.

The Recreational Fishing Survey, compiled by Touche Ross Services and Cam Rungie and Associates, had 2 specific objectives: firstly, to assess the social, recreational and economic significance of recreational fishing in the Northern Territory and, secondly, to measure the impact of recreational fishing on the environment, especially in relation to alternative uses of the shared resource base. The subsequent study, which was carried out by Mr Bill Coburn, expanded on the survey. Its terms of reference included assessing the findings of the survey, making recommendations on the management and development of all types of recreational fishing and developing the basis for an overall strategy. Both the recreational fishing survey and the broader study have now been completed. The survey report has been released and I have just tabled the study. I will be seeking the advice of the Amateur Fishermen's Consultative Committee on the implementation of recommendations in the study.

Mr Speaker, the report on the Recreational Fishing Survey highlights a number of very significant findings. Key motivators were 'to relax and unwind' and 'to be outdoors' whereas the competitive-oriented aspects received a low ranking amongst fishermen, as did 'to catch a feed'. Of the respondents interviewed, 35.3% had been fishing at least once in the last 12 months and 51% of households surveyed reported fishing-related expenditure during the same period. An average of \$1660 per fishing household and an overall total of \$31m was spent within the Territory in the 1985-86 financial year on recreational fishing. The \$31m spent supported 290 direct jobs, primarily within the retail trade sector of the economy, and the flow-on expenditure to other sectors was \$6m which supported a further 70 indirect jobs. Approximately 8000 tourists are attracted to the Northern Territory specifically for fishing and their average Northern Territory spending is \$1500. An additional 12 000 visitors go fishing as part of their visit and their average annual spending in the Territory related to fishing is \$350 per head. Total annual tourist spending directly related to recreational fishing in the Territory approximates \$16m and this supports 250 direct jobs, primarily in the retail and hospitality industries. Tourist expenditure generated flow-on expenditure of \$7m which supported a further 100 indirect jobs.

We are looking at a major Territory industry, one which generates \$60m in expenditure annually and employs a total of 710 Territorians. Clearly, an industry of that magnitude with so much social appeal deserves this government's strong support. It should be fostered and it should be developed. At the same time, we must manage the resource for the future, particularly in respect of barramundi. The survey estimated that, in the 12 months preceding the survey, a total of 300 000 barramundi were caught. Recreational fishing accounted for 58% of these. There is evidence to suggest, however, that in terms of weight rather than number, the commercial fishery still takes more than the recreational fishery. Nevertheless, the

impact of recreational fishing on the barramundi resource is most significant and must be included in management plans for the fishery.

There are a number of management options which need to be addressed. I reiterate to honourable members that these are options. They include reducing the bag limits on barramundi, imposing a minimum size limit on barramundi, licensing amateurs to fish inland waters, introducing a closed season on amateur barramundi fishing, permitting the capture of fish in fragile or over-fished waters on a tag-and-release basis only and closing the whole or part of rivers to fishing by either amateur or professional fishermen for specified periods.

In respect of closures, Mr Speaker, it is worth mentioning the extended closure of the commercial barramundi fishery in the Mary River, the Territory's most heavily fished river. In 1985, the government decided that the Mary River would be closed to commercial fishing in 1986-87 for an additional 4 months after the general closed season applying across the whole of the industry. It was also decided that the river would be closed indefinitely to commercial fishing from the start of the 1988 season. This last decision is, however, subject to a review based on the findings of a monitoring program of both commercial and recreational fishing sectors on the Mary River for the past 2 years.

My department has allocated specific resources to developing recreational fishing as an industry in the Northern Territory. This is not a new direction but the emphasis has increased. For some years, assistance and support has been provided for fishing tournaments such as the Barra Classic, which embodies the conservation approach to the sport fostered by some sections of the angling community. All fish except potential records are tagged and released using Northern Territory Fisheries tags. Recently, the Barra Classic was accorded the status of being one of the only 2 officially-sanctioned tournaments of the Game Fish Association of Australia. Honourable members may not be aware that the Barra Classic is presently in progress at the Mary River.

The amateur barramundi tagging program, itself labelled AMTAG, has now been in operation for more than 6 years. Approximately 3700 barramundi have been tagged and released under this program which was commenced at the request of the Amateur Fishermen's Association. More than 150 tagged fish have been recaptured and the tags returned. Coupled with the government's own barramundi-tagging program, AMTAG has provided valuable information which can be used to manage the resource more effectively. The Fisheries Division has always encouraged the formulation of organised fishing clubs. Assistance and encouragement were given earlier this year in the formation of the Katherine Game and Sport Fishing Club and the Kakadu Game Fishing Club.

The Territory's coastal waters are a Mecca for light tackle game fishing. Attention has been given also to the potential of big game fishing through surveys and rewards for the capture of billfish. As a result, it has been possible to identify favourable seasons and locations for marlin and sailfish and this information is put to effective use by local game fishermen and charter boat operators.

The program of establishing artificial reefs in Darwin Harbour was commenced 5 years ago and the Port Authority has scuttled 3 derelict vessels to create artificial reefs which have proved popular with local and tourist fishermen alike. Unfortunately, plans to create 2 further reefs were themselves scuttled earlier this month when derelict vessels due to be added to the 3 existing reefs were sold to another party by their owner.

Effective consultation is paramount in developing the recreational fishery. This has not only helped to reduce conflict between the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, it has also enabled the government to develop a better understanding of the recreational fishery and its needs as well as a strong rapport with the recreational fishing organisations. The focal point for consultation is the Amateur Fishermen's Consultative Committee. First mooted at the 1984 Amateur Fishermen's Association annual general meeting, the consultative committee was established as a forum for discussion between recreational fishing organisations and the government on matters pertaining to the development of management of the sport, and to provide a means for the organisations to make coordinated representations to government. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development and serviced by the Fisheries Division. To date it has functioned most effectively, achieving tangible improvements to facilities and amenities for recreational fishermen and helping to identify policy areas warranting attention.

Fisheries Division research staff have played an important role in assessing the extent and impact of the recreational fishery. The first roadside surveys of anglers were conducted on the Arnhem Highway in 1978-79. These were repeated in 1984 and then conducted annually until last year when the program was intensified with both roadside and creel surveys conducted regularly at several Top End locations. The recent surveys, which have identified a spectacular increase in the numbers of tourist fishermen, have complemented the recreational fishing survey and enabled fisheries officers to obtain first-hand information from anglers in the field.

The recreational fishing tourist sector has great potential for increasing the economic spin-off to the Northern Territory. Basically, there are 6 categories of tourist fishermen: those who drive to the Territory for fishing and camping holidays and who do their own thing once they get here; those who fly to the Territory to fish with friends who live here; those who come to the Territory on organised bus trips with itineraries geared towards visiting different fishing locations; those who avail themselves of prepaid fishing tourist packages organised by safari-style camp operators or lodges; those who arrive, by whatever means, unequipped and not necessarily specifically to go fishing and who engage the services of a fishing guide for short-duration trips, charter a boat or spend a day or more at a safari-style camp or lodge; and those who come here specifically to compete in fishing competitions and tournaments.

Often working in conjunction with the Tourist Commission and the Conservation Commission, my department has attempted to identify and address all aspects of the tourist fishing industry. Promotion has been a major thrust. Detailed information brochures and pamphlets have been prepared and distributed through several avenues within the Territory, around Australia and even overseas. Assistance and field support have been provided to visiting magazine journalists and film crews. One that stands out is the Go Fish Australia film project, a bicentennial initiative of the Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Confederation. This 13-part video series is expected to appear late this year or early next year on prime-time ABC national television before an anticipated audience of 5 million Australian viewers and, later, will be shown overseas. My department organised the itinerary and assisted the film crew during a week of filming in the Top End in March this year. All indications are that the Territory will receive star billing.

Financial assistance and support have been provided to fishing clubs and associations for the convening of major tournaments and competitions. I have mentioned the Barra Classic. Two other notable drawcards to the Territory are the Gove Game Classic, which is the Territory's premier blue water event, and the Borroloola Fishing Classic at which 202 anglers competed last Easter, many of them from interstate.

The Northern Territory division of the Australian Anglers Associations is mounting a bid to secure Darwin as the venue for the 1991 Australian Anglers Association championships and convention, for which an estimated 2000 to 5000 visitors would visit the Territory for a minimum of 2 weeks. At the recent championships on the Gold Coast, all available accommodation was taken up by competitors and their families.

Over the years, recreational fishing organisations have made repeated requests to government to improve and increase access to inland and coastal waters. This has been given a high priority because it permits a greater dispersion of fishing effort over the Territory's inland waters and coastline. The result is to reduce the likelihood that fishing effort in particular locations or in relation to particular species will reach excessive levels. The provision of access to prime fishing locations on the Mary River system, following the purchase of Point Stuart and Wildman River Stations, is one good example. Regular liaison is undertaken between the Fisheries Division, the Department of Lands and Housing and the Conservation Commission with a view to increasing access for recreational fishermen to parks and reserves, Aboriginal lands and pastoral properties. The Conservation Commission has prepared a detailed inventory of recreational fishing sites in the Northern Territory and this has proved to be a useful tool in planning for the future needs of recreational fishermen.

It is unfortunate that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service does not share our enlightened approach towards access to waterways for recreational fishing. A great number of valuable recreational fishing locations in Kakadu National Park have been closed to fishing and there is understandable apprehension about possible future restrictions. The pressure which this puts on other areas is ignored by ANPWS. I will be seeking to establish a relationship with the new federal Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism and Environment in an attempt to promote a more rational approach.

We have not been idle in our attempts to develop our recreational fishing resource. Armed with a recreational fishing survey and the wider study recently completed, we intend to increase those efforts. Consideration will be given to any amendments to fisheries management plans, such as that for barramundi, which might be necessary in the light of information now available. All aspects of the sport will be promoted, together with assistance and advice to new and existing fishing tourist operations according to their needs, with a view to maximising the economic benefit to the Territory from the recreational tourist fishery.

Honourable members will be aware that a major portion of the Territory's coast and river systems lies within the boundaries of Aboriginal land. Some Aboriginal traditional owners have taken the opportunity open to them to negotiate access rights for fishing tour operators. These arrangements are to be commended, and I hope that both the Northern Land Council and the Aboriginal Development Commission will use their influence with Aboriginals to encourage more ventures which will open up new areas for recreational fishing on Aboriginal land for the benefit of fishermen and for the benefit of traditional owners.

Further development of organised recreational fishing, such as the establishment of new fishing clubs, tournaments and competitions, will continue to be encouraged. Research, to monitor the progress of our developing recreational fishery and to provide information for any future management decisions, will be an ongoing activity. My department has acquired the expertise to deal with the various features of the recreational fishery. This expertise will be put to effective use at every opportunity. Certainly, by Australian standards, we have a unique resource which has enormous social and economic potential. We intend to encourage its development and achieve that potential and, at the same time, guarantee its future.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not sure that I am the most appropriate person to talk about recreational fishing in the Northern Territory. I remember participating in a weekend charter fishing trip to the Perron Islands. You are guaranteed to catch fish on a chartered fishing trip to the Perron Islands and I caught my fish on the last day just 5 minutes before we were due to leave. What I found particularly irksome was that everybody else caught literally hundreds of fish and it took me until the last 5 minutes to catch one.

I have had another significant fishing experience in the Territory. One day I was fortunate enough to go out with Babe Damaso. He is a long-time Territorian who knows the fishing spots around the Darwin Harbour very well. It was an extremely interesting experience to go out with him and to discover the extent of his local knowledge. Those of us who have access to government drivers and government vehicles at present will know that Babe Damaso's reputation is in good hands with John Tye. I do not know how he finds the time to undertake his driving responsibilities and meet his fishing responsibilities as well.

I welcome the statement made by the minister. To some extent it contrasts with the position taken by the Treasurer in his budget speech yesterday when he made a point that I thought was rather foolish. It was a political comment, I know, but he said something to the effect that he hoped that the Commonwealth would not take steps to limit tourist flows into Uluru and Kakadu.

The Minister for Industries and Development has been somewhat more realistic. There will be a time in the history of the tourist industry when we will have to limit tourist access to Uluru and Kakadu. We may disagree over the point in time at which that will be necessary but, following the experience in the great national parks of the United States, there is no doubt that in our great national parks there will be a need to control access and visitor numbers. The minister's point in relation to the fishing industry in the Northern Territory was that there is a need to regulate it. Significant steps have already been taken to accomplish this, particularly with the barramundi industry, both at the commercial level and at the amateur level. That is a realistic position which recognises the fragility of the natural resource and the need for government intervention to ensure that the resource continues, whilst maximising its economic and social benefits. I congratulate the minister for pointing that out and making it the keynote of his statement.

I also congratulate the minister's departmental officers because I think it is true to say that the staff of the Fisheries Division has been a very enlightened group of people. As the minister has stated, they have shown some



skill in leading the debate about regulating the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. It has been an emotional debate and often controversial. It is not easy to say to independent people like commercial fishermen: 'Sorry fellows, you cannot do that any more. We have to buy back some of your licences to regulate and protect the fishery'. The minister's department has handled that matter with skill and tact and we are seeing the benefit of it.

Skill and tact are also required in dealing with amateur fishing. I can remember how, when I first came to the Territory, some of the people I associated with prided themselves on going out fishing and coming back with huge hauls of barramundi which they openly sold amongst their friends and sometimes to shopkeepers. It is probably extreme to say that does not happen any more, but it certainly does not happen very often and it certainly does not happen amongst the people that I associated with at that time. They have undergone a conversion in attitude, as have a majority of people in the Northern Territory. This is because we now realise that if we want our grandchildren to be able to fish in the Northern Territory, we have to limit our catches. I think that message is getting across.

The other thing that I found significant in the minister's statement was the economic impact of the recreational fishing industry in the Northern Territory. Quite frankly, I was staggered to learn that it is worth \$60m and accounts for 710 jobs. I must say that I am still rather sceptical about those figures but, on the basis of the information supplied, I am prepared to accept them. I think that we too often forget that there are many industries which are contributing to the economic wealth and the future of the Northern Territory. Recreational fishing is quite obviously one of them.

Another industry that is too often neglected is the Aboriginal arts and crafts industry. It has been moving along nicely and is presently experiencing an enormous boom. Robert Holmes A Court, for example, has been buying up whole collections of art in the Northern Territory. I understand that the industry is worth close to \$10m a year directly and the indirect benefits would make it a \$20m to \$30m-a-year industry. Industries like recreational fishing and Aboriginal arts and crafts make the Northern Territory a dynamic place. I sometimes think we tend to forget those smaller areas and concentrate on the major areas like mining and tourism. From that point of view, I congratulate the minister on drawing this Assembly's attention to the potential that recreational fishing has, both in an economic and a social sense, in the Territory's future.

The fishery in the Northern Territory, properly managed to take into account the sometimes competing interests of recreational and commercial fishermen, has an enormous potential which we are just starting to tap. I have said that the education exercise in both the commercial and amateur areas has paid dividends and we now have attitudes on both sides of the fence which are consistent with the ongoing protection of the industry. It is important that we keep in place proper management controls and that they be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the fishery remains healthy.

I was intrigued that the minister did not mention whether there was a relationship between the increased crocodile population and any potential strain on the fishery. I do not know ...

Mr Perron: If you find out will you let me know?

Mr SMITH: I will. People consistently say that one of the reasons why there is additional pressure on the fishery is the increased crocodile

population. I certainly do not know the answer although I am pleased in a way that the minister does not know it either because it has too often been assumed that that is the case. From his comments, I assume there is no established causal link between the expanded crocodile population and the decline in the fishery.

In terms of discussion of the industry, it is important that we do not overly concentrate on the barramundi fishery. Obviously, it is an important part of the fishing industry but, as the statement again points out, we have an enormous range of fish in our Top End waters and it is important that strategies are in place to ensure that recreational fishing can benefit from many species.

I must take the opportunity of congratulating the people at Gove who have put the Gove Fishing Classic on the map. The name that I know is Graham Mibus. I think he is one of the prime movers. He is a bit like John Tye: he teaches to get the money and fishes as his main occupation. Certainly, his efforts and those of other people in Nhulunbuy have made the Gove Fishing Classic an event that ranks highly on the Australian fishing calendar. The Barra Classic also has enormous potential for the development of recreational barramundi fishing in the Northern Territory. As the minister said, it is important that we encourage fishing clubs, whether they go in for these major events or are lower-key affairs concentrating on social fishing. We should encourage their development because it is through them that we are able to disseminate information among fishermen and ensure that the clubs and their members are fully aware of what is needed to keep the fishery in good and healthy condition.

The minister touched on other possible areas of friction in relation to landowners, whether they be Aboriginal or pastoral, and access to fishing spots. I think these matters will need continued careful handling. Clearly, sometimes there are competing pressures and competing interests. In the past, landowners have had problems as a result of fishermen leaving gates open and letting stock out and that type of thing. Aboriginal landowners have had problems with people getting too close to sacred sites and leaving rubbish around. With proper education, there is an opportunity to satisfactorily accommodate the needs and interests of both landowners and recreational fishermen and, as pressure increases on our existing fishing spots, I am sure that it will be possible to open up new areas to the benefit of all.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by again welcoming this comprehensive ministerial statement on recreational fishing in the Northern Territory and I congratulate the minister on the manner in which the speech was put together. I particularly congratulate the minister for providing the opposition with copies of the speech 3 or 4 days in advance because that has enabled us to get our thoughts together and debate the matter now, which is the appropriate time, rather than having the statement placed on the Notice Paper.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have listened with interest to this particular debate and I have considered some of the issues raised by the minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I find the report very interesting from both a personal and an electorate viewpoint. Mr Speaker, this may strike you as strange coming from a denizen of red-earth country and the parched centre, but I trust that I will be able to convince you that my interest is genuine. From an electorate perspective I want to refer to 2 matters. One relates to the general notion of recreational fishing and the other to a particular fishing project which has been mooted.

I think the term 'recreational fishing' is not entirely appropriate. Any of us who have succumbed to the atavistic hunter-gatherer urge that drives us to drop a line off the end of a pier or over the side of a boat will recognise that, however relaxing it may be, it is not simply a recreational pursuit. It is, in fact, an economic pursuit. For example, page 93 of the report refers to a recommendation for a comprehensive survey of fishing tourism and its financial and social impact on the Northern Territory. It is of some interest to me that the idea of being a hunter-gatherer is something that is still alive in our own culture in these terms. I suggest that anybody who goes out and catches a fish and feeds the family with it, is satisfying an immediate economic interest. The effort that goes into catching that particular fish means that you do not have to provide a meal for the family that night and that there is a saving to the family budget. It means that you do not have to buy steak for that evening. The money saved on not buying fillet steak from Coles for the evening meal can be directed in other ways. For individual anglers and their families there is, quite clearly, an immediate, tangible, dollars-and-cents benefit.

Mr Speaker, I am not sure that my prowess as an angler is any greater than the Leader of the Opposition's, but let me say that I have a deep interest in the matter. In fact, this debate is something of a coincidence because, this very Saturday, I was hoping to throw a handline in somewhere. Perhaps the member for Karama might be able to provide me with some information. I would be more than happy to receive advice from honourable members who may be able to assist me to satisfy my atavistic hunter-gatherer urge.

I have a serious point to make in this context because I suggest that it is one of the areas where economic pursuits on an individual level are common right throughout the Territory. I suggest that the hunter-gatherer process of throwing in a handline and bringing home a bag of fish is exactly the same human urge as occurs throughout my electorate when people hunt the kangaroo. That is an important economic pursuit for the families who are involved in it. It is atavistic in a much fuller sense for the people in my electorate. The adjective 'recreational' is not entirely accurate because people do not go fishing for recreation in the same sense as they might go to a football match. There is something far more to it and I think that is something that all Territorians have in common.

Mr Speaker, I said I would refer to a particular project in my electorate that has been the subject of correspondence between myself and the minister. I understand that there have been proposals to stock dams in central Australia with fish for the purpose of production. I am not sure whether there is a recreational aspect to it. My understanding is that Mr Peter Severin at Curtin Springs has proposed to stock Beefwood Dam with particular species and that officers of the minister's department have provided some advice to Mr Severin. There is concern in some quarters about the particular species that may be used to stock the dam. I am yet to be convinced that fish that are not native to central Australia - and it may come as something of a shock to people to find that there are fish native to central Australia - should be the only ones in the dam. It is an issue that I have been pursuing.

I have done some recreational fishing in central Australia. I had a supremely embarrassing experience one day about 30 or 40 miles west of Areyonga. Back along the valley towards Boggy Hole, just over the range from Palm Valley, there is a place called Kurrkutjingi. We were out there with a couple of other families and I had a magnificent 2-piece fibreglass rod with a spinning reel which I have since lost. There was a wonderful fishing hole chock-a-block full of catfish. This particular day I reckoned I was in like

Flynn. I had a tin full of worms and I baited up and cast right out into the middle of the pond and started to reel in. I was at this for about an hour. There were a couple of little kids there as well. One had an old coke bottle with about 3 m of line on it. I had been standing there casting for about an hour, reeling it back in and catching absolutely nothing while this little kid with his coke bottle tossed out his 3 m of line and pulled it in. He pulled out a pretty nice-sized catfish while the best I caught for the day was about 6 cm long.

I may be putting myself in here because I probably committed all sorts of offences that day and have now recorded them in Hansard but, in summing up, I heartily congratulate the minister for this statement. Apart from the personal interest I have in the subject I hope that I have drawn to the attention of the minister, in a sensible way, an aspect of recreational fishing that may not have occurred to him before: its economic importance and the connections such hunter-gatherer activities have for all Territorians.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to commend the minister for his statement and for his initiative in having the report prepared and tabled. It is a step in the right direction. Recreational fishing is a very important industry in the Northern Territory and has an enormous impact on many things that are achieved here. Unfortunately, I have not had an enormous amount of time to examine the Coburn Report but I have looked at some of its major conclusions and recommendations. I would like to deal with some of those and comment on specific points raised in the minister's statement in relation to the recreational fishing and boating industries.

The Coburn Report concluded that recreational fishing is bound up with the whole Territory way of life and that its main motivators are to relax and unwind in the outdoors. That is a clear statement of how we should approach the local community's involvement in recreational fishing and boating activities.

I have been a recreational fisherman and boatman for many years.

Mr Harris: A successful one, I hope.

Mr FIRMIN: Yes. As the member for Port Darwin is aware, I have been involved particularly in yachting, speedboating and water-skiing. In the last decade, I have found that I have been able to spend a little more time on recreational fishing, but not as much as I would like to do.

Unfortunately, recreational fishing is not a cheap sport these days. In fact, it is probably one of the most costly sports when one considers the end product, as was suggested in an interjection this morning. I would suggest that the average fisherman in the Northern Territory probably spends somewhere between \$600 and \$800 per fish caught. Just to go fishing around the Darwin Harbour you need a dinghy and outboard motor, an echo sounder in some cases, a vehicle and a trailer to put your dinghy on, rods, reels, nets, lures, fuel, food and camping gear. When I put together all the equipment I use for a trip I make about once a year to one of the fishing areas away from Darwin, its value comes to between \$20 000 and \$25 000. That is not cheap for a once-yearly fishing trip. Admittedly the vehicle is used for other purposes and occasionally the dinghy is used for fishing around the Darwin area but if one carries all that equipment rather than hiring it or going out with a fishing party, it is a pretty costly exercise.

The minister stated that recreational fishing is worth \$60m a year and is a major industry in the Northern Territory. Some years ago, when the present Chief Minister was Minister for Ports and Fisheries, I said that I believed the industry was probably supporting the Northern Territory economy to the tune of between \$20 and \$30m a year. At that stage, there were no facts and figures to support my view, although many people involved with recreational fishing felt that the figure was reasonably close to the mark. It is interesting to see that surveys have now put the industry's value at about \$60m per year.

I agree with the recommendations listed in the Coburn Report, particularly those stating that the commercial and recreational fishing industries should work together to manage the fishery. I also agree that a member of the commercial fishing group should probably be on the recreational fishing authority or board. I fully agree with the recommendations to open up new fishing areas and ensure that we maintain activity in existing fishing areas. I not only refer specifically to Kakadu, which in my view is rapidly becoming closed to recreational fishing, but also to areas like Wagait in the Finnis basin, which I fished for many years and which is probably one of the most attractive and productive recreational fishing locations in reasonable proximity to Darwin.

Kakadu is a different problem altogether. I know the Kakadu fishing spots intimately. I fished there over 10 years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I went to Kakadu almost every weekend for 4 or 5 months during the dry season, as soon as access was available. I had not been back there for 8 or 9 years until early last year when I went to look at the fishing and recreational areas. I have spoken in this Assembly before about how bitterly disappointed I was to find that a very large number of the waterways, river systems and lagoons had been locked away by the ANPWS and were unavailable for recreational use. There are considerable numbers of inland lagoons in that area which are good fish breeding and fish catching areas. Capably managed and monitored, tourists could take considerable numbers of fish in such places. That is what I believe management is all about: monitoring and managing the available resource, not locking it away and doing nothing with it. Unfortunately, whilst portions of Kakadu are being locked away, the ANPWS is only monitoring the areas of major usage which, of course, are suffering because of the pressure of increased numbers of people who want to fish there.

I am rather cynical about what will happen because I believe that, shortly, the ANPWS will begin to produce figures relating to areas under pressure and use them as a justification for closing access to more places. I do not agree that that is either desirable or necessary. There are extensive waterways in the park, stretching from the bottom end of the park to the crossing at the South Alligator, right through all of the Red Lily Lagoons and the upper reaches of the Sandfly Creek area, into the Nourlangie Creek system at the base of Nourlangie Rock and large areas of water like Umbungbung. All are denied access at the moment. If they were opened up for use and monitored successfully we would create a totally different environment in Kakadu, and we would then be managing our parks in a correct manner, as is done in many other places around the world.

Kakadu has some of the best recreational fishing in the world. It is not just the barramundi; it includes tarpon and saratoga, both of which are prolific, and very fine fish to catch. One does not normally eat tarpon but it is an excellent game fish, being very small and a great fighter. After catching, the tarpon can be immediately released. If there were a need to monitor catching rates of tarpon, considering it is not a very palatable fish,

the tag-and-release system could be used. I do not think that tagging of tarpon is necessary and I think the same goes for saratoga. Whilst I have eaten it at times, I find it too soft and fleshy and to my mind it is not particularly desirable as a table fish.

As I said, the Wagait area in the Finnis basin is another which could be opened up. It is closed at present, there being no major access into the bottom end of the Wagait nor through the Finnis River areas. It is a very extensive river and lagoon system with some of the prettiest country to be found close to Darwin. Parts of it are similar to the Everglades Forest Reserves and the Florida Everglades in the United States. There are floating islands which can be landed on and which actually have trees on them. The surface is very spongy and walking on it is like walking on a mattress. When you part the reeds underfoot, you discover 20 to 25 feet of crystal clear water below. There is abundant fish life in that area but, unfortunately, we are denied access to it at the moment.

The conclusions of the Coburn Report reflect almost totally the information that was given to Mr Coburn. I commend him for the way in which he has presented his report. It is extremely clear and easy to understand, with recommendations and conclusions given at the beginning and the supporting evidence contained in the body of the report.

Recommendation 9 relates to the user-pays principle. It is recommended that efforts be made to discover a workable method by which the user-pays principle can be implemented in the recreational fishing industry. Given the points I made a few moments ago about the costs incurred by an amateur fishermen in order to pursue his sport, I would say that the user-pays principle is working extremely well. It costs a considerable sum to catch fish. The money spent by fishermen goes back into the community very quickly. I would not like to see an additional impost placed on the industry. I do not have a major problem with the monitoring of what is taking place within the fishery but I would prefer to see that paid for out of the public purse by way of collection of revenue from the sale of capital items that the fisherman requires.

I would like to touch on a couple of things in the statement relating to management options. The options included reduction in bag limits, the imposition of minimum size limits, the licensing of amateurs to fish inland waters, the closure of river systems and closed seasons. On the surface, all of those are probably highly desirable matters to address, and I stress 'address'. My feeling is that the bag limit on barramundi is reasonable because, at the moment, fishermen rarely reach the limit. Most serious amateur fishermen, particularly those who take part in competitions like the Barra Classic which is currently in progress, observe these controls. As the Leader of Opposition pointed out earlier, the days when recreational fishermen tried to make financial gain from catching barramundi are gone.

I do not believe licensing amateurs to fish inland waters would serve any useful purpose. Licensing means control and control usually means additional staff and policing and I fail to see exactly what that would achieve at the moment. Research indicates that it may be necessary to introduce a closed season for amateur barramundi fishing. This could be appropriate during the roe-carrying period but, rather than completely prohibiting barramundi fishing during that time, a tag-and-release requirement might suffice. In other words, no fish would be taken except where a tagged fish was caught. The principle of catching a tagged fish means that the tag is taken back to Fisheries and, of course, the fish is brought with it as well.

With respect to the suggestion that size-limits be imposed, I would like the minister to ask his staff to consider the possibility of imposing a maximum-size limit, bearing in mind that the smaller fish are rarely breeding stock. It makes more sense to look at protecting the largest fish, which are probably the main roe-carriers and breeders.

With respect to salt water recreational fishing, some small and helpful steps have been taken in recent years through the provision of specific offshore marks, lights and leads to assist fishermen to move into and around the fishing areas. One of these is at Buffalo Creek to assist the fishermen from the northern suburbs. It allows them to identify the creek entrance and access it on most tides and that is particularly helpful to people fishing the Vernon Islands. Fish Reef, to the west of Darwin, now has a light on it and that is extremely helpful to people heading down to the Dum-In-Mirrie and Indian Islands area. However, I believe there is a need for some others, especially to assist some of the larger offshore vessels and particularly at 2 locations on Melville Island. One should be at Cape Jahleel on the northern end of Melville Island. It is a particularly dangerous and reefy area. Elphinstone Reef is a very large shoal and very close into the top of Melville Island. There are no marks and the shoreline is very low and featureless. It is particularly difficult to find your way around there without radar, and not many boat owners can afford the sort of radar that gives the exactness of positioning which is needed. The same applies to Cape Arnhem on the western side of Melville Island. Several leads would be helpful in the Perron Islands area and perhaps that option could be looked at as well.

One other place that I was lucky enough to have a look at the other day was the Borroloola Channels area. It surprised me. I visited the area with Fisheries inspectors about 3 weeks ago and watched a considerable number of tourists launching boats and racing around the channels, which are very difficult to identify on your first visit. The tourists had to stop and ask the local people how to get back to the boat ramps. It seemed to me that it would be a very simple option to install signage in that area. It is one of the first locations in which amateur fishermen and tourists would launch boats on their way up to the northern part of the Territory, and Borroloola is developing rapidly as a fishing haven for tourists entering the Territory by road. I think a signage system in the channels and creeks there would greatly enhance the fishing.

Mr Harris: Jump in and put them in the water?

Mr FIRMIN: They could be nailed to trees. It would only be a signage system to help people find their way from point to point. A small map of the area could also be produced as part of our tourist operation.

Fishing in the Darwin Harbour would be enhanced with the introduction of several small markers and signs. East Arm is notoriously difficult to navigate once you go beyond the north and south shoals and start to head up towards Elizabeth River. There are a considerable number of small shoals and sandbars which could be identified very cheaply with poles and signs. The same applies in Middle Arm, which is probably the most underrated area for recreational boating within the confines of Darwin Harbour, but is very dangerous to negotiate because of shoals and sandbars.

Aside from fishing only, marks and leads in East Arm would offer great assistance to growth for small boat and yachting activities. It is the most protected waterway in the harbour and constant breezes blow there. They are surface-level convection-current breezes which provide maximum opportunity for

small trailer-sailers and small pleasure yachts to enjoy sport and recreation in what are essentially closed waterways.

Mr Speaker, I commend the minister's statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to discuss this ministerial statement as it relates to tourism. I shall concentrate on barramundi fishing. We have excellent resources of reef, game and other types of fish but barramundi has become associated with the Northern Territory. For many years, good stocks of barramundi were available in north Queensland and along the Queensland coast but, because of poor management techniques, they have been substantially eradicated in that area. It has become well known around Australia that the Northern Territory is the best place to catch barramundi. While other forms of recreational fishing will develop here, I think recreational barramundi fishing will carry the initial impetus for this area of tourist development.

Barramundi is reputed to be a very tasty fish. It is, however, a freshwater or estuarine fish. Such fish, when compared with fish from salt water - particularly cold salt water - do not hold flavour very well over long periods of storage. Barramundi is best cooked soon after it is caught, which is when you get the full flavour and appreciate that it is something quite special.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: With garlic and a bit of salt.

Mr EDE: Indeed. I myself am quite partial to it caked in clay and cooked in the coals of a fire. I find that retains the flavour quite adequately and produces a very delicious fish.

We have heard that the industry is now worth \$60m a year. If that is the case I would say that we are still only looking at the tip of the iceberg. I believe that this is an industry which has enormous potential. In the last election, we ran a couple of buff-and-barra tours. Tours like that can allow people to come to the Northern Territory, see the country and experience the flavour of the local lifestyle. I would like to see more of these safari-style tours developed. They bring small groups of tourists into close contact with some of the Territory's characters, people who really know the land and can take a small group out to a favoured waterhole or stretch of country and give those people the experience of a lifetime. People who have been on such tours talk about it for years. They talk about it to their friends down south and everybody wants to be in on it. No enormous capital outlays are required to get involved in the industry through such tourist ventures and they do not need scarce up-market skills. They have the capacity to involve significant numbers of Territorians.

I was rather surprised to read in the report by Bill Coburn about the difficulty that he experienced when attempting to find fishing sites. It was rather disappointing that he carried out this research as an outsider and was unable to find a place where he could obtain the information he wanted. I note, however, that he found that the recreation and conservation priorities mapping project is nearing completion. Hopefully, this will provide information about places to visit for those tourists who know enough about the bush and fishing to be able to manage such visits themselves. While there are significant numbers of such people, they do not comprise the bulk of visiting recreational fishermen, who are people who come to the Territory for a wide range of purposes and want to have some access to a fishing experience while they are here. I believe there is room for very substantial growth in the types of tours and services offered to these people.



The minister's statement referred to access to lands, a matter which is often raised with me by people in the recreational fishing industry. I found it quite interesting that Mr Coburn had been able to look at the barramundi fishing sites in various categories of land. The only disappointing aspect of the minister's statement was that, while he spoke at some length on access to parks, reserves and Aboriginal land - and I will be coming back to that - he did not give enough detail on access to leasehold and freehold land. On pages 67, 68 and 69 of his report, Mr Coburn refers to interstate and overseas interest in particular barramundi fishing sites. He identifies 9 such sites on Aboriginal land, 14 in parks and reserves and 40 on leasehold and freehold land. These are sites that the Conservation Commission has examined as a means of demonstrating the potential. If these figures are correct, and I have no reason to doubt them, they indicate that the major problem regarding access relates to leasehold and freehold land. We should direct our energies towards those land types in the early stages. I would suggest that we have had the idea for too long that there must be free and unlimited access to every area.

The member for Ludmilla argued that, because of the expenses fishermen face in terms of equipment, travel and so forth, no further imposts should be placed upon them. An additional 10% of total costs, paid to the landowner or leaseholder ex gratia in exchange for access to his land, may be substantial in money terms to the leaseholder but nowhere near as substantial to the holidaymaker or the fisherman in terms of their total outlay for the trip. Giving a financial benefit to the leaseholder or the landholder will enable him to see it as an adjunct to his total business and will enable him to feel that he has a certain degree of control. Permits to enter the particular leasehold or freehold land may be issued to individual safari operators or perhaps sold through the Tourist Commission. The landowner might allow a certain number of people per month to visit a certain area and charge a specific amount to cover the possibility of damage. It would also allow them to keep details of the groups which messed the place up so that they can be prevented from entering the area again for a period. It is basically a matter of trying to find a balance between competing interests.

Aboriginal people are becoming involved in the cattle and horticultural industries, and local economies could gain an added boost if visitors were allowed onto the land to fish. Such activity would allow significant areas to be opened up and it has much potential in places like Arnhem Land and Wagait. Rather than talking about individual entry permits in discussions with traditional owners, we should look at the need to blacklist people who do the wrong thing on Aboriginal land, as well as a system for issuing specific numbers of permits per weekend at a specific cost, allowing people to visit specific areas and fish there. These permits could be issued through the Northern Land Council, the Tourist Bureau or some other agency. Once traditional owners became involved in the tourist industry in this way, potential further steps could include local people working as guides, construction of appropriate facilities and so on. For example, after a day's fishing and a few beers as you cook some of your catch, the time inevitably comes when you discuss the country you are in and the stories of its long-ago events. To me that is an essential part of the fishing trip; there is not much fun in racing out, catching 4 fish and charging back to Darwin.

Part of the whole fishing experience is learning about the country. This is where the recreational fishing industry can benefit from the contributions of long-term fishermen who know the country: battlers on leases and developing properties and Aboriginal people. Similarly, such people can obtain benefit by utilising some of the few assets that they have: their

local knowledge and the land itself. If we approach it from that angle, the industry has a really rosy future and I commend the minister for taking it to heart. I wish him the very best in his further endeavours in that regard.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity in this debate of congratulating the Gove Amateur Fishing Club and the Gove Game Fishing Club for their very successful development of the recreational fishing industry in north-east Arnhem Land. They have demonstrated how, if people put their minds to it, a potentially very important industry can be developed from a very meagre basis. They have also demonstrated that, if persons of good intent are prepared to communicate and speak to each other, a number of agreements and accommodations can be made on and around Aboriginal land under the Land Rights Act.

Over the years, the Game Fishing Club has conducted a series of negotiations with traditional owners in and around the Wessel Islands. The success of these negotiations has meant that the Gove Game Fishing Tournament can continue to operate. These people provide members of this government with an object lesson in how to speak to and negotiate with traditional owners. There has been no glad-handing and no great fiscal drain on the game fishing club, yet it has successfully negotiated over access. I hope that the government contacts that club and spends a great deal of time speaking to Graeme Mibus and other members because I am sure that the government and other people could learn much from them to the general betterment of the Northern Territory, particularly in terms of how best to pursue tourist activities or recreational fishing activities involving game fish and sportsfish in and around our coastline.

The report delivered with the minister's statement is certainly very comprehensive. It provides ample justification for the continued development of the industry within the Northern Territory and it demonstrates the advantages to the broad community which can result from the government adopting a very active policy on the taking of sportsfish. Certainly, it demonstrates that there are considerable incentives for the continued development of the industry. I would also say that, whilst I have not had a chance to see it mentioned in the report, the Gove Fishing Club has exemplified how reasonable people can negotiate with Aboriginal traditional owners. Reasonable people can reach accommodations which satisfy all interests and this applies not only to fishing and tourism, but to all endeavours that government pursues in the Northern Territory. I am sure that the results achieved through reasoned negotiation far outweigh the perceived political advantage of continuing to knock or harangue traditional owners.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, in opening today I would like to pay tribute to the minister and his departmental officers in recognition of the work that has been undertaken in support of this industry. The monetary potential of the amateur fishing industry has been generally unrecognised until recently. The department has been conducting a program of biological research for a period of years but this is still a long way from completion. It is a long-term process and the public often does not understand that. Frequently, the department is blamed for delays in the introduction of effective management procedures for the industry. We would do well to bear in mind that it is not in the long-term interests of the industry and the effective management of the resource to proceed without significant results in biological research.

Other speakers have mentioned the financial benefits of the amateur fishing industry. A figure of \$60m has been quoted, an amount which far

exceeds the commercial value of the barramundi fishery. This leads to some conflict between commercial and recreational fishermen. I believe that both groups must have a place in the fishing industry as a whole, and both must play a part in its long-term management. Nevertheless, they have their differences, and catering to these will be a tricky matter for the department to address in the development of long-term management strategies. The financial benefits from recreational fishing flow far beyond the industry itself and this is indicated in the report. Various industries and retail outlets throughout the Top End, apart from those directly related to fishing, benefit from the presence of fishermen. Small retail outlets in remote locations like Roper Bar and Timber Creek obtain a substantial income from visiting recreational fishermen.

Other speakers have also mentioned the changing attitudes of recreational fishermen, attitudes which have been reflected in the formation of fishing clubs in various localities throughout the Top End. We have heard about how, a few years ago, some people would go fishing and come back with freezers full of barramundi to give to their friends or to sell to commercial outlets. By and large, that practice has faded out and fishermen are much more responsible.

The Katherine Amateur Fishing Club has attracted many members and is inculcating throughout the community a much more responsible approach to recreational fishing. I was interested to hear at a club meeting that most club members supported some of the management options mentioned by the minister today, including the reduction of bag limits, the imposition of minimum size limits and the licensing of fishermen. In fact, it surprised me somewhat that the latter was strongly supported by the club with the proviso that any revenue raised should be directed to further research in the industry.

I have mentioned the benefits that flow from the activities of recreational fishermen. They head out from Katherine in droves at weekends, particularly long weekends, to the Victoria, Roper, Daly and other rivers in the Gulf of Carpentaria as far down as the McArthur. Stores in those areas receive the spin-off benefits of all that fishing activity.

This brings me to the minister's remarks concerning the motivations of people when they go fishing. From my experience, catching fish is certainly not one of them. Coming home with a reasonable catch seems to be a side benefit. The major motivation is to relax and unwind, to get away from it all, to have a break from work and enjoy a change of atmosphere. Quite apart from the fishing itself, these activities must have social spin-offs in the community. I guess that these types of benefits will become more pronounced as the population in our major centres increases.

Mr Speaker, the report made suggestions in relation to the future administration of recreational fishing. I note that one of the proposals is to provide 2 directorates within the Fisheries Division in order to take into account the needs of recreational and commercial fishermen on a more equal footing. I agree with the report that this option would serve the industry well but I have some reservations about the possibility, mentioned in the report, of competition between the directorates. Whilst each could have a degree of autonomy, it might be better to have a single management body within the department.

In conclusion, I repeat that the department has addressed the matter in a very professional way. Clearly, it is heading towards a management program,

for the barramundi fishing industry in particular, that will be of long-term benefit to both the commercial and the recreational fishing industries in the Northern Territory.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the statement made by the Minister for Industries and Development. The statement is both welcome and significant for the Northern Territory because the fishing industry is one of our natural resources and for many years it was not studied by the government and the departments concerned. I met Mr Bill Coburn a couple of times in my electorate, where he spoke to many of the people who are involved in the fishing industry and people living in the isolated communities.

I believe some 60% of coastal land in the Northern Territory is either in the hands of the Aboriginal people or in the process of becoming so. It is very interesting to note that this government is willing to take advice and consult on a matter like this, which is of vast importance to the Northern Territory in terms of its \$60m economic value and the 710 jobs it provides directly and indirectly. A very pleasing aspect is that, in the future, the government will continue the theme of consultation by taking into account the interests of people living in Arnhem Land, the Tiwi islands and Groote Eylandt. It concerns me that opportunities have been lost to these people because some Europeans consider these places to be locked up and not available for development. That is not the case. Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are beginning to wake up to the concept of development and the exploitation of their land for their own benefit.

A prime example of that is the tourist facility at Bathurst Island. Another tourist venture has been established at Cobourg Peninsula and another at Wigram Island, which I am sometimes involved with personally. I welcome this government's initiatives in relation to these developments and I would encourage it to look further at the possibilities of setting up oyster and prawn-fishing farms around the north-east coast of Arnhem Land, together with the establishment of weekend fishing camps. I am sure that money coming into those communities would be very much appreciated, especially in the light of indications that this government intends to cut off outstation funding in the very near future. The location of wilderness camps or fishing camps around north-east Arnhem Land would certainly be appreciated. We do not want highly-organised ventures, but places which people can visit and fish for a weekend on their own and then leave, provided that they consult the people concerned and the land councils and leave the place tidy and clean.

I have heard of instances at Borroloola where fishermen have visited some of the islands which have significant sacred sites and, apart from enjoying themselves on the beaches, have visited grave sites and interfered with human skulls and remains. Activities of that sort only limit the type of venture that this government is keen to promote because they frighten many of my people who otherwise might be willing to cooperate in such developments.

The other aspect that worries me is the overfishing of creeks in the Northern Territory. When flying from Lake Evella or Milingimbi, I have seen ships that have had nets cast from one side of a river to the other, which I believe is illegal. After they have left an area, you see dead catfish, dugongs and stingrays, all of which form part of the diet of my people. Actions of that kind sometimes frighten many people, especially those living in outstations. They see a boat moored in the mouth of the river beyond the point where this is allowed. They see a net placed across the river and fish and other creatures in it. It worries people, especially those on outstations who depend on marine life for their livelihood, along with the sale of artefacts to resource centres.

I have spoken with people who live in coastal areas around Milingimbi and Elcho Island about considering exploiting their land to bring economic benefits. I shall continue to do that, and I welcome the statement by the Minister for Industries and Development. I would like to caution the government in respect of its approach to the consultation process because I realise that some government departments despise organisations like the Northern Land Council, which exist to protect the interests of my people. Government departments should take the opportunity of talking with the land councils on a wide range of matters.

On behalf of my people, I welcome the announcements made by the minister and offer my assistance to him.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to pick up a few of the points raised by honourable members. I appreciate their contributions on this matter the importance of which is emphasised by the fact that some people travel across the country or even across the world to catch a fish. Not many people travel across the world to go to a casino but they will do so to pursue that elusive big fish.

The figures which are now coming to light show that recreational fishing is already a major industry which, if properly fostered, could become enormous. In some ways, it reminds me of the tourist industry itself which, 10 or 15 years ago, did not generate much excitement among governments. The benefits of tourism were not properly quantified and it was difficult to form a concept of the industry as a whole. It contained people who cleaned rooms in hotels, taxi drivers, hotel managers, tour operators and a diverse conglomeration of people all over the place. It was not quantifiable in the same way as 5 million tonnes of wheat per year or 25 million tonnes of coal, which were industrial outputs which governments and politicians could easily grasp the idea of. Tourism was just a big blancmange and no one wanted to know about it.

Today things are very different and I give credit to the federal Labor government for initiating a ministry of tourism. One of the failings of the previous coalition government was that it did not give tourism the recognition it deserved. Nowadays the benefits of tourism are recognised and recreational fishing is important in that context as well as in its important role in the lives of local people.

The member for Ludmilla raised an interesting point in relation to bag limits. It is something which will have to be discussed and I hope the community will take the matter up and debate it. We will certainly be liaising with the various amateur fishing associations to get their views but, in general terms, we consider a minimum-size limit as the sensible way to go in terms of preserving young fish which can mature and then be caught. The member for Ludmilla also pointed out that the male barramundi becomes a female after 4 to 6 years and, the larger it becomes, the more eggs it produces. In fact, we understand that the most prolifically fertile barramundi is the giant barramundi weighing over 25 kg. These fish are the big egg producers and perhaps we should try to stop people from catching them, or at least stop people from killing them. Catching and releasing fish can all be part of the game and the point raised by the member for Ludmilla certainly warrants further consideration.

In the context of the government's desire to minimise unnecessary legislation, it appears that some of our current marine regulations are, to some degree, inhibiting the expansion of this industry. It seems that, whilst

our system allows whole families, including children, to go out for weeks at a time on rivers and the open sea in dinghies of 4 m and 5 m, similar activities conducted under commercial auspices require certification. If a very experienced fisherman or boat handler wants to carry another single adult for a fee, he is required to obtain a government certificate indicating that he can drive a boat and navigate.

In a recent incident, an individual sought to obtain such a certificate to operate commercially and take small groups of rich people boating from time to time to the good fishing spots. He was told that, because he was colour-blind - which he did not know about until tested - and although he had coped with life pretty well in that state, he could not have a coxwain's ticket. He is prohibited from using his boat on the freshwater creeks of the Northern Territory for the purpose of carrying paying passengers because he cannot determine in which direction a trawler is travelling according to the colours of its lights. Mr Deputy Speaker, you do not run into a lot of large commercial vessels that carry port and starboard lights on Corroboree Creek or the Mary River. I certainly have not seen very many of them. Nevertheless, in this particular instance the gentleman was denied a coxwain's ticket on that basis. Such matters will be examined as time goes by.

I was very pleased to hear the member for Arnhem say that he believes Aboriginal land is not locked up as many people believe. I confess to having been one of them from time to time. He said that Aboriginal land is there to be used with the cooperation of traditional owners, and he encouraged us to examine further opportunities for enterprises on Aboriginal land, particularly those relating to marine life. He rightly pointed out that Aboriginal people are concerned at the ratbag element entering and damaging areas of significance. No doubt that sort of activity occurs sometimes and no right-thinking person would condone it, but there are ways of weeding out such persons and ensuring that people who enter land, including Aboriginal land, take a more responsible attitude and commit themselves to doing the right thing.

It is important for Aboriginal people who might like to get into this form of business to realise that conditions can be imposed upon people who want to go fishing and that such conditions, including special bag limits, will be quite acceptable. Indeed, some people would be quite prepared to pay to enter Aboriginal land in order to visit rare spots that have not been fished very much, even if they were allowed to fish only on a catch-and-release basis. There are such fishing purists and many are very keen to get to some new areas. I am sure that, if Aboriginal traditional owners were aware that they could allow fishing in some of their rare and sensitive spots without depleting the fishing resource, they might be more inclined to consider letting it happen.

I will approach the Northern Land Council to open preliminary discussions on how we might jointly go about bringing such opportunities to the attention of traditional owners and perhaps working up some guidelines as to ways in which persons may negotiate for access rights. It has happened already in relation to fishing lodges on Aboriginal land. That is very commendable. I believe they are successful and probably will be more so as the years go by. It has been done in the past and I am sure it can be done again. I am happy to take a personal role in initial discussions with the land council about how we will get our act together here with a view to having some more areas opened up, if not next year then the year after. However, unless we make a start, we will never get to the end. I appreciate honourable members' contributions in response to the statement.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MOTION

Reference to Standing Orders Committee

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the question of the appropriateness of standing order 95 in relation to speaking times, numbers of speakers and the overall length of debate be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration and report.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 33), the Bail Amendment Bill (Serial 34) and the Criminal Code Amendment Bill (Serial 35) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stages and the third readings of the bill together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 33)

BAIL AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 34)

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 35)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of these bills is, subject to certain safeguards, to provide a legislative basis under which police may detain in lawful custody, for a reasonable period, persons reasonably suspected of having committed offences. This is to enable necessary and proper investigations to continue and for the evidence so obtained to be admissible in court. Further, the proposed legislation will provide that a person in prison or another place of legal confinement will be able, subject to certain safeguards, to be given into the custody of the police in order to assist in investigations into offences committed by that person or other persons. Other Australian jurisdictions are considering similar provisions.

At present, if a person is taken into custody and arrested, that person must be taken before the first available court. In the case of *R v Williams*, reported at 66 ALR 385 and 6 ALJR 636, the High Court adjudged that police had no authority to detain arrested persons for questioning before taking them before a court. The effect of that is that police cannot delay taking an arrested person before a court in order to continue their investigations into the offences for which that person was arrested or for any other offences. The form of such investigations includes further questioning, video-recording, re-enactment of crimes, identification parades and recovery of the bodies of victims, weapons and stolen property, as well as investigations to establish alibis.

Whilst this area of the law was already a matter of concern to Northern Territory police, Williams Case has highlighted the issues involved. Mr Justice Stewart, the Chairman of the National Crimes Authority, has written to the Chief Minister in the following terms:

It seems to the authority that there is an urgent need in the Northern Territory for legislation enabling police to detain persons in custody for questioning. I therefore urge that consideration be given to introducing legislation to provide police with adequate powers to overcome this problem.

The long-standing practice of the Northern Territory police has been to continue investigation after the suspect has been arrested, in order to ensure that as much evidence as possible is available for presentation in court. Indeed, in 1976, the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Forster, in *R v Anunga and Others* 1976, laid down guidelines for police in the following terms:

Even when an apparent frank and free confession has been obtained relating to the commission of an offence, police should continue to investigate the matter in an endeavour to obtain proof of the commission of the offence from other sources. Failure to do this may lead to rejection of confessional records of interview.

Mr Justice Ward and Mr Justice Muirhead agreed with the Chief Justice. All such evidence must be obtained voluntarily and fairly, in that the suspect must consent before being told that he has the right to withhold his consent. Against this background, the Northern Territory police have rarely been criticised for obtaining evidence after an offender has been arrested. On the contrary, such criticisms as have been made are usually concerned with the lack of post-arrest investigation: for example, *R v Hayes and Carroll* of 24 April 1976, an unreported case heard and determined by the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory.

Compounding these difficulties are those situations where police desire to speak to the arrested offender about other and separate offences. This could involve the most serious crimes, such as the Birnie Case in Perth in November 1986, where police had arguably to investigate 4 separate murders and deliver the offenders to court by 10 am the following day, or the most mundane offences, for example juvenile burglars who are apprehended for a dozen or more offences. Williams Case was in the latter category. The defendant avoided conviction on 26 counts because police delayed bringing him before a court whilst they questioned him about these offences. A further example may be found in the recent multiple killings in the Timber Creek and Pentecost River areas of north-west Australia. Had the offender been apprehended and detained, proper investigation and questioning would have taken several days, particularly if the offender had desired to re-enact the crimes or assist police by revisiting the various crime scenes.

Further, once a prisoner has been remanded in custody by a court or is lawfully detained for some other reason, it should be possible to obtain an order to remove him from a normal place of confinement - for example, prison or police watch-house - to facilitate further inquiries. At present, even though he is not at liberty, a prisoner cannot be removed for this purpose. The anomaly of the present situation is that the prisoner's consent to delay is irrelevant. The prisoner who desires to make a clean breast of his past misconduct is denied the opportunity to do so. Worse still, the innocent person who is, nevertheless, justifiably suspected of a crime is prevented



from demonstrating his or her innocence. Also, offenders are unable to assist in locating exhibits, co-offenders and even victims of crime.

Mr Speaker, powers of investigatory detention are not only considered necessary by the Commissioner of Police and this government but have been advocated by distinguished bodies such as the Committee of Inquiry into the Enforcement of Criminal Law in Queensland, known as the Lucas Report, the Criminal Law and Penal Methods Reform Committee of South Australia, the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Thomas Committee of Scotland.

One important aspect of the proposed amendment should be noted. Although courts and magistrates normally retain a discretion to exclude otherwise admissible evidence, one amendment to the Police Administration Amendment Bill provides that, when evidence has shown to have been voluntarily given by a detained person, and is not inadmissible by other rules of law or evidence, the court or magistrate cannot exercise a discretion but must admit that evidence.

The Police Administration Amendment Bill provides the authority for police to delay conveying a person in lawful custody for such time as is reasonable, up to 48 hours, in order to question that person and carry out other investigations. Safeguards as to what is considered reasonable have been included. A magistrate and a justice may extend the period of detention to and beyond 48 hours where, for reasons of communications or transportation, it is impracticable to conclude the detention within that time. The bill also provides that a magistrate may authorise the release of a prisoner from a place of legal confinement into the custody of police to assist with investigations.

The Criminal Code Amendment Bill and the Bail Amendment Bill simply contain cognate amendments to provide for such delays. The proposed amendments will strengthen our criminal justice system and strike a balance between individual rights and the protection of society from crime. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 56)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Firearms Act, firstly, by making appropriate offences under the act regulatory offences, secondly, by amending the word 'authorised' in section 18(1) to 'licensed' and, thirdly, by providing penalties for certain offences under the act.

In relation to the first proposed amendment, at present several offences under the act provide for statutory defences. These defences usually consist of facts peculiarly within the defendant's own knowledge. The Commissioner of Police sought to have the onus of proving such defences placed on the defendants. Advice from the Department of Law, however, suggested that this objective would be better achieved by making those offences regulatory offences. The department further advised that other offences under the act which did not require an element of intent could also be made regulatory offences.

Under the Criminal Code Act, a regulatory offence is an absolute offence and, as such, the complainant need not first prove that the offender had a guilty mind or intention to commit the offence charged. Making an offence a regulatory offence is to announce what it truly is: a sanction considered necessary in order to regulate the affairs of citizens in an orderly fashion. A citizen may still have a defence to the charge but the onus is placed on that person to prove the defence.

Mr Speaker, turning to the second amendment, the intention of the Firearms Act is for all firearms to be registered and for all shooters to be licensed. The word 'authorised' in section 18(1) of the act is ambiguous in that a person who has a firearm registered under section 11(2) of the act may believe that he or she is therefore authorised under section 18(1) to carry, own, hire, possess, purchase, repair, store or discharge the firearm. Amending the word 'authorised' in section 18(1) to 'licensed' will make the real intention of the legislation clear to members of the public.

With regard to the third amendment proposed by the bill, certain sections of the act provide offences but, at present, no penalties exist for those offences. The bill simply corrects these anomalies by providing penalties consistent with other penalties existing for similar offences under the act. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BAIL AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 57)

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Attorney-General, I present the Bail Amendment Bill (Serial 57).

Bill read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to include a section in the Bail Act which will make it an offence to fail to appear in respect of a bail undertaking. When a person is released on bail, he gives an undertaking to appear before the court at a specific time and place. The problem with the Bail Act as it stands is that failure to make this appearance pursuant to a bail undertaking is not an offence. There have been instances of the same persons failing to appear repeatedly. All that can be done is for the person to be brought back to the court again. The problem is more severe in regard to minor offences where there may be no sum or surety deposited with the court or, if there is a sum and it is forfeited, it is considered a civil debt and recovered accordingly.

As the situation now stands, forfeited bail cannot be enforced by warrant of apprehension where the person has fled to another state, as it does not fit within the definition of a 'fine' in section 26A(1) of the Commonwealth Services and Execution of Process Act which allows for recovery between states and territories. Failure to appear in respect of a bail undertaking is an offence in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. Treating failure to appear as an offence will reinforce the criminal nature of breach of bail. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL  
(Serial 50)

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Attorney-General, I present a bill entitled the Statute Law Revision Bill (Serial 50).

Bill read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, there is not much I can say about statute law in general that will be new to honourable members. The House is very used to the processes involved. Before proceeding to make specific comments on a couple of matters contained in the bill, I again invite members who have a query about any aspect of it to let the minister know and he will make appropriate arrangements for them to be briefed by officers of the department.

A couple of the provisions of the bill correct references which were overlooked in the uniform Companies legislation and the restructuring associated with the establishment of the Power and Water Authority. I particularly draw honourable members' attention to clause 2(2) which makes the cross-reference changes retrospective to the date when all other such changes were affected. No rights will be adversely affected by the retrospective operation. A considerable number of changes are devoted to removing references to the Electricity Commission and replacing them with references to the Power and Water Authority. The need for this will be obvious to honourable members.

The proposed change to the Companies (Administration) Act removes the involvement of the Remuneration Tribunal in determining sitting rates for members of the Companies Auditors Board. The involvement of the tribunal in that specific matter was an historical accident. The effect of the change means that the rates will be set under the Remuneration (Statutory Bodies) Act in the same way as for most other statutory boards. Because of his interest in the nuances of language, the member for MacDonnell will particularly appreciate the suggested amendment to the Motor Vehicles (Hire Car) Regulations where the absence of a parenthetical comma has changed the whole sense of the provision from that intended. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 49)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill amends the current definition of an employee contained in section 3 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. As the act is presently framed, 'employee' means an employee within the meaning of the Public Service Act, a member of the Police Force or an employee of a statutory corporation. Public-sector employees in such categories are legally obliged to adhere to the requirements and controls detailed in the act and in

complementary financial legislation covering the proper management and administration of public moneys and public property. However, officers and employees engaged under the Teaching Service Act are presently excluded from following the prescribed requirements of Northern Territory financial legislation. Substantial amounts of public money and property are administered by teaching service staff who are not subject to the same controls and requirements for accountability as their counterparts employed elsewhere in the public sector.

In order to ensure uniform adherence to proper accounting requirements for public funds and property, it is necessary to rectify this anomaly. The bill does this by amending the definition of 'employee' to include employees and officers under the Teaching Service Act. If passed, the bill will provide that such officers will also be subject to provisions and financial control systems detailed in the Financial Administration and Audit Act and supplementary Northern Territory financial legislation. At the same time, the bill ensures that specific reference is made, in the definition of 'employee', to the departmental head. This provides uniformity with the definition of 'employee' in the Public Service Act and avoids any distinction between the 2 acts in terms of the definition of a departmental head.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

JABIRU TOWN DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 54)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Local Government): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

In July 1984, the Jabiru Town Council came into being by virtue of amendments to the Jabiru Town Development Act. Those amendments enabled the council to administer all the local government powers the Jabiru Town Development Authority had under that act, except the power to declare the municipal general rate and set the establishment and terms and conditions of council staff. The government's objective in establishing local government in Jabiru in 1984 was to place the responsibility for municipal matters in the hands of the residents of Jabiru against the background of the authority's ongoing responsibility under its act. Other factors included the town lease between the authority and the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Kakadu National Park Plan of Management and the need to protect the interests of the mining company, Energy Resources of Australia, in the town.

Since 1984, there has been time to review various aspects of the act in regard to the council's administration of its affairs. The intention of the bill is, therefore, to streamline various sections of the act which will enable the council greater autonomy and flexibility in administering the powers and functions delegated to it by the authority. In this respect, I draw attention to clause 8 of the bill, which provides for members present at a meeting of the council to appoint one of themselves to be the acting chairman for that meeting, in the event that the chairman or deputy chairman is absent. The person presiding over a meeting of the council will have a casting vote as well as a deliberative vote. Clause 8 also provides for 5 members, whether appointed or elected to council, to form a quorum for

council meetings. The present requirement in respect of forming a quorum is that an appointed member must be in attendance. The bill removes that requirement.

A further major aspect in providing greater flexibility for the council to handle its own affairs is reflected in clause 9 of the bill, which provides for the council to vary its approved annual estimates of income and expenditure which relate to the activities which lie within its power, without seeking prior approval of the authority.

This amending legislation has been developed in close consultation with ERA and the council, reflecting the government's policy of devolving responsibility for the administration of local affairs, as far as is practical, to local government bodies. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 4)

Continued from 7 May 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in noting the opposition's support for this legislation, I wish to refer to the various aspects of the bill. I do not consider its provisions particularly contentious but, in order to satisfy the minister and all honourable members that the opposition has dealt conscientiously with it, I will make brief reference to them.

We note that the bill allows hire car licences to be used as security for loans and we note that the Registrar of Motor Vehicles will record the lender's interest. This will be a matter of considerable import in the taxi and hire car industries. A large capital outlay is involved in purchasing hire car plates although I am advised that the cost of plates has dropped, which is in itself a matter of some concern. I have heard that the going rate for taxi plates was in the vicinity of \$110 000 but that the most recent sales have fallen below \$100 000. I hasten to add that my evidence is anecdotal but, if it is accurate, it is a matter of concern. Obviously, people investing in licence plates want to be able to use that investment as collateral in whatever way they can and they certainly should be allowed to do so. The opposition, therefore, has no hesitation in supporting those particular provisions.

In this context, I raise a matter which is of concern to the government as it is to the opposition. It relates to the plight of people who purchase motor vehicles in good faith only to find, after parting with their hard-earned cash, that the vehicles are subject to hire-purchase arrangements. Next, a zealous representative of a hire-purchase firm appears on the doorstep attempting to repossess the car. I am sure other honourable members have received representations from people who have been in this situation and who have had to take civil action, often to no avail or, at best, taking many months or even years to recoup thousands of dollars.

It has been suggested that there should be an encumbrance register which would record the sale of vehicles subject to hire purchase agreements, as a result of which a would-be purchaser could not be hoodwinked. Even paying zealous attention to the old adage of caveat emptor, such a purchaser can still be hoodwinked. I understood that such an encumbrance register was on

the way and I would very much appreciate a comment on that during this debate from the Minister for Transport and Works. I appreciate that maintaining such a register would be much more complex administratively than registering loans against hire car and taxi plates but, nevertheless, I feel that it is an issue well worth attention and debate in this Assembly.

I also note that this bill changes the requirements for re-registration of interstate vehicles in the Northern Territory. In noting that the requirements for re-registration have been tightened up, the opposition concurs with the government's concern that, in these straitened times, we should not be deprived of rightful revenues from people who stay here for a certain time as residents. They may perceive themselves as being here on a temporary working holiday but it is quite appropriate that a 3-month period be the maximum period of such a holiday. Many of us came here 15 years ago on a working holiday and never went back. In that context I can see that it is quite appropriate that a limitation be put on the time vehicles can be driven here before they are required to have Territory registration. I also note that the government has included exemption provisions for bona fide tourists who stay longer than 3 months and that the onus is on the person to prove that he is a bona fide tourist. Nothing could be more appropriate than that.

I think that the distinction between a Territory resident and a bona fide tourist is an interesting one and, in another context, I suggest that the distinction is worthy of consideration. I suggest to the Minister for Lands and Housing and Tourism that a similar distinction be made between bona fide tourists and residents when surveys of caravan parks are carried out by the tourist industry. If people are here for more than 3 months and are living in caravan parks - mum, dad and 3 kids crammed into 18 feet of aluminium-coated splendour - that needs to be recorded in caravan park surveys.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Don't you come harassing my constituents.

Mr BELL: I will take up that interjection from the member for Koolpinyah. I point out to her that I have such establishments in my electorate. Far be it from me to suggest that long-term residents in caravan parks have no right to be there. For many people, it is a lifestyle that is the epitome of freedom. My concern, however, is that our collection of statistics often masks real housing-related poverty. Certainly, a distinction needs to be made between long-term residents in caravan parks who are there even though they have other housing options, and other people for whom long-term residency in caravan parks is the only option, an option that is gradually destroying families in that situation. Only last night in this Assembly, the member for Koolpinyah spoke about family values. I suggest to her that, if she has such deep concern, she might like to study the distinction I am making and take it into consideration. I appreciate that, as a member of the New Right, she is most reluctant to do so.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The old right.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate honourable members' tolerance of that digression. I am quite surprised not to have had a point of order called on me.

The opposition has no hesitation in appreciating the distinction introduced by this legislation between bona fide tourists and residents of the Territory.

Thirdly, we note that this bill will allow fees to be charged for the inspection of defective vehicles. I do not in any sense object to this provision. A large number of my constituents are poor, to put it in simple English. To put it in trendy, sociological jargon, they tend to have a lower socioeconomic status. Because of this fact, they are forced to buy motor cars that are susceptible to having defect notices slapped on them and which, I suppose, are more likely to be inspected. I do, however, appreciate that services such as inspection cost money. and I have no objection to the user-pays principle being applied, although I do note that it will impact upon the people I have been speaking of.

In this context, Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer to your own comments in last year's budget debate, where you spoke of the increased amount of revenue that would derive from inspection fees and the general activities of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. I point out to the minister that I will be looking carefully at those figures this year. Obviously, the serious drop in the number of new-vehicle registrations has had a serious impact in the Territory and right around the country. There is serious concern about its ramifications for the vehicle-manufacturing industry in this country. However, in the Territory context, I will be interested to make comparisons and analyse registration figures and their impact in terms of the administration of these sections of the act.

Fourthly, I note that the bill relaxes certain provisions for applicants for an instructor's licence. In his second-reading speech, the minister made mention of a particular anomaly relating to motor-cycle instructors who were required to have a motor vehicle licence. Obviously, the opposition is quite happy to accept reform in that regard. The fifth area that the bill addresses is that of provision for classes of bus licences, whilst the sixth removes a further anomaly, under which a truck driver who has his licence removed for 3 months actually has to wait 12 months before this occurs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has no hesitation in supporting the legislation and commending it to honourable members.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is good to see that the government is again addressing the problem of interstate driving licences and interstate-registered vehicles. It is obvious that the old act contained far too many loopholes. Many interstate vehicles are operating permanently in the Northern Territory. In fact, I know personally of some people in Alice Springs that re-register their old vehicle regularly in South Australia. They effect that quite simply through the mail. If honourable members think that this is not a major problem in the Northern Territory, I would remind them that, last year, a young Alice Springs resident was killed when a vehicle driven on the wrong side of the road was involved in a head-on collision. It happened at night and the unregistered car from South Australia had its headlights sitting on the back seat.

During my numerous wanderings whilst door-knocking prior to the last election, I noticed that 1 in 10, if not 1 in 5 vehicles parked in Alice Springs driveways, had interstate registration. Obviously, these people deprive other taxpayers of revenue and unfairly keep up costs for those of us who run motor vehicles legitimately in the Northern Territory. They pay no money to use their vehicles on our roads and do not contribute to the TIO's motor accident insurance scheme. I have also noticed with some interest that a number of companies in Alice Springs use vehicles with interstate registration. One national company operates 4 or 5 Queensland-registered utilities as I believe it has done for the last 2 or 3 years.

I have some concerns about hire-car registration. Looking back on my own involvement with the hire-car industry over some years in Queensland, I remember the terrible problem caused by the number of hire-cars carrying interstate plates which came from other states. There was a most bureaucratic scheme which involved the maintenance of a register which had to be delivered each month to the Motor Vehicle Registry. We found that by the time we had delivered this long list to the Motor Vehicle Registry - and sometimes it contained the licence numbers of 400 or 500 interstate cars - and paid a fee to operate them in Queensland, half of them had left the state. We would then cross them off the list but, by the time that was done, they had popped back through Coolangatta into Queensland. Once the bureaucrats get hold of some of these schemes operated across states by the national hire car companies, the results can be quite mind-boggling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill. However, I point out that I have some concerns - like other people do in the Alice Springs area - about unregistered South Australian vehicles that come over from a couple of the settlements just south of the border and operate on Northern Territory roads. Obviously, the provisions of this amendment bill will not catch those people. It will not really cover them, apart from the fact that they are operating illegally.

Mr Ede: It is not illegal to drive in from South Australia.

Mr POOLE: They are not registered in South Australia. They have South Australian plates. They are not required to be registered in order to drive on the settlement and it is a problem. It is something that we as a government will have to address. The amendments to the bill are small, but I am sure the revenue raised as a result of these changes will surprise honourable members, and I support the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, this legislation contains amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act which have obviously been initiated by the industry itself. I have no argument with this, nor would any sensible person. Legislation for an industry must mirror the wishes of that industry for control and regulation. We have seen this occur many times before as professional groups, such as veterinary surgeons and engineers, have sought legislation setting up registration boards, and such legislation has been enacted as a result. It has also happened with para-professional groups asking for legislation to prescribe who may and who may not be considered as one of them, rural people asking for relaxed motor vehicle registration to suit pastoral purposes and so forth. We all know of those cases. When a certain industry asks for legislation to help it, provided that it is a reasonable request, the legislation has always been put in place.

Whilst not knowing the exact price of a taxi or private hire-car licence, I have been told they are in the vicinity of \$50 000 - \$100 000. This is a very large sum to have sitting idly in somebody else's bank for the government's use and not collecting interest to pay for the purchase of the licence. I believe that money should be put to work and the use of a hire car licence as a security for a loan is common sense to me. It is a very large sum of money and it is quite sensible to allow a person to use it as security to borrow more money or in whatever other way they wish.

The legislation states that there will be restrictions on the sale of licences in order to protect the lender of money used to purchase a licence. I wonder if the minister has considered that this could result in a situation, which I do not object to, in which every licence could also assume a monetary



value. I am talking about licences in other areas, such as the fishing industry. They also cost a lot of money. I do not know whether the same conditions apply to them but, if not, the relevant minister should consider similar legislation.

Another matter covered by amendments to this Motor Vehicles Act is that of interstate-registered vehicles. My only regret is that it has taken so long to catch up with people who come to the Territory from elsewhere and hang on to their interstate registrations for months, if not years. Over the years, I have received many complaints from the principals of small trucking companies who object to large companies coming into the Northern Territory without local registration or subcontracting to truckies from interstate who have no Territory registration or, in some cases, no registration at all. Registration is very hard to police when the job is out bush somewhere. These vehicles put the public at risk and they also put local operators who are doing the right thing at a financial disadvantage.

I would like to make some comment on the remarks of the member for MacDonnell about caravan parks. I believe that the less the government interferes with the way people live, the better. There are many people who prefer to live in caravan parks. The honourable member said that some people choose to live in caravan parks because of a certain degree of freedom. It does not really matter to me and I do not think it should matter to him why people are living in caravan parks. If that is their choice, it is their choice. It is their own private business.

The legislation seeks to catch up with many anomalies and injustices in the motoring and trucking world, as well as previous omissions from legislation. All of these have been detailed in the minister's second-reading speech and, because they appear fair and just, I support them. There is, however, a matter I wish to raise in the context of hire car licences and private hire car licences in particular. Having a tangential interest in vintage and veteran cars and being concerned in a small way with the bicentennial vintage and veteran car rally which is starting from Darwin next February, I wish to put it to the minister that it is about time the Department of Transport and Works or the Motor Vehicle Registry Office took up the question of allowing vintage and veteran car owners to take up private hire car licences from time to time. I am not talking about a permanent hire car licence and, in raising this matter, I do not see any area of conflict between the current holders of private hire car licences and people who own vintage and veteran cars and wish to use them as public hire cars from time to time on occasions like weddings, funerals and so forth. The sort of person who wants to hire a Volvo or a Merc from a private hire car company is not the sort of person who would be interested in hiring a Whippet or an A-Model Ford to go to the same place or for the same use, therefore, I see no potential for conflict. I would like the minister to address this question. I have not yet written to him about it but I will be doing so some time in the near future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make some comments on clauses 13, 14 and 17. Before I do so, I want to state that I have no problems with the provisions relating to Territory registration of interstate vehicles, but I would ask that adequate public notice be given through the newspapers so that people know that there is going to be a crackdown.

The matter that I want to address is one in which there is confusion and I hope that, if the minister cannot clarify it now, he will do so at a later date. The matter has come to my attention regularly during the last 3 or 4 years and it was only recently that I found that it was by no means confined

to my electorate. Other members on this side of the House who represent bush electorates have had the same queries put to them as may also be the case with the members for Barkly and Victoria River.

The problem relates to the requirement to have a licence when driving, the requirement to drive a vehicle that is not defective and the requirement to have a registered and suitably insured vehicle. If a person drives a vehicle within the confines of private land, there is no requirement that the vehicle be roadworthy, insured or registered or that the driver be licensed. This applies on suburban or rural blocks and also to cattle stations. It was only relatively recently that we provided for a new class of registration for people who drove primarily on cattle stations but might, for some particular reason, need occasionally to drive on a public road to attend fires and so forth. That provision was supported by this side of the House.

I am finding that Aboriginal people, in particular, are becoming extremely confused about just where the line is drawn. If you think about it, Mr Speaker, you find it is extremely difficult to determine just what are roads and what are not roads. For example, cattle stations have roads around the boundaries or to bores, along with a road from the homestead to the main gate and, possibly, another road that goes to an excision or a community. Some of these roads are maintained to some extent by the government, although they are not gazetted roads as such. They certainly have not been excised from the cattle station to become the property of the Crown.

There is a further complication in the case of access roads to homesteads on cattle properties such as Ti Tree. The law requires that people driving on that road have a licence, that the vehicle be registered and insured and so forth, but what is the situation if the land becomes the subject of a successful land claim? The same thing applies to roads on Aboriginal communities. There is no argument about major roads like the Tanami Highway, which goes through my electorate. It is a gazetted highway and was classified as such at the time that the land became schedule 1 land. And what is the status of the roads that go off that highway to outstations? Is it linked to whether government money has been spent on them, does it relate to whether gazettal has occurred or, given that title is vested permanently in a land trust, is it the case that drivers on these roads do not need to be licensed, registered and insured? Further, what is the situation in respect of roads that people have put in themselves, where new roads have been pushed through from outstation to outstation? Are those roads in the same category as roads to the bores on a cattle station and, if so, is it necessary for people to go through all the licensing and registration procedures in order to drive there?

These questions are constantly put to me as I attempt to ensure that people drive registered vehicles which would satisfy any defect procedures and that they are licensed and insured, a state of affairs which has obvious advantages. It is an extremely confusing situation and it extends to mining leases as well. What is the situation for people who are living and working on a mining lease? Are they in the same situation as people who are on private land? That opens up another issue in relation to the town of Nhulunbuy, which is totally on a mining lease. I stand to be corrected, but I believe that the status of the land is such that it could be seen to be quite different to a town such as Tennant Creek.

I would like the minister to take these difficulties on board and advise us about them at some stage. Such difficulties are being raised constantly and we would like to be able to provide correct advice. I am sure that the member for Victoria River has been in the same situation. I have taken the

matter to lawyers and I have found that each lawyer will give a different answer depending on how the pieces of land are described. I would like to leave it in the hands of the minister because he is the person with responsibility for the act. I ask him to give me some clear definition of the different categories of land and the different requirements with regard to that land so that I can circularise my community and let people know just where they stand.

Mr Speaker, as the member for MacDonnell said, the opposition supports the amendments and commends them to the Assembly.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I do not often agree with the member for Stuart on many things but I must say that I do have some sympathy for the cause that he put forward a moment ago. It is a very complex issue. Roads are appearing all over pastoral land. There are roads leading into settlements and roads on land under claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and land that has been granted under that act, and so on. These are very complex issues and I think that gazetted roads certainly need to be identified and advertised. The status of the roads to which he drew attention should be clarified. I am quite sure that the minister will take up that matter and resolve it in due course.

I would like also to refer to the comments of the member for Koolpinyah. We all know that she has a desire for her electorate to secede from the Northern Territory, to establish a monarchy and set herself up as Queen Noel of Koolpinyah. However, the good member must realise that will not happen. The electorate of Koolpinyah shall forever remain part of the Northern Territory and she and her constituents will be obliged to live within the laws and regulations of the Northern Territory. That is where the matter rests and she should get used to that idea.

Mr Speaker, the bill includes a number of minor amendments. Nevertheless, they are quite important amendments because they clarify a number of clouded issues that have caused concern in the Territory for some time. These amendments have been brought forward after extensive consultation with the relevant industries: the taxi and hire car industries and the finance industry. The member for MacDonnell covered the issue of cars sold whilst under hire-purchase agreements.

Under current legislation, interstate motor vehicles that come to the Northern Territory are required to have their registration changed over after a period of 3 months. That has always been the case so I am surprised to hear from the member for Araluen that we have had Queensland-registered vehicles operating commercially in Alice Springs for several years. But I also take the point that, unless those vehicles are actually stopped for a traffic infringement or unless somebody notes that they have been around for quite a while, nothing will happen. Such vehicles generally come to the attention of police when they are stopped as a result of an infringement. That is when they check how long a vehicle has been in the Territory.

Where a person brings an interstate vehicle into the Territory and is required to change that registration over after a period of 3 months, that person will now have to change over his licence. In the past, that requirement did not exist. A person could change over his registration but retain his interstate driver's licence. He will now be required to change his driver's licence within that period as well.

I can understand the exemption provision for visitors who might stay for a period exceeding 3 months. There are people living adjacent to me whose parents spent 5 or 6 months here recently, looking around the Territory. They are from Victoria and it would have been unreasonable to require them to change their licence when they knew full-well that they would return to Victoria once the weather started to warm up. In fact, they left town last weekend. Such people should be granted that exemption.

Another case is where contractors come to town with interstate equipment to work on a project. This happens regularly and an example would be the contractors working at the RAAF base at Tindal. It is well known that interstate contractors or local branches of interstate contractors operate on that project. They bring into the Territory heavy equipment which might be located at a head office interstate. That equipment is moved around Australia. It is reasonable that those people should be able to operate that equipment, on a short-term basis in the Territory, without having to change over registration. However, I emphasise 'short-term'. Some projects might continue for a year or 2 or even longer. It is unreasonable to expect that equipment should be able to operate in the Territory for that period of time without a licence changeover. I think that needs to be clarified; it is still a bit of a grey area in my mind. Some reasonable time limit should be set on the exemption period for such vehicles.

I note that interstate vehicles, which are purchased for private or business use and brought to the Territory, must have their registration changed over within 28 days. This applies also to hire cars. We all know that there is a great influx of tourists for a 5 or 6-month period during the dry season and that the local hire car companies bring up fleets of vehicles during that period and then return them south. It is fair and reasonable that, if they are gaining commercial profit from those vehicles, registrations should be changed over within 28 days.

There are other advantages that accrue from having those vehicles registered in the Northern Territory. The vehicles will have to go across the pits at the Motor Vehicle Registry or be inspected with regard to their roadworthiness. We do not want vehicles being driven in the Territory when they come from states which do not require vehicle inspection. It is fair and reasonable that the owners of such vehicles should be paying registration fees into the coffers of the Northern Territory because, after all, it is the Northern Territory government that has to pay for the repair and maintenance of roads and the provision of all sorts of facilities around the Territory which these vehicles use and, in some cases, damage.

The bill provides authority for charges to be made for some other minor services that are provided, whether they are provided on request or otherwise. For example, if a motor vehicle is considered defective by the police and has to be inspected, then I agree that a charge for that service should be levied. As I said, those services may not be requested but may result from an identified infringement. The cost incurred by government in, for example, inspecting a defective vehicle at Motor Vehicle Registry, should be met by the user. That is another extension of the user-pays principle for government services.

I am pleased to note that the bill relaxes some requirements that applied previously. For example, a person applying for a motorcycle instructor's licence will no longer be required to hold a driver's permit for a motor vehicle. That seems reasonable to me. If a person is to become a motorcycle instructor, it is not necessary that he also have a motor vehicle driver's

licence. He should certainly have a motorcycle licence but a number of people who only ride motorcycles have no need to drive motor vehicles.

There are a number of other minor amendments which I will not go through individually because they have been addressed by various other speakers. I support this bill and I commend it to honourable members.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. The bill came about substantially as a result of pressure from the industry in relation to various changes which it saw as desirable. I will now address some of the specific issues raised by honourable members.

In his opening comments, the member for MacDonnell referred to the fluctuating market in taxi plates and so forth. That issue is being addressed by the industry itself. Naturally enough, when market forces prevail, people who wish to invest in a taxi plate may have a windfall or occasionally suffer a loss. That situation occurs elsewhere in Australia where there is public tendering and transfer of licences on the open market.

In relation to registration of the lender's interest, provision has been made in proposed new section 27F(4) under which regulations shall be implemented through procedures that allow for the endorsement on a licence of the details of the loan or liability. Removal of those particulars would be subject to the regulatory procedures and would involve endorsement by the lender that the obligation had been fulfilled. Therefore, the sale of a licence would be secured because the purchaser would be aware of that endorsement. General encumbrances are the subject of a matter being pursued by the government and it will be addressed in the very near future.

Reference was made by a number of members to fees for inspection. Naturally, these fees would reflect the cost to government of having to provide the service and would be contained at that level. It would not be seen as a revenue-earner but the recovery of a cost and, whilst those fees have not been established yet, that would be the basic principle. It should be stated that, whilst people certainly do not want to receive a bluey or a request for inspection of a defective vehicle, the government is very rightly ensuring that the safety of the general public is looked after, as well as that of the driver and passengers in the vehicle concerned. It helps people to protect themselves, and that is quite justifiable.

I am not entirely clear about the point raised in relation to inspection fees having a potentially adverse effect on the number of new vehicles being registered. Quite obviously, fees charged for motor vehicle registration in the Northern Territory are comparable to those interstate, particularly in relation to heavy vehicles. I understand that the Victorian government has recently increased the maximum loads on transport vehicles to match those which have been in place in the Territory for 3 or 4 years and will also increase registration and permit fees by approximately 310%. That will take them well and truly through the roof compared to the sort of fees we pay in the Territory. However, government has a serious responsibility to ensure that road users, who are the people who benefit from use of the roads, make a reasonable contribution towards maintenance costs. We should bear that in mind when discussing a number of the points which have been raised today.

The member for Araluen raised a concern about interstate vehicles, some of which have been registered interstate for years on end whilst being permanently located and driven within the Northern Territory. Some states do

not have inspection requirements ensuring that brakes, steering and other safety-related matters are attended to. However, aside from those safety aspects, we need to ensure that Territorians are protected and, once again, help people to protect themselves. We need to ensure that they make some sort of contribution and that users pay fairly towards that massive \$28m a year that we pay on road maintenance. That phenomenal figure is nowhere near met through motor vehicle registration and licence fees. We all have a responsibility to share in that cost and, following the passage of this legislation, its implementation will be given significant publicity so that people will be made aware that they must comply with its requirements within 3 months unless they have a legitimate reason for not doing so. Each case will be assessed on its merits.

The member for Jingili mentioned construction equipment. There are different sorts of construction equipment. There is the classic example of a gravel truck driven from interstate, roaring along the highways and tearing up the roads, adding significantly and directly to our maintenance costs. Quite obviously, owners of such vehicles ought to be paying a permit fee if they are to be given exemption from the requirement of actually changing their registration plates. At the other extreme, we might be talking about a piece of mining exploration equipment that functions well away from the road system, and different criteria might apply in that case. In answer to concerns which have been raised, ample publicity will be given throughout the industry and officers will be educating people concerning their requirements.

The member for Stuart expressed concerns about licensing and registration on Aboriginal and other non-public land. The act defines 'public place' and 'public street', as does the Traffic Bill which is before us. Where there is common usage by or access to the general public, whether by permit - as is the case on Aboriginal land - or by fee or otherwise, there is a requirement for proper licensing and registration. From a commonsense point of view, we would not want to be sharing a road with somebody who was unlicensed and driving an unregistered vehicle that is not covered by third party insurance. I do not believe that the member for Stuart was advocating that we should be doing that. The definition of 'public street' and 'public place' extends to common usage.

The member for Koolpinyah suggested that it was about time the government made decisions about vintage motor cars. She concluded by saying that she has yet to write to the government about the matter. I certainly welcome her suggestions in regard to private hire car licences, part-time or otherwise. Matters such as this will be seriously investigated and if other members have similar concerns, they should direct them to my office.

The member for Stuart said that he had been concerned for 3 or 4 years about licensing matters in relation to Aboriginal communities. It is a matter that he may very well have raised but I would welcome a formal approach so that we can clarify those aspects. He will then be able to circularise his electorate and make sure that people are familiar with the requirements in respect of licensing and registration.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 7 agreed to.

New clauses 7A, 7B and 7C:

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

The clauses, as amended, would allow the registrar to alter licence forms for public and private hire cars with a requirement that a copy of any forms so approved be published in the Northern Territory Government Gazette. These changes will allow greater flexibility to cope with practical requirements, including any changes to licence forms found necessary to cater for the licences being used as security for purposes of a loan.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would appreciate further explanation. I appreciate that the minister has addressed the amendment standing against 5.3, but he does not seem to have referred to the amendments standing against 5.1 and 5.2. I draw his attention to the fact that 5.1 and 5.2 appear to have the effect of removing the requirement to have the word 'renewal' endorsed on them.

In regard to 5.3, this amendment requires a gazettal of the form of licence required for public motor vehicles and the private hire car vehicles that is not in the act at the moment. I am not sure that it is appropriate. They are 2 separate questions.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, there was a prescribed form laid down in the old act in regard to gazettal. When the registrar alters the form, he needs to advise the general public of that detail.

Mr Bell: What about 5.1 and 5.2?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the member for Ludmilla has some supplementary advice which he has kindly extracted for me.

Mr Bell: Assistant minister?

Mr FIRMIN: Not at all. Everything is in capable hands.

The matter relates to the way in which the renewal forms are sent out. When the notices of registration renewal are returned, it is apparently easier to process them manually than on computer. In case one is accidentally missed and not stamped, the term 'approved form' is used, this being the form which has been approved and which is depicted in the renewal notice itself. It is handled by the computer as a transaction and becomes law. It is simple.

New clauses 7A, 7B and 7C agreed to.

Clauses 8 and 9 agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 5.4.

This amendment is in response to a request from the banking fraternity which wishes to broaden the types of advances which can be made. The amendment simply extends the definition to advances of money or credit.

Clauses 10, as amended, agreed to

Clauses 11 to 17 agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 5.5.

This amendment allows for special number plates to be offered under tender option or other methods approved by the registrar. Currently, plates must always be sold in accordance with the prescribed fee. This amendment allows us more flexibility and the opportunity to raise more revenue. It is as simple as that. That is particularly pertinent with bicentennial plates and other matters which are coming up shortly. The amendment is simply to allow the use of special sale methods for raising additional revenue. There should, of course, be a bottom line. For example, if plates were being auctioned, the reserve price would be the prescribed scale price.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have a question for the minister. A previous Minister for Transport and Works, the former member for Elsey, had his number plate cheerfully emblazoned with the name 'Roger'. My understanding was that at that stage the act empowered the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to allow you to inscribe your number plate 'Roger' or 'Fred' or whatever, for a variable fee. I am just curious to find out why it is necessary to amend the act in this way.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, it has been possible to buy number plates of different configurations and even to bulk-purchase them under a prescribed scale of fees. This amendment will allow us to use an auction system in 1988 to raise potentially greater revenue over and above the prescribed scale price. There will be special opportunities for such sales in 1988 with the sale of commemorative number plates. The states use this procedure to sell 007 number plates and all sorts of other strange combinations. It is a marketing tool. That is the total intent of the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 18, as amended, agreed.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

TRAFFIC BILL  
(Serial 42)

Continued from 11 June 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this is a major piece of legislation and the opposition is critical of some aspects of it. I would like to commence by thanking the minister, his ministerial officer and senior members of the Department of Transport and Works, Mr Phillips, Mr Smith and Mr Hewitt, who very kindly spent an afternoon giving me the government perspective on this legislation.

I do not expect that the Traffic Bill will excite vituperative debate in this Assembly but, lest we take it too lightly, it should be pointed out that the Traffic Act is responsible for the majority of appearances in the lower courts. The legislature has a responsibility to enact traffic laws in such a way that they provide a sensible legal framework and, with a single exception that I will be referring to later, it is the opposition's view essentially that this bill achieves that. A large variety of issues come up in the



context of this sort of legislation, although I will not belabour this Assembly or the minister by going through them chapter and verse.

It is interesting that this debate follows the passing of the amended Motor Vehicles Act. If I learned nothing more from my research into this particular bill, I developed a clearer understanding of the difference between the 2 items of legislation. There may be honourable members who understand these things far better than I do, but the Motor Vehicles Act deals with motor cars when they are stationary, in terms of what constitutes a motor vehicle and what does not and who is allowed to drive one and who is not. The Traffic Act, on the other hand, deals with motor vehicles that are allowed to travel on the roads, how they are allowed to travel on the roads and how the people who drive them are allowed to behave. Of course, one of the most contentious areas of this sort of legislation relates to breath testing, which is the subject of one of the act's 7 parts.

The bill is innovative in the sense that it introduces the concept of the control area, which will allow traffic authorities to set aside particular areas for experimentation with signs, amongst other things. We notice also that, unlike its predecessor, the bill refers to competent authorities in respect of the installation of road signs. This differs from the current situation in which the minister is faced with the time-consuming task of delegating to responsible authorities and in which every individual sign has to be authorised. For this reason, a defence against a prosecution for disobeying a reasonable sign that was not duly authorised can fail for purely administrative reasons. That, of course, is undesirable. However petulant we may sometimes be with traffic signs, it is obvious that prosecutions should not fail for that reason and, therefore, the opposition welcomes this change from a delegation system to one of competent authorities.

We note the introduction of a minimum penalty for driving uninsured. The opposition endorses that. Another issue relates to preventing drivers who have had their licences cancelled elsewhere from driving in the Territory. I understand that other states are taking similar steps. There are other less contentious issues such as minimum footwear requirements for motor cyclists. A matter that will be of concern to people is the question of driver responsibility for passengers. It is certainly an issue in central Australia. As member for MacDonnell, I am aware of accidents involving people travelling on tray-top vehicles in the bush and I note that this matter is dealt with in the regulations.

The chief innovation is in the regulation-making power. Much of what was previously in the Traffic Act has been moved into the regulations and a regulation-making power is contained in clause 53. I draw to the attention of honourable members that on page 34 of my copy of the bill, there is a second clause numbered 53. This must be a misprint and the second clause should be 54.

A more contentious issue that does not appear either in the bill or in the regulations is the question of hours of driving for long-distance truck drivers. I draw the attention of the minister to section 26A of the principal act, which deals with a limitation on the time for which drivers of certain vehicles may remain continuously on duty. It is a matter of concern to me that neither the bill nor the draft regulations that the minister circulated contain any restriction in that regard. My investigations indicate that it is a matter of concern. I appreciate - and I do not think anybody understands it better than I do - that we do not need to follow slavishly practices in this regard that are applicable east of the Great Dividing Range. Obviously, in

the less populous areas of the nation, it is inappropriate to apply the same necessarily stringent log book requirements and so on that are appropriate when travelling on the Hume Highway between Melbourne and Sydney.

However, the messages that are coming through to me, particularly from the Transport Workers Union, are that there is concern in this regard. I appreciate that any mention of trade unions to this government is like a red rag to a bull, but I ask government members to bear this concern in mind. These reports are coming through to me and I think they need to be placed on record in this Assembly. The drivers and the companies who employ them form a pretty small club in the Territory. What is coming through to union delegates and union officials is that employees are being told ...

Mr Coulter: 75% are owner-operators.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the minister's interjection. I do not think it is appropriate, in the context of this debate, to talk about the structure of the long-distance transport industry. Suffice it to say, however, that a large number of truckies are employed by various companies around the Territory. I know the Treasurer would like to believe that the myth of the free-market economy means that people should be allowed to drive for hours and hours on end. I do not accept that.

I am aware that the drivers are reluctant to lay complaints in relation to this problem and there is concern about the difficulties of policing it. I am certainly not arguing that we should have the same stringent regulation of driving hours that are needed on the Hume Highway. I am arguing that there is a need for enforceable regulations. There should not be a stream of drivers up and down the Stuart Highway who are forced to meet deadlines by driving for too many hours without rest. Obviously, if somebody is driving from Alice Springs to Darwin and needs a rest halfway, he should not have to stop somewhere out in the flat. He should be able to stop where he can rest comfortably. I suggest that the regulations ought to cover this situation. In a bipartisan strategy, I suggest we could approach both employers and employees to arrive at a reasonable set of enforceable regulations.

There is the additional problem of interstate drivers, who, once they get to the Territory, can just throw their log books on the back seat and forget them. I would suggest that the number of single-vehicle problems may be affected by this sort of gung-ho frontier mentality. I am not satisfied that it is something we ought to leave alone. I have noted that driving hours have been a major concern to people involved in the transport industry. The majority opinion amongst employers seems to be that the industry is self-regulating and that there is no need for restriction on the hours that drivers can work. Whilst some employers may be responsible enough to ensure that their employees do not work excessive hours, the union has received many reports of employers requiring drivers to work long hours. The problem which we should be addressing, although just off the top of my head I am not sure how, is that drivers have not been prepared to make official complaints because of their fears of reprisal, such as by losing their jobs. In these straitened times, jobs are not easy to come by and people are reluctant to stick their necks out. That is why they have trade unions. As I said before, it is one of the problems of the close-knit nature of the transport industry, particularly in the Territory.

Territory employers may be responsible, but that does not give them any control over transport operators from other states. These drivers may have been driving for days to get to the Territory, and who knows what rest periods

they have or have not had along the way? This problem has been exacerbated since the sealing of the north-south road. There has been an increase in the number of transport units heading into the Territory. Perhaps the Chief Minister may not be aware of it because he travelled by air whilst campaigning in the Barkly by-election but, having spent a good deal of time on the Stuart Highway during the campaign, I am aware of the considerable increase in traffic. Obviously, that represents economic activity and it is good in that sense. I might mention here that an extraordinary number of retired couples are towing campervans from Ayers Rock to Alice Springs, and that this journey has now become quite hazardous. At one stage, you were lucky to see a caravan in 300 miles; now, you are lucky to see fewer than 10. However, my traffic hazard is the Territory's productivity, and I am prepared to live with that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to return to the matter of driving hours, there is no control over the number of hours interstate drivers are driving. I am concerned that it will only be a matter of time before a serious accident occurs. As we have said, there has been an increase in the number of tourists. We ought to be giving some consideration to this matter before there are major pile-ups. I have noted that we have been fortunate so far in not having experienced the sort of ghastly accidents which occur from time to time in the more populous parts of this country. There has been an increase in the number of single vehicle roll-overs and that is a matter for concern.

Under the old act, the majority of the operators were aware that there was a provision relating to the hours of driving. Although it was never enforced, it was still the law and I am concerned that the immediate passage of this bill will remove the moral force of the old act, even if it was not actually enforced. At least people knew it was there and that they were doing the wrong thing. I earnestly request the minister to address that issue. It is an obvious oversight in the legislation before us. The act will come into effect by notice in the NT Government Gazette after it has been assented to by the Administrator. There should be time for the minister to incorporate a regulation which covers the content of the old act in relation to this. I sincerely hope and trust that, for the benefit of road users in the Northern Territory, the minister will take this matter on board.

With those few comments, I reiterate that, essentially, the opposition supports this bill and looks forward to its being used as a more efficient framework for the regulation of traffic movement within the Northern Territory.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to start by touching briefly on the philosophy behind a review which has been in progress for nearly 7 years, since it was initiated by the then Minister for Transport and Works, Roger Steele, at the behest of the Road Safety Council.

The review was based on the following principles: that all drivers are obliged to avoid an accident; that the act would cover driver behaviour and traffic management; that existing provisions of the act and the regulations should be negative documents, in the sense that they would refer only to matters that were illegal; that any illegal act should be stated only once and not duplicated throughout the act; that the rules only apply to public streets and public places; that it should redefine the relationships between the Motor Vehicles Act and the Traffic Act to make sure that there was a clear definition of the roles of both those acts; and that the act should be such that it could comfortably be read in its entirety by persons wishing to determine their obligations and responsibilities in respect of traffic matters. The review has been completed and I commend the minister, his staff

and the other people who have been involved in it. It has had a long gestation period, but it has taken many views into account and satisfied many concerns.

The original act and regulations were extremely large. The legislation created difficulties for the courts and the law enforcement agencies because there were so many possible defences as a result of duplication between the Motor Vehicles Act and the Traffic Act. Some of the provisions were quite obtuse and, in some cases, had been in place for 20 or 30 years. For example, that equipment overhanging the back of an articulated vehicle had to carry a red light so that it was visible from a certain distance. Another part of the act stipulated that a red flag should be extended to a certain length from the vehicle and no more than a certain height from the ground. The 2 original acts contained many such examples of duplication or conflicting requirements and the old Control of Roads Act contained others. A great deal of complex and time-consuming work has gone into redefining the functions of these 2 important pieces of legislation and ensuring that the result will be both workable and easily read. I commend all the people who took part in that review.

Before I turn to the bill itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will address a comment to the member opposite who raised some queries in respect of time limits for trucking operators. I take into account what he said about the difficulties of understanding some parts of the bill, even though we had joint briefings over a considerable period of time. There is such a major structural change to the legislation that he may not have understood that this bill is designed in such a way that many things that do not appear to be covered in it are actually there, because they are defined in general terms.

Although trucking regulations are not specifically placed in the act at the moment, there is a provision under section 53 whereby regulations may be made from time to time to attend to the type of problem mentioned by the honourable member. The existing regulations will apply until such time as the new regulations come into effect. The existing regulations quoted by the honourable member in respect of time limits for trucks will continue for a short period. In the meantime, the national body is already reviewing this particular situation in respect of trucks. The general view nationally is that self-regulation should apply. The magnitude of capital tied up in road transport of any size these days is such that most drivers, particularly owner-operators, have such a large capital commitment to protect that they will not exceed the time limits and jeopardise their right to drive.

If it were decided to introduce Northern Territory regulations limiting the number of hours which could be driven consecutively, there would be a problem policing them. A further problem is created by the fact that the tachometers installed in trucks these days record only actual driving time. They do not record periods for which vehicles are stopped, nor are they designed to do so. A driver could drive down the road for 4 or 5 hours, stop, take several hours to unload and have his meal, jump back in his truck and take off again, and you would not really know whether he had had an extended period out of the driving seat in a rest situation or whether he was working continuously. With the equipment used today, we cannot control that sort of problem. I lean towards self-regulation in this industry. As I said, given the amounts of capital tied up in vehicles, the owner-driver is certainly not going to jeopardise his investment. We have not had any major problems with long-distance driving vehicles for many years.

The bill comprises several parts, which makes it easy to operate. The administrative functions and the definitions come at the front. In many cases, these have been expanded to reflect more accurately current situations Australia-wide and to redefine some of the attitudes in respect of those parts of the act which required it. There is considerable delegation now, taking away the requirement that the minister provide adjustment legislation when it is needed to conform to Australian standards or Australia-wide changes in road traffic laws.

Some major areas of change briefly touched on by the minister include penalties for drink-driving. Penalties now provide for a minimum period of disqualification of 6 months for first offenders, and 12 months for second and subsequent offenders, for persons with blood alcohol contents which exceed 0.08%. The fines have also been increased, and I believe that is a worthwhile move.

Another major area that has been changed relates to interstate drivers who have been penalised or disqualified interstate for an offence which would have resulted in the same sort of penalty here, but who previously could not be disqualified from driving here as a result of the interstate penalty. That matter has now been attended to. Similarly, Northern Territory drivers who are penalised or disqualified from driving as a result of offences committed interstate, will be treated similarly in the Northern Territory on their return. That will provide flexibility to ensure that people do not move from state to state at various intervals to avoid penalties resulting from driving offences.

Several amendments have been circulated and I am certain that the minister will speak to those in some detail in the committee stages. I have had an opportunity now to look at the amendments in conjunction with the bill and they are sensible amendments that allow for some minor changes. Several rectify drafting errors but, for the edification of members opposite who may not have had an opportunity to study them yet, I will comment on a few.

Amendment 15.1 to clause 3 omits from the definition of 'child' the words: 'has attained the age of one year, but ...'. That refers to the possibility of future regulations being enacted to allow for child restraints for children up to the limit of 8 years already specified in the legislation. The child restraint does not necessarily need to be a basket-restraint for infants. It allows for car seats, the high-rider type of seats and other seats currently being sold on the market. In certain circumstances, the Australian-standard child-restraint will be required.

The amendment with the widest ramifications is probably amendment 15.2, which relates to the definition of 'competent authority'. It widens the definition to include those incorporated community councils that are now emerging in the Northern Territory, and allows them to have the same rights and privileges - particularly in relation to signage - within their community areas. It also requires them to conform to the standards laid down within the legislation.

As far as I can see, the rest of the amendments do not have an enormous impact. There is some tidying-up in relation to persons who omit to renew licences. It no longer requires a mature-age driver who has forgotten to renew his licence to revert to a provisional licence and thereby be forced to keep to zero alcohol levels. I think it would give a hell of a fright to some of our mature-age drivers if that were to happen and the change makes sense.

There is one person I would like to pay tribute to for his work on this bill, particularly in its early drafting period. Unfortunately, he no longer works for the government, having retired due to ill-health. I refer to Mr Noel McAdie who formerly was an employee of the Department of Transport and Works. He worked zealously on this particular bill for many years and I would like to pay tribute to his work. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports this piece of legislation. However, I would like to take a few minutes of the Assembly's time to raise a particular problem that I have.

We have here a piece of legislation with some 55 clauses to it, and it is accompanied by 154 draft regulations. On the other hand, we have figures here which show me that road deaths in the Northern Territory are not declining. The government will say that this new legislation will contribute to improving the situation, but I certainly hope it is not saying that the rate of road deaths in previous years has come about through people finding loopholes in the law as it previously existed and being killed whilst committing offences which will not occur once this legislation is in place. That would be drawing a very long bow.

I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to some of the trends in road deaths in the Northern Territory and Australia-wide. I have here a document on historical trends relating to road deaths in the various states and territories from 1960 to 1986. I will make it available to anybody who would like to see it. In 1987, Territory road deaths are already above numbers for the same period last year. Last year was a bad year; 71 people were killed, with the lowest number of deaths occurring in the final quarter of the year. The source of these figures is the document 'Road Traffic Accidents Involving Fatalities' produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It shows that there were 14 deaths in 1965, 42 in 1970, 64 in 1975, 63 in 1976, trending up to about 70 in 1981 mercifully dropping to 60 in 1982, 49 in 1983 and then rising again to 50 in 1984, 67 in 1985 and 71 in 1986 with the likelihood that road deaths will exceed that figure this year.

Even without carrying out a trend analysis of the figures, it is clear that our death rate is increasing whereas the Australia-wide death rate between 1965 and 1986 has essentially remained static. It would be easy to say: 'Fair enough. That is because of the increasing numbers of vehicles on the roads'. However, if the trends per 10 000 vehicles are considered, there is clearly a problem in the Territory. Australia-wide deaths per 10 000 vehicles between 1962 and 1985 dropped from an average of over 8 to an average of between 3.2 and 3.4 or 40% of the 1962 figure. In New South Wales, the figure has been reduced to about 30%. Because of the smaller numbers here, it is difficult to produce year-to-year figures. They do, however, show a reduction from more than 14 fatalities per 10 000 vehicles to 10, which is 70% of the level in the 1960s and does not compare well with 30% and 40% elsewhere in the country.

It would be easy to say that figures from New South Wales or Victoria are not relevant to the Northern Territory. On the other hand, states like Western Australia have many miles of road, much of which is not up to our standard, and its rate has gone down to 34%. Queensland is interesting. I understand there is no random breath-testing there, but fatalities have been reduced to 38% of the figure in the early 1960s. That makes me wonder about whether our program of random breath-testing is as effective as we would like to think.

While it is quite clear that alcohol-related factors are a very important consideration in deaths on the roads - in fact in 1986, 65% of all deaths were alcohol-related - alcohol was not as significant a factor in road deaths in the 2 major areas of Darwin and Alice Springs as it was in other areas. Only 17% of total road deaths in Darwin were alcohol-related and the figure for Alice Springs was 3%. In small towns and bush areas, alcohol was involved in 44% of deaths. We have been carrying out random breath-testing for a number of years and I think we ought to have a look at the figures. For example, in 1986 in Darwin, 9316 people were tested but only 2.4% were found to exceed 0.08% blood-alcohol content. In Alice Springs, it was 5426 with 2.6% exceeding 0.08%. It was 2% in Katherine, 1.9% in Tennant Creek, 0.9% in Nhulunbuy and in Jabiru, a very small place, 3%. That is good if you look at it from the point of view that a small proportion of people tested were actually found to be exceeding 0.08%, but it begs the question of what we are going to do. We are putting an enormous amount of effort into the larger towns but indications are that they are not the major problem areas.

In 1986, 41 out of 63 deaths occurred outside Darwin and Alice Springs. Perhaps we have to concentrate more in the areas outside Darwin and Alice Springs, because it seems that that is where most of our problems are occurring. We can legislate until the cows come home but, if we have no means of enforcing the legislation in those areas, we will not do much good. I would like the minister to tell me what he is doing, in non-legislative terms, to come to grips with the horrifying death rate on our roads, a death rate which is 3 times that of the states. It is not reducing and, in recent years, it has been increasing. We have to be imaginative. We cannot just place heavier legislative burdens on the people who live in the areas where we can enforce such measures.

I believe we must try to find some means of educating the people who drive on bush roads about the horrendous rate at which they are dying. Taking into account the numbers of vehicles in those areas, and excluding deaths in Alice Springs and Darwin, it emerges that there is a death rate of 60 to 70 per 10 000 vehicles in those areas, which is phenomenally high - 20 times the national average. That figure is based on 41 deaths in those areas of the Territory and my knowledge of the number of vehicles there. Until we tackle that part of the problem and design some specific programs to address it, basically, we will be going through the motions and kidding ourselves. We are passing legislation for the sake of passing legislation so that when people erupt in anger and dismay at the death rates, we can say we did something. I do not think that we can continue to bury our heads in the sand. We cannot continue to kid ourselves because the figures do not show that anything that we are doing here is attacking the real problem. I think that the minister should be able to give us some indication of how he is tackling the problem in areas outside Alice Springs and Darwin, where the higher percentage of deaths per 10 000 vehicles is occurring.

Certainly, bad roads in outback areas are part of the problem, along with drink-driving, but let us not kid ourselves. Mr Deputy Speaker, I know as well as you do that many people categorise drink-driving out bush as drinking while you drive. You drive along with an esky in the back and a tinny in your hand and the distance between places is measured in terms of it being a 4-beer drive, a 6-beer drive or whatever. I realise that the size of our police force does not enable us to police all the country roads in our electorates, but perhaps we need to make some changes in the way we prioritise our use of resources. I would hope also that it will involve some fairly imaginative and non-legislative programs to try and get people to change their own habits and their own ethos of what it means to drive in the Northern Territory. We must

get them to accept that there are safer and sounder means of getting from point to point.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been told that we are not going any further with this legislation tonight and that the committee stage will be taken later.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the thing that appeals to me in this legislation, which the minister mentioned in his second-reading speech, is the introduction of minimum penalties. I think this is an indication that the government is reflecting the vast majority of people's views and feelings about the horrendous nature of road accidents, deaths and the maiming of people, particularly in relation to drink-driving. I believe these minimum penalties will have a very salutary effect.

The minister might consider taking on board the suggestion that the actual penalties for the various drink-driving offences and repeated offences of driving when over 0.08% and over 0.15% be displayed in places where liquor is sold. That might bring home the fact that, if you are caught and it is demonstrated that you are over the limit, you will lose your licence. It is not only the person who drives a vehicle whilst in that state and is apprehended who is affected; the whole family is affected.

Recently, I was asked to testify to the good character of a gentleman who was involved in the stock and station business. One Friday night, he had organised with a non-drinking friend to be out at the cattle yards. He had had a few beers and his non-drinking friend was going to drive him in. However, he was prevailed upon by another fellow who had his vehicle out there and who was definitely well and truly above the limit, to drive him into town in his own car. He had to decide whether he himself was over the limit or not. He thought that probably he was not, so he sent his own car in with his non-drinking friend and drove the very intoxicated fellow, only to be picked up by the breathalyser and find that he was over 0.08%.

That was a difficult situation. It could be said that it was far better for him to drive when he was just over the limit because otherwise the fellow who was in no condition to drive would have driven his vehicle into town, which would have created a far more dangerous situation. If that man had lost his licence, it would have meant the loss of his job because he was involved in travelling all over the southern parts of the Territory. He was lucky. The magistrate felt kindly about it and listened to the reports of good character and so forth, but I know darn well that he will not be drawn into such a situation again. He had done his best to organise himself but was prevailed upon and fell into a trap. I would suggest to the minister that maybe it is not such a bad idea to display information about penalties in places where liquor is sold.

The legislation talks about drugs as well as alcohol, but only in a very minimal manner, and this is something I have harped on in this Assembly from time to time. About 12 or 18 months ago, The Australian carried a report from Victoria. The report estimated that about 50% of people involved in accidents which had led to deaths or major injuries had been under the influence of drugs other than alcohol.

At this stage we may not have equipment capable of detecting the presence of drugs other than alcohol, although I believe it is being worked on. I would certainly ask the government to keep abreast of whatever is going on. An recent article in The Australian said that it is estimated that at least 3 million Australians have tried pot at some stage or another and there are



those that say it is quite harmless. Others say it is dangerous. It certainly has to be very dangerous in the driving situation and that is something we must take account of. I would ask the government to keep abreast with what is happening in relation to detection equipment and, if it can be tested in a reasonably cheap and effective manner, to consider legislating to allow its use and to apply appropriate penalties. People are involved in road accidents through drinking alcohol or the use of other drugs and they put not only themselves at risk but many other people who do not indulge in such substances. I feel very strongly about that particular point.

As mentioned in the second-reading speech, it was good to receive draft regulations. The list is fairly comprehensive and most of it is quite sensible and understandable. One concern I have is in relation to cyclists. I do not see anything in the draft regulations requiring them to use hand signals. A particular incident I was involved in about a year ago reminds me of the importance of this. I was driving near the Catholic church in Alice Springs and 2 lads were riding bicycles in front of me on the left side of the road. It is virtually a 4-lane highway there and I had plenty of room to go past them. I was just about to do so when, without a word of warning or any indication, they did a U-turn in front of me. I am glad I was not distracted by some good-looking lady because I would have gone straight through them. I burnt rubber there and also burnt the air and they looked at me with their mouths open. That sort of incident is very common. Not only do cyclists not bother with hand signals, they do not even turn their heads to look behind them. They apparently depend upon their ears to work out whether a vehicle is coming or not, and that leads me to my next point.

Very often the ears of cyclists are covered with the earphones of Walkman radios!

Mr Setter: They should ban those things.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, I believe the member for Jingili has it in one. People riding pushbikes should be banned from using Walkman radios. It is a dangerous practice and the onus is left entirely with the drivers of motor vehicles. The problem has not been addressed in this legislation and I would like the minister to consider covering it in the regulations. I would like to hear the views of other members as well.

Another point which has concerned me greatly over the last few months is that, now that the Stuart Highway is sealed, we have convoys of caravans travelling on the roads. I use the word 'convoys' deliberately. The drivers of the vehicles are often retired people. I welcome them, but there have been plenty of stories about them and I have seen them where they have been travelling virtually bumper to bumper. You only need half a dozen caravans travelling in this manner and cars are confronted with something which is extremely long and difficult to pass, particularly on some of the narrow, single-lane sections of the Stuart Highway. I know that the act says that vehicles have to be 60 m apart whilst travelling at less than 60 km per hour and 200 m apart at speeds above that. However, we can pass all the legislation we like, but the problem is to get the message across on the highways that driving close together is a dangerous practice. Somehow, we must get the message across to these caravaners that they should leave room so that faster vehicles can pass the convoy.

A 'long vehicle' is defined as any vehicle over 7.5 m. That relates to a vehicle or a vehicle with a trailer attached. 7.5 m is about 25 ft. I may have missed it, but I do not see any indication in the regulations that such a

vehicle must have a sign saying: 'Do not overtake turning vehicle'. Regulation 85 on page 60 has the most quaint language that one could imagine. I think it means, or should mean, that if the vehicle is under 7.5 m it is not permitted to have a 'Do not overtake turning vehicle' sign. The regulation is expressed in double negatives and I would like it clarified. On the other hand, one would assume that there is a regulation somewhere to the effect that, if a car and caravan is over 7.5 m, it must have such a sign. I oppose that. We have been driving on the roads with caravans for long enough to be able to trust our own judgment. It seems to me as if somebody might have shares in a sign-writing business. It is one of those regulations which is unnecessary for a caravan and car or even a large trailer and motor car. I can see some point in it for a road train but, then again, I think the very words 'road train' painted on a vehicle are surely enough for the majority of people. You would have to be pretty brave to try to pass a road train that is indicating its intention to turn right. I think it is unnecessary. The Chief Minister said this morning that we wish to avoid unnecessary regulations and costs. These signs must be costly. I would ask the minister to take note of what I have said.

There is a regulation on page 57 relating to standards of lighting on bicycles. There are a tremendous number of people in Alice Springs who do not have lights on their bikes. They are placing themselves in danger of being run down. I am curious to know whether the lighting has to be battery-operated or whether a generator set, which produces light only when you are moving, is still legal. I am a generator fan and confess I have one on my pushbike. Nevertheless, I am aware of a problem in that, if you stop, your lights go out. I dare say reflectors can give some protection from vehicles coming from the rear on those occasions.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this bill, I would like to comment on a number of points made by the member for Stuart. I was a little confused by his comments because he seemed to be inferring that the increase in road deaths in the Northern Territory was not the result of people breaking the traffic laws and regulations but the result of their complying with them. He left me totally nonplussed because that is absolute nonsense. People die on the roads, generally speaking, because they have infringed some traffic law, be it a provision of the old act or one of those in this bill. They are basically similar.

The honourable member spent most of his speech referring to the drink-driving aspect of the legislation. This bill covers a whole range of traffic issues. Clause 5, driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs, is only one section of quite a large bill. He should widen his horizons. He went on to say that the new bill does not address the issue of drink-driving at all. He quoted the Queensland situation where he claims that the number of road deaths has fallen quite considerably recently. He suggested that that may be because Queensland does not have random breath-testing. I would like to enlighten the honourable member. Even though there is no random breath-testing in Queensland, the police will stop you if you scratch your nose. They have speed traps all over the place. They will stop you for any slight infringement and, if they stop you, you will blow in the bag. In Queensland, the majority of the population lives on the coastal strip. That is where most of the road traps are, not out in the scrub near Longreach or Mt Isa. That is why they are picking up so many people and perhaps it is having quite an influence.

The situation in the Northern Territory is totally different because the majority of our deaths come from single vehicle roll-overs on the open road.

As the member for Stuart rightly pointed out, the number of deaths that occur in the urban areas is quite low in comparison with those that occur on the open road. He made the suggestion that perhaps if we had random breath-tests out on the open road, we would achieve rather more than we are achieving at the moment.

Let us look at why so many deaths are occurring on the open road. Certainly there has been an increased traffic flow because of the huge number of people now using the Stuart Highway. We have long, straight, well-surfaced roads which are quite boring to drive on. The inclination is to put your foot down, particularly if you have called into one of the roadhouses along the way and had 2 or 3 tinnies or if you have an esky in the back. It is very easy to have an accident, particularly if a wallaby, a kangaroo or a buffalo runs across the road and you swerve to miss it. About 2 months ago, a family I know of was on the highway near Mataranka. They had a cat in the car, which is a very foolish thing to do. At about 8.30 pm the cat started to claw somebody and the driver leant over and grabbed hold of the cat to put it in the back. The van promptly rolled and the driver died about a week later. His wife is in Melbourne with severe brain damage. That is how quickly an accident can occur.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SETTER: I am pleased to see that the member for MacDonnell has returned from his little jaunt and that we now have somebody sitting on the opposition benches.

Mr Bell: We don't need to have somebody for you, Rick.

Mr SETTER: Perhaps not, but at least out of courtesy it is nice to see somebody over there.

Certainly, many road deaths in the Northern Territory are related to alcohol.

Mr Bell interjecting

Mr SETTER: I took the opportunity of jumping to my feet while you were jogging out to Stuart Park but I am sorry to say that you have returned.

Mr Bell: I am sorry.

Mr SETTER: I mistimed it slightly.

In my opinion, random breath-testing would be more effective on the open road than in urban areas.

Turning to the legislation itself, it will replace an old act which was first brought into force in 1949 and which has since been amended many times. I understand that about 50 amendments have been made to it. Things were very different back in 1949. I am not sure if you can remember back that far, Mr Speaker, but I certainly can. I can recall obtaining my driver's licence, when I was 17. That was in the early 1950s. I went down to the local police station and said: 'I would like a licence. I am 17 today. How do I go about it?' The police officer asked if I had a car with me and I told him I had my dad's car. He said: 'Hop in and drive around the park and back into the yard'. I did that, taking left turns all the way so I would not have to give a hand signal. In those days you had to stick your arm out the window to give

an indication that you were turning, as the member for Sadadeen mentioned a moment ago. It took me 2 attempts to back that vehicle through the gate of the police station but I eventually achieved it. I hopped out and was given my licence. It was as simple as that.

About 12 months later, I went back down to the police station for a motorcycle licence. The officer said: 'Can you ride the motorcycle?' I said 'Sure, I can ride it'. I had ridden it down there without a licence. He told me to bring it into the front yard of the police station and do some figure-8s. He watched me from the verandah of the police station and he kept on shouting, 'faster, faster, faster'. I was not going to go any faster because I might have fallen off. Anyway, I satisfied him and was given my licence. That was the situation in the early 1950s. Of course that just would not be good enough today with the number of vehicles on the road, their speed and the other pressures and dangers. We certainly need more stringent legislation and regulation to look after the interests of people.

The bill breaks considerable new ground. It is based in part on the National Traffic Code. Where the code's provisions have been applicable to the Northern Territory, we have adhered to it as closely as possible. This particular bill is the result of a considerable amount of public discussion and consultation with a number of interested bodies in the community. These include: the Road Safety Council, the Automobile Association, the Darwin City Council, the Department of Transport and Works, the police and the Law Society of the Northern Territory. All of these bodies deal with issues relating to the traffic code. We have had extensive consultation and there is ongoing discussion between the Northern Territory and the states in relation to the traffic code. We believe that if, in the long term, the states can adopt a uniform traffic code of regulations, it would be a good thing for everybody concerned.

A particular problem in the Northern Territory is that many of our drivers have grown up and gained their licences interstate and are used to laws, regulations and traffic signals which apply elsewhere. When they come to the Territory, they find our code is slightly different. Uniformity in this case would be an excellent idea and I am quite sure that the minister will continue to work towards that end.

The bill places a considerable onus on the the driver to be aware of the provisions of the legislation and to comply with them. Ignorance is no excuse and it is up to all of us to familiarise ourselves with the requirements of the legislation. The bill allows for the transfer of some requirements from the old act to other more relevant acts. For example, some provisions of the old act have been transferred into the Motor Vehicles Act, which we dealt with earlier today.

The Northern Territory has some unique characteristics. As I mentioned before, a large percentage of our licence holders come from interstate. We have to contend on the open road with road trains, which most people interstate have never seen. I am not talking about semitrailers but about road trains with a semi plus a couple of dogs on the back. Members who have tried to overtake one of those will know that it is a very difficult task indeed. I first had the experience in 1964 when I drove my old Ford Prefect utility from Mt Isa up to Darwin. On the return journey I came across a road train at Newcastle Waters. Members will recall how narrow the road was in those days. I tried to pass the road train whilst going downhill. My old Ford Prefect would do 45 mph flat out downhill. It was registered in Queensland. Mr Speaker, if you have ever had to overtake a road train, you

will find that they shake and wobble back and forth. It was quite an effort. I got 2 wheels on to the gravel and I thought 'Hello, here it comes'. There was a white post looming up but with due skill I managed to miss it and passed the road train. Its driver was not very happy; he kept burning my bumper for the next 20 or 30 miles.

Another difference is that the Northern Territory has no absolute speed limit on its open roads in contrast to most states where, I believe, it is about 110 km/h. Here it is as fast as you need to go, within reason.

I was interested in the provisions relating to bicycles being allowed on footpaths. Essentially, it recognises the current situation in relation to the cycle paths which have been provided here in the Northern Territory, mainly due to the federal government's generosity through the CEP scheme and in cooperation with the Darwin City Council. While it is appropriate for safety reasons that cyclists use these cycle paths rather than the road, there is a problem with children leaving bicycles on the footpaths at shopping centres. It is quite an experience to try to negotiate your way through piles of pushbikes lying all over the footpath on the way to the local fish and chip shop, which happens to be right next door to my electorate office. It is quite a dangerous matter. Whilst I am young, nimble and agile, I can appreciate that an old lady, a pensioner or somebody with poor eyesight might have some difficulty and suffer a very nasty injury. I understand from the regulations that town and community councils will be responsible for this, so I will certainly be on my hot line to the Lord Mayor to have a whisper in his little ear about the problems with pushbikes on footpaths around suburban shopping centres.

Recently, I visited METAL, which is the motorcycle education training facility in Bishop Street, Darwin. Motorcyclists can participate in a training program which teaches them how to handle motorcycles. I inspected the facility recently, and must compliment its staff on their excellent work in training riders. I also compliment the minister and the department on providing the facility. I hope that, in time, that large block of land can be fully developed to include additional paths and obstacle courses. I was quite concerned to learn that deaths from motorcycle accidents occur at something like 9 times the rate of deaths among people driving other motor vehicles. That is quite horrendous. I was told that approximately 75% of people who ride motorcycles have an accident which requires them to seek medical assistance within the first 12 months of receiving their licence. That is quite frightening. I used to ride a motorcycle myself and I know it is risky because I spent my little time in hospital as a result of my stupidity. Nevertheless, the bill provides for motorcycle riders to be responsible, not only for their own actions, but for the actions of their passengers.

The bill also modifies and clarifies penalties applying for offences committed under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs. That is fine because that it was a provision of the previous act. The thing that concerns me is that the legislation makes no reference to people being in charge of a vehicle while under the influence of kava. We have had discussions in this House about kava and its influence, and we know that it is widely consumed throughout Aboriginal communities in northern Arnhem Land. We agree that kava is a sedative. In fact, I have read medical reports that confirm that kava is a sedative which, according to my layman's understanding, is a type of drug. However, kava is classified under the Customs Act as a food or a beverage. I question how any charge laid by the police against a person driving whilst under the influence of kava would stand up in court when, under the Customs Act, kava is classified as a food or a beverage. If it is not classified as a

drug, it becomes impossible to charge anybody with driving under its influence. I think that point is well worth looking at, and perhaps an amendment should be forthcoming.

The other matter I would like to address is the issue of on-the-spot fines, affectionately called 'tinnies' by the police. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, on-the-spot fines are issued to offenders for a whole range of relatively minor offences. The police stop the person and write out a ticket on the spot. Indeed, we amended the provisions of the previous Traffic Act, I think in the June sittings, in relation to that. Nevertheless, I believe there is considerable merit in expanding the number of offences covered by on-the-spot fines. One of the great difficulties we have in our Courts of Summary Jurisdiction is the fact that they are clogged up by a whole range of minor traffic offences being processed. It would be much simpler to issue on-the-spot fines. If a person feels he is not guilty, he should be able to fight the charge in court, but if he is guilty and accepts it, why not make it easier for him to pay the fine? I think we need to have a closer look at that issue.

The bill addresses many other issues. However, I feel it is inappropriate to address them all. Many have been mentioned by other members and I would only be repeating comments made earlier this evening. I believe that the bill is a move in the right direction. I commend the minister and members of his department for the hard work they have put in over quite a long period of time. There have been a number of reviews and revisions undertaken to try to get this right. Of course, this is not the final answer because times change, conditions change, and needs change, and amendments will doubtless be required in due course. Perhaps I have foreshadowed 1 or 2 of those in my comments.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I will address some of the comments that have been made. I thank the member for MacDonnell for drawing to the attention of the House a printing error in relation to clause 53. I would seek the cooperation of the Clerk, under standing order 202, to have that fixed as a matter of course.

The member for MacDonnell made reference to the driving time of transport drivers. That matter is the subject of extensive debate nationally. It was raised at the last ATEC meeting, which was held recently. Whatever system you invent, truckies seem to have a great knack for being able to overcome its restraints in relation to driving time. That is a matter of historic record going back to time immemorial. The approach that is being considered elsewhere in Australia is the equipping of relevant vehicles with time-measuring devices. Tachometers really are creating a great deal of heartache for the states. Whilst clause 53 allows for the question of time constraints on commercial drivers to be addressed by regulation, the actual problem in devising a system for the Northern Territory is to find something which is effective in practical terms. What is applicable for a truck driver between Melbourne and Sydney in terms of stress and fatigue is not the same as in the Northern Territory, particularly with the standard of our upgraded highway systems. The Road Safety Council and others will be continuing to monitor the discussion nationally and we will move accordingly.

Some of the reasons why the Northern Territory has a good accident record in relation to large vehicles are quite simple. Some honourable members spoke of the large amount of dollars invested in equipment. Many of the coach companies, for example, have their own company rules and impose 2-driver

requirements with 4 hours on and 4 hours off. That applies also to some of the larger haulage contractors. People are conscious of the equipment that they have and the dangers of fatigue. That applies to the professional drivers. When we consider that some sections of our highway have yet to be upgraded, particularly south of Tennant Creek, and the large number of caravans that are on the road, I think the competence of the professional drivers we have operating in the Northern Territory is clearly demonstrated. Probably about 90% of the large transports are owner-operated and those drivers have a great deal at stake. If they feel that they are up to driving for 10 hours, in my opinion they should be permitted to drive for 10 hours. If they want to take a break when it suits them, that is really a matter for self-regulation. That is the key to the issue at present. The industry is operating in a self-regulatory fashion anyway because, quite simply, it is impossible to monitor the times that drivers spend behind the wheel.

The member for Stuart seemed to be critical of a number of clauses and regulations. The Traffic Bill originated to tidy up the mass of amendments that have been made to the Traffic Act since 1949. In reviewing those, there was very little intention of using this legislation and the proposed regulations to address the incidence of road accidents in the Northern Territory. I would like to correct some of the statements made by the member for Stuart. We must always keep statistics in perspective. It is no good looking at the number of deaths or injury-related accidents in relation to the number of vehicles registered, the population, the length of roads or the distances vehicles drive in the Territory. There are so many factors and variables that the figures become meaningless. You cannot take in isolation the sort of statistics that were thrown about by the member for Stuart. If we simply isolate driving in the remote areas of the Northern Territory, which is where the great majority of our travel is done, and compare that to what occurs in the remote areas of other states, we do quite well.

I do not wish that to sound as though there is any cause for complacency. Far from it. We are certainly prepared to acknowledge that, on the surface, the number of deaths on Territory roads per annum per head of population is 2.5 times the national average - not 3 times, as the member for Stuart suggested - but that is meaningless unless we analyse what we are talking about, such as the sort of circumstances that lead to injury-related accidents as opposed to deaths. Much of the heartache and much of the cost associated with vehicle accidents in the Territory and Australia-wide is, in fact, related to those people who are involved in the more serious accidents as opposed to those that involve a fatality. I am not playing down the fatalities, but these things need to be put into perspective.

The small population of the Northern Territory introduces an added complication. I have become extremely concerned over the last 2 months that, for no apparent reason, we have had a great increase in the number of deaths on our roads. Until the end of June, the figures were very favourable compared to those of last year. Suddenly, the figures have gone through the roof. It is very difficult for us to react unless we analyse the particular circumstances of each accident. That is what our road safety people do.

The Northern Territory population is particularly mobile and people drive long distances. People on remote settlements and Aboriginal communities have access to modern cars that are driven at high speeds on gravel roads. The Territory highways are largely unfenced. The cost of fencing our highway system would be absolutely phenomenal. We are working towards having properties fenced where accidents occur frequently. The numbers of wandering cattle and feral animals on Northern Territory roads are probably very much

higher than the numbers on interstate roads, particularly larger animals. Factors such as these must be taken into account.

The Northern Territory began self-government with a road system that was in an extremely poor state. Since self-government, the Northern Territory government has poured a tremendous amount of resources and funds into our road system, and quite justifiably so. Unfortunately, the federal government has recently adopted a formula for road funding based on the recommendations of what was called the Cameron Inquiry. This disadvantages the Northern Territory because funding is concentrated on the more populous areas, the major cities with their 6-lane expressways, and ignores the fact that the Northern Territory's road system had not previously been constructed to an acceptable standard.

The Northern Territory government has not only provided funding for a gradual upgrading of the road system and maintenance of that system to a satisfactory standard; it has also applied funds, where appropriate, to the construction of traffic control devices. We would all acknowledge that, if people simply obeyed the rules of the road, we could probably save ourselves a fair bit of money on some of the traffic light systems that we have to install.

With regard to the maintenance of vehicle standards, I would suggest that the Territory system is second to none. I believe we take a responsible attitude by ensuring that all vehicles are inspected annually and that public transport vehicles, such as buses and taxis, are checked even more regularly. For the member for Stuart to suggest that we have turned our backs on the real issues and attempted to address the problems of road safety by means of a piece of paper is totally erroneous. Through the Road Safety Council, through various publicity campaigns in Aboriginal languages, through the publication and distribution of pamphlets and brochures and through school road safety programs, the Territory does more than most states to educate its young people in road safety matters.

We have sensible licensing provisions whereby young people are able to obtain a learner's permit if they can satisfy the licensing people that they have a comprehensive understanding of the rules of the road. Elsewhere in Australia, that does not always happen. I note that New Zealand recently introduced a brand new, you-beaut system under which persons applying for a licence will be tested on the road rules. We have recently introduced the zero-alcohol limit for P-plates and under-18s. That is a responsible approach to ensure that our young people have the opportunity to learn to drive and develop their driving skills without the adverse influence of alcohol.

In regard to alcohol-related problems, one honourable member referred correctly to the minimum penalties that are now provided for alcohol-related offences. That is a step forward and certainly one that was supported very strongly by the community at a number of public meetings of the Road Safety Council. Members of the public made submissions and the police are also very keen to see consistency in penalties handed down by the courts. More importantly, the penalties for serious offences, such as drink-driving, must be predictable. People must realise that, if they commit such an offence, their licences will be suspended. It has been found that monetary penalties have different effects on different people. Imposing minimum monetary penalties does not always have the desired effect. What we want is for people to accept their responsibility for not driving if they have been drinking.



The provisions in this bill will lead to a more responsible attitude by drivers. If that is to be attained by imposing more serious penalties, so be it. Sometimes, the effect of suspension of a licence is extremely damaging to family life, employment and so forth. People must realise that the government is serious in its desire to see alcohol-related accidents cease. I spoke this morning about the effect of alcohol on some pedestrians involved in accidents in the northern suburbs. Of the 13 cases that were tested, the lowest reading was 0.156%. If people have been drinking, their faculties are impaired and they expose themselves, their passengers and other innocent people to danger. We need to get that message across loud and clear. I take the point of the member for Sadadeen that we need to ensure that there is public awareness of these penalties.

The question of drugs was raised. There is provision in the terms of the bill for a police officer to assess whether a person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs and the extent to which that it is affecting that person's driving. At this stage, it is extremely difficult to develop a proper statistical base by which to measure the impact of different sorts of drugs. It is also difficult from a technological point of view. Where technology is available, it is extremely expensive in terms of both the equipment itself and the experienced staff and qualified people needed to operate it. We may be able to address the issue of drugs better in the future but, for the time being, we address it by providing that a driver can be found guilty of an offence where an officer is satisfied that the person has been affected by drugs or alcohol in a general sense. The analysis of our statistics relating to accidents causing injury rather than death indicates some improvement.

I believe that the programs of the Road Safety Council, which seek to make the public aware of the dangers, together with improvements to vehicles and roads, will continue to improve the situation. The cooperation of the public is essential. It is an educational matter that needs to be addressed seriously. Some numbers concerning fatalities were given to me this morning. A significant one concerned people killed while not wearing a seat belt. The statistic was quite horrific: 118 deaths since 1984.

A number of other issues were addressed, and I will cover them very briefly. In relation to caravans, the Department of Transport and Works, in association with the Tourist Commission, is implementing a number of measures. There will be notices at border crossing points detailing Territory requirements for separation distances of vehicles and the dangers relating to travelling on the same roads as road trains. This information will also be disseminated through the various tourist bureaus and automobile associations throughout Australia.

The matter of Walkman radios was also raised. It has been debated nationally and, ultimately, there will be some outcome, although it has been a difficult issue to address. In regard to the matter of vehicles of less than 7.5 m, which was raised by the member for Sadadeen, I am pleased to say that the wording of that proposed regulation has been tidied up already. That relates to vehicles greater than 7.5 m which can, if they are carrying the designated plates, use more than 1-lane in order to turn to the left, while vehicles under 7.5 m cannot do so. That has all been tidied up. In regard to bicycle lights, we will endeavour to ascertain the purely technical requirements and advise the honourable member later.

In closing, I would like to thank officers of the Department of Transport and Works, Road Safety Council committee members and officers, and members of the public who have put in a great deal of effort to see the Traffic Bill where it is now.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina)(by leave): Mr Speaker, on Wednesday 10 June I stated in this House that Block H at Finnis River Station had been sold for \$654 000. This morning the Minister for Lands and Housing indicated that the sale price was \$575 000, a figure which may prima facie appear at odds with my statement of 10 June. Following this morning's statement, I went immediately to double-check the figures. As a consequence of my inquiries, I should explain that the figure of \$654 000 that I gave consisted of the sale price of \$575 000 plus an interest component which brought it to approximately \$656 000. I thought that I should clarify this matter for the benefit of honourable members. If my statements have inadvertently misled honourable members, I sincerely apologise.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in my attempts to obtain decent water supplies and living conditions for people, not just in my electorate but in remote communities throughout the Territory, I have often come in for a certain amount of rubbishing, particularly from ministers opposite. Their ribald comments do very little justice to the subject and show them in a very poor light indeed. This morning, however, the Treasurer put himself in a class of his own.

Let us have a look at some of the things that he stated this morning. For example, yesterday he made a big noise about why a place was called Soapy Bore and this morning he said he had been unable to find out how it got its name. I think he is attributing something to the quality of the water in relation to the name of the bore which, as you would know, Mr Speaker, is a load of rubbish. The water there is all subterranean water, which is not of an artesian nature. It flows beneath the ground following the course of the Sandover River. He stated that the bore had a very low yield, only 0.2 L per second, and went on to infer that it was a common problem in my electorate and that there were problems with the water in the Soapy Bore area.

I would like to tell the Treasurer something. I told him this last night but obviously he was not listening. The Sandover Basin is one of the most prospective sources of water in my electorate. Yields of 2, 3, 4 and 5 L per second at depths of only 20 m to 30 m are very common. The water quality is extremely high; in fact, it is far higher than in Alice Springs. I will not allow the Treasurer to get away with this attempt to avoid the consequences of not putting in water for the people of Soapy Bore by saying that the water quality out there is not sufficient. The quality is good and the quantity is good. There is plenty of water. As I told him last night, though again he was not listening, the problem with the original bore was that it hit a granite floater when it was being put down to provide water for cattle, and re-drilling it was not worth while. Everybody knows that officers of his former Department of Community Development found that there was water there when they had a bore sunk to 30 m or 40 m.

Mr Coulter: You said we did not do any work there.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will take that interjection on. I did not say no work was done. I said that there is no water for the school. If the minister will keep his mouth closed for a few moments, he will find out just exactly what was done and not done and why there is still a major problem. He has not understood it yet. The problem is that there is not enough water for reticulation to the school at Soapy Bore. Is that clear enough for the Treasurer? He has talked about how the bore was upgraded from 0.2 L to 0.5 L per second, but appears not to understand that the major part of the problem is that the tank is down on the flat. It is not high enough to enable water to be reticulated to the school. The Department of Transport and Works plan was to put a tank on the hill behind the community, as I said last night. As usual, the minister was not listening.

A tank is needed on the hill behind the community. New bores are needed, along with a windmill to pump water up to the tank. The small tank on the flat below the community is inadequate because, no matter what the Treasurer tells it to do, water will not flow uphill. This work, along with other improvements for the area, was actually programmed to occur in 1985-86.

I take issue with the Treasurer's statement that I said that all the money had been spent on consultants. That is absolutely ridiculous. The amount of money spent on consultants was such that there was not enough left from the original funds to do the job. The program was cut back. Bores were installed and upgraded. The basic problem at Soapy Bore is that water will not run uphill. You have to pump it uphill and then reticulate it to the community and to the school. Because the Treasurer lives in Palmerston, he may not understand that basic fact.

Mr Coulter: You would not know where I live. I do not live in Palmerston and you are making a fool of yourself.

Mr EDE: You do not live in your electorate? That is interesting although I do not mind it. I do not live in mine either, nor do many other members.

The minister does not understand the problem. It was explained to him very clearly last night but, rather than give an explanation that would offer some hope to the people of Soapy Bore, he decided to play the smart Alec this morning because proceedings were being broadcast. He thought that he could display his corny wit whilst avoiding the fact that the people still have no water and that there is still no work scheduled in the capital works program which will provide that water.

From what the Treasurer said, it seems as though the government believes the problem is solved because it provided water to 5 or 6 communities around that area, and that somehow the people of Soapy Bore should be grateful because the communities around them have water. As I said last night, when your kids are continually in hospital with gastroenteritis, when they are dying through the lack of adequate water supplies and when your old people are going blind, you do not feel content with the knowledge that the people next door have water. These people need water, and I will continue to pursue this issue on their behalf.

Mr Speaker, bores have been provided at Soapy Bore but there is no means of getting water to the community and to the school. One of the issues I took up with the former Minister for Education, the member for Port Darwin, was the provision of schools in remote outback communities. We finally got some

schools. Why can't we have some water at the Soapy Bore school? It seems a fairly reasonable request.

Mr Coulter: Make your request and don't rubbish us about our policies, our consultants or our efforts in the area.

Mr EDE: Given that, at Ampalatwatja, the community existed for quite some considerable time on water excess to the requirements of the school, I would have thought that the government would at least have allowed the school at Soapy Bore to have some water, and I would have hoped that it would have extended its benevolence to allow the community to have some water. The Treasurer interjected earlier that if I wanted some water at Soapy Bore, I had to ask for it nicely and I should not rubbish his policies. That is his attitude. He feels I have to go down on my hands and knees and beg him for it. He thinks he is some sort of little emperor.

Mr Coulter: Have you been practising this all day?

Mr EDE: It is the people's right to have that water supply. It is not something they should have to beg for. I will not stop fighting for water at Soapy Bore. I will not stop fighting for water at Anningie. I will not stop fighting for water at any community in my electorate or elsewhere in the Northern Territory where basic provision does not exist. Perhaps the minister has not heard me talk at great length about the 20/20 rule of water supply and how that affects health. I have said it time and time again, and I will continue to say it until I can get it through the heads of members opposite, because it is essential to the life and health of Territorians. It is ridiculous just to state that the place is too far out in the desert to bother about and that that is the end of the matter.

Mr Coulter: We cannot get water at Cox Peninsula.

Mr EDE: If there are difficulties, we must work out how we can fix them.

Mr Coulter: Parts of the rural area can't get water either.

Mr EDE: I know there are problems in the rural area, and I might have a few words to say about that at some other time.

Mr Coulter: I am sure the member for Koolpinyah would love to have a person like you to support her.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am really shocked that, even now, I have not convinced the minister of the importance of water. Water is the second-most essential component of life in the Northern Territory. The ability to stay where you are on the land is the primary component, and the second is water. We are nearing the end of the International Decade of Water and it is to the ultimate shame of the Northern Territory that we have not reached and, at the current rate of progress, will not reach the objectives which the United Nations set for the world during that decade. We are supposedly a first-world country. One would have thought that we would have been able to achieve those objectives. Our failure will be to the ultimate shame of the Northern Territory and I hope that the honourable minister will change his attitude.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, tonight I want to raise some of my concerns about government red tape. I know that the Chief Minister has addressed this issue and I am very pleased that he has established a Regulatory Review Committee. I think that that is long overdue and I compliment him for his action.

In the 3 years that I have been in parliament, I have quite a number of complaints regarding not only government red tape but the fact that public servants, in abiding by the regulations, are wittingly or unwittingly frustrating the ease of business. We are a free-enterprise and private-enterprise society and, if we can facilitate job-generation by assisting private enterprise, that is what we should be doing. We should not be inhibiting its activities. The Chief Minister said that this committee would comprehensively review regulatory activities and administrative procedures, particularly those affecting business.

He also told us that advertisements had been placed in the media recently, but that only 2 responses had been received. He did not tell us what sort of responses they were or from whence they came, but I would have thought that organisations like the Master Builder's Association and the Confederation of Industry and Commerce would be likely to submit responses to those advertisements. Obviously, the responses to date came from private individuals or companies complaining about specific problems that they had experienced. I will be very surprised if the organisations that I have mentioned do not make submissions or at least express their views, along with the Small Business Association. I am quite sure that their executive officers will make their views known to the review committee and draw to its attention any regulations that are inhibiting their members.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr SETTER: Yes, Chief Minister, I am sure that you do and I think that is probably the way you will get responses because many people are not prepared to complain until they are hurt directly. When that happens, they start to jump up and down about it.

I also note that the Chief Minister said that departments and authorities have been instructed to review all regulations which apply to their various areas of responsibility, and that that process will be done in 2 separate exercises. The total review will take about 2 years. He also commented that, since mid-August, all draft regulations must be submitted to this committee for review before they are put into place. I noted that there was some possibility that, at some stage, a sunset clause might be introduced.

Mr Hatton: It is not a possibility; it is a fact.

Mr SETTER: It is. The Chief Minister said that a sunset clause has been introduced and that these various regulations will be reviewed as a result of that.

As I said earlier, I have received a number of complaints about red tape and regulation during my period in parliament. I know how those people feel because I spent 11 years in private enterprise in a management capacity in this city prior to coming into this parliament. I have been frustrated many times, perhaps unwittingly, by public servants who were implementing the regulations as they were required to do. Nevertheless, something that to us in private enterprise would be a very simple matter to solve, has to go through the system where it gets bogged down again and again.

The main targets of the complaints that I have received concern building inspectors who inspect buildings under construction. Complaints have come to me that some inspectors go out of their way to make it difficult for some builders. I have no idea whether that claim is true or false, but that is the sort of complaint that has been lodged with me. An instance was quoted in

which a building inspector insisted that a builder knock holes in columns constructed from large concrete blocks, so that he could check to ensure that the reinforcing rods went all the way down.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: He should have been there when it was done.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, perhaps he should have been but, nevertheless, that is what happened. These nicely-constructed columns now have patches of plaster where the holes were knocked through in various places. One of the tricks of the trade, and I do not say that unkindly, is to put a short section of reinforcing steel into the top of the block and to forget to continue it through the rest of the blockwork. Perhaps the building inspector's request was justified, but I can appreciate the builder's frustration when he had done a good job to start with.

The other authority which has been the source of a number of complaints is the Planning Authority. Many complaints have been received in relation to delays which occur there.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You haven't been out in the rural area.

Mr SETTER: Perhaps the honourable member may care to speak later and express her opinions on this particular subject.

The Building Board also came in for quite an amount of flak. People cannot understand the delays that occur. Certainly, people in private enterprise cannot understand why it takes not days, not weeks but many months to get things through. Those delays mean money to people in private enterprise, who expect to be able to get on with the job once decisions are made. Whilst everybody understands that you have to go through the process of having plans approved and all that sort of thing, I believe that people within the public service who have responsibility for the carriage of these things should go out of their way to ensure that they flow through the system as quickly as is physically possible.

Another government instrumentality which is a constant cause of complaint is the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. The commission controls not just the sale of liquor but a number of building matters within licensed premises as well. For example, its officers can enter premises and, if they think that the paint is a little mouldy, unclean or scratched, they can order that the premises be repainted. That might cost thousands of dollars. If the carpet is a bit torn and tatty, they can instruct that it be replaced. Those things can cost somebody who is working his butt off in private enterprise thousands of dollars. He works long hours, 7 days a week trying to make a buck and all of a sudden the rug is pulled out from under him, sometimes with questionable justification. An inspector comes along and makes an arbitrary decision. The poor old person out there in private enterprise, trying to do his best, becomes completely frustrated about the whole thing. We all know that it happens.

Mr Speaker, I would just like to refer you to an editorial from the Sunday Territorian of 23 August 1987. It is headed, 'Bureaucratic bungling' and it says: 'Red tape, bureaucratic delays, public service bungling, and the sheer indifference of pen pushers towards the private sector is strangling business in the Territory and driving away millions of dollars worth of investment'. That was the opinion of the editorial writer of the Sunday Territorian a month or so ago. That is the sort of thing that I am talking about. We should be facilitating and expediting applications from business for investment

development, and not frustrating people because of a regulation that some bureaucrat has written because he thinks it is a good idea without understanding the influence that it will have on the carriage of reasonable business.

Fairly recently, I received a complaint from a particular business person. I understand that this matter has since been resolved, so I will not mention who it was or give details. I will, however, give a couple of quotes from a letter this person wrote to the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, as an example of the sort of thing I am talking about.

The person wrote: 'I find it an absolute disgrace that an application submitted on 26 April 1987 is still unresolved'. This letter is dated 21 August 1987. One of the reasons why the application was not resolved was because it involved one other authority, the Darwin City Council, which had influence in the particular area of responsibility. The Darwin City Council approved the plans and the total application on 27 June 1987, yet by 21 August the matter was still unresolved. I understand that one of the problems was a traffic matter in the central business district and that the Darwin City Council, which has carriage of traffic matters in that area, had no objection to what was proposed. The Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission then went to the Department of Transport and Works which undertook a study and made various suggestions and recommendations. The department's letter, to which I referred, indicated that although it had an opinion, it had no authority in the matter. The commission, however, chose to disregard the opinion of the Darwin City Council which had carriage of the matter, and took up the view of the Department of Transport and Works which had no authority. It then delayed the application. I just cannot understand the logic in that.

I will give one other quote from this letter. The person says: 'If the economy of the Northern Territory is to grow, the private sector must be allowed to get on with the job and not be tied up with unnecessary government department interference which, in this case, has gone on for some 18 weeks'. It actually went on longer than that but, as I said earlier, the matter has since been resolved. It took 19 or 20 weeks to approve a simple application. There was nothing complicated about it. No major building construction was involved. It was just a matter of upgrading an existing facility and redirecting traffic to some extent. The Darwin City Council had no objection, but the easy way was not taken and difficulties were created unnecessarily. That is the sort of thing that goes on and which should be addressed by the committee investigating problems with red tape.

I have a personal concern about the revision of government regulations by government officers. In effect, they are reviewing their own regulations. I hope that my personal concerns will prove unfounded. I certainly believe that a revision of regulations is a good move and I wish the committee well in its deliberations. I will be looking forward with keen interest to some very positive results from its efforts.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning, a petition from the good people of Nhulunbuy regarding food irradiation was read out. This topic has come into focus in Australia during the last few months. It is an important issue and it seems that a great deal of misinformation is being spread around the countryside. When they do not understand irradiation, people are fearful of it, and that is understandable. It is easy to raise people's fears and many people are fearful about this particular topic.

It is estimated that something like 30% to 40% of all foodstuffs produced in the world is wasted because of bacterial and fungal action. That includes products like wheat, which we try to store for the 12 months between one harvest and the next. A tremendous amount of food is wasted around the world. That may not worry us so much here in Australia, but in countries where food supplies are short, this waste is very costly in relation both to the quality of life and the preservation of life itself. Therefore, the preservation of food is very important. Some well-tried methods include cold temperatures, heating, smoking and canning.

Food preservation through irradiation uses a radioactive substance which emits gamma rays. These are photons, wave-like particles similar in nature to X-rays but produced by a different source, namely a rearrangement in the nucleus of an atom which, in passing from a high-energy state to a lower-energy state, gives out radiation in the form of gamma rays. The food is not coated with radioactive material, nor is radioactive material sprinkled on the food, as some people believe. The material which produces the radiation is kept well away from the food, which is protected by metal surfaces and so forth. The radiation penetrates through the metal while the food is carried past on a conveyor belt. A calculated dose is given to the food, killing off bacteria and fungi and giving a much longer life to food materials. The residual radiation is so small as to be incapable of being measured. It is caused by beta particles and people do not generally realise that, if they sit closer than 18 inches to their TV sets, they receive a reasonable dosage of beta radiation.

Mr Palmer: 85 mg a year.

Mr COLLINS: Who is giving this speech? The member for Karama never says a word in this Assembly, but now he has suddenly come to life. He is like a sparrow, twittering away.

After people told me of their fears about food irradiation, I took steps to find out whether there was any measurable radiation in the actual food after it had received its bombardment. I rang the Australian Nuclear Science Technology Organisation at Lucas Heights and spoke for a considerable time to a Dr Watson, who later sent me some literature. The radiation coming from irradiated food is virtually unmeasurable and I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the measurement of radiation in all its forms is a very highly sophisticated art these days. It has just not been possible to detect radiation from food against normal background radiation.

The World Health Organisation and other bodies, including an Australian organisation whose name escapes me for the moment, have looked into this matter. It is a serious matter and people need to be reassured that the irradiation of food is a safe process. It has to be monitored if it comes in. At present there is no food irradiation in Australia, although there are 2 places in New South Wales and 1 in Victoria where medical equipment is sterilised by this method. The equipment is bombarded with either the gamma rays or beta particles, thus killing bacteria. The irradiation goes straight through the container holding the instruments, which means they do not have to be handled until they are removed for use. That creates very sterile conditions for medical bandages and equipment.

The possibilities are exciting. As with all radioactivity, things need to be monitored and people need to be reassured. However, the whole community needs to be made aware and reassured that, carried out properly, food irradiation will result in a considerably longer shelf life for foodstuffs,



particularly perishable foodstuffs. It is a big advance, particularly in view of problems with dangerous chemicals in beef which almost led to the loss of some very valuable markets in the United States, something which would have been very damaging to people in the Territory.

In preserving fruit, which we also hoped to use to earn export dollars, a chemical called ethylene dibromide has been used. I think the United States has banned this particular chemical. Some of the chemicals which are used in trying to prolong the life of foodstuffs are very dangerous indeed, and in that respect food irradiation will prove to be a real godsend. Dr Watson told me that experimental work has been carried out on strawberries at Lucas Heights, which is a logical place for carrying out experimental work. He said that they had put punnets of strawberries through the irradiation process and then compared them with punnets of strawberries which had been picked at the same time, but not irradiated. The irradiated strawberries were in top condition while the others were nothing more than a mushy pulp.

My concern is that the people of this country need to be reassured by the highest authorities that food irradiation is not a method that will lead to their eating radioactive material and that it will prolong the life of the foodstuffs. No doubt people in the Territory's horticultural industry will be very interested in this. It will enable them to grow produce, send it overseas and have it arrive in very good condition. I would suggest that members of this House make the effort to find out about what is involved in food irradiation and assure themselves, through whatever sources are available and not just in Australia but worldwide, that it is a safe process that has tremendous potential to benefit everybody on this whole planet in an economic sense, and that it will improve quality of life and standard of living. We, as leaders in the Territory, should be doing our bit to obtain the facts and disseminate information in the community so that people can be reassured that this is a vital and economic method of food preservation.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to say something about the statement on recreational fishing in the Northern Territory made by the Minister for Industry and Development.

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The statement was on the agenda for today and it was debated. Standing orders do not permit further debate on the subject at these sittings.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member cannot refer to the statement.

Mr TIPILOURA: I will talk about the fishing industry generally. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, the people in my electorate are keen fishermen. We have been so for a number of years now - for the past 40 000 years in fact. Fishing has been our way of life in the electorate of Arafura, especially on the Tiwi Islands where I come from. We now have recreational fishing out there and many tourists come through, all the way from America. It is a very good thing for us and we appreciate the tourists who come from overseas. Also, we get a lot of tourists from around Australia. Sporting identities like the footballers from the VFL come up and spend time over at Bathurst and Melville Islands doing a bit of fishing on the reefs or wherever. We have a footballer there now, Maurice Rioli. He is from the Tiwi Islands and he brings up members of the Richmond Football Club and they go fishing. Also, players from Western Australia come across to the islands for the fishing.

We appreciate all that because we have been fishermen ourselves for the last 40 000 years and fishing has been really good to us. We eat most of the fish that we catch. We only eat them when we are hungry and we do not use them for sport, but we welcome the game fishing that is occurring in the Territory and we welcome it on the islands. There is a barra-fishing base at Port Hurd and game fishing is popular around the coast. There is a tourist safari camp at Pularumpi and people go out from there for traditional fishing, crabbing and so on. I was very glad to hear about the way in which the government is negotiating with traditional owners. The people of the Tiwi Islands would welcome anything of that nature which brings tourists up to the Territory.

I want to raise a matter that is of concern to me after listening to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and hearing some of the interjections from members opposite. What have we done to you? The way government members carry on is crazy. How the hell do they expect us to work with them, to understand their way of governing and everything else? We are Territorians and we are proud to be Territorians. We want to work with the government and everybody else, but if government members are going to treat us like nobodies, how the hell do they expect us to work with them? I have only been here for a short time and it might be new to me. In the few months that I have been a member in this House, the reaction that I have seen from members opposite and the interjections I have heard concerning Aboriginal issues have been ridiculous.

How the hell do government members expect us to understand their policies and other things the government wants to introduce into Aboriginal communities? We are quite prepared to be involved and to develop our communities. Many of the communities in the Territory want to develop, to grow and understand and be involved in the Territory. We are not different; we are Territorians. The fact that we are black does not mean anything. We are part of this Territory and we want to learn and understand. But look at the attitude of the Treasurer and the way he carries on.

The member for Ludmilla asked in an interjection why people live out in the remote areas and why they do not move in closer. That is the sort of comment I am talking about. We are talking about people living out there. They are human beings just like me and every member in this House. How about showing some consideration instead of just saying, 'What the hell, we are the government. We don't have to do anything with them'. Do you expect us to crawl on our knees and to beg? These are people like everybody in this House.

We are prepared to work beside white Australians and understand their culture and, vice versa, we would like you to understand our culture as well. We are going to live in this country and there is no way the government can change that. Members opposite are not going to shift. They are here, and here to stay. They have brought their families up here. They love this place and they want to continue to live here, but I think it is about time this government started to recognise our problems and treated them properly instead of treating it all as a big joke. It might sound like a joke or it might be a bit sickening at times, but we are people and we are entitled to have facilities equal to those in towns.

It is about time this House and this government recognised the problems in our communities instead of just ignoring them as if they do not exist. Problems do exist in the communities, and we are trying to overcome them. We are helping ourselves but we need some help as well. If we do not get any help from this government, who else can we go to? It cannot just be left to the federal government. If this government wants Aboriginal people to know

the Territory government and what it is up to, maybe government members should listen. Every time an Aboriginal issue is raised, they talk about the federal government this and the federal government that. It is about time the Territory government took an interest in all communities, black or white.

I want to bring this out. There is a problem out there and this government has to have a serious look at it instead of treating it as a joke.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, since the last sittings of the Legislative Assembly, there have been developments in my electorate of Koolpinyah with regard to the Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan. The plan was issued by the Department of Lands and Housing in May this year, after a long gestation period, and it is still being considered by the people. Two extensions of time have been given to allow for public perusal of this plan. At first, comments had to be made by June. The period was extended to July and later to the end of November. Residents and members of local community groups are very appreciative of this extension of time because it is a very extensive plan and it takes considerable time to consider and talk about the planned changes.

The most important issue is the composite option proposed by planners for licensing and metering of commercial bores in water management area 1, which is roughly the area around Benhams Lagoon and Lambells Lagoon, and for residential bore owners to seek voluntary metering in that management area. The minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority indicated in a telex that residential bores would not be licensed and metered. So far so good, one might say. Reading between the lines, however, the current situation is that licensing and metering of commercial bores will begin in water management area 1, and this system will then spill over into the remainder of the rural area. The minister's telex indicated that residential bores will not be licensed and metered but he has not said that commercial bores will not be licensed and metered. That omission sticks out like a dunny in a desert and confirms that the government will meter and license bores. What is a commercial bore anyway? I have heard rumours that a commercial bore is a bore supplying a block that has 5 or 6 fruit trees or 3 or 4 pigs or about 20 chooks. It would include practically every one of us out there and that is why we are all so worried.

I am not rehashing old news when I mention the vociferous antagonism shown to the minister and a public servant of the Power and Water Authority at a public meeting in the rural area a couple of weeks ago. At that meeting, about 1000 people gathered to demonstrate their violent objection to the proposal to license and meter bores. That is a considerable number of people in anybody's book. To be fair to the minister and the public servant, I must add that quite a few people who loudly voiced their disagreement with the minister and the public servant, said to me afterwards that they appreciated their attendance at what they must have known would be an antagonistic meeting. We might speak our minds in the rural area, but we also appreciate it when somebody fronts up to do his job. That is what the minister did. He does not often receive bouquets from me and it is a pity he is not here tonight to receive this one.

The minister and the public servant heard our views, which were loud and clear enough to be understood. We thought that it was quite clear that our bores would not be licensed or metered in the future. To mention that there is even a possibility of that is like waving a red rag at a bull.

I will quote briefly from the latest issue of the Power and Water Authority's magazine relating to water management:

The water management policy is under consideration for rural land generally north of the Arnhem Highway which is a high yielding area with ample capacity for both commercial and rural residential development.

Mr Speaker, if it has 'ample capacity', why the devil do we need to license and meter it? You can bet your bottom dollar that, as soon as one area is licensed and metered, the policy will spill over into the rest of the rural area and we will become victims of the red tape that the Chief Minister is hoping to stamp out. The article continues:

The policy is to be progressively developed and applied as resources become committed. It will involve monitoring bore flows of large users, monitoring aquifer levels, limiting pumping rates and annual volumes extracted by large users and monitoring small bores in areas suffering reduced ground water availability. The Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan draft issued in May this year is being revised to outline the water management policy to be developed. It will be submitted through the Power and Water Authority Board to the minister for approval.

Somebody did not have his ears open at the public meeting because there is no way that we will countenance our bores being licensed and metered. We have all installed our own bores and we pay 100% of the cost of production of that water when we turn on our kitchen or bathroom taps. Until water costs went up recently, Darwin people paid less than one-third of bringing water to their taps.

It is my view, and I believe I am correct, that when all comments on the draft strategy plan have been received at the end of November, they will then be put before the Rural Planning Authority. Its comments will go to the Minister for Lands and Housing. I do not believe the strategy plan will go from the Power and Water Authority Board to its minister for approval. I am not saying that the Power and Water Authority is unable to comment on the water policy. That is mentioned in this draft strategy plan, but it will not have the last word on it. The people's representatives on the Rural Planning Authority, who have been representing our views for a number of years, are the ones who will have the last say, and they know what we want in the rural area.

I have said in other forums and in articles that I have written that, if the government persists with this proposal for the licensing of bores, there will be a range war in the rural area. I am not kidding. I do not want to see people taking to inspectors with shotguns, but that will be the least of their problems from what I have heard.

Mr Speaker, licensing a bore is not going to produce more water. All it will do is cause a lot of unnecessary bureaucratic red tape. It will affect the newly-developing horticultural industry first and then householders in the rural area. The planners cannot escape the fact that we got to the rural area before they got their hands on it. We are doing what we want to do and we are not affecting anybody. There will be water in the future for everybody to use, but not the way the planners want us to go about it. One horticultural producer in the rural area has said quite plainly that, if his bore is licensed and metered, to hell with it, he is going to give up and go on the dole or the old-age pension.

Mr Perron: Why would he do that if it was licensed and metered?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Because if it is going to be licensed, he will have to pay. You do not license bores for no reason. He will have to pay and he will have to put up with the bureaucratic red tape of more inspectors. We do not want inspectors in the rural areas. That producer is not doing any harm at the moment.

Mr Perron: Do you want electricity?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We are not talking about electricity, and I am not going to respond any more to your interjections.

Apart from studying the Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan and its contents relating to the licensing and measuring of bores in the rural area, I recently attended a meeting in Batchelor. It was held at a most inappropriate time, a Wednesday afternoon. This was obviously to suit the public servants and not the farmers. It concerned the government's intention to declare more areas as future dam sites. Members might ask why I went down to Batchelor and why I was interfering in somebody else's business. I went there, along with the President of the Litchfield Shire Council, because we are not going to stand by and do nothing while people in other parts of the rural area and other parts of the Territory have meetings in relation to our area.

The meeting at Batchelor discussed 2 locations which are in my electorate. The subject of dams at Tumbling Waters and Acacia Gap was raised. Both of these places are in my electorate. During the meeting, the minister promised that somebody from the Power and Water Authority would be stationed for a time in the office of the member for Victoria River at Batchelor to give advice and information to all of the people who were worried and concerned about these future dam sites. He did not promise to station an officer of the Power and Water Authority in the member for Koolpinyah's office. No, you only get that service if your local member belongs to the CLP and hang the rest of us! If it is good enough for one member of this House to have the use of an officer in this way, it is good enough for others.

Mr Perron: Batchelor is 60 miles away.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not care whether Batchelor is 60 miles away or not. The fact is that there was a meeting down there and the people at that meeting, including the minister and the chap from the Power and Water Authority, were talking about places in my electorate. They did not do me or the people in my electorate the courtesy of having a meeting about those dam sites in my electorate. Why the hell should we have to go to Batchelor to hear about places in our area? That is what I am getting at.

I believe that the Power and Water Authority is also thinking about bringing out another water policy. I spoke to the man who addressed the public meeting and we had quite an amicable discussion. I suggested to him that, in order to avoid confusion and in the interests of good public relations - I am always trying to sell the work of public servants to my constituents, as a good member always should - any such plan should not be discussed publicly until we have the Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan off our chests.

A new water management policy will involve more paperwork for us to comment on and most people will end up throwing it all in the air and saying in a very loud way what they think about all of these plans and policies,

unless they are given adequate time. As I have said before, a great deal of work has gone into the Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan. The Minister for Lands and Housing sent me a letter concerning my remarks on the issue in a previous adjournment debate. I do not have time to respond to his comments now and I will either do so at some future time in this House or by means of a letter. I know the minister did not write the letter himself and I know my remarks were rather unkind.

Mr Dale: Give us 2 minutes on the goats.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not think this is a matter for levity at all. It is a very serious subject. I believe that if the Power and Water Authority hopes to sell a case for some form of water monitoring or some form of consultation regarding dam sites, it will need to do much more in terms of public relations than it is doing now.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I did not intend to speak in tonight's debate but I have sat in this House and listened to the interminable rantings of the member for Koolpinyah about the plight of rural residents.

I think we should look at the background of rural residents and, more particularly, how one goes about becoming a rural resident. First and foremost, when deciding to move to the rural area, one must carry out detailed research. One must look at land to find a block that is about 10 battleaxes deep, with access through about 3 creeks and a paperbark swamp. The land should be barren and elevated, quite devoid of vegetation. One should also seek out the advice of the Power and Water Authority to ensure that if a bore is drilled there is little likelihood of getting water or, if there is water, that it will be saline.

After obtaining this idyllic block, which one has dreamt about for years, one should get a bulldozer in to scrape it clean of any vegetation before erecting a bit of a fence around it. Having done that, one should import a couple of horses and 10 or 15 goats, just to ensure that the environmental disaster is complete. Having done that and sunk a bore, one should sink the septic as close to the bore as possible, to ensure a leaching cross-fertilisation. This is all for future reference: one has to build a case.

The next step is to resign from employment and go on the dole because one's normal place of employment is too distant. One then visits a rubbish tip in order to accumulate a mass of holed and flattened corrugated iron, bits of timber, broken louvres and termite-ridden architraves. The construction phase then commences and everything is slapped together. It is wired up for electricity and one gets hold of an old pump for the bore and a 15-year-old Lister with a Dunlite of equal vintage to power it, making sure that there are plenty of fluctuations in the supply. One then moves the family in, knowing that the home of one's dreams is complete.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: And we merely want to be left alone.

Mr PALMER: Then they want to be left alone.

The disaster is complete. The kids live 20 miles from the school, there is no access in the wet season, the bore is saline, the neighbours complain and the mosquitoes are eating everyone alive. The family has been moved away from a Housing Commission house in Darwin, the school down the road, shops and community health centres. The whole exercise is an unmitigated disaster: one

is now ready to go to the local member of parliament and to start blaming the government.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am not blaming the government. We want to be left alone.

Mr PALMER: You are always blaming the government. The government does this, the government put me out here.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am blaming the government for intervention in our way of life!

Mr PALMER: You are always saying that you are a pioneer. You are not a mobile environmental disaster area; you are a pioneer.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not many people go back to Karama from the rural area.

Mr PALMER: It is all the government's fault, from the complete loss of any topsoil that might have existed, right through to the lack of any services. The minute your bore pump breaks down, it is the government's fault for not giving you power. You cannot drink the water and the kids get sick: that is the government's fault. You cannot get them to a community health centre because you have made sure your car is 20 years old and does not work.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Because the government closes the Howard Springs Community Health Centre!

Mr PALMER: It really takes some planning to become a rural resident. You can go from an idyllic existence to a hovel, all for a mere \$70 000. You can then spend your life writing letters, complaining, drinking home brew and attending public meetings - hopefully 3 or 4 per day.

Mr Hatton: You would still have to go to work.

Mr PALMER: You are too busy to go to work. Everything in the rural area is the government's responsibility.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is not the government's responsibility. We do not want interference.

Mr PALMER: I think the Government Printer should publish a guide on how to live out there.

The final thing you must do is to deny any social responsibility to the rest of the community. Deny anybody else in the Territory any right to comment, talk, or take an active interest in your rural area.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, unfortunately my contribution to this evening's debate is not going to be half as risible as that of the member for Karama, certainly not to the Minister for Lands and Housing or his predecessor the member for Casuarina.

The fact of the matter is that the more we dig into this question of the government's dealings in relation to Block H at Finnis River Station, the murkier it becomes. Since this subject has become the subject of renewed speculation and media interest, my phone has been running hot, not from the left of the Labor Party, the right of the Labor Party, the left of the CLP,

disgruntled members of the CLP or members of the National Party. It has been running hot from various people in the Darwin business community. The gist of what they have been saying is: 'Stick with it. Keep digging. It stinks on ice'. The only thing that provides a bit of respite for the government is that that ministerial office has changed hands so often over the last 12 or 18 months that it is fairly difficult to apportion ministerial responsibility exactly.

In spite of the member for Casuarina's protestations in his personal explanation, there is a serious charge to be laid against him. I do not propose to dispose of it in this evening's adjournment debate because I propose to read more carefully what he actually said today and to line it up carefully with his comments back in June and the totality of this imbroglio.

This evening I intend to concentrate more specifically on the questions that I attempted to raise in this morning's question time when, with the degree of deftness one would expect from an ex-Rotarian, the Minister for Lands and Housing managed to obfuscate with a dexterity which in other circumstances would be admirable. Now that I have the floor, he can sit and listen to what I have to say. I am pleased to see that the denizens of the fourth estate, who have been doing a wonderful job over the last couple of days, are once again present to hear what I have to say.

There are basically 3 points that I want to make. First, there are serious disparities between what the member for Casuarina said in June and what he is saying today. There are serious disparities between what the Minister for Lands and Housing said yesterday and what he said today. However, I will not dwell on those this evening. The opportunity for discussing those will come later. I remind the minister that he said yesterday that the block was sold in February. I have evidence, which I will produce in this Assembly at the appropriate time, that the sale did not take place in February. There was no exchange of contracts agreeable to both parties at that time. The minister's statement to this House yesterday contained an error. Whether it was a conscious error or not we will establish at some later time. That is the first point I want to make, but not perhaps the most important.

Mr Speaker, the 2 most important issues for this evening's debate are the misapprehensions that the Minister for Lands and Housing and this extraordinary government have about their responsibilities towards the public purse and their responsibilities towards the stewardship of public resources in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: Have you got your facts right this time?

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the member for Fannie Bay, I seldom get them wrong.

This morning, the Minister for Lands and Housing attempted to say that I had no right to inquire about the dealings of the Northern Territory Land Corporation because he has no responsibility for what the Northern Territory Land Corporation does. Can I just refresh his short memory by reminding him that, in this Assembly yesterday, reference was made to the \$65 000 of public money that had been paid through the Northern Territory Land Corporation. Under other circumstances, it would be laughable for him to suggest that there is no public accountability for that money. Under these circumstances, it is evidence that the government is on the ropes.



The third issue is the central issue that I want to raise in this evening's adjournment debate. I would like an answer from the Minister for Lands and Housing or whoever else on the government frontbench is willing to have a go. Perhaps the member for Casuarina could shed a bit of light on it.

Among the stream of phone calls I have been getting from the Darwin business community was one from a particular gentleman whose name I will not give at this stage. He has written records from an employee of his, a consultant who has very close connections with the Country Liberal Party and who continues to be employed as a consultant by the Northern Territory government in various respects. He was retained by this particular entrepreneur, who was prepared to put money into this particular block, to take notes of a conversation, concerning an offer for the block, with the then Minister for Lands and Housing. The offer was not for \$575 000, and this morning we heard some comments about that from the former minister, the member for Casuarina. I do not know what the new boy will say tonight, but the plain fact is that the ballpark figure that this particular person was talking about was \$650 000, with no concessional loans at 13½% interest.

That is terrific, Mr Speaker! Do you understand what a 13½% loan would mean? Basically, it is a little like handing somebody \$37 000 a year because that is the difference between the rate that the Northern Territory Land Corporation is giving this brave entrepreneur and the prime lending rate of 18%. It is \$37 000 a year in the pocket. Imagine what you could do with that! I will not enhance the arguments I put last night but I am quite sure, Mr Speaker, that there are a few would-be home owners in Braitling who would not mind getting 13½% and who cannot get it for love or money. The government, particularly the Minister for Lands and Housing, has a lot to answer here. Let me recapitulate the 3 questions that I want answered.

I do not have time in this adjournment debate to illustrate all the discontinuities and falsehoods that emerge when one compares what the member for Casuarina has said to this House and what the Minister for Lands and Housing has said in relation to this issue during the last couple of days. Suffice it to say that they will be detailed at some appropriate time during the deliberations of this Assembly. Doing that will take at least half an hour. That is my first point.

The second point is that this Northern Territory Land Corporation which, nobody can get in touch with, is neither fish nor fowl. It is not a private organisation that has to register itself. It is not a private company. Does the Chief Minister have a copy of the legislation there? He ought to have a look at it. It does not even have to register itself with the Companies Office. There is no requirement that it provide reports, as all private companies must do. Certainly, there is absolutely no public-sector accountability.

For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I think it is either section 6 or section 7 which covers this. I invite him to check it out; it relates to finance and administration. The section renders the Northern Territory Land Corporation exempt from any customary audit procedures. That is extraordinary! Opposition staff rang the Department of Lands and Housing, which directed them to the minister. The minister then redirected them to the Department of Lands. Nobody knows how this organisation operates. The minister gets up here in question time and tries to tell us, 'Hands off. I do not have to say anything. I have no responsibility. It is not my business'. The problem that brings him unstuck is that he and his mates have given this organisation \$635 000 of public money to play around with.

My final question is: why did the Northern Territory government reject out-of-hand an offer of \$650 000 for Block H in November 1986?

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to pass a few remarks about the events of the last few weeks. In particular, I would like to extend my gratitude to the electors of Barkly for having the decency and the goodwill to send me back into the parliament to represent them. I would like to record my appreciation for the efforts of members of my party and my campaign team in Tennant Creek and to thank members of my family for their support during the period of the election. It was the seventh election campaign that I have fought and the sixth that I have won. I am quite delighted with the size of the win. I am indebted to people on the other side for some of the things they did to help me win by so much, but I will leave that for another day. It is my intention to represent my constituents in the electorate of Barkly as strongly as ever, along with any other constituent of the Territory who cares to raise issues with me.

Mr Speaker, you would recall that during the course of the campaign I made some comments about the cost of closing my office. You passed a few of your own yesterday in a written statement to the House. I have a copy of your statement in front of me and I note that your view is that the cost of the closure of the office was in the order of \$570. If I may, Mr Speaker, I would like to run through a few costs relating to the closure of the office, so that you will know what I am talking about. Whilst I do not have the background to your information, at least we will know why we are thousand of dollars apart.

The closure of the office could have been handled in a dozen different ways. The way that it was done cost the taxpayer of the Northern Territory travel and 2 nights' accommodation for 2 officers, which comes to \$300. Salary payments would have come to \$100 per day for 2 days, and 2 separate vehicles covered 3000 km at 30¢ per kilometre, which is about what it costs to run a car these days depending on its size. The Telecom connections and reconnections would have cost a minimum of \$200. The air freight on the typewriter that was confiscated and ultimately sent back was in the order of \$100 and there was a car-rental payment of about \$300 for the week that I did not have a car because it was in Darwin. The car rental would not have mattered because if I had taken it back it would have cost another \$300. There is a neat \$2000 there, Mr Speaker.

The taxpayers of the Territory can be deeply grateful that the wish of whoever it was to change the locks on the office could not be carried out because there is nobody in Tennant Creek that can change locks. At one stage people were talking about bringing locksmiths from Alice Springs - God forbid - to change the locks in the office. If you want to know why we look like geese in the eyes of the electorate, this is a prime example. We can only be grateful that Mr Martino, the owner of the building, was prepared to give up 5 or 6 weeks' rent so that he could maintain the security of the building and keep a check on it himself. He believed that, if the building were known to be closed and unattended, it would be vandalised, as buildings often are in Tennant Creek, and he did not want that to happen. He was prepared to forgo the rent so that he could keep an eye on the building.

The government spent all this money when it would have been quite possible to recruit someone locally to sit in the office and knit or read a book all day. The whole business defies the imagination, but I am finished with the topic now and will move on.

What I really would like to know - and it has me beat - is who has the clock? Who is the fellow in this House who looks after the clock and records the amount of time people like me spend in the Chamber, so that the Leader of Government Business can tell the Territory I spend so many hours, minutes and seconds in the House, out of the House, in the toilet, the bar, or wherever? At one stage, the poor old Whip got the blame for it, but his name disappeared from the scenario pretty quickly. Then there were sworn statements about people who kept the times. Mr Speaker, I can tell the Leader of Government Business that he does not need to use a parliamentary sneak to keep a time check on me with a stopwatch. If he puts a punch clock on the wall, I will clock on and off every time I go in and out of the place. You can publish it in the paper 3 times a week and it will save everybody a lot of fuss, particularly some of the ministerial officers who have been accused of being the timekeepers.

Mr Speaker, I do not mind if somebody wants to use that sort of tactic because I will go on record now as saying that I intend to be the guy with the little black book on who is in the bar and for how long, and people will find my readings considerably more interesting than how often I punch in and out of this Chamber.

Mr Dale: What about when you are on the phone to Ansett Airlines all the time, ringing up your mates?

Mr TUXWORTH: Any parliamentarian who does not use the phone to his advantage is a mug. I have always been a good phone man and I do not make any apology for it. It has served me well over the years.

Mr Speaker, to move away from subjects of such levity, I note that the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education have made responses in question time on matters of some import, matters which in my opinion could justifiably have been the subject of ministerial statements for debate in this House. One such response from the Chief Minister related to deliberations concerning deaths of Aboriginal people in custody, an issue which will be very sensitive in the Northern Territory, particularly when you move 50 miles beyond Darwin. Other responses related to defence and the issues of education in the 1990s.

For the moment, however, I want to concentrate on the question of Aboriginals being held in custody. This issue is being considered by governments, police ministers and their staff and I understand the problem as well as every other Territorian. What concerns me is that, whilst some of the measures being proposed for implementation in policing situations throughout the Territory as a matter of course are well-meaning and desirable, they will be very difficult to implement in practical terms and they will leave some people exposed.

One possibility is that the community may decide that, when an Aboriginal is taken into custody, he or she should be examined by a medical officer or somebody who is qualified to make an examination. I have no problem with that. It sounds perfectly reasonable. There are many police stations, though, at places like Warrabri, Yuendumu, Docker River, Borroloola, Avon Downs and so forth, where Aborigines might be taken into custody. There is no way of making medical assessments of the state of prisoners in such places. It is not a matter of not being interested or not trying; it is a matter of practicalities.

There will be a great deal of consternation if uniform criteria are implemented for the admission and holding of Aboriginal people in cells

throughout the Northern Territory. I understand what the Chief Minister is doing and I understand the need for it. It would be very helpful if we could use a debate in this House to comment on the proposals as they are being worked up. We could all get in and have our pennyworth. There would be nothing more regrettable than implementing a system that was impractical or did not have the support of the community as a whole. I raise that prospect because policemen from all over the Northern Territory are telling me that they are losing interest in enforcing the law or apprehending Aborigines because of the aggro that they get when they do their job. They get aggro from legal aid, from Aboriginal organisations and sometimes from internal investigations within the force. It is just as easy to turn a blind eye and not do the job. We can do without that situation but, unfortunately, I sense that there is growing momentum towards it. I make these comments with a sense of deep regret.

Finally, I remind the Chief Minister and other ministers who have issues that they would like to raise for consideration by the community that, although answers to questions can sometimes be used, we would like to debate some of these matters in response to statements or in other ways. There are a couple of other points that I want to raise but time is insufficient tonight.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in the adjournment debate tonight but I was prompted to get to my feet by the remarks of the member for Arafura. I make these comments because I believe that they need to go on the record. His comments in relation to the activities of the government in relation to Aboriginal issues were grossly unfair.

His remarks were emotional and I accept that he has not been in this House all that long. I can remember, when I first came into this House, being a little concerned about the activities and carryings-on of members of parliament. Indeed, I was at a meeting last night when someone commented to me that they had attended a session of parliament and were astonished at the shouting from one side of the Chamber to the other. We have also heard of comments made by schoolchildren in respect of the behaviour of members in this parliament. I always reply that behaviour in other parliaments is so much worse and that this parliament behaves well in comparison.

I would just like to say to the member for Arafura that the government does recognise that there are many problems which must be addressed in the Aboriginal field. There is no doubt about that and I am sure that, if the member goes back through Hansard and if he listens to the speeches and statements that are made in this Assembly, he will have to acknowledge that the government has acted responsibly, is doing a tremendous amount of work and is spending millions and millions of dollars in this area. It is not only the Northern Territory government that is doing this, but also the Commonwealth government. We have to work together. Many of us have said in this Assembly that, if we are to come to grips with the very real problems that exist in Aboriginal communities, it will require the cooperation of all members and both governments. That is vital.

The other thing that the member does not seem to acknowledge is that both the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart can become very provocative on occasions. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will recall how difficult it has been at times to keep control of this House because of the activities of some members. Both the members I have mentioned twist the truth at times and are provocative. That prompts interjection from the government benches but it does not mean that we are not interested in Aboriginal people or their activities. That is a nonsense and I hope that the member for Arafura

acknowledges that. Those of us who have been in this House for a number of years must recognise that the government is doing a great deal in Aboriginal communities.

I know that tremendous inroads have been made in the 2 areas that I have been involved in: education and health. Certainly, a lot of work still has to be done and that is not denied. No member of this government would say that there is nothing more we can do to help the Aboriginal people. A great deal of work needs to be done and the government will continue to make efforts to be responsible and not just to spend money for the sake of spending it. People have to consider whether money is being well spent in Aboriginal communities. I can recall money being spent in a scandalously wasteful way in places like Amoonguna. One has to be responsible and try to spend the money so that it will assist the Aboriginal people where they require assistance.

I would ask the member for Arafura to acknowledge that the government is helping and to join as a member of a team in our efforts to develop ideas which will help his people. I had to respond to his statements to the effect that the government is not interested and does not think his people are human beings. I would ask the member for Arafura to read through Hansard and look at what the government is doing. I am sure that he will be pleasantly surprised.

Mr HANRAHAN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, in real estate and contractual terms 'sold' does not mean 'settled'. I can assure the member for MacDonnell that, from the details I have been able to peruse relating to the sale of Block H at Finnis River, an offer was made and accepted. Documentary evidence is available to prove that that happened in February of this year. This morning I explained the reasons for the subsequent delay in settlement. 'Sold' does not necessarily mean 'settled'. An offer was made and accepted.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, if you make an offer of purchase on a block of land or a house anywhere in Australia and the offer is subsequently accepted by the vendor, the property is considered sold. This is the case even if no deposit has been made and no contract signed. Contracts, incidentally, can take up to 3 months to exchange. I can assure him that the block was sold in February.

As for the offer in November, I will wait with bated breath for his documentary evidence and the proof and substantiation of his allegations. I am aware, from the evidence available to me and from speaking to people who were involved in the original sale of the block, that there were other interested parties. If I could refer the member for MacDonnell to the Parliamentary Record of 6 May 1987 and 10 June 1987 and the various explanations given by the former Minister for Lands, he will see why everything relating to any other offers was impossible because of the arrangements already entered into by an agent acting for and on behalf of the government. The reasons the government had for using the services of the agent are also clearly defined.

I would also point out, in case the member for MacDonnell hears any other stories, that I was approached at a later date by parties interested in purchasing Block H at Finnis River. That was in March or April. I was quite capable, Mr Speaker, of telling them that the block was sold and if you refer to my earlier remarks, you will know why.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this sitting day be granted to the Attorney-General because he is representing the government at a conference interstate.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88  
(Serial 58)

Continued from 15 September 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Territory is a land of promise and excitement. It has an enormous amount of potential in tourism, mining, agriculture and horticulture and, to give the Treasurer his due, he succeeded in making that clear. We share his optimism about the Territory and his enthusiasm about a bright future for this part of Australia. It is something we in this House share with all Territorians and, basically, that is why we are all here. We want to see the resources of the Territory realised for the benefit of people of the Territory and for all Australians.

At present, the Territory can be compared to a lusty, squalling infant, particularly with the honourable Treasurer in charge. It needs careful nurturing if we are to take our place as equals with other Australians. However, our economic immaturity is evident in the current downturn of the Northern Territory economy which has resulted in estimates for revenue raised in the Territory decreasing this year by 10%, a figure which is roughly equivalent to the cut in Commonwealth contributions. Hopefully, the ability of the Northern Territory to raise its own revenue will increase and this year is only an aberration. But, it has had the effect of reducing the percentage of income that we raise locally from 22.6% down to about 21.6% and, quite naturally, it has reinforced concerns about our narrow economic base.

Mr Speaker, in such an austere climate, it is incumbent on government to chart a careful and precise course to maximise the effectiveness of the community's resources. It can only do that if it identifies clear targets that are acceptable to the community. In other words, the government must clarify and define the targets that the community can support. The government must plot our progress, coordinate our efforts and regularly evaluate our success. In that way, and only in that way, will we all know where we are going and, equally importantly, how we are going to get there.

The major failure of the budget is that we do not know where the government is leading us. We do not have clear goals presented to us in this budget. The great pity of the budget is that it is pointing in the right direction but it is not identifying the target. It is like staring into the sun. We are bedazzled by the light and warmth, but we cannot really see where we are going. We have been told about many things along the way, but they are not linked to goals or directions. The budget does not consolidate our development and, further, it does not explain the role of government in making that development happen.

Mr Speaker, there are 4 statements in the budget speech that demonstrate the government's sun-gazing approach to our future. Three of them are on page 3 and the other is on the last page. The statements are: first,

'decisions should be made having regard to our future goals, development and greater self-sufficiency'; secondly, 'emphasis has been given to those areas which will produce future wealth and prosperity for the Territory'; thirdly, 'that room should progressively be made for the private sector'; and fourthly, 'that the government should act as a facilitator of economic growth so that the private sector can take advantage of the opportunities that are available'.

Mr Speaker, those are fine sentiments and we on this side of the Assembly take no issue with them. However, on their own, that is all they are: sentiments. They are meaningless. They take us nowhere and they do not tell us how we are to attain those ideals. The government might like to consider a few more detailed principles as a framework for development and I want to indicate 6 legitimate aims and objectives for the Northern Territory in the next few years.

The first is to provide an economic and social framework for the realistic achievement of statehood. This means identifying population growth targets and developing an economic and social infrastructure to facilitate our emergence as a state. The second is to ensure that there are training and employment opportunities for Territory kids. It is significant that, in the minister's budget speech, there was not one word about employment and training and that stands in stark contrast to the amount of time that the federal Treasurer spent outlining the federal government's employment and training initiatives. A third specific goal should be assistance to private enterprise to take up opportunities in the Northern Territory through reductions in the costs involved in red tape. A fourth is the establishment of a lean, effective and efficient public service by restoring equality of opportunity and career structure. A fifth is keeping Territorians' money working in the Territory and making it work harder. A sixth is thoughtful social development taking into account the quality of life of all Territorians. Those are 6 specific objectives which I will expand on during the course of this address.

As I have said, the major failure of the budget speech is that it contains no such specific targets. In other words, it provides no framework or business plan for the Territory. In the past few weeks, the opposition has taken extensive soundings within the business community and the public service on the budget and the role of government. Without exception, the major complaint has been the lack of direction and leadership provided by this government for both the private sector and the public service. Public service morale is low and private enterprise disenchantment is high as the comments of Max Ortmann of the Small Business Association bear witness.

What can be done to provide leadership has been demonstrated in the Labor states of Australia. They have all seen the value of forward planning and clearly spelling out their states' goals and objectives for the next 5 to 10 years. Unfortunately, there is no Territory equivalent of the Victorian document 'Victoria: the Next Decade', the Western Australian document 'Leading Australia into the Nineties' or the New South Wales document 'An Economic Development Strategy'.

Mr Speaker, just to give you a taste of what the Victorian document sought to do, I will read from page 2:

The purpose of this document is to provide new impetus and direction to those developing trends and to provide greater definition to the government's continuing economic strategy. More specifically, its

purposes are as follows: (1) to review the results of the government's economic strategy to date and emerging trends in the Victorian economy; (2) to delineate more clearly the path ahead for the Victorian economy over the next decade; (3) to outline a wide range of measures and to give further impetus to emerging growth trends; and (4) to continue to put in place some of the preconditions for continuing internationally competitive growth, for example in education, transport and the public sector generally.

Quite clearly, not all of those objectives are particularly appropriate to the Northern Territory. The point is that the Victorian government has made the effort to delineate the state's strengths and weaknesses and to provide leadership in terms of the government's aims for the state in the next 10 years.

In contrast, the Northern Territory has a piecemeal approach to the business of government. Very little assessment is made of where money has gone and the results it has produced. The budget process is limited to a consideration of inputs - that is, money going into departments and authorities - and adjusting those inputs in the light of inflation and budgetary constraints. There appears to be no evaluation of the outputs, of the effectiveness of the money that has been expended. A consistent theme of this opposition over the last 2 or 3 years has been that we really need to move our budgetary processes into the second half of the 20th century by adopting a progressive budgetary system which makes a thorough evaluation of where the money goes and, most importantly, how effective it is in achieving the government's goals. We simply do not have a clue. We pour the money in with no measurement for assessing how effective it is in achieving our goals.

I am encouraged by the concept of classification of expenditure by function outlined in the speech. That is the beginning of a recognition of the need for some cost-benefit analysis. There is a long way to go, however, and, particularly when money is extremely tight, it is a matter of high priority that the government should implement systems which will enable it to account for the effectiveness of its spending. It does not have to reinvent the wheel. There are now systems in most states of Australia which, I am sure, can be adapted.

Let us look in more detail at what the budget contains. It is important to appreciate that any budget has to be delivered in the context of current economic circumstances facing both Australia and the Northern Territory. Australia's difficult terms of trade make restraint in government expenditure necessary. A tight federal budget is in place to reduce the current account deficit. This in turn means that there must be cutbacks in financial assistance to the states. The recent May economic statement was evidence of this restraint and the wisdom of this policy was indicated in Tuesday's federal budget.

In the Northern Territory, there has been a general slowing down of the economy. This is clear from various official indicators. ABS figures show that population growth has slowed considerably over the last 2 or 3 years and the current level of unemployment is 7.5%. The total number of people employed in the Northern Territory is declining and, significantly, there has been a major reduction in the number of apprentices taken on in the last few months. That is as good a sign as any of a downturn in the economy because we all know that, unfortunately, when things get tough and firms do not have a continuing supply of work, it is very difficult for them to keep apprentices on or take apprentices on. Other economic indicators, particularly in the



housing and building industry, show similar trends. Building approvals for the year ended March 1987 were down 35.4% compared to an 8.5% downturn nationally, and building commencements for the year ended March 1987 were down 46.5%. New motor vehicle registrations for the year ended May 1987 were down 28.7% and the level of retail sales in the Northern Territory has remained static.

Another indicator of the deceleration in economic activity has been the fact that many revenue items in the financial statements for 1986-87 showed lower amounts than estimated in the last Territory budget, including the areas of stamp duty, motor vehicle charges, sewerage charges, Registrar-General fees, land sales, leases and rents.

It is fair to say that, in putting this budget together, the Northern Territory has been hit by a double whammy. On the one hand, there has been a tightening of money supplied by the federal government and, on the other hand, there has been a slowdown in the Northern Territory economy which reduces the ability of the Territory government to raise its own revenue. In that context, the real reason for the fuel and bed taxes becomes clear. It was not to make up for lost federal government revenue but to make up for lost Territory government revenue. Even with the fuel and bed taxes in place, Territory revenue estimates have decreased by \$26m in real terms this financial year. I cast no aspersions: it is a statement of fact and an indication of the problem we have in the Territory, hopefully temporarily.

As with the federal budget, it is quite clear that there is no room for error in this budget. Quite clearly, the cash reserves that tided us over the last couple of years are gone and, if anyone wants confirmation of what we have been saying about the Consolidated Fund being balanced through the use of cash reserves, they can look at the budget item which says how much interest we are getting from cash reserves this year. It is significantly less than previously. There are no hollow logs left for the Northern Territory government and it is important that the government has its sums right. I must say, probably at some risk to myself, that it appears that this year's revenue estimates are somewhat more realistic than those which caused the government some problems last year.

Everybody would be happier with this government's budget in these tight economic times if they were satisfied that the government was making full and maximum use of its limited resources. Unfortunately that is not true. In tight circumstances, the \$8.7m allocated to Yulara, the \$5.1m for the Alice Springs Sheraton and the \$3.4m for the Darwin Sheraton comprise a growing millstone around Territory taxpayers' necks. To put it simply, the people of the Territory cannot understand why water and sewerage charges have gone up in this budget. They cannot understand why the Chief Minister has broken his promise of 23 January that there would be no tax or charge increases this year.

Mr Hatton: I did not say that. You keep getting it wrong.

Mr SMITH: I have your press release.

Mr Hatton: I was talking about taxes in the financial year.

Mr SMITH: I have your press release and I will get it for you.

People cannot understand why charges are rising while the government continues to pour \$17m a year into those private enterprise projects. I

suspect people find it particularly irksome that Yulara is receiving an increased amount from the government even though all reports by the Minister for Tourism indicate that it is booming. The reason given is that it is to reduce capitalisation of interest in future years. That was the very reason given 2 years ago to justify a one-off payment of \$14.4m to buy back some assets used by the government at Yulara. There seems to be something quite strange about our Yulara operation. The more successful it is, the more the government has to put into it.

The government has never explained properly why it will not or cannot dispose of its commitments in these assets. If it is not prepared to do that, it should at least take steps to make the money it has in these projects work harder for the Territory. I am amazed, for example, that in return for that financial support to those projects, the government has never insisted on the hotels and resorts undertaking a formal training program for Territory youth in the hospitality industry. I am amazed that it has not sought guarantees that the hotels will use local suppliers where they are available and competitive in price.

Many laughed at my election-campaign suggestion that nights at the Sheraton could be given as raffle prizes in an effort to make our money work harder. But no one, either in that election campaign or subsequently, has told me that the idea is not feasible and will not help Territory taxpayers to obtain greater benefit from the money that they have been forced to invest in these properties.

It is clear that, with some thought, our money can be made to work harder and to circulate in the Northern Territory rather than simply lining the pockets of developers who mainly live interstate. If we have to accept the continuation of deals from those champagne days of Paul Everingham and others, it should be a priority of government to renegotiate the deals to ensure a better return for Territorians. I will put it simply. If the government can renegotiate the rights of compulsorily-transferred public servants who thought they had ironclad guarantees of their rights, it can similarly renegotiate our Yulara and Sheraton deals. As a matter of equity and fairness, it should do so.

The Trade Development Zone remains a financial sinkhole. By the end of this financial year, we will have spent \$19m on the zone while the income derived from it will be \$128 000 - \$28 000 last financial year and \$100 000 this financial year. It seems again that, the more activity there is, the more government is expected to pay. Marketing costs have doubled this year from \$1.3m to \$2.7m because, and I am quoting from Budget Paper No 4, 'of the increased number of zone tenants and related incentive payments together with additional funding for marketing to attract new zone operators'. I will say it again because it is extremely significant: marketing costs have doubled. In return for spending this money, because we actually have tenants in the zone and because we are paying them incentives to be there, we are getting \$100 000 in rent and zone-fee receipts. That does not seem to me to be a good deal. On those figures, we might be better off having nobody in the zone. At least we would not have to pay out money to get them there. We certainly are not getting much money from having them there.

The government's embarrassment about that particular figure is clearly indicated on page 3 of Budget Paper No 4, where there is a cute attempt to deceive. It says: '\$4.8m of the Trade Development Zone budget will be by appropriation and another \$1.46m will come from other sources of revenue'. \$1.36m of that \$1.46m, the supposed other source of revenue, turns out to be

funds carried over from the previous year. Only \$100 000, less than 10%, is actually revenue in the sense that most people understand it: income generated from activity. A nice attempt but it did not work. It is clear that the government is in so far that it is too embarrassed to get out of the Trade Development Zone. It must, at least, publicly review its marketing strategies and the incentives it is offering. Business people are quite reasonably asking why so much money is being spent on so few, particularly when an outfit like Hungerford Refrigeration is along for the ride. It is interesting that no one interjected to defend Hungerford Refrigeration. I find that very significant.

The casinos constitute another cause for embarrassment. This year, \$2m is anticipated in revenue. The cost of collecting that revenue is \$728 000 in gaming inspectors' salaries and other administrative expenses so we clear a bit more than \$1m. Out of interest, I checked with the manager of Federal Hotels, John Haddad, on what we would have been receiving from the casinos if Federals were still in control. If Federals were still there, we would be receiving \$4.2m this year from the Darwin casino alone, with about another \$1m from the Alice Springs casino. That decision by Paul Everingham - and let us not forget that Steve Hatton accompanied him around the world seeking new casino owners - continues to cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year. It is \$3m this year and, over the years since Federal Hotels was removed, it has cost us close to \$10m in forgone revenue. At least we have turned the corner. We are in the black and at last we are getting more out of the casinos than we are putting in. That is a pleasant change from what has been happening. Given the way this government operates its budgets, we ought to be thankful for small mercies.

Taking into account the casinos, Yulara and the Sheratons, the Territory has forgone the use of \$25m, which is not an inconsiderable amount of money - 2% of our total budget. That money is locked up in deals that most people in the Northern Territory would prefer that we were out of or, more importantly, had not been involved with in the first place. Obviously, the government is trying to recoup some of that every time Territorians turn on a tap or flush the loo.

The TAB is another area of concern. In 1986-87, the revenue estimate for the TAB was \$1.3m. Instead it brought in \$300 000. This year, despite the much-celebrated link-up with the Victorian TAB, the budget estimate is only \$400 000. Those profit figures do not match well with the recent NT TAB comments on the rapidly-expanded volume of betting.

Mr Hatton: A 33% increase.

Mr SMITH: There are lies, damned lies and statistics. A number of people will be very interested when the TAB annual report is published.

Mr Dale: What are you saying? That we should stamp it out?

Mr SMITH: I am saying that many people are starting to ask some very serious questions about the TAB.

Mr Coulter: Who?

Mr Dale: What absolute nonsense. What do you want to do? Sell it off or close it down? Shut down the Darwin Cup? What do you want to do?

Mr SMITH: Are you finished? I will reiterate my concern. If, in 1986-87, the estimated revenue from the TAB was \$1.3m and the actual revenue was \$300 000, I would have thought that that would have concerned even the most dense minister of the Crown.

Mr Speaker, the housing area is remarkable for the dramatically-reduced effort of the Northern Territory government with its own funds. While the federal government has kept up its share of housing funding, the NT government has dropped its bundle in relation to the housing area to the tune of \$35m. There is a decrease in both the amount made available for housing loans and the number of new dwellings built by the Housing Commission. In fact, the decrease is dramatic: down from 633 to 205 homes. Essentially, that reflects the drop in demand for housing with the slowdown in population growth.

In this instance, the government has tried to hide that slowdown by saying there is a bigger role for private enterprise in housing construction but, if there is a private enterprise housing role, there still remains the question of access to the houses constructed and the question of individual finance, and I guess that brings me to one of my basic objections to the budget. There is a bland statement in the budget speech, with which we do not necessarily disagree, that there is room for a greater private-enterprise role in the housing area, but nowhere there or in any of the supporting government budget documents is that role spelt out or any information supplied on how that role is to be achieved. Clearly, it is another matter which the government has not thought through.

The primary task of this government is to provide an overall view of the direction of the Territory economy and, on this side of the Assembly, we will continue to say that until members opposite get the message. The second task for government is to facilitate private enterprise to play its part in moving with us in that direction. Tourism is a prime example. It is clear now that the government's over-enthusiasm for the high-roller section of the market 3 or 4 years ago has caused some serious structural problems in the tourist industry. Although we knew about the sealing of the south road and although myself and others talked loudly and long about how that would alter the tourism profile of the Northern Territory, the government did not do enough to inform the industry. It is an indictment of the government that, even now, when we are coming to the close of the first tourist invasion resulting from the sealing of the south road, the Roadside Inn Review Report is still not available publicly. That is an indictment of the way this government has handled that section of the tourist market. The research was not done in time and the facilities were not in place.

As the minister has indicated, the result has been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints about inadequate and substandard caravan parks and roadside stops, of surly service and, on a number of occasions, of non-service. The most important thing that this government could do in relation to tourism in the next 12 months is to work at improving standards along our major highways. There is no place any more for tired, worn-out facilities like those, for example, at Renner Springs where you cannot even obtain lead-free petrol. Places like that need assistance to improve or the existing operators should be encouraged to leave the industry.

The Nullabor experience was that the second year after the sealing of the road was the big year. It may already be too late, but certainly a major effort is needed to upgrade as much as possible of our major arterial road tourist facilities before that second big year starts in March next year.

Despite the claim that emphasis has been put on our growth industries, the Tourist Commission has received less money this year than last. An ironic fact is that it is still \$3m or \$4m behind what it received 3 or 4 years ago. It is well-known that the tourist industry is cyclical. Today's flavour of the month is tomorrow's disregarded location, and we do not need to look any further in Australia than Tasmania to see that. Currently, it is going through a very depressed tourism cycle. In my view, the second major task for the Tourist Commission has to be to develop means to counteract that normal cyclical movement within the industry. To do that, it needs money and plenty of it. Unfortunately, despite the words of the Treasurer, it really has not been given enough money even to keep up with inflation.

Mr Coulter: The Tourist Commission?

Mr SMITH: The Tourist Commission. Have a look at the figures.

A third major task in the tourism area is to get moving on conventions. A cut in funding some time ago saw the Convention Bureau get the chop from the Tourist Commission. Experience is that government assistance is necessary if the highly-competitive convention traffic is to be fully exploited. You can take private enterprise a long way but, when the experience is that most, if not all, of the states of Australia have specific convention-seeking people, it is a bit shortsighted to say that we will not put any government money into that area any more and that private enterprise can do it. Certainly, that is one of the major areas that the tourist operators, whatever field they are in in the Northern Territory, would like to see improved.

In mines and energy, the Treasurer's favourite area - and I say that with no ill intent - the major initiative signalled by the government is the cutting of red tape. This initiative has shown results and is to be commended, and I think that the mining industry has recognised the efforts made by the Northern Territory government in that area. In my view, the major challenge in the mining industry is to ensure that mining companies channel money back into the Northern Territory. Dr Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh of the North Australian Research Unit has done a great deal of excellent work on the mining industry, and one of his disturbing findings was that a typical mining company's expenditure within the Northern Territory is about 17%. In other words, only 17% of the money that this typical mining company spent on its developments in the Northern Territory was spent with Northern Territory people. The rest of it went outside the Territory, either interstate or overseas.

To get the most out of every mining dollar, we need to be saying that, in return for the cutting of red tape, the mining industry should be spending as much of its money as possible in the Northern Territory. If we can lift that figure of 17% to 25%, we will have increased the figures - the amount of money spent by the mining industry in the Northern Territory - by 50% without any increase in activity. We need to be hard-nosed about it and tie the removal of red tape in with positive approaches to the greater involvement of local companies in mining operations.

Mr Speaker, that brings me to what appears to be a success story and, of course, that is that splendid Labor initiative: the Industrial Supplies Office.

Mr Dale: Your idea, was it?

Mr SMITH: That is right. It was.

I understand that the Industrial Supplies Office is currently engaged in negotiations with Western Mining over the Goodall Mine and the basis of its negotiation is to seek the maximum possible involvement of Territory firms in the establishment of Goodall Mine. I understand that those negotiations are going well. What I am saying is that those negotiations may well serve as a model for future negotiations with other mining companies. Mr Speaker, 17% is an extremely low figure. I realise that mining companies have many needs that cannot be met within the Northern Territory, particularly for mining machinery and infrastructure. However, I do not believe that we are limited to supplying 17% only. By making an effort, we can certainly increase that amount.

An area to which little attention has been paid is the increased economic power of Aboriginal groups. We now see Aboriginal groups making money and investing money into the full gamut of economic activities: tourism, the pastoral industry, the mining industry, retail and wholesale fields, and arts and crafts. Of course, the value of Aboriginal economic activity, unlike that of the mining companies, is that almost all money that Aborigines and Aboriginal organisations have is spent within the Territory. Aboriginal money is some of the hardest-working money around, with very little directly filtering outside the Territory. That new-found economic importance and independence is something that the Northern Territory government has to take into account when developing its goals for the next few years.

Mr Speaker, defence liaison is not referred to in the budget papers. However, I am pleased to note that, after long urging from the opposition, urging that in some instances has been derided by the government, money and effort is being expended on defence liaison. I congratulate the government for at last doing that. At long last, the government has learnt that the defence development of the Northern Territory can be enhanced through proper contact and liaison between our senior public servants, our local industry and the Defence Department. To that end, the briefing held on 4 September was a step in the right direction and one which will have a major, long-term economic impact. Defence measures now are bringing money and jobs into the Northern Territory and I hope to see, in future budgets, calculations paying close attention to the economic implications of defence liaison and federal defence upgrades. Any Treasurer who ignores a major industry and major spending coming into the Territory is not doing his job.

Mr Speaker, there is not time today to deal with all aspects of the budget. Those areas that I have not dealt with, particularly health and education services, will be addressed by my colleagues in due course. I have concentrated on looking at the overall impact of the decisions made and the management of the economy.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, the Northern Territory could be likened to a medium-to-large Australian company. It has a medium range budget of \$1200m and 15 000 public servants. That is roughly equivalent to a reasonably-sized Australian company. From that perspective, I have often thought that what we need in the Northern Territory is a position of managing director. The first task of that managing director would be to develop a 5 to 10-year plan. To do that, the managing director would need to identify very precisely what the goals of the organisation were. The resources required to reach those goals would need to be identified. The next step would be how to apply those resources most effectively to support the long-term goals. You would then divest yourself of those activities and involvements ...

Mr Coulter: Such as development, tourism, mining, primary production and manufacturing! As soon as we get a chance, we will sit down and do it.

Mr SMITH: I think the Treasurer has made my point. Thanks very much. To take up that interjection, those things are going to happen and they are happening. Sometimes they have something to do with the government and sometimes they are independent of government. The point is that, if the value of those economic activities to the Northern Territory is to be maximised, the government has to play a coordinating role. I am ashamed that the Treasurer cannot see far enough ahead to realise that the government needs to play a coordinating role to ensure that we derive the best possible advantage from all the economic activities undertaken in the Northern Territory. It is often said around the traps that the Treasurer is commercially illiterate. Quite clearly, by that interjection, he has demonstrated that to the satisfaction of us all.

Mr Speaker, in this plan, the managing director would have ways to report on and measure progress. He would regularly review methods and effectiveness in moving towards targets. This budget reveals none of those basic management practices. If we were a business, we would be a prime takeover target. We are rich in resources and personnel but, at this time, we are poorly managed. We are not providing our shareholders, the people of the Northern Territory, with the dividends they are entitled to expect. That is the basic failure of this budget.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it gives me much pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the 1987 Northern Territory budget. In particular, I would like to take the opportunity to respond to some of the comments by the Leader of the Opposition although I will not deal with all of the specifics because my ministerial colleagues will more than adequately answer some of the criticisms and comments that he has made.

However, I would like to deal with one broad matter. The Leader of the Opposition commented that we needed some sort of a plan and he set out a 6-point program. He alleged that this government does not have a plan and does not have a direction.

Mr Smith: Why not tell us if you have one.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am surprised he is not aware of the plans of the Northern Territory government or the direction in which we are heading because, during the last Northern Territory election, we issued the most comprehensive and detailed set of plans and objectives that any government has put before an electorate in an election campaign. I circulated widely a program called 'Directions of Government'. We have backed that up with detailed plans in the economic and social areas. We have restructured and shaped government towards meeting those objectives. This budget is the culmination of that program of direction and focus which is on schedule to meet the plans and the targets that we put before the Northern Territory people during the course of the election campaign. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I will send him a copy.

The program includes health plans, a plan to combat drug and alcohol abuse, a plan for respite residential care for the disabled, plans for education, housing, women, law and order and public safety, a community care plan, an energy plan, a fisheries plan, a land plan, an agricultural plan, a mining plan, a business and industry plan, a pastoral industry plan, a consumer protection plan, a tourism plan and a secondary industry plan. I

would ask the attendants if they would convey to the Leader of the Opposition a copy of all of these plans which includes a summary of where we are, the problems we are facing and how we intend to deal with those over the next 10 to 15 years. If he had addressed some of those issues during the election campaign, he would have done better than his miserable performance in the election and his performance in this House in the last 6 months.

Mr Speaker, Tuesday's Territory budget, which of course is the tenth balanced budget of a CLP government since self-government, differs in many respects from any of its predecessors. It is not the traditional department by department, function by function, catalogue of revenue and expenditures, new taxes and new spending programs and it is a far cry from being a horror budget, as it was described in the local press. It is an intelligent and well-reasoned response to the most difficult budgetary task ever to have faced a government in the Northern Territory.

Before proceeding further, Mr Speaker, let me outline for honourable members a little of the background on developments in the Territory economy since self-government because these have an important bearing on the directions and priorities of the 1987-88 budget.

In the most simplistic analysis, one could say that, at 1 July 1978, the Territory's fledgling economy was narrowly-based, fragile and vulnerable. In many respects, it was an artificial economy based on public sector money and simple exploitation of our natural resources. Local industry was overwhelmingly service-oriented and much of that was based on the building sector. There was precious little in the way of industries adding value to our basic resources by processing them into more profitable exports nor had there been any sustained attempt, prior to self-government, to bring about a diversified, balanced economy.

I have heard it said that, aided by a generous federal government, the newly self-governing Territory government was able to indulge in using federal money to provide facilities like schools, hospitals, and houses for public servants. CLP governments recognised this fact and set about the task of expanding the economy as quickly as possible. The only way that diversification could occur was with the aid and active intervention of an entrepreneurial government. We had to use government resources as the engine of growth so that government adopted the role of initiator of development over the whole range of industrial activities, especially tourism.

It has become fashionable recently for some people to criticise the government's early investment in tourism infrastructure but, in doing so, they overlook the degree to which the NT economy was exposed to the blustery winds of Canberra's so-called generosity. It is too easy to forget also that many developers were not prepared to take the risk of opening a greenfields industry in the Territory without an expression of faith from the most secure investor possible, the government. The government's strategy was the right one for the times and I am confident that history will judge it to have been so.

Consider for a moment what would have happened if we had not maintained faith in the future prosperity of tourism as an income-earner and employment-generator. If we had not actively supported the growth of the tourism industry in those early years, the Territory would have been ill-prepared for the booming tourist numbers we are experiencing this year. We created this boom in tourist numbers, through a major expansion of the marketing of the Territory as a tourist destination, to maximise use of the



infrastructure which had already been put in place. We did that, particularly over the last 12 months, with significant injections of funds and, for the first time in a few years, the reintroduction of television advertising throughout Australia and specific marketing campaigns to back up 'Crocodile Dundee' in America, Europe and throughout the world.

The spontaneous private-sector expansion in tourism facilities which is occurring across the Territory today is testimony to the private sector's ability to follow the path which was carved out of the wilderness by a CLP government. The government had to prime the pump. Tourism industry growth is now mainly self-generating and our role is reverting to the more traditional one of promoting the marketing of the Territory as a tourist destination and facilitating private investment in the industry.

This same government-backed infrastructural development occurred right across the Territory economy, in capital works, education, health and primary and secondary industries. In the early years, we were building an economy from scratch but what was appropriate earlier is not necessarily suitable for today. As recently as 12 months ago, the Territory was in grave danger of languishing on the economic vine. The Territory was coming off that first wave of post self-government development. Simultaneously, the federal government was pulling back its financial commitment to the Territory. Despite all our efforts to expand and diversify the Territory economy, we were still hit hard by sudden and drastic reductions in federal allocations. There is no clearer proof of that fact than what happened in May of this year. It was necessary, therefore, for some difficult decisions to be made, decisions that we knew would be unpopular with large sections of the Territory community.

We took those decisions. We have made a series of fundamental changes to the economic environment. Cost-cutting measures have been implemented. The process of deregulation and cutting red tape has begun. The public service has been restructured to produce a leaner, more efficient service and the whole process of government has been tightened by a variety of devices, focusing government on the task of building a real economy, not a government-driven economy. My government has had some hard economic decisions to make but we have not shirked that responsibility. Cabinet had a more difficult task than usual in framing this budget. We had much less flexibility in the allocation of our financial resources and the simple option of injecting massive amounts of government money into capital works to stimulate growth, whether they are needed or not, was an option no longer open to us. The Territory has now to live and survive in the real world, not the dreamy days of the lotus-eaters.

Fortunately, the government anticipated the situation now facing the Territory, although it was not possible for any government to anticipate the rapidity with which this new fiscal discipline was imposed on us. We recognised that, in the face of a dwindling financial commitment from Canberra and a changing internal economy, we had a limited number of options open to us through which to continue to provide the services considered essential by the community whilst maintaining government spending at a level which did not crowd out the private sector.

Our options were deficit budgeting, raising taxes, cutting services or a mixture of 2 or all of those. In short, we were caught between a rock and a hard place. Deficit budgeting is not an acceptable option to this government. Unlike other governments, which have fallen for the soft option of deficit budgeting, this government will not pass on to future Territorians debts

caused through a lack of fiscal discipline. That option was ruled out immediately and it left us with the unpleasant choices of cutting services and raising taxes and charges. Most of this was achieved in the Treasurer's June statement when services were cut by \$94m and taxes raised by \$6m. Given the gap we had to fill, we took the most responsible course and reduced our own demands on the community as much as possible before asking for more by way of revenue. Despite some small increases in charges, Tuesday's budget therefore contains no new taxes. We considered and rejected a land tax and a fire services levy, both of which were foreshadowed in the Treasurer's June statement. I believe it is a testament to our responsibility as a government that we cut our budget cloth in such a way that we have staved off the need for such new imposts.

Our attitude is that Territorians have already suffered the pain and now it is time to reap the gain which we know is there. The 1987-88 budget achieves its primary objectives. It balances, its increases in taxes and charges are kept to a minimum and it provides a framework for growth and development in the Territory in the coming year. It also looks beyond the short term to the wealth and income-generating diversification of the economy which is needed in the 1990s, to expand our tax base through building and diversifying our economy. It is the culmination of a series of steps taken in the past year to create smaller government. Government has been restructured and refocused on this new task.

Additionally and importantly, the budget is also a caring document because it addresses some of the major social problems facing the Territory. It fulfils election undertakings in the areas of respite care and facilities for the behaviourally-disturbed, correctional services for young people, increasing police operational strength and a new career structure and adequate financial rewards for nurses. Overall, it focuses and prioritises the work which the government has put in over the past year to restructure government, and it sets the stage for business to take advantage of the new activity which is beginning to occur in the Territory economy.

The message from the budget is that the Territory is growing up and we are on the verge of a new round of economic growth based on new development opportunities which have already been identified. Mr Speaker, you need go no further than the first page of the budget speech to find this message and I quote the Treasurer's words in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday:

It is time to break the shackles of the past and an overdependence on the whims of Canberra-based politics. Now is the time to leave behind the post self-government obsession about what is due to us from the Commonwealth. It is time for Territorians to take charge of the Territory's destiny.

Once, the Territory could be satisfied with handouts. Today we have to earn our place in Australia. Soon we will no longer be regarded as the mendicant child in the national economy. Instead we will be seen for what we are: a sturdy youngster contributing measurably to the nation's well-being.

Anyone who reads the budget speech will notice that we have not gone out of our way to criticise the federal government's financial treatment of the Northern Territory. This is a deliberate and clear signal that the days of Territory governments dwelling on Canberra's changing political and economic priorities are gone. While we will continue to resist Canberra's 'father knows best' attitude to the Territory, and to oppose discriminatory fiscal treatment, it is our firm belief that we will serve Territorians best if we

direct our energies principally towards creating our own opportunities for new growth and development. What Territorians want and what this government is about is finding opportunities rather than conflict.

This budget also contains a further measure of the maturing of the Territory economy. I refer here to a new budget document, Budget Paper No 6. This document is Treasury's detailed assessment of the current state of the Northern Territory economy and the immediate outlook for each industry sector. We started along the road to producing such a public assessment of the economy and future directions last year, and developed the process further in the early part of this year with the release of the detailed plans for industry and community services which I have just given to the Leader of the Opposition. Budget Paper No 6 provides the public with the same economic overview which Treasury prepares periodically for this government. It is a valuable source document for anyone interested in the state of the Territory and, along with the Treasurer, I strongly recommend this document as required reading for all persons interested in the future economic development of the Territory.

I turn now to areas that are in my own portfolio responsibilities. An important commitment made by my government during the recent Territory election campaign was to strengthen the powers of the Northern Territory Police Force to ensure effective law enforcement aimed at reducing the incidence of crime and disorder in our communities. Legislation to effect some of the necessary changes has already been introduced at these sittings and further changes will be considered by Cabinet in the near future. This budget makes provision for the recruitment of an additional 27 police officers this year as the first stage of the government's commitment to increase the size of the force by 53 officers over a 2-year period. Funds are also provided to allow recruitment of additional junior police rangers and to expand school-based community policing to all secondary schools by 1988.

I might say that the junior police ranger program is one of a number of initiatives I announced in the election as part of generating employment and training opportunities for young Territorians. The Leader of the Opposition failed to hear about that as he has failed to recognise the substantial steps that have been taken by this government, particularly in the last 12 months, to generate real job opportunities and training for young Territorians and to make Territory jobs available for Territory youth.

Facilities for police, fire and emergency services will be considerably upgraded. Stage 1 of the training centre at Berrimah for police, fire and emergency services will be completed this year and work on stage 2 has already commenced. Construction of a new \$4.1m central fire station in Iliffe Street has commenced and is expected to be completed by August next year. In Katherine, a new police, fire and emergency services centre costing approximately \$3.5m will commence construction this financial year. The budget provides full-year funding for a computerised national fingerprint facility, and it also announces the establishment this financial year of a 2-man gold squad to attack the serious problems of gold theft in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory has police, fire and emergency services of which we can be most proud. Our police force has a very high clear-up rate of major crimes and has been almost totally free of the allegations of corruption so sadly prevalent in other forces in this country. My government will continue to support the maintenance of law, order and public safety most strenuously, both by ensuring our officers have the necessary legislative backing to meet

their responsibilities adequately and by providing them with the necessary personnel, facilities and equipment. These sittings and this budget provide ample evidence of our resolve in this regard.

I would also like to make a few comments on the budget's provision of funds to advance the third part of our development trilogy: constitutional development. I do not wish to labour the point at this time, since I will be making a major statement and tabling papers related to statehood next week. Suffice it to say that the government's commitment to attaining equal rights for all Territorians remains firmer than ever. It is not good enough for the Northern Territory to remain, in constitutional terms, a second-class cousin of the states. We will accelerate our awareness campaign for statehood throughout the year.

Although we are not yet out of the economic doldrums, Budget Paper No 6 certainly gives us cause to be optimistic about the future, including the immediate future. The Treasurer has eloquently outlined the reasons for this optimism in his budget speech. Honourable members should be under no illusion that this budget heralds a fundamental transformation of the Territory's economy. The government-led economy of the past is at last giving way to one driven by the private sector. This has been a long time in the coming but, of course, it is the only sustainable base for a sound economic future. In the past year, this government has set in place the foundations for that future.

We have had the pain; now we can look forward to the gain. Already there are substantial indications that the gains are here. I will give a few brief examples. There was the doubling of gold production last year, its doubling again this year and a doubling again next year. This will result in an increase in government revenue from royalties, not from higher levels of royalties but from increased production. There are the significant benefits of the Territory's gas economy, including a gas stripping plant and opportunities for the supply of Territory gas to South Australia. There is the development of offshore oil and gas, especially the Jabiru and Challis fields which will be producing 60 000 barrels of oil per day by the end of this year. There is continued rapid expansion of tourism infrastructure and increases in visitor numbers. Tourist numbers are growing at an average annual rate of 13% and tourism now accounts for 4.6% of our GDP compared with 3.8% for Australia. There is a resurgence in the construction sector in Darwin this year with a least 5 major new buildings going up in the city centre, all private enterprise. There are further developments of our small but growing manufacturing sector which already had a high export orientation. There is the establishment of the Nortrade initiative and the opening of trade opportunities in South-east Asia, including our nearest neighbour, Indonesia. There is the development of further onshore support facilities for the fishing industry by making Darwin the base for an increasing part of the north Australian fishing fleet. There is close cooperation with the federal government to maximise benefits to the Territory flowing from the defence build-up in the north. Finally, there is the reopening of Katherine Meatworks, and continued growth in our rural industries such as cattle, buffalo, horticulture and the infant but emerging grain industry.

Mr Speaker, we cannot afford to become complacent, but the hard work we have done and the hard, and sometimes unpopular, decisions we have had to make are about to bear fruit. We have set the framework, the opportunities are there and our huge natural resources and our as yet largely-underdeveloped potential are only beginning to be tapped. This budget enables the government to shape and facilitate the development of the Northern Territory well into the 1990s. If Mr Keating's J-curve theory really does apply, then all

indications are that we in the Territory have finally turned the corner and are heading upwards. I commend the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, in his presentation of the tenth Territory budget on Tuesday, the Treasurer spoke of continued internal economic growth, strong export development and a future in which optimism will be fully justified. I wholeheartedly concur. The foundations have been laid for the Territory's continued growth and development during the next 10 years and we are ready to take charge of our own destiny. All Territorians should rightly feel secure in their future. This budget, framed in the toughest financial environment the Territory has yet faced, tackles the circumstances of reduced funding levels available to us in a most responsible manner. This House should pay tribute to the Treasurer and to Treasury for exceptional economic management in particularly difficult times.

Mr Speaker, I will now deal with the portfolio areas for which I am responsible. They are among the most exciting in government as they are development related, socially oriented and environmentally conservative.

The government has long regarded an adequate provision of housing and housing assistance as critical to a stable population and the continued growth and development of the Territory. Our record since self-government speaks for itself. Since 1978, a large share of government resources has been allocated to overcoming the housing shortage. This was necessary during a period of high levels of population growth and housing shortages across the geographical and climatic diversity of the Territory. Hand in hand with ensuring an adequate and affordable supply of housing to provide for a stable population base has been the recognition that the best use of the housing dollar for responsible government is to stimulate the growth of industry and a viable private sector.

In the interests of the community, policies have been developed aimed at encouraging the growth and activity of business in the fields of construction, development, real estate and home financing. As well, the government has displayed an overriding commitment to home ownership and introduced home loans and sales schemes which considerably increased the level of home ownership in the Northern Territory.

In the past, the Northern Territory housing market has been dominated by a number of features which have made it unique and which have very largely dictated the role of government in housing provision. They have certainly meant that the scope and nature of the government's housing activities have been very different from those of its state counterparts. These features have included high population growth, resulting from both natural increase and migration, a young and often transient population and large numbers of people in shared accommodation, in non-permanent structures or simply inadequately housed. All these factors combined to create a situation of high demand. As well, building costs were high as a result of a lack of local raw materials, limitations to and cost of transportation, limited skilled labour and the high cost of an imported work force, and the influences of climate on productivity, building codes and staging of construction. The combined effects of high demand and high cost of supply, together with a lack of older and cheaper housing stock, particularly in Darwin, created a situation where dwellings were scarce and rents high. Consequently, for many households renting in the private sector, for economic reasons, was not an option.

As I said, the public housing function has been a key element in the Territory's economic growth. By maintaining a role of providing housing for

all, the government aimed at fulfilling a need which could not always be met by a developing private sector. However, the changing profile of some of the Territory's unique features, particularly the ability of private enterprise to play its part in housing provision, now dictates a change in direction for public housing policies. Cutbacks in federal funding have also decreed a closer examination of housing policies to ensure that they conform more fully to traditional housing authority roles and that assistance is focused on those in need.

This year, the Housing Commission will add to its housing stock a total of 205 dwellings, a massive drop from the 1986-87 level of 614 dwellings and the even higher levels in previous years. Whilst demand has slowed somewhat over the last 12 months, it is the responsibility of government to put in place policies now that will ensure that adequate, affordable housing will be available to all in future years. The government's housing strategy for the future will be based on policies to encourage home ownership and to allow for housing assistance to all persons in need, whilst ensuring that precious government funding is not used to subsidise those who can be catered for adequately and rightfully by the private sector. It should be stressed that, for the industry to grow and the Northern Territory to prosper, every effort will be made to reduce the government's incursion into the private sector's domain.

I will now detail the major policies which will form the basis of the future direction of public housing in the Northern Territory. Owning their own home is still the ultimate aim of most Australians, an aim which has been virtually unachievable for a large number of people in today's economic climate. As I said before, home ownership has always been a high priority for the government which, since 1979, has provided finance for home loans with schemes which have contained some of the most generous loan terms available in Australia. The Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme has been in operation for 3 years during which time some 1400 loans, at a value of \$44m, have been made available to first-time home buyers in the Territory.

However, I have been concerned for some time about this scheme's continuing ability to cater for all home purchase needs in today's marketplace. For many prospective buyers, interest rates coupled with the cost of housing in the Northern Territory provide an insurmountable barrier to buying a home and, unfortunately, the cost of finance, along with other federally-determined economic policies, is beyond the control of this government. For this reason, I intend to introduce a new initiative for home ownership which will not replace the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme but operate in conjunction with it to increase availability of home ownership.

A working party is currently investigating options available for a shared-equity home ownership scheme to allow prospective home buyers to purchase an affordable share of a dwelling, using private sector finance. It is proposed that the government would provide finance for the remaining cost of the dwelling, with the purchaser paying rent on the government's equity. I expect to be in a position to provide honourable members with full details of the scheme later this year. The expertise and cooperation of private sector representatives has been utilised to the full in developing the terms and conditions of this scheme. In particular, private lenders are being consulted so that the interests of home buyers can best be met. I am pleased to say that cooperation has been evident throughout negotiations and that the housing industry overall is committed to the scheme.

A major and elemental change in public housing philosophy in the Northern Territory, but one which is traditional to southern housing authorities, is that public rental housing assistance is to be targeted more closely to those in need and for the duration of that need. In the past, Housing Commission rent levels have been well below those for similar dwellings in the private sector. This has been a financial incentive to more affluent people to look to the public sector to provide their housing and this has caused longer waiting times and hardship for those in genuine need. However, since 1984, commission rents have been set according to a formula which reflects the cost of operating the rental housing stock. The latest rise in commission rents reflects an overall increase of 10% which will restore some relativity to rents in the private sector, in particular for medium-density accommodation. Inevitably, the cost of running the public housing stock will continue to increase. This in itself will act as an incentive for higher-income tenants to seek alternative housing arrangements and not to remain in public housing at the expense of those who are less well off.

I want to stress that introduction of this change will not impose financial hardship on low-income tenants or those with fixed incomes. The government's rental rebate scheme will mean that pensioners will continue to pay a minimum of 15% of income towards rent and no tenants will be asked to pay more than, on average, 25% of their income. However, those tenants who can afford to pay a realistic level of rent will do so and will not be subsidised by the public purse. Obviously, increasing rents will lead to increases in the government rental rebate bill. As rents rise, more lower-income people will qualify for a rebate. Conversely, higher rents will mean that higher-income people will opt for home purchase or rent privately, hence the reduction in rental receipts. However, I consider this a timely move, coming as it does during a period when rents in the private sector are stable or decreasing and real estate represents a buyer's market.

By not trying to compete with the private sector, in the future public housing waiting times should be able to be contained at an acceptable level, allowing the Housing Commission to provide assistance to those who need it. The Industry Housing Assistance Scheme will also be reviewed to reflect a more careful targeting of assistance. I believe that eligibility criteria have to be reconsidered so that assistance is given only in instances where it will make a real contribution to economic development, and then for a limited establishment period only. Once the review is complete, I will inform honourable members of the direction the government intends taking in this matter.

In line with streamlining the general provision of housing, during this financial year the Housing Commission will be embarking on a program of upgrading older dwelling stock. This is designed to achieve consistency in dwelling standards, provide a better service to public tenants and reduce future maintenance costs. The timing of the program is such that it will generate work for the building industry despite the current downturn in housing demand. A number of unit complexes and older houses have been identified for rehabilitation and upgrading. Detached housing is generally of a good standard, however a small number of the older houses, which do not have facilities in line with current standards, have been identified for upgrading. It is estimated that this will affect a total of approximately 1500 dwellings. This financial year, \$6.8m will be spent on Darwin flat complexes and older houses, \$1.4m in Alice Springs, \$1.1m in Katherine and \$400 000 in Tennant Creek.

Past government policy in relation to increasing public housing stock has been to construct rather than to purchase additional dwellings. This was in recognition of the need to increase the total number of houses overall in times of acute housing shortages. However, the changing situation dictates a different approach. In future, a system of spot purchases will be utilised in certain cases. This will be used as a cost-effective measure in instances where established dwellings are selling for below construction cost. It could also be beneficial at times as a counter-cyclical balance to fluctuations when the market is depressed. I must emphasise that the impact on the marketplace will be closely monitored to ensure that there is no inflationary effect and that the Housing Commission's needs can be met in terms of adequate standards and value for money. It should be borne in mind that this is happening at a time when I intend that the government's overall housing profile will be diminishing significantly.

The 1987-88 spot-purchase program is an initial exercise with an anticipated purchase of approximately 21 dwellings. I am aware that a major shift to spot-purchase could be against the best interests of the whole building industry as well as that of the public. However, a small program of selective spot purchases could be beneficial in cushioning the impact of periods of market oversupply.

Other issues will also be looked at in relation to the housing needs of specific groups. As well as identifying groups whose housing is inadequate, unsuitable or unaffordable, alternative means of increasing housing access for low income-earners will be investigated, particularly some utilisation of private-sector dwellings. This could be a logical extension of the current rent-relief scheme which subsidises low-income tenants in private rental accommodation. The benefits of such a scheme are three-fold, allowing tenants a wider choice and greater autonomy in where and how they live, shifting financial resources from the public to the private sector and reducing the administrative load on government.

During 1987-88, the government will continue with its program of alleviating the acute Aboriginal housing shortage. This is the major area of housing need in the Territory. It has been estimated that 97% of the outstanding need is in the rural areas. Consequently, the majority of funding assistance will be provided to non-urban areas. Additional assistance will continue in the urban areas via public housing and construction and the non-discriminatory policies of the general rental program. Aboriginal housing programs are formulated in consultation with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission and are based on the 1985 needs survey which identified a shortfall of some 4176 dwellings. In all cases, ownership of dwellings is vested in the community in which they are constructed. The community takes responsibility for the ongoing management of accommodation, including allocation and maintenance etc. The allocation under the Aboriginal Housing Program in 1987-88 is \$12.5m. A construction program is proposed which will provide a total of 75 houses and 54 cabins or shelters in the northern region and 71 houses with an additional 65 cabins or shelters in the southern areas.

As well as the injection of capital funding for Aboriginal housing, an Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service is being established to assist Aboriginal people in handling housing problems. Two housing workers have been employed for the Darwin region and 1 in Katherine. The service is aimed particularly at Aboriginal newcomers to the urban environment, and will provide information on a full range of housing options and related services.



All of these programs are in line with the government's resolve to make best use of a dwindling funding supply. I am determined that the impact of cutbacks in federal funding will be cushioned as much as possible. Public housing policies will be focused on assisting those people who need help, and will not be used to compete with the private sector or to usurp its traditional housing role.

Mr Speaker, today I announced a major change to the building approvals system. From 1 October, building inspectors will also be responsible for granting clearances under the Planning Act. In recent years, the government has sought to establish a one-stop shop for building approvals within the Building Branch of the department. Currently, this facility allows builders to obtain plumbing and draining, building, fire safety and health approvals at the 1 counter. A separate inspectorate provided a planning clearance service and therefore required various inspections by 2 groups of inspectors. Under the new system, the building inspector will assess both building and planning requirements each time he inspects a development. It will make things easier for the builder in his dealings with the government and, in addition, the issue of certificates of occupancy will be even faster.

I turn now to tourism. In his budget speech, the Treasurer presented an economic outlook for the Northern Territory which dealt with the tremendous development opportunities now opening to us. Nowhere is this dramatic period of development more evident than in the tourism industry. It is most certainly a rags-to-riches story which epitomises the determination and foresight not only of successive Northern Territory CLP governments but also the many operators who put their faith in the potential of this region. The combination of government encouragement and incentive, supported by a highly professional team within the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, and entrepreneurial skill on the part of industry operators has resulted in a tourism success no other state or region of Australia could hope to match. Considering the fact that visitor numbers during 1986-87 reached 762 000, exceeding our projections, I am supremely confident that, in calendar year 1989, the Territory will welcome its millionth visitor.

Projections are of little value if they cannot be substantiated. To that end, I wish to quote from an independent document: the Queensland Development Report compiled by the Rider Hunt Group of consultants. This report is the bible of Queensland's construction and tourism industries. In its introductory comment, the report states: 'The Queensland tourism industry continues to forge ahead with giant strides. Total visitor nights in the year ended 31 March 1987 increased by 12.8% compared to a national increase of just 1.9%'. However, an accompanying graph shows that total visitor nights in the Northern Territory during the same period increased a massive 21%, almost double Queensland's increase and 10 times the national figure. If Queensland tourism is forging ahead with giant strides, then the Territory is leaping tall buildings in a single bound.

It was interesting to note that, of the 6 states and 2 territories, we were almost twice as far ahead of the 3 other regions - Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia - which recorded increased numbers of visitors in 1986-87 and 1987. New South Wales recorded a 1% increase in tourism during the year, Tasmania a fall of 9.3%, the ACT a fall of 8.8%, Western Australia a fall of 6.9% and Victoria a fall of 5.9%.

We can be justifiably proud of our record, and it is no wonder that both Queensland and Western Australia are approaching us with a proposal for a northern Australian regional tourism promotion. We will continue to cooperate

with our neighbouring states where appropriate. What we cannot afford to lose sight of is the fact that the Territory now is the market leader in Australian tourism. The results are on the board. We have come of age and yet we still have detractors in our midst - those who continue to try to denigrate what the Territory and Territorians have achieved. It grieves me to hear people like the member for Barkly and the Leader of the Opposition continuing to put our efforts down. I feel sorry for them. Anyone who cannot see past the red herrings and furbies relating to the Sheratons and Yulara is just plain stupid. The facts prove the few destructive critics wrong and show, once again, that they are living in the past. They are yesterday's men.

Mr Speaker, to give one example of what is happening in the real world, the Northern Territory Government Tourist Bureau in Darwin achieved a record sales performance for the year ended 30 June 1987. The Darwin bureau established annual sales of \$2.1m, exceeding its previous year record by 27%. Not to be outdone, staff at the Darwin bureau then turned around and set yet another record in July of this year by writing sales of \$501 699, which represented an increase of 77% on July 1986. I congratulate the Darwin bureau staff and our staff in all of the other offices around Australia and overseas. They are doing a magnificent job. The results are clear. To help ease the pressure on bureau staff, this budget provides for additional staff and computer support for reservations processing in Darwin as well as allowing the Tourist Commission to recruit an extra staff member in both the Frankfurt and Los Angeles offices.

The international component of our visitor market has seen the most dramatic increase. We will see at least a 35% increase in overseas visitor numbers this financial year, and that is a conservative projection. Gradually, international access to the Territory is improving and, recently, I held promising talks with our international carrier, Qantas, at which I put forward the Territory's case for increased attention. I must say that the Northern Territory government and Qantas have a good relationship. Qantas continues to be supportive and is extremely cooperative with our tourist offices worldwide, and I appreciate that assistance. Also, Qantas is well aware of the most recent developments in tourism infrastructure throughout the Territory and is showing keener interest as we continue to chalk up the results. The attention we are receiving throughout the world from promotional vehicles such as 'Crocodile Dundee' is obviously paying dividends and will continue to do so.

Let me make it quite clear to honourable members that the domestic Australian market is still our largest market and we are not neglecting it. This budget provides for the Tourist Commission to spend \$2.5m on national marketing activities this year, including a \$900 000 television campaign in all states which began in August and will finish in November. A complementary print media advertising campaign is under way, as most members will be aware as they read the metropolitan newspapers and national magazines. Internationally, the commission will spend \$894 000 on marketing activities.

This brings me to the appointment for the first time of a Japanese market coordinator who will soon be based in Alice Springs and who will work with Japanese and Territory tourist operators to ensure that the Japanese visitor is adequately catered for. On that note, we will soon have an extended presence in Nagoya and Osaka to complement the new Qantas service from Cairns. It is a great shame that, once again, the Commonwealth has seen fit not to upgrade Darwin's international airport facilities. An amount of only \$300 000 is allocated under proposed new works and apparently that is for a maintenance facility involving communications and electrical and mechanical equipment.

That allocation may not be spent this year because the federal government has yet to decide where the new terminal building will be placed. I suppose we should be thankful for the \$4.5m allocated to resheet the Alice Springs runway. I welcome the \$1.1m for extensions to the Alice Springs Airport terminal but, again, it is a drop in the ocean considering the traffic involved and the facilities urgently required.

We are paying special attention to the involvement of Aboriginal Territorians in tourism. Recently, the Tourist Commission produced a video and manual to assist Aborigines establishing tourism operations. That initiative - a first in Australia - was in response to the rapidly-increasing number of inquiries from individuals, groups and communities for information and help in becoming involved in the industry. Aboriginal Territorians have a very special role to play in tourism, and the government will continue to provide incentive and encouragement to this vital area.

The success of Aboriginal tourism initiatives such as Ipolera, Wild Goose Tours and Putjamirra on Melville Island, to name a few, is clear evidence of Aboriginal entrepreneurial skill. As a further example of the government's commitment to Aboriginal involvement in the industry, the Tourist and Conservation Commissions and the Department of Lands and Housing have identified a 40 ha site opposite the Berry Springs Wildlife Park for the development of an Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Centre. There is an enormous potential for this project to become a major tourist attraction. With the Berry Springs Zoo opening in December next year, there is an excellent opportunity for the government to create a tourism precinct at Berry Springs. A concept study outlining the commercial activities available in the wildlife park, together with the Aboriginal cultural centre which could be co-located, will be let later this month.

The pastoral industry throughout the Territory is being virtually forced into the tourism industry through sheer public demand. Almost nowhere, it seems, is now too remote for the adventurous traveller who will beat a path to the door of any place considered different. While some of the Top End's pastoralists are well-established as tourism operators, until now the more isolated properties of the Centre have been largely insulated from the tourist invasion. However, during a tour of several central Australian stations last weekend, I saw evidence of the increasing tourist traffic from Molly Clark's remote old Andado Station right across to the Uluru boundary. In the Gulf region, attention is being focused more and more on tourism and the Tourist Commission, in association with the Conservation Commission and the Sacred Sites Protection Authority, is producing brochures on the region's attractions.

I turn now to conservation. The Tourist Commission and the Conservation Commission work closely in several areas and that relationship will naturally strengthen as the government continues to open new parks and reserves to public access and recreation. The Conservation Commission is involved in some of the most exciting developments now taking place in the Northern Territory, including Kings Canyon, Cobourg Peninsula, Litchfield Park, Katherine Gorge and the Berry Springs Wildlife Park and Zoo, which I have already mentioned. The commission is working in every part of the Territory, such has been the nature of development during the last few years. The Treasurer has increased the commission's appropriation this year by \$2.17m to a total of \$30.1m. More than 10% of the commission's total budget is earmarked for capital works at the Berry Springs Wildlife Park, which will be an international standard facility when it is fully operational in 1989-90. This year, the commission will spend \$2.9m to complete the aviary, rainforest walk complex, nocturnal

house and lagoon bird hive. A further \$0.5m will be spent on building the tropical aquatic fauna display.

Mr Smith: What about the diurnal house?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, the diurnal display will cost \$0.5m. I am presently negotiating with several private enterprise people who are potential sponsors of the project.

Mr Ede: Read the script.

Mr HANRAHAN: That is not in the script.

Mr Speaker, one must see the project to appreciate fully its size and intricacy and I urge all honourable members to acquaint themselves with what I believe will be a world-class nature park. I pay tribute to the commission, the designers and the project managers. The park and zoo will become a feature tourist attraction for the Northern Territory and an important educational and research resource.

The crocodile continues to dominate much of the national and international attention the Territory receives. As recently as this week, once again we received world-wide publicity when Conservation Commission rangers captured one of the rarest reptiles in the world, an adult albino crocodile, in the McArthur River near Borroloola. Snowy McArthur, as it has been named, is an exceptional specimen and I am sure it will ultimately become a tourist attraction in its own right at the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. The commission has advised me that it has received an almost unprecedented number of media inquiries from throughout Australia and overseas about the capture. We will be taking extra special care of this crocodile. Already it has been valued, because of its rarity and condition, at between \$100 000 and \$500 000. The commission's Crocodile Management Program has already received international recognition at the highest levels. The fact that Snowy was caught on the first night of the current patrol at Borroloola proves the effectiveness of that program.

Mr Speaker, we enter another exciting new era today with the launch of the crocodile flesh industry. This industry, coupled with a developing market in skins processed from the crocodile stock bred on farms in the Top End, will ensure the reptile's success in the wild. The commission firmly believes that, by producing a marketable commodity in the crocodile, the temptation for some people to engage in illegal slaughtering, skinning and souveniring will be greatly reduced if not eliminated. As well, the exhibition of crocodiles at the Top End's 3 commercial farms as an integral part of the tourism industry will enhance the future successful conservation of the reptile.

The Conservation Commission will spend \$300 000 this year establishing trails, recreation facilities and toilets in Kings Canyon National Park, \$200 000 on similar facilities and a campground at Finke Gorge and \$150 000 on the restoration of historic buildings at the Arltunga Reserve. A further \$147 000 has been allocated this year to the conservation of Victoria Settlement and \$150 000 to Litchfield Park for facilities in stage 2 of Wangi Falls and stage 1 of Florence Falls.

The Bushfires Council's appropriation this year has increased slightly due in part to an unusually active fire season. Rural dwellers in the Vernon region particularly placed themselves at considerable risk by failing to take adequate protective and preventive measures during the pre-fire season. The bushfires service will take corrective action prior to the next season.

One of the most important issues in which the commission has been involved is the return to the Northern Territory of the world-renowned Strehlow Collection. As honourable members will be aware, negotiations with Professor T.G.H. Strehlow's widow have now been completed successfully. Dr Kath Strehlow has agreed to terms and conditions which will ultimately see the collection of records, sacred objects and artefacts securely housed in what will become the Strehlow Centre in Alice Springs. I wish to record my appreciation of Dr Strehlow's assistance in finalising the arrangements surrounding the collection.

It is, and has been for several years, the intention of the government to establish the Strehlow Centre to protect the collection as a whole and for it to be managed in such a way that the wishes of the Aboriginal people are fully respected. The government will appoint a board of management to plan and develop the centre and to advise on the care of this great resource. Members of the board will include a representative of Aboriginal people from central Australia. The Strehlow Centre will promote research into Aboriginal law and tradition and I am confident it will attract international attention as a centre for Australian studies. The Strehlow Centre will stimulate a greater interest in Aboriginal culture. I am sure all honourable members will welcome the successful conclusion to a long and involved series of events. Soon we will be able to honour the work of a great Territorian, Professor Ted Strehlow.

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

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time to complete his statement.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, the Museums and Art Galleries Board's appropriation this year has increased by \$1m to \$4.7m. A variation of \$893 000 under the heading of 'Other Services' is due to the fact that the board is sponsoring 2 bicentennial projects, the Macassan prahu and the Ghan Preservation Society projects. Further funds will be made available to establish a museum and art gallery in Alice Springs. The estimated expenditure for restoration projects connected with the Ghan Preservation Society at Alice Springs is \$799 000 this year. The Macassan prahu restoration project in Darwin has been allocated \$100 000.

Mr Speaker, the museums and art galleries in the Northern Territory - all 28 of them - provide a wealth of display, research, educational and cultural material. The Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences in Darwin and the smaller town and regional museums, displays and exhibitions form a major resource, not only for our younger generation, but for our visitors as well. It is a little known fact that the Darwin Museum and Art Gallery complex is still the Territory's leading tourist attraction, boasting a public attendance figure close to 300 000 per year. Therefore, it is an integral part of the tourism industry.

I turn now to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. I am pleased to announce a new initiative of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in conjunction with custodians and the Northern Territory Tourist Commission which I am sure will prove to be a valuable educational and informative facility. The authority's director will soon present proposals to me and to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission regarding the publication of a strip map and the establishment of a system of signposting of significant

sites. Planning of both proposals is under way and I would expect at least the first stage of the work to be completed this financial year.

I see the proposals of the Sacred Sites Authority as being of major significance, particularly in light of my earlier comments regarding the increase in tourism and the upsurge in the numbers of motoring holidaymakers travelling the Stuart Highway. The authority believes that, by undertaking a program of information, the general public's appreciation of Aboriginal sites of significance will be greatly enhanced.

For the benefit of honourable members, the program will work something like this. A strip map will be produced identifying sites at various locations close to the highway and also off the beaten track. A code will appear beside the location, with a number and corresponding information about landscape values, botanical details, a history of the site and a brief explanation of why the site is significant to Aborigines. Signposts at the actual site will carry a code number corresponding with that on the strip map identification. In this way, travelling motorists will have access to basic information before driving to the sites.

The plan is to integrate Aboriginal information, natural environment descriptions and historical data. In short, the program will go a long way towards making travellers more aware of the significance of the surroundings they pass through. It will make their trip more meaningful and interesting and, hopefully, it will encourage them to remain a little longer in various areas. Motoring holidaymakers, particularly family groups, will be able to make diversions from otherwise uninteresting and even boring sections of the highway. The result will be that much of the misinformation regarding Aboriginal sites of significance will be removed. Instead of being secret, many will become readily accessible. Registered sacred Aboriginal sites will continue to be respected, of course, and the authority will exercise discretion in identifying such locations. Following my recent visit to Borroloola with the Chief Executive Officers of the Conservation Commission, the Tourist Commission, the Department of Lands and Housing and the Sacred Sites Protection Authority, the track into that town from the Stuart Highway has been selected as the starting point for the new program. I commend the initiative and the cooperation of various government agencies in its development.

The new initiatives and continuing programs I have outlined are the direct result of the sound financial discipline laid down in the Treasurer's budget. While we are certainly not out of the woods yet, we have reason to be firmly optimistic about our future. The development now taking place in the Northern Territory in tourism, mining and other sectors demonstrates that, despite the state of the national economy, we are in a position to become this country's pacesetter. We have entered a new development-led recovery phase which will secure a bright future for all Territorians. I commend the bill.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in the 1987-88 budget debate in the knowledge that it has already been picked apart by the Leader of the Opposition and that, no doubt, his colleagues will bash it further as the sittings wear on. I rise also in the knowledge that, had the budget included a brand new car for every Territorian, the headline in the NT News would refer in letters 6 cm high to the prospect of a horror road ahead. Such newspaper headlines are hard to accept. I know newspapers have to be sold and those of us who have chosen public life are used to the media making mountains out of molehills, but readers deserve better than Tuesday's ridiculous headline in the NT News which described this \$1500m split-up of expenditure as a 'horror budget'.

Turning to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, his nitpicking is becoming irrelevant. The opposition will not give praise where praise is due but I am happy to do so. To hand down a budget in which expenditure has been cut by 10% in real terms, whilst leaving essential services virtually unscathed, is a magnificent achievement and the Treasurer deserves the congratulations of all Territorians for his achievement. This opposition of doom and gloom just cannot help itself. To it everything is negative, an indication of its extremely myopic view of public life.

While I am on budgetary matters, I will take the opportunity to congratulate the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, on what seems at first glance to be a responsible budget for Australia. Clearly, there remain areas in which the federal and Territory governments must agree to disagree. These include inequitable treatment of the Northern Territory in federal government disbursement of funds to the states. However, the federal budget is substantially better than expected in many respects and it would be petty to criticise any part without regard to the total outcome. After all, since the Whitlam era, we have wanted federal governments to live within their means. The Territory government has done that consistently and continues to do so, and it is about time members opposite recognised that fact.

Of course, there have been mistakes in the past 9 years. It was necessary to build and diversify the Territory economy quickly and not every project was an unqualified success. But, looking at what we have achieved in those 9 years, I am proud to have been part of that achievement. Yet the Leader of the Opposition has again flogged his own story on the Sheraton Hotels. His version of the story is a subject I must dwell on for a moment. We heard it again today. There is another side, the side we call the full story but, unfortunately, the full story does not always make headlines.

Mr Speaker, we can quickly cover the story about Territory government funding of hotels because the government's funding is, in fact, an investment which, in due course, will pay off handsomely. Annual make-up payments are made to the Sheraton Hotels to prevent losses occurring in the case of the Sheratons and Yulara, but this arrangement is due to end in something like 10 years time when the hotels will be sold and the government's money will be repaid. The Yulara resort financing arrangement also ends in some 10 years time, at which time the resort, with its value projected at \$270m by then, will be owned by the TIO. In other words, it will be owned indirectly by the people of the Northern Territory. When these arrangements come to an end, the government and the taxpayers will not be out of pocket.

But what have we achieved for our investment over that period, Mr Speaker? For a start, there was construction activity worth \$200m, undertaken without the government footing the bill at the time, which simply would not have happened without the government's commitment and foresight. Once the hotels were built, 450 permanent jobs were created injecting a wages bill of some \$140m into the Territory economy over 10 years. Another \$50m will flow to suppliers of goods and services to the hotels and \$20m will be paid for power and water. The Territory government will receive \$7m in payroll tax and liquor licensing fees. The Commonwealth will obtain \$32m in income taxes, and a fortune in rates, company taxes and other taxes and charges will flow to all levels of government, including local government. But that is not all, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition is noting all this information. Perhaps then he will not feel such a pressing need to bore us with his version of the Sheraton story over and over again.

As a result of the primary multiplier effect, another 360 jobs are created for Territorians employed in providing goods and services to the hotels, their staff and their families. Their wages will be spent in the Territory, thus creating even more jobs. As we all know, Commonwealth payments to the Territory are based largely on population so the hotels, directly and indirectly employing perhaps 8700 people and supporting another 1000 family members, will be responsible for an additional \$70m-odd in federal government funding over a 10-year period.

What do we have, Mr Speaker? For a relatively small investment each year, over a relatively long period of time, 10 years, this government has created \$200m in construction activity and 800 permanent jobs. We have sold power and water worth \$20m and created revenue of well over \$40m for all levels of government. Perhaps \$200m in wages and salaries will flow through the Territory's economy over 10 years and, by creating those jobs, we have increased the basis of Commonwealth funding to the Territory.

I have not said a word during that little spiel about the Sheraton Hotels and Yulara themselves, about the tourists and business travellers, the type of people who stay at these first-class hotels, and the type of money such people spend during their stay in the Northern Territory. Yulara and the Sheraton Hotels were initiated by the Territory government because we could not promote the Territory's tourist potential until there was adequate accommodation at all levels, from campgrounds right through to 5-star hotels. In saying that we should not have committed taxpayers' funds to support construction of the hotels, the Leader of the Opposition overlooks the very basic fact that we will get our money back. He also conveniently overlooks the fact that, without the government's initiative, we would not have the tourists or the assets and we would not have an additional \$30m a year flowing through the Territory economy.

For 9 years now, I have sat in this Chamber listening to carping criticism from members opposite. The members themselves change regularly, but the whingeing never does. According to the opposition, this government has not done a thing right in 9 years. We do not know how to run the Territory. Our business dealings are all rorts and the whole thing will come tumbling down around our ears at any minute. How many times have we heard it? Yet miraculously, the Territory has changed in those 9 years, changed dramatically and changed for the better. Sometimes I wonder whether opposition members ever get out to see what is happening in the Territory today because, if they ever did, they might be a little bit more constructive in their attitudes.

If honourable members had visited Casuarina Shopping Centre over the last week or so, they would have caught the last few days of a 2-week promotion of Territory Fresh produce - fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the Northern Territory, in many cases within a 30 minute drive of Darwin. The products on display at the Territory Fresh promotions included lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage, squash, tropical fruits, melons, onions and a host of other items which could not have been grown here without the government's past support and encouragement for horticulture. In Katherine and central Australia, the story is much the same. A variety of top quality produce is now being grown which years ago would only have been a dream or the occasional achievement of the odd farmer. Today, such production is commonplace.

We have had a 4250% growth in the value of Territory horticultural produce since self-government, and that was not the result of chance but the result of dedicated effort by both government researchers and farmers, and of a budgetary commitment by the government to follow it through despite the fact



that, in earlier years, research appeared to be simply an excuse to waste money. Dairy foods, eggs, poultry, meat, fruit and vegetables are now produced in the Northern Territory in considerable quantities and we are self-sufficient in many of them, at least for most of the year.

The point I am making is not so much where we are today, but how far we have come in 9 short years and, really, we are only just getting on our feet now. In those 9 years, the Territory has consistently outpaced the rest of Australia in terms of economic growth, employment growth and population growth. The unemployment rate has remained consistently lower than that for Australia as a whole. It has remained almost static over the past 9 years, while the number of employed has risen from 44 000 to over 71 000. Private sector employment has grown at 3 times the rate of public sector employment over that period, an indication of both where we have been and where we are headed in the future. It is very important that persistently we see figures showing that the growth in the private sector is far outstripping the growth of employment in the public sector, at least from our point of view on this side of the House.

The value of exports from the Territory has risen from \$350m at the beginning of the decade to \$750m this year while the value of imports has declined over the same period. The Territory is also playing an important role in increasing trade with South-east Asia. We are doing what the rest of Australia is just talking about. In the past year, exports to ASEAN countries from the Territory increased by 221%, compared to the overall Australian increase of just 10%.

The number of tourists has risen from 500 000 to 800 000 in 3 years and is estimated to exceed a million in 2 or 3 years from now. Revenue from tourist accommodation has quadrupled in 8 years. The value of primary production has risen by over 50% in the past 6 years. Horticultural production, as I said earlier, is up 4250% since self-government and grain production is up 300% in 5 years. Speaking of grain production, the last 2 of those 5 years were very unkind to the farmers as far the weather was concerned. Hopefully, the coming year will prove more profitable for them. New mines are opening up so regularly that people do not even seem to notice them any longer. New hotels have been built at Darwin, Jabiru, the Cobourg Peninsula and Kings Canyon, and the Alice Springs casino will be expanded at a cost of some \$14m. All of this is coming from a private sector with real confidence in the future of the Northern Territory. If the government is doing it wrong in the eyes of the opposition, all I can say is that we should be doing more of it.

This budget will be seen as the turning point for the Territory in coming to grips with a hostile federal government which has been fiscally vindictive over the past 3 years. The tenth budget since self-government sees the Territory lean, but in good shape and looking forward to the future. In the past 9 years, we have laid the foundations for sustained economic growth which will see us through into the next century. We have provided the infrastructure within which the private sector can get on with the job of creating wealth and employment. The government will continue to facilitate the creation of economic activity, and this is an excellent budget in terms of that scenario. While the overall budget has been reduced, consequently reducing the public sector impact on the Territory's economy, ongoing programs designed to encourage and foster sound economic activity will continue.

Within the Department of Industries and Development, the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign remains the major budget item. The campaign moves north this year and much of the southern part of the Territory should be

declared provisionally free of tuberculosis at the end of this year. When the campaign terminates in 1992, we can anticipate a pastoral industry on a sounder and more efficient footing than ever before with better access to markets, improved beef quality and better animal husbandry. With the increasing demand for lean beef in South-east Asia, the Territory pastoral industry will be ideally placed to capitalise on our proximity to those markets and on the higher quality beef which will become available as a result of the BTEC program.

The buffalo industry is at a crossroads in the Northern Territory, and I will be saying a little more about this in a ministerial statement later during these sittings. The Northern Territory government has embarked on a marketing campaign to increase the value of buffalo for human consumption in southern states. The buffalo industry is uniquely important for the Territory because Queensland and Western Australia, the states with tropical regions, do not have buffalo numbers on the same scale. We see the industry playing a very important role in the Territory economy in the future.

Australian exports of goat meat for human consumption have also risen dramatically in recent times and I believe that the forecast future demand for goat meat worldwide is such that it cannot be met.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is called chevon.

Mr PERRON: The member for Koolpinyah will be keen to hear about these developments and she will also be aware that the Northern Territory government has quite an extensive research project on goats at the Coastal Plains Research Station. We are trying to assemble information as rapidly as we can on all sorts of matters, from the most suitable pastures to the most suitable types of goats, so that we can encourage the private sector to take over from the government and become involved with goats in a big way.

The crocodile industry is another of our animal industries which is quite often in the news. Today, I will be launching crocodile meat for human consumption in the Northern Territory. Recently, permits have been issued so that the Territory's crocodile farms can begin to exploit the crocodiles for their skins, meat and other parts of them that are in demand, and the industry is about to become fully commercial.

Support for other areas of the broad agricultural sector will continue, buoyed by the encouraging results seen in horticulture, cropping and animal industries over recent years. Horticultural activity is a major success story and the ongoing research program will continue to identify the best crops for growth and for market and the best land on which to grow them. Down the line, we can anticipate significant improvements in both value and variety of horticultural produce in the Territory. The list of products that we can now grow commercially in the Northern Territory is quite impressive and, as a result of further research, is growing all the time. Honourable members will be keen to know that, this year, we are anticipating a harvest of 4000 t of rockmelons in the Northern Territory of which 3800 t will be exported from the Territory. It is one of those very attractive industries for us, and it is an industry that is only about 3 years old.

The cropping industry is in its infancy. We began the best part of 200 years behind the rest of Australia in determining whether crops could be grown successfully and which crops could best be grown. But, between 300 000 ha and 1 000 000 ha in the Territory has been identified as suitable for crop production, and it has been estimated by my department that, if all

goes well, there could be 100 000 ha under crops, worth \$100m through value-added production, within a decade.

This year, the grain industry is expected to return about 10 200 t and, as I mentioned earlier, it has not been a good year from a weather point of view. It is very pleasing to see such activity and faith and confidence in the future. I was in Katherine the other day, and witnessed the virtual commissioning of a big irrigation scheme on a private farm. The irrigator can water 106 acres in a sweep, and that sort of activity is very impressive. We will be planting several pilot plots of kenaf this year in an attempt to gain further agronomic information on this crop as we further our evaluation of the world kenaf market with a view to taking it on more seriously in the future.

The future of the fishing industry has never looked more promising than it does at present, both with regard to the direct fishing industry and to the support industries. The new mooring basin will facilitate the creation of a full fishing infrastructure for the Territory, from maintenance and supply services to processing of the product. The government has done its part, and it is now up to the private sector to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the existence of the mooring basin. Of course, the government will facilitate this development as it has done in the past. In other words, we will make it as easy as possible for the private sector to get on with the job. In the near future, the government will be calling for applications for pearling licences in the Northern Territory. We see an opportunity here for a small number of licences to be issued which will put the Territory back into the pearling business. We have not been in it in a big way for some years as far as collecting of pearl shell off the Territory coast is concerned. We have been involved through the production of cultured pearls.

The department is having talks with people about the installation of a fish-processing facility in Darwin and we are also about to commission an oyster farming study to investigate the Northern Territory's potential for oyster culture. I am pleased to advise honourable members that, in the budget, funds are allocated for additional buy-back of barramundi licences to try to continue to reduce the impact of the commercial barramundi industry on that fishery.

The potential of commercial aquaculture will continue to be investigated, specifically targeted at barramundi and prawn production. Results to date have not been as successful as the government had hoped, but we cannot and will not resile from potentially important developments simply because they do not meet with immediate success. A barramundi hatchery is being established now to initiate research on this exciting project. If the lack of immediate success were the only guideline to be used, we would never do anything. Indeed, if the opposition used that guideline in its own affairs none of its members would be sitting in the House at all. There are few enough of them as it is. Another interesting item in relation to fisheries is a proposal to establish studies in giant clam culture in the Northern Territory with a view to that becoming an industry as well.

The small business sector will receive substantial assistance in a number of areas with the aim of making business easier and enhancing business opportunities. The government has announced a sweeping review of red tape and regulation and hopes to reduce significantly the amount of regulation that is perceived to be hampering enterprise. However, it was disappointing to note that, after the first week of an advertising campaign, we had received quite a poor response from the private sector. Never mind, the small business sector must take the issue on. I am sure it will assist the government in coming to

grips with areas of difficulty. Other assistance to small business includes the formation of the Industrial Supplies Office, a joint venture between the government and private sector designed to ensure that the capabilities of local businesses are made known to purchasers and to ensure, wherever possible, that local business beats its interstate competitors. The establishment of a single Supply and Tender Board will also assist small business in the Territory. Included on the board are the Director of the Industrial Supplies Office and a private-sector representative, which will further assist in ensuring that local companies are given every opportunity to win government supply contracts.

It is pleasing to note the development of Aboriginal enterprises and joint ventures in the Northern Territory. In recent years, enterprises and projects in the pastoral industry, fishing, retailing, arts and crafts, clothing manufacture, tourism, construction, contracting and broadcasting have been initiated. Officers from my department have already held discussions with the Northern and Tiwi Land Councils to identify additional business opportunities for Aboriginal communities. I understand possibilities so far canvassed include the handling and processing of trepang, sawmilling and timber product manufacturing, fishing and meat processing. Honourable members will be aware of the specific involvement of central Australian Aborigines in new tourist projects such as the Kings Canyon development and of the proposed tourist development on the Cobourg Peninsula involving the Gurig people. Other projects near Pularumpi and Point Hurd have been successfully negotiated. I believe these are important industry developments. They are important to the Aboriginal people and important to the Northern Territory economy. They are certainly important to the Northern Territory government. I anticipate there will be other industry opportunities for Aboriginal people including joint venture arrangements, particularly in tourism and mining. My department is well placed to assist these business and industry developments.

I turn now to manufacturing. Trade and manufacturing are closely linked in their importance to the Territory's future. Members are aware of my enthusiasm for trade with South-east Asia and I am delighted to see that Australia as a whole has woken up to the absolute necessity of increasing that trade. The Territory is ahead of the rest of Australia with a 221% increase in Territory exports to South-east Asia over the past year and the government will continue to support trade development through Nortrade. Anyone who has dealt with the South-east Asian business and public sectors will realise that it takes a great deal of time and hard work to gain a foothold in that vast market. There is great loyalty towards traditional suppliers among countries to our north. Even though this is a bad thing when you are battling to enter the market, it is a very good thing once your links have been established. Recent years have been spent forging those links and our efforts over that time are now coming to fruition.

A Darwin builder is currently tendering on a \$2m construction camp in Brunei following a personal invitation to tender from Brunei's Minister for Development, Dr Ismael. The company is also expected to be awarded contracts to build homes as part of Brunei's current 5-year plan which calls for the construction of some 5000 new houses. Another Darwin manufacturer has entered into a joint venture with a major Singapore company to fabricate and market aluminium building products throughout South-east Asia. Yet another Darwin company is designing and supplying commercial kitchen equipment to South-east Asia and a local fashion designer won a substantial order recently from a giant Singapore retailer.

Container loads of Australian products are exported through the Port of Darwin by a Darwin-based exporter to stock Brunei's supermarket shelves and the same exporter plans to expand the service to include other islands to our north. Territory food products, both fresh and processed, are being exported. Live cattle, goats and buffalo are exported and crocodile skins are about to be exported. Many other Territory companies are now negotiating agency and joint venture arrangements in South-east Asia as a result of Nortrade's work. This year's budget allocation for Nortrade will ensure that even more opportunities are brought to the attention of the Territory business sector and a full program of trade exhibitions and promotional activities is programmed in the budget.

The Trade Development Zone is now up and running with 4 businesses in place and 3 others having signed formal lease and operational agreements. It is not my intention to inflate expectations about the TDZ and it is not my intention to make any comment about particular companies which may or may not set up in the zone at some time in the future. The fact is that the Trade Development Zone is operational with 4 companies in place. It is a fact that South-east Asian investors have established businesses in the zone, importing technology not only to the Territory but to Australia. It is a fact that jobs for Territorians have been created in the zone and that more will be created in the future. Most importantly, it is a fact that products made in the Trade Development Zone in Darwin are now being sold in high-class department stores in New York and Sweden with the 'Made in Australia' label proudly attached.

I have said consistently that the Trade Development Zone is a long-term project which should not be judged on the short 2-years that it has been there. Too many people have been prepared to judge it early, I must admit, assisted by some premature announcements which were made in good faith by the government before we realised the time delays involved in the process of bringing foreign investors into Australia. As I said before, immediate success is not the criterion on which development in the Northern Territory should be judged, nor will it be by this government. The Trade Development Zone, its initial development phase largely behind it and its operational phase now under way, will become an important part of the Territory's manufacturing sector and of the Territory's move into export markets. Its budget allocation this year reflects its operational nature in funding and a full marketing program designed to attract even more new industry, new jobs, new technology and new economic activity for the Northern Territory. The budget also provides for additional factories to be constructed in order to cope with demand.

In relation to the Trade Development Zone, I must take up an issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that the Trade Development Zone seemed to have consumed \$19m so far for a return of a mere \$120 000 which is shown in this budget. Mr Speaker, what a comparison! \$19m has been spent over more than 2 years in constructing assets in the zone and in marketing, staffing and promoting the zone, and the Leader of the Opposition wants us to compare that figure of \$19m favourably with \$120 000 for its income in its first operational year.

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

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Minister for Industries and Development be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, what honourable members need to bear in mind when reflecting on the Leader of the Opposition's comments are the following facts. Over \$4m of the \$19m he spoke about has been spent on roads external to the Trade Development Zone. That involves roads and other services, including electricity, water and so on, which serve the whole of East Arm. This brings the figure to under \$15m. There are \$8.5m worth of assets in the Trade Development Zone in the form of subdivisions, factories and offices and so on. Those are assets of Territorians, having been built using Territory taxpayers' funds. Yet to hear the Leader of the Opposition, we would get the impression that that money has been wasted, that a cheque was written out and all we have for it is a pile of ashes.

I would like to point out very briefly to honourable members, particularly those in the opposition, a couple of the incentives that were brought to my attention recently, which are provided at a zone similar to ours, which was established recently in Thailand. This is the sort of competition we have but, despite this competition, we are attracting customers and we will continue to do so. We have some benefits that are different from those offered to people in Thailand. The following are from a list of incentives that are published in this trade zone which is called the Ta Phut Zone. An import ban on competitive products, which is a pretty good incentive. We cannot offer that to people in our trade zone, because we do not control Australia's tariff levels but, in Thailand, the authority can arrange for an import ban on competitive products. The chairman of the Ta Phut authority has the power to order any tax relief measure or other action that will benefit the project; exemption of company tax for 3 to 8 years, and permission to carry forward losses for up to 5 years; exemption of up to 5 years on taxes on goodwill, royalties or fees remitted overseas; exclusion from taxable income of dividends during tax holidays; 50% reduction on company tax for 5 years after the tax holiday; and that the cost of transport, electricity and water can be doubled and used as a deduction.

Mr Speaker, those are the sorts of incentives that are offered in Thailand to the same type of people that we are trying to attract into our trade zone. However, it is interesting to note that we do have benefits that are attracting people and we have people from Thailand coming to consider the establishment of their industry in our trade zone. The fact that we cannot match those incentives offered by Thailand, which is a country and has the ability to control its own taxes, makes a significant difference between the 2 of us because we have the ability to affect only state-type taxes.

The Trade Development Zone is an investment in the future. It is one that took faith and political courage to establish. I guess we are having to use a bit of that political courage now in riding through the antics of the Leader of the Opposition, his persistent criticism of the trade zone and his claim, before the zone was 1 year old, that we should sell it because, to his mind, it had not worked. Honourable members need to bear in mind that the member for Casuarina turned the first sod at the trade zone in March 1986, not much more than a year ago.

As one of the 6 targets that he put forward that this government should consider in the budget, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'We should set a goal to assist private enterprise to take up opportunities in the Northern Territory'. Mr Speaker, we have a goal to assist private enterprise take up opportunities in the Northern Territory and the Trade Development Zone is doing exactly that. Formerly, the Northern Territory Development Corporation did exactly that; it assisted private enterprise to take up opportunities in the Territory. The Sheraton Hotels are a perfect example of the Territory

government assisting private enterprise to move into the Territory and so is Yulara. I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the prime goal that he said we should set for ourselves has, in fact, been in place and operational for some years.

The government has developed the infrastructure for industry and the private sector can now get on with the job. We have made the contacts and the opportunities for Territory businesses to see beyond our limited population base to the markets of Australia and South-east Asia. We have developed the research and information bases on which the private sector can capitalise. We have made the roads, encouraged the airline services and upgraded the Port of Darwin to facilitate exporting to the stage at which \$100m in exports now passes through the port every year. Last year, one local shipper alone carried cargo worth \$280m into the Asian region from Darwin.

The budget, which will substantially reduce the public sector's slice of the Territory's economic cake, will have benefits for the Territory of 1987 and for the Territory of the future. At a time when every man and his dog in Australia is crying out for real reductions in government expenditure, we have done it. We have set the scene for a period of strong growth in the Territory's economy, and I trust that I have given an indication today of some of the areas in which that growth will occur. There will remain those who feel that we could be doing it better and those who will pick through the budget to find the expenditure of a few dollars here and a few dollars there with which they will not agree. I sincerely ask those people to look at the overall picture and to compare where we were in 1978 to where we are today. I ask them to share with me the excitement of where we are going as Territorians, all of us with the same goals in mind. There is justification for considerable confidence in the future of the Territory and I suspect that, when we look back on both budgets handed down this week, they will be seen as a turning point in the economic history of the Northern Territory. I commend the Treasurer for his budget.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, this budget certainly does reflect the economic constraints that have been placed upon all Australians by the federal government. The Treasurer's May statement gave some indication of the line the government intended to pursue in relation to public expenditure and this budget is further proof that the government intends to carry that through.

Budgets also provide a means of reflecting upon the achievements of government over the previous 12 months. You can generally go through the budget and see what the government has achieved over the last 12 months and how it has continued in comparison with previous years. Budget Paper No 2, the statement of revenue sources, should be looked at in the context of last year's estimates of what the NT government hoped to generate through domestic taxes and internal fund-raising as opposed to payments from the Commonwealth, to see what was actually achieved. The discrepancies can be put down as being a mere mistake but it is certain that the Northern Territory government failed to achieve its targets during the last 12 months. One glaring example which I note this year, because the estimate is slightly more credible, is income from the TAB. It was proposed last year that income from the TAB would increase by something like 300%. That was absolutely unachievable and, this year, the estimate is closer to something achievable. I hope that next year's statement of revenue sources, representing the actual achievement, will be closer to the estimates.

I want to make a number of other observations on this budget and they are comments rather than criticisms. On 23 January this year, the Chief Minister said there would be no increases in taxes and charges this year. He later said that what he meant was the 1986-87 financial year, not the entire 12 months of the 1987 year. Whatever his intention, it was clearly stated, on at least 2 occasions, that there would be no new increases in taxes and charges this year. In fact, there have been increases in taxes and charges, albeit they are not huge and their absolute contribution to inflation will not be dramatic. Nevertheless, they are significant enough to push the Northern Territory's inflation rate into double digits. There is no escaping that.

Mr Coulter: We will see.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Treasurer can say that and I hope that, in 12 months time, I am proven wrong. I hope that the Treasurer can rise in this Assembly in 12 months time and say: 'The member for Nhulunbuy was clearly wrong. Our inflation rate has remained below double digit inflation'. There is no reason to suspect that these are the only increases that will be imposed on Territorians over the next 12 months - the federal government may also increase charges on Territory people. I am not singling out any particular body. The facts of life are that there is a very real prospect that the Northern Territory will have double digit inflation. I appreciate that the impact of that will be mainly psychological. After all, moving from 9.7% through to 10.1% is only 0.4%, but the psychological impact on the community should never be underestimated.

Once again, we have the Treasurer's classic balanced budget. The figures in the documents provided relate to revenue provided by the Commonwealth or raised within the Territory. There is no indication of the borrowings that the Northern Territory intends to undertake this year. I assume that borrowing will occur to the extent that the Loans Council permits, and I understand that is some \$63m. A budgetary concept that I have never been able to fathom is that, while we are still borrowing money, we are still able to balance budgets. I am quite sure that housewives and others in the Northern Territory wish that they could balance their budgets simply by borrowing more money.

I imagine that we will borrow \$63m this year. I appreciate that it will be a decrease of \$20m on last year's figure simply because the Loans Council has decreased the limit. Our balanced budget will be achieved by borrowing money. I have never been able to balance my budget that way but apparently governments can.

Mr Hatton: Home mortgage.

Mr Smith: You cannot buy houses with mortgages. You should know that.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I do have mortgages but I do not keep borrowing money to pay back those mortgages. That is precisely what the Northern Territory is doing: it is taking out loans to repay loans. The Chief Minister is deliberately misinterpreting what I have said.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister said that his political organisation issued a number of statements which indicated the direction of the Northern Territory.

Mr Dale: So does yours. Whose do you like best?



Mr LEO: I would prefer to see it in terms of what is achievable. I want something far more practical than the harebrained schemes that many ministers in this government have undertaken.

Be that as it may, there is one aim which is particularly pertinent to the Northern Territory. This government hopes to achieve a total population of some 200 000 in the Northern Territory by the turn of the century. A remarkable aspiration! Indeed, I think it is perhaps achievable. This government intends to create 1000 new jobs per annum between now and the turn of the century to achieve this growth in population. I would have hoped that the ministers who have spoken today could have been a little more specific about the number of jobs that the government hopes this budget will create. Whilst I appreciate that some measures have been taken which undoubtedly will create employment in various areas, I would have preferred that at least one of the ministers had been far more specific about the job-creation activities that the government hopes to undertake so that, in 12 months' time, members can assess the government's achievement over that period.

That is what is sadly lacking. There is no way that anybody in the Northern Territory, let alone the government itself, can make an assessment of the achievements. If this government achieved its aim of creating 1000 jobs in 12 months, it should be able to crow like hell about it anywhere in Australia. To be able to do that, the government will need to be far more specific. I hope that, before this debate is finished, a minister will indicate the functions and activities whereby the aim of creating 1000 new jobs may be achieved.

Those are the general matters on which I wished to comment. In respect of my shadow portfolio responsibilities, I am afraid that industrial relations does not command much budget activity and therefore there is not too much I can say on that.

Mines and Energy is one of the really bright spots on the Northern Territory's economic landscape. The developments in mining this year, particularly gold mining, must lend heart to all Northern Territorians. I listened with joy to the Treasurer's exposition on the possibilities of various offshore gas fields and what they could mean for the Northern Territory. In mining, the Northern Territory does have some real prospects. That is not to say that I do not believe there are real prospects in primary production given what the minister outlined. However, in terms of cash and investment turnover, the mining sector certainly does offer the best opportunities in the short term.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I turn to more parochial electorate matters. I will not stress, as I have done every year, that I failed to find reference to Nhulunbuy in any part of the budget even though it is a fact. We will let that go. However, I will get on to a hobby horse.

30% of my constituents are Aboriginal people. For the general education of members present, I would suggest that they look at the statistics on the Aboriginal population and demography. This government and other governments in Australia are to be congratulated for the dramatic fall in the infant mortality rate among the Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal population, is in fact, exploding. If you look at the demography of the population, it is clear that the number in the 0-5 years age group is larger than the 5-10 years age group which in turn is larger than the 10-15 years age group. In fact, it is identical to third world demographical patterns.

It is obvious that the Aboriginal population is exploding. I suppose statisticians and other academics could draw conclusions from that on its likely percentage of the Northern Territory's population over a given period. What is becoming dramatically clear is that the Aboriginal population is increasing as a proportion of the total Northern Territory population.

Mr Hatton: The census figures show that it is going the other way.

Mr LEO: I suggest to the Chief Minister that he checks that because it is certainly a matter that has occupied a lot of my thoughts. The ABS figures are notoriously inaccurate. The census figures are inaccurate. I know of at least 5 communities that the census people never went near. The census figures are an absolute nonsense.

The Aboriginal population is certainly increasing at a very dramatic rate, if that satisfies the Chief Minister. However, the effort being put into education in the Northern Territory nowhere near matches the increase in population or the growing demands on our education system. I have not had time to regionalise the figures but, in general, the education vote has been increased by 0.5%. If that is adjusted for inflation at 8%, which is lower than the stated Territory figure of 9.3%, that is a decrease of 7.5% in the education vote. This is occurring at a time when demands on the education system are increasing dramatically. There is no way of escaping that.

Demands are increasing dramatically among the European and even more dramatically among the Aboriginal population. This is because the Aboriginal population is basically uneducated in European terms. Unless that fundamental issue is addressed with realistic amounts of funding, the Northern Territory will continue to be burdened by people who have no hope of competing within or contributing to our broader economic community. This government will condemn a very large section of our population to a life of dependence unless the task of education is given adequate resources. It is a matter of such profound importance to the future of the Northern Territory that I do not believe that any government can continue to ignore it.

It gets right up my nose when I see the monstrosity at the end of Mitchell Street, the Taj Mahal for a collection of intellectual would-be's and could-be's, having its budget increased by 1% to 1.5% above the inflation rate. I am talking about this would-be university. It is absolutely outrageous. I have children in my electorate who cannot even achieve a basic standard of education under this government and the budget allocation which affects them is reduced while the monstrosity at the end of Mitchell Street has its budget increased. To my mind, that is obscene in the worst possible way.

Mr Coulter: We could put that in the Nhulunbuy newsletter.

Mr LEO: I think you should. I would be pleased to publish it for you.

The Treasurer also stated that the Housing Commission had decreased its number of starts because of the reduced requirement for new starts in the Northern Territory. He said there was a surplus of houses. I must assure the Treasurer, the Minister for Lands and Housing and all members of the government that is certainly not the case in my electorate where there continues to be a very large number of people who have been on the Housing Commission list for an extensive period. Because of the nature of the community, they have nowhere else to live but in other peoples' backyards. It is not as though they are living in private accommodation and paying private

rental rates and want to go into cheaper Housing Commission accommodation. In fact, there is nowhere else for them to live. Furthermore, there are people in Aboriginal communities in my electorate who live in tin sheds and have done so for years.

It may very well be the case that the Northern Territory generally, and Darwin in particular, has a surplus of accommodation but I can assure the minister and the government that that is not the case in Nhulunbuy. I appreciate the government's predicament in coming to terms with land tenure in Nhulunbuy but, if someone waved a magic wand tomorrow and 50 houses appeared out of nowhere, there would still be a waiting list in Nhulunbuy. These would not be people who would just move from one accommodation into another. There would still be people living in tents and backyards, people living with friends and relatives and people who do house-minding. I hope that the Minister for Housing will continue to review the plight of a large number of my constituents in achieving accommodation in Nhulunbuy. It is something that has gone on ever since I have been a member of this Assembly and it needs to be addressed seriously.

After having handed out my brickbats and bouquets, I would like to conclude by saying that I appreciate the Treasurer's predicament. I accept that the Northern Territory, like the states and the Commonwealth, is confronted by economic constraint. I suspect that, in the long term, it will benefit Australia and the Northern Territory if we can continue to practise restraint. I have no difficulty in accepting that. I do have difficulty in some instances in accepting the order of this government's priorities.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the budget this afternoon, I must say that I was quite delighted when I heard the Leader of the Opposition open his remarks earlier today. He commented that this budget sets the framework for development and I could only agree with him. But, by the time that he finished, I thought I was at a funeral. With all the doom and gloom and mournful this and mournful that, frankly, by the time his address closed, I thought that I was listening to a mortician reciting the last rites over a pauper's grave: it was that bad.

That performance was exceeded by the speech by the member for Nhulunbuy a moment ago. He droned on and on, complaining, whingeing and whining about all of the things that the government is not doing in his electorate. It became quite obvious to me that the poor fellow did not know what he was talking about. Quite obviously, he has not read the budget papers because he does not know what money the government is spending in his electorate. He said that he could not find details of any construction work or any money being invested by the government in Nhulunbuy. Let me just draw attention to the east Arnhem Land capital works program for the coming financial year. Nhulunbuy: Gove District Hospital, modify a boiler system, \$200 000. That is not a bad start. Then he spoke about Aboriginal education and he told us about the terrible things that were happening there. Let me just run through a few Aboriginal communities in east Arnhem Land and the money that the government will spend out there. They may not all be in his electorate but they are certainly in east Arnhem Land. If they are not in his electorate, then they are adjacent to it. I have a difficulty with some of these names - Gamarranguru, teaching space, \$50 000; Gan Gan, teaching space, \$60 000; Baniyali, teaching space, \$60 000; Garrthalala, teaching space, \$60 000; Numbulwar, construction of a community education centre, \$500 000; and Gapuwiyak, upgrading of school, \$1.01m.

Aboriginal community housing would amount to almost \$2m in that area. Then there are some Aboriginal essential services, water and sewerage: Numbulwar, \$500 000; Gapuwiyak, \$894 000; Galiwinku, upgrade water supply, \$150 000; and, Gapuwiyak again, replace high level water tank and rising main, \$150 000. Those are a few of the items. I could go on for the next 10 minutes or so. Perhaps it may not be a bad idea if the member for Arafura has a look through these documents to see how much money is being spent in Aboriginal settlements. It is a considerable amount. I would suggest that, by far the majority of government expenditure in the areas of transport and works, health and community services and education is made in remote Aboriginal areas and not in the urban communities.

Let me return to some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. In his whining way, he spoke about contingent liabilities: the Sheratons, Yulara and the casino. We have heard it all over and over again to the point where it has become totally boring. He had nothing new to say. However, in my opinion, those are investments in the future of this Territory. They are not contingent liabilities; they are contingent assets, and time will prove my words to be correct.

He spoke about creating employment. Let us have a look at that. If the Sheraton Hotels, the casino and Yulara were removed from the Northern Territory, look at the employment that would be lost, not only directly in those facilities but in the service industries also. Think about the jobs that were created during the construction phase. Hundreds if not thousands of jobs were created. He is talking absolute nonsense. Ask average Territorians, particularly Darwinians, how they would feel if the casino or the Darwin Sheraton disappeared off the face of the earth tomorrow. We have heard about the enormous expansion in our tourism industry. The hotels and tourist facilities throughout the Territory were absolutely full during the peak season. There was not an empty bed to be found anywhere. How would we cope with the tourism explosion if it were not for those facilities and the foresight of Paul Everingham, for example, whose vision for the future put those facilities in place? The Leader of the Opposition continued to knock our investment in those facilities yet, in the next breath, suggested government should be investing more in the development of tourist accommodation. On the one hand he knocks it and on the other hand, he tells us that we should be investing more money in it. He does not know what he is talking about.

Mr Speaker, I don't want to continue on that line. It is dismal enough to listen to the opposition members. Today, I would like to discuss mining. Even in relation to this subject, what did we hear from the Leader of the Opposition but a mouthful of misunderstanding and misinformation? He attacked the mining companies and claimed that, on average, they invested only 17% of their capital outlay within the Territory. He quoted from some obscure report undertaken by some doctor from the North Australian Research Unit. By the time he had finished speaking, I must admit I had to ask myself Dr Who? because I had never heard of the gentleman concerned. I do not question his credentials. I would like to know how this particular gentleman undertook such a study and I would certainly like to get my hands on a copy of it.

Let us have a look at the Western Mining investment in the Goodall Mine which is under construction. There were 4 major contracts let during the construction phase and they were all let to Territory companies. I will run through them. For example, the contracts for road construction, site preparation and mine development work were all won by Henry and Walker. All of the concrete construction infrastructure that was necessary was undertaken

by Sitzler Brothers. The work undertaken by Territory companies was worth \$31m. Is that an example of investment going interstate? I can appreciate that some of the specialist mining equipment would have to be sourced from interstate, but I am quite sure that it is the policy of all of those companies to buy Territorian and employ Territorian wherever possible.

Mr Coulter: Even the fridges and the radios were bought here.

Mr SETTER: Even the fridges and the radios came from local suppliers - we hear it from the Treasurer.

I would like to commend the Treasurer on the continuing initiatives he is taking to assist the expansion of the mining, oil and gas industries in the Northern Territory. The Treasurer's enthusiasm for the mining and energy portfolio is well known and appreciated by the industry, not only in the Northern Territory but throughout Australia and, I would venture to say, throughout South-east Asia. It is no secret that mining, oil and gas activities are the backbone of the Northern Territory's economy and likely to continue as such for many years to come. As the minister pointed out, mining and oil and gas activities contribute 18% of the Territory's gross domestic product, a higher percentage than in any state. In fact, this sector in the Northern Territory contributes over 3% of all Australian production from mining. Sophisticated treatment methods and the current high price of gold, which is over \$600 per ounce, have led the Territory mining sector into another boom period. About \$10m will be spent this financial year on gold exploration in the Northern Territory and gold production is likely to exceed \$200m.

One of the first local mines to use sophisticated treatment and processing methods was the Pine Creek goldmine which came on stream in late 1986. At a development cost of \$37m, it will produce nearly 3000 kg of gold per year over a 9-year life of the mine. The decision to proceed on the old Enterprise mine leases and additional granted leases displayed the modern trend towards large-scale excavation and treatment of relatively low-grade ores. Some goldminers are now treating old tailings dumps at abandoned goldmines as sophisticated technology makes it profitable to re-work such dumps. Some large mining concerns are conducting studies into open-cutting older sites which were previously mined underground.

The arid Tanami Desert has seen the opening of what could become the Territory's largest goldmine at The Granites. Located some 500 km north-west of Alice Springs, this mine currently produces over 2500 kg of gold per year and its potential is absolutely enormous. 100 km away is the Tanami Mine, a small and rich deposit that will produce 2700 kg of gold in an 18-month mining life. The old goldrush area of Arltunga, east of Alice Springs, is being explored with a view to large-scale, open-cut operations. The Tennant Creek area has also seen some interesting developments in underground mining to access small rich gold deposits. Argo Mine recently came on stream to augment feed stock to the Warrego mill. The TC8 Mine has been developed by Cuprex Ltd. Unfortunately, Noble's Nob has ceased production but the Northern Star, White Devil and Black Angel gold ore bodies will continue to be processed at the Noble's Nob mill.

In the Top End at Hayes Creek, the Mount Bonnie processing plant has been treating ore from the Iron Blow and Golden Dyke mines, while the Moline tailings and the Cosmo Howley heap leaching in the Pine Creek district are producing good gold recoveries. Numerous alluvial goldmines are also operating including Sandy Creek, Fountain Head, Chinese Howley and others. I

am quite sure that there will be many more to come. Coronation Hill has the capacity to outstrip the Pine Creek goldmine in gold production and could also produce platinoid metals if the Commonwealth government gives consent to proceed. To the east of the Adelaide River township, mine construction activities have started at the Western Mining and Goodall gold project which I mentioned a moment ago. The mine will be a conventional open-cut mine with an associated processing plant. At the Sundance Mine, a small open-cut mine near Batchelor, ore is being transported to the Mount Bonnie plant for processing.

Gold is just one of the mineral riches of the Northern Territory. It is worth recalling that, in addition to gold, the Northern Territory is known to have many other important resources. We have 20% of the western world's low-cost uranium reserves. If we turn the clock back 15 years, the percentage of known reserves of uranium in the Northern Territory would have been considerably more than 20%. It was only because the reserves in the Jabiru region were not allowed to be mined at that time that other countries, particularly Canada, developed their uranium resources. Our percentage of known reserves has now declined to 20% but, even so, that certainly is a considerable figure.

We have the world's third largest manganese mine, located at Groote Eylandt. Nabalco's bauxite mine at Gove is the third largest of Australia's mines. In respect of silver, lead and zinc, we have the world's largest underdeveloped ore body at McArthur River. I can recall when that ore body was first discovered back in the early 1960s by Mimets, a Mt Isa Mines subsidiary. I believe that it still holds that lease today. The prospects for platinoids are very promising and copper, bismuth, tin, tantalite and molybdenite are all presently being mined. Diamonds have been discovered and intense exploration is taking place. Iron and mica have previously been mined in the Northern Territory. Many other mineral deposits have been discovered but remain unexploited and it is clear that there is an enormous future for the mining industry in the Northern Territory.

I trust that the new provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, which allow agreed access for exploration and subsequent mining on Aboriginal land, will lead to increased exploration. As the minister mentioned, mineral production this year will increase to well over \$1000m. Our mineral resources certainly offer numerous investment challenges, and I wish the minister well in his untiring efforts to attract joint venture partners to develop these natural resources.

Turning now to oil and gas production, I note the minister's recent comments. He said that the value of production for the 1987 year is projected to be \$253m as compared with \$24m 2 years ago. We heard recently about a new oil rig and the minister stated that the Territory is on the verge of a boom in offshore oil and gas exploration and production. His words are being matched by the reality of the activity. This activity is best reflected in the huge commitment BHP Petroleum has made to the search for oil in the Timor Sea. Some 50% of BHP's Australian exploration for petroleum will be concentrated in that area. This in itself will offer a high chance of further discoveries and future development. The reality of the industry activity is shown by the fact that at least 3 drilling rigs will be operating in that area during 1988. The capacity of the Jabiru floating production facility is being expanded to 60 000 barrels of oil per day from the current 30 000 barrels. The Challis field is being developed to produce 24 000 barrels of oil per day. This high level of drilling activity means that the Timor Sea will be Australia's - if not the Asian Pacific region's - most active area.

The oil and gas boom is bringing closer another of the minister's plans for the Northern Territory. That is his desire to see Darwin become a logistical and operational base for the energy and petroleum industries in the northern part of Australia. I note with particular interest his announcement of a seminar for Territory business to be held on 21 October. He has informed me that key mining, oil and gas representatives will be participating and that local businesses will have the opportunity to hear exactly what is planned for those industries, what goods and services will be needed and what is expected of local industry if it is to reap the benefits of an offshore boom period.

Industry cannot afford to be complacent about this boom. Local manufacturers need to realise that they will be competing with suppliers from all around Australia for goods and services ranging from food to nuts and bolts and to major engineering and construction requirements. I understand from the minister's comments that many of the speakers will be pulling no punches in their discussions about both the successes and the problems they have encountered in their dealings with local suppliers. Unless these problems are addressed, Territory business will lose out. It is up to local industry to gear up and grab the opportunities otherwise they will be lost to competitors from other states and industry will have no one to blame but itself.

I have heard similar comments over and over again during the 14 years that I have been in Darwin, and 11 of those years were spent in private enterprise management. Certainly, it is true to say that, in the past, Darwin business has not been quick to latch on to the opportunities that have been provided by investment, particularly by interstate and overseas companies, in Territory resources. Unfortunately, the old laissez-faire attitude prevailed before the cyclone.

In today's very competitive marketplace, that attitude has no place. The time when you could sit back and easily make a dollar in the Territory has gone. Industry here must have the ability to compete with interstate suppliers and manufacturers. Businesses cannot rest on their laurels and think that they will capture the market because they are locals. That is not the reality of business in today's hard, cold world. I know that many Darwin businesses have seized that opportunity with both hands and have been very successful. I would certainly recommend to others, who want to become involved as suppliers to such industries, that they become more professional and seize these opportunities.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate the honourable minister for arranging this seminar and trust this will be the start of an ongoing dialogue between the mining, oil and gas sectors and local suppliers. With those comments, I support the budget.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Grain Industry

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory has a long history of attempting to establish farming operations for the production of grain. In the past, a number of large projects have failed due to remote management and a number of factors associated with the application of farming techniques and environmental circumstances. Following self-government, the government made a concerted effort to establish a grain industry in the Northern Territory and to work closely with farmers and

private sector interests prepared to put their resources into establishing this industry.

In 1978, the Territory government called together those interested in crop growing and commenced a series of initiatives through a Crop Development Committee to start the long, hard process of establishing grain production in the Northern Territory. In 1980, legislation was passed in this Assembly to establish the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority, ADMA, and to initiate its programs in land development for cropping and for handling and marketing of grain produced. A sunset clause was placed in the legislation to compel a reassessment of progress after 5 years to determine the extent to which government resources should continue to be applied to the programs. Subsequent amendment to the legislation in 1986 extended the programs for a further 5 years to 1990.

Those initiatives and the very substantial efforts of private farmers have seen the Territory's grain industry develop through its initial stages to a production level in the order of 10 000 t of grain a year. The initiatives have resulted in orderly marketing for the Territory and enabled private farmers to make investment decisions and to apply efforts and resources to their farms which would have been difficult, if not impossible, without government support.

Coupled with this, research programs conducted by the government on experimental farms and, where appropriate, in conjunction with private farmers have provided support for the industry to overcome a series of difficulties associated with the growing and production of grain. CSIRO has also devoted considerable resources and effort to this area and I wish to put on record the government's appreciation for this work.

The industry today consists of farmers spread over a wide geographical range with highly variable climatic and environmental circumstances. There are some 40 farmers at different levels of production centred in the upper Adelaide River, Douglas-Daly and Katherine areas. Other areas are emerging in the Stuart Plateau area and in the Barkly Tablelands. The total of between 300 000 ha and 1 000 000 ha has been identified as potentially suitable for crop production in the Top End. Development of this area of arable land is dependent on availability of farmers with financial resources and farming experience, improved technology and identification of crop types for particular areas. Of this area, 8113 ha was farmed in 1986-87 compared to 2098 ha in 1981-82. A further 1600 ha is under hay production, some of which is directly associated with crop production.

Not only has the area of cropping increased substantially over the past 5 years, but also the range of crops has widened. Commercial production of soya bean, rice, sesame and guar has been added to the traditional crops of sorghum, maize, mung beans and peanuts during this period. Rice in particular is proving to be a catalyst in the development of mixed farming systems to exploit the natural richness of the Marrakai floodplains.

Total grain production has increased from 3400 t in 1981-82 to 10 050 t in 1986-87. Though crop yields are not at a satisfactory level, the yield on a unit basis for individual crops has progressively shown an upward trend except for the last 2 seasons when unsympathetic seasonal conditions adversely affected yields. The improvement in yield has resulted from improved technology and greater experience of farmers within the difficult and sometimes uncertain environmental and growing conditions in the semi-arid areas.



The value of the grain and seed industry has increased from \$160 000 in 1979-80 to about \$2m in 1986-87, an increase of some 1250%. Local stockfeed processing and end-user industries such as pigs, poultry and dairying have been stimulated providing an added value of some \$4.4m. The potential for further expansion in the use of grain in agriculture, lot fed beef and other intensive animal production has yet to be fully realised.

There are currently 3 project farms owned by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Board on which farmers are continuing the project farm initiatives. Two of these have recently been renewed for a further 12 months and the other has a period of 2 years to go. Other project farms have been sold on appropriate terms and are now continuing their development as private sector farms. It is anticipated that the final 3 farms will be sold at the completion of their current agreements. Land excised from the Mataranka pastoral lease is similarly being made available to private farmers and 2 such farms are now established.

It is well known that the last 2 seasons have been poor for crop production and, accordingly, have placed considerable stress on the financial circumstances of farmers in the industry. Evaluation of the financial status of farms is being undertaken and the government, bankers and other financiers and suppliers are endeavouring to assist farmers to continue their operation into the 1987-88 cropping year. Specific schemes have been provided by the Northern Territory government to assist farmers through the developmental stage, and these include the Fertiliser Subsidy Scheme and the Crop Contract Scheme. The former is aimed at assisting farmers with the cost of fertiliser in the initial years when the volume of use is low and, accordingly, the unit price is high. As the industry expands, economies of scale are expected to reduce fertiliser costs and alleviate the need for the scheme.

The Crop Contract Scheme has been in place for some 6 years and is aimed at encouraging crop production under good husbandry practices and assisting farmers by sharing the risk associated with the developmental phase. A number of farmers have participated in the scheme, and the combined efforts of this scheme and the underwriting of project farms is largely responsible for the volume of production today. The contractual nature of the scheme ensures responsibilities are placed on farmers to follow efficient and effective farming practices, as they stand to lose a share of the costs in the event of failure and to participate in profits as these are made.

In addition to the provision of project farms and the government-sponsored farm sales, a number of pastoral property owners have shown initiative in developing and releasing farming blocks from their pastoral holdings. This has led to some integration of pastoral and cropping activities on the stations concerned, with benefits being derived through the use of stubble after crop harvesting.

Up to this stage, marketing of grain has been achieved through ADMA. Sorghum, maize, soybean and rice have found a market niche in the local stockfeed industry and now provide a viable linkage for the pig and poultry industry and in the provision of other stockfeed requirements. High value crops, including peanuts, mung beans and sesame, have found markets interstate and overseas, predominantly through linkages with interstate marketers whilst our production levels are low.

The government has provided grain depots at Katherine and Douglas-Daly and a storage area at Adelaide River for rice at a cost of \$2.7m. Approximately 8000 t of vertical silo storage is available and any excess grain is stored in

bunker storage. Should increased production occur in the short term, bunker storage will continue to be used. In the long term, however, further vertical silo storage will be required. The decision on how much is needed and its location will fall within the ambit of the newly-formed Grain Marketing Board. The decision on location will consider proximity to processing and end-user industries and the transport costs of moving grain off farm or to the end users and processors.

With the new administrative arrangements for the Department of Industries and Development and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority, the 1986-87 crop will continue to be marketed in the name of ADMA utilising the resources of the department. The Grain Marketing Board has been established by legislation passed in this Assembly in 1983 and brought into effect this year. Election of current representatives to the board has now been completed and the board held its inaugural meeting in Katherine on 2 July this year. The board will take over the coordination of the marketing of grains in the Northern Territory, commencing with the 1987-88 crop. Arrangements are currently in hand for sorghum, maize and soybean to be declared commodities under the Grain Marketing Act for compulsory marketing.

The government does not take a unilateral approach in these matters. The establishment of the Northern Territory Grain Growers Association in 1982 has centralised the voices of producers in the 3 major production areas. The association provides one avenue by which industry can influence government decisions on research, extension, development, grain handling, marketing and financial assistance. The members are proactive. For example, the association was instrumental in initiating a review of the grain industry currently being conducted by the department and the industry. The association has representatives on several government advisory groups, including the Field Crops Advisory Committee, the Grain Marketing Advisory Group, the Soil Conservation Advisory Council, the Rural Land Use Advisory Committee, the Northern Territory Development Council, the Northern Cattle and Buffalo Advisory Committee and the North-west Advisory Committee of the CSIRO. Mr Speaker, it is a wonder they have the time left to get out there and farm. Members of the association are also involved in the coordinated purchase of fertilisers, agricultural chemicals and seed at bulk prices.

Unlike other areas of Australia, the Northern Territory is an infant in relation to crop development and production. Efforts to accumulate basic information on agronomy, plant protection, market intelligence and the economics of crop production through government research and extension are relatively new. Other areas of Australia have almost 200 years of cropping experience and research to draw on while the Territory has about 25 years. Even so, we lead in knowledge of cropping in northern Australia.

The Douglas-Daly and Tortilla Flats Research Farms facilitate the research effort by providing infrastructure for testing new crops and new agronomic and plant protection techniques under controlled conditions. Basic information collected during this phase of research is then applied directly to the commercial situation on private farms in observation trials which represent the final test for newly-developed technology. As a result of this approach at Douglas-Daly Research Farm, considerable progress has been made in research into the control of crop weeds, disease and insect control systems, crop nutrition and agronomy of grain legumes such as soybeans and peanuts, maize breeding, testing of conventional, minimum and no-tillage cropping systems, development of modified farm machinery for the new tillage systems and assessment of new crops such as soybeans, sesame, guar and kenaf.

At Tortilla Flats Research Farm, the emphasis has changed from a rice-based program to a farming systems approach which incorporates the production of rice and soybeans, the use of legume pastures to supplement nitrogen supply to soils, and animal production. This will result in the development of a floodplain cropping system that will be applicable to large areas of the Marrakai land system.

The government sees a need to maintain input into research and extension to assist the infant cropping industry, and the operational financial input into the research programs at Douglas-Daly and Tortilla Flats Research Farms is in the vicinity of \$200 000 per year. Research and extension is also carried out in the Katherine area at the Katherine Rural College, on CSIRO's Katherine Research Station and on private farms. Research effort in this area concentrates on the assessment of new crops such as guar, pigeon pea, sesame, millet, mungbean, grain and forage sorghums, particularly for the drier areas south of Katherine. The annual cost of these research and extension operations is about \$70 000.

Irrespective of area of crop, the prime aim of research is to develop cropping systems that are economically viable by keeping production costs as low as possible and using techniques that suit the semi-arid environment in which the crops are grown and which provide the farmer with sufficient diversification as a buffer against the vagaries of seasonal conditions. To this end, the use of supplementary irrigation and the incorporation of animal production or even horticulture into the cropping system is being investigated. It is important to stress that, although most of the research into cropping is undertaken down in the Douglas-Daly area, the result of this research is applicable to other cropping areas and not necessarily restricted to the crop on which the research is done. For example, weed control or nutrition research done at Douglas-Daly is generally equally applicable to the Katherine or Darwin areas.

The research effort is not being developed in isolation. The industry has had considerable influence on the content of the research programs in all production areas. This input is fostered through regular farmer meetings where research results are provided to farmers for comment and information and where problems perceived by farmers during the cropping season are discussed and incorporated into research programs. The Northern Territory Grain Growers Association and farmer representatives on the Field Crops Advisory Committee also ensure that the cropping industry's needs in the research sphere are adequately catered for. Undertaking observation trials or testing of new varieties or techniques on private farms also provides an avenue for input into research and extension programs. In this situation, the farmer grows the crops and departmental staff impose treatments and make observations.

To ensure that research findings are disseminated to the farming community, 2 extension officers - 1 based in Darwin to service the farmers north of Pine Creek and 1 based in Katherine - visit farmers regularly to advise on crop production. The department has decided to subdivide the area north of Pine Creek into 2 areas, the Douglas-Daly and the upper Adelaide River areas, and to provide an additional extension service through Agnote and Technotes.

The need to diversify crop production from traditional crops, such as sorghum and maize, has been recognised by the government as well as the farming community. It is through efforts by the department, CSIRO, individual entrepreneurs and the industry that crops such as mungbeans, sesame, peanuts, soybean, rice, guar, pigeon pea, kenaf, millets and others have become - or

are likely to become - part of the integrated farming approach in the crop production areas of the Northern Territory. This work will continue.

It is also necessary to further diversify cropping enterprises by using irrigation and by incorporating cattle production through lot feeding and the use of crop stubbles. This approach is aimed at maximising production and minimising the risk of reliance on one crop or one production system.

In early 1986, the government identified a need to establish the Field Crops Advisory Committee comprised of departmental staff and representatives from industry and the CSIRO. The committee's role is to advise government on research and extension needs as perceived by industry and to address other issues that affect the cropping industry and the ancillary end-user industries. The success of this committee can be measured by the fact that the research and development program of the department reflects the industry's perceived needs. The committee, along with the Northern Territory Grain Growers Association, has been instrumental in initiating and conducting the Grain Industry Review. This review aims to assess many aspects of the cropping industry with the purpose of developing a position paper that will guide the development of the industry for the next 5 to 10 years.

Issues being addressed include the history and current status of production and research, financial assessment of the crop industry and ancillary industries, prospects for diversification of the industry, methods of reducing costs of production, financial assistance measures, infrastructure developments, grain handling and marketing, market intelligence and so on. It is planned to complete the paper by October and I propose to present it to Cabinet. The research programs are reviewed annually by the Department of Industries and Development and, through the mechanism of the Field Crops Advisory Committee, it is necessary from time to time to review specific initiatives. Programs encompassing grain, legumes, maize breeding, tillage systems and the floodplain cropping system were reviewed during 1986. Adjustments have been made to ensure that programs reflect the needs of industry and the directions of government.

Because the cropping industry is still in a developmental phase and, as could be expected, the debt structure of farming operations is high, it will be necessary for financial assistance, both government and private, to be continued for a reasonable period. 5 years is a very short period for a cropping industry to become established and to demonstrate economic viability, especially taking into account the not infrequent adverse seasonal conditions that occur in the cropping areas of the Territory. It is envisaged that at least 10 years production is required before a realistic assessment of the viability of a cropping industry can be made. This is the basis on which the Grain Industry Review is currently being undertaken; that is, to assess where the industry is, where it should be in 5 years time and, most importantly, how that can be achieved within the constraints of available financial resources.

Continued government support through research and extension programs is seen as vital. New initiatives such as further diversification of crop production systems, supplementary and dry-season irrigation and development of new crops will be incorporated into the department's programs. The need to introduce farmers to computer technology and improved farm management and accounting practices has been recognised and is being addressed through a series of on-farm workshops for farmers, to be run in September and October this year. Government support in the form of grain receival handling, storage and marketing will continue through the Grain Marketing Board.

By persisting with the cropping industry, the government could expect 100 000 ha of crop production worth some \$40m indirectly, or \$100m through production of value-added products, in the next decade. While it is the aim of government to expand the cropping industry together with the primary and secondary industries, the cropping industry requires a period of consolidation with existing farmers rather than a concerted effort to significantly increase farmer numbers in the Top End or a massive increase in the area cropped. This approach will allow existing farmers to capitalise on their investment, to improve economic efficiency and to build on the valuable expertise and experience that they have accumulated in the difficult agricultural environment of the Top End. The consolidation of existing enterprises will result in increased production on a unit-area basis and reduced production costs emanating from improved technology and management practices and reduced costs of basic commodities such as fertiliser, seed and agricultural chemicals.

The cropping industry will also assist regional development. Infrastructural development such as roads, bridges and power has occurred in the Douglas-Daly, Tortilla Flats and Katherine areas. The road system opens areas to tourism and provides another basis for rational development. In short, there is far more benefit to the Territory in the development of the cropping industry than may be apparent on the surface, with an impact seen both in the development of general infrastructure and in the encouragement of value-added intensive animal production. The growth shown by the infant industry over the past 5 years encourages the government in its confidence in the Territory's grain industry. With the hard work of initial establishment behind us, it is the government's view that the next 5 years will see the industry consolidate to become an important part of our economy.

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

Debate adjourned.

#### LEGAL PRACTITIONERS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 59)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Legal Practitioners Act following consideration by government of proposals from the Law Society of the Northern Territory and the Chairman of the Legal Practitioners' Complaints Committee. The financial year of the Law Society begins from 1 October each year. Many of the amendments have operational effects in accordance with that financial year. For example, practising certificates and the fees payable for them are issued on a financial-year basis. Thus, it is proposed that the bill should proceed through all stages at these sittings so that legislation can come into force at that date and the positive improvements to the legislation proposed by this bill can be implemented immediately. Otherwise, the effect of many of the amendments will be delayed for another year.

In recent years, there has been a great increase in the number of lawyers practising in the Territory and it has become obvious that there is a need for more control over their activities. In response to this need, the Law Society of the Northern Territory and the Legal Practitioners' Complaints Committee, which is a body established pursuant to the act to discipline practitioners,

has taken an increasingly responsible attitude culminating in an extensive review of disciplinary procedures and certification of practice of legal practitioners in the Northern Territory. This review has now come to fruition in the bill presently before the Assembly. The attitude of the Law Society and of the complaints committee is highly commendable. The government endorses their activities and the consequential benefits which will flow to the public. I will describe the specific features of the bill for the benefit of honourable members.

By clause 4, the definition of 'legal practitioner' has been amended. The effect of the amendment is that the Director of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in the Northern Territory, the Director of the Australian Legal Aid Office in the Northern Territory, the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory are excluded from the trust account obligations of solicitors holding unrestricted practising certificates. Such officers do not hold trust accounts of the type held by the private profession but, because they hold or are deemed to hold unrestricted practising certificates, it could be argued that they would be in contravention of the act if they did not comply with these provisions.

By this clause, the new definition of 'professional conduct rules' is also included. The rules are those relating to the professional conduct of legal practitioners made by the Law Society and, for the time being, approved by the Attorney-General. This amendment relates to later amendments effected by clause 14 dealing with charges to be laid for professional misconduct. Clause 4 also includes definitions relating to restricted practising certificates and a definition for a new class of practising certificate to be referred to as a restricted practising certificate class 3. The functions the holder of a restricted practising certificate class 3 may perform are set out in the amendments effected by clause 5.

The purpose of clause 5 is twofold. Firstly, the clause includes in section 22 a new subsection (3A) which provides that legal practitioners employed by certain prescribed organisations and bodies should hold either a current unrestricted practising certificate or a restricted practising certificate class 1 to practise in the Territory. This amendment is to provide for a deficiency in the act in that, previously, there was no clear provision for legal practitioners employed by organisations such as legal aid to hold practising certificates.

Secondly, as indicated in my comments on clause 4, clause 5 provides that a legal practitioner employed by other than another legal practitioner or a government or quasi-government organisation should hold the new class 3 restricted practising certificate in order to practise. This certificate is aimed at giving limited rights of practice to 'in-house solicitors' who are employed by, for example, many corporations such as mining companies and banks. Without this amendment, there is an argument that corporate lawyers may be restricted in the legal work that they can undertake for their employer. Obviously, another effect of the amendment will be to give the society some control over their conduct as legal practitioners.

Clause 6 provides an amendment to extend eligibility requirements for the issue of unrestricted practising certificates. Subsection (1) of section 25 of the act presently entitles practitioners who have worked in various situations to an unrestricted practising certificate after a minimum period of 2 years. The amended section will extend this right to legal practitioners employed by organisations which will be prescribed. These would include organisations such as the Northern Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service.

To date, no matter what length of their employment, the employees of these organisations have not been entitled to gain an unrestricted practising certificate. The clause also amends the section to allow a practitioner who has had equivalent experience in another state or territory to be entitled to such a certificate.

Clause 7 amends the act to allow a broader range of circumstances for the cancellation of a practising certificate. The amendment will allow the Law Society, in appropriate circumstances, grounds to immediately cancel or suspend a legal practitioner's practising certificate. The grounds include, for example, that the practitioner is in prison, is bankrupt or has committed an offence involving dishonesty. Clearly, this will give the society greater control over practitioners and therefore will be of benefit to the public.

Clause 8 repeals section 28 which deals with cancellation of practising certificates upon bankruptcy. This issue is now dealt with by the amendments effected by clause 7.

Clause 9 extends the obligation of holders of unrestricted practising certificates to give notice of a change of name or address to the Law Society to those practitioners holding restricted practising certificates class 1 or class 3. This amendment is to address the problem the Law Society has with regard to ensuring that legal practitioners who change employers are covered by compulsory professional indemnity insurance. This is a problem, particularly in relation to a legal practitioner who moves from employment by the government, where insurance is not necessary, to a private firm where it is.

Clause 10 repeals the existing definition of 'professional misconduct' in the act and includes a new inclusive definition with specific instances of professional misconduct as it was necessary to look to the common law to find the elements of this offence. The definition will clarify to both the public and practitioners what constitutes professional misconduct.

Clauses 11 to 16 contain various amendments to the act to clarify the disciplinary procedures available in the hearings and investigations of the Law Society and the complaints committee. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak to the main thrust of these amendments and disregard the merely consequential aspects of the amendments. Clause 11, for example, amends section 47 of the act to clarify the functions and powers of the Law Society by stating that, where the Law Society finds a complaint proved, but where the circumstances of the case and the record of the legal practitioner justify it, it may make a finding which is merely recorded and take no further action. A further amendment in that clause increases the Law Society's power to fine, when a complaint is proved, from \$200 to \$2000.

By clause 13, section 49A of the act is amended so that, on appeal to the complaints committee from the Law Society, the committee will have the power to confirm or quash a finding of the Law Society and exercise any of its wider powers being, for example, that a practitioner may only practice on certain conditions. The complaints committee's order will have effect in substitution for the Law Society's finding.

Clause 14 amends section 50 of the act, which allows charges to be laid before the complaints committee, by including an amendment to allow the Law Society, upon approval of the Attorney-General, to lay a complaint for any breach of its professional conduct rules before the Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee.

The definition of 'professional conduct rules', as mentioned in regard to clause 4, are those rules relating to the professional conduct of legal practitioners for the time being approved by the Attorney-General. This gives the Law Society's professional conduct rules some statutory recognition, as is the case in other jurisdictions. The clause also clarifies that the committee, on making its own finding, may record a finding but take no further action or alternatively admonish or fine a practitioner.

Clause 15 amends the act to provide that the complaints committee may engage a legal practitioner or other person to assist it in its activities. This authorised person can make any necessary investigations on behalf of the complaints committee. An offence is also created, with a penalty of \$5000 to be imposed, on a person who will not comply with the investigations of the authorised person. This will assist the authorised person in obtaining necessary evidence for the committee.

Clause 16 amends the act to specify that an appeal from an order of the Legal Practitioners' Complaints Committee to the Supreme Court is by way of a re-hearing and that on re-hearing it, the Supreme Court may give the order that could have been made by the complaints committee.

Clause 17 amends section 52 of the act to allow the Attorney-General or the Law Society to institute disciplinary proceedings in the Supreme Court against a legal practitioner without first going to the complaints committee. This amendment was based on the argument that the Supreme Court's inherent jurisdiction to deal with legal practitioners was limited by the effect of section 52 in that it may not have been able to deal with the practitioner without the complaints committee first having inquired into the conduct of that practitioner. There may also be cases which are of a serious enough nature to warrant the Attorney-General or the society being allowed to proceed directly before the Supreme Court.

Clause 18 increases the penalty, for a legal practitioner who practises while his right to do so is suspended, from \$500 to \$5000 or imprisonment for 12 months. This is considered a serious offence and the society suggested that the penalty should reflect this.

Clause 19 amends the provisions of the act which preclude a legal practitioner from taking legal action for recovery of costs until a month after he or she has delivered an itemised statement of costs. The amendment enables legal practitioners to alternatively deliver a lump sum statement. Clients may still request an itemised statement within a month or stay any proceedings by the practitioner for the recovery of costs till they have been delivered an itemised account. This procedure has been used in New South Wales and it has been found to stop the unnecessary and time-consuming procedure of legal practitioners delivering itemised statements on all occasions, which has also proved expensive for their clients.

Clauses 20 to 22 make the consequential amendments necessary to include the new lump sum statement into the provisions of the act dealing with taxation of costs and disbursements before the Master of the Supreme Court.

Clause 23 inserts a new section into the act to provide a general offence of failure to comply with the provision of the act where no other offence is provided. The penalty provided for this offence is \$2000. In conclusion, I reiterate that the overall effect of these amendments will be a more complete control over the legal profession and its actions in the Territory.



I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS  
(MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL  
(Serial 62)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill arises from the recent series of events concerning the election of the member for Barkly, Mr Ian Tuxworth. Briefly, that series of events was as follows. On 7 March 1987, general elections were conducted for the Legislative Assembly. In the election for the seat of Barkly, Mr Tuxworth gained victory over the independent candidate, Ms Margaret Hickey, by 19 votes. Ms Hickey subsequently petitioned the Election Tribunal for a declaration that the election was void. This was on the basis that Mr Hallett, the endorsed Labor Party candidate, was not an Australian citizen and was therefore not eligible to contest the election. The requirement for a candidate to be an Australian citizen is laid down in section 20 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978. On 30 July 1987, the tribunal found that Mr Hallett was not an Australian citizen and that the votes cast for him were invalid. The tribunal went on to declare the 7 March 1987 election for the seat of Barkly to be void.

Following the declaration, legal advice was obtained as to a number of matters in relation to the position of Mr Tuxworth. In essence, that advice was as follows. His Honour the Administrator should, within a reasonable time, proceed to issue writs for a supplementary election for the seat of Barkly. Notwithstanding that Mr Tuxworth's election was void, the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly to that point were valid. Mr Tuxworth ceased to be the member for Barkly when the general elections were held on 7 March 1987. Mr Tuxworth was not entitled to any moneys as a member of the Legislative Assembly on 7 March 1987. The moneys that had been paid to Mr Tuxworth from 7 March 1987 were recoverable. However, on grounds of elementary fairness, there is a very strong case for not seeking to recover the moneys.

Honourable members will be aware that copies of this legal advice have already been tabled by Mr Speaker in this Assembly. As a result of this advice, all payments to Mr Tuxworth ceased on 5 August 1987. A supplementary election for the seat of Barkly was conducted on 5 September 1987 and the poll was declared in favour of Mr Tuxworth. In a judgment delivered by the Election Tribunal, the point was made very clearly: 'No irregularity on the part of Mr Tuxworth or of any person on his behalf with or without his knowledge is alleged'. The tribunal further stated that Mr Tuxworth's conduct as a candidate had been beyond reproach.

In view of these matters, the government has decided that it would be just and equitable to ensure that Mr Tuxworth is granted the moneys and benefits to which he would have been entitled had the Election Tribunal not declared the 7 March 1987 election for Barkly void. That is the purpose of the bill presently under consideration. I turn now to the specific provisions of the bill.

Clause 2 outlines circumstances where the tribunal declares a candidate to be not duly elected or the election void and that same candidate is again elected at the supplementary election. Provided the Speaker believes the void election did not arise from any fault of that person, an entitlement will arise to the moneys that would have been payable had the declaration not been made.

Clause 3(1) empowers the Speaker to certify the amount to which that person is entitled. Clause 3(2) allows the Speaker also to take into account in his certification reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred. Clause 4 allows 90 days to claim reimbursement for those out-of-pocket expenses. Clause 5 ensures that there is no gap in service or contribution entitlements for the purposes of the Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Act.

Mr Speaker, I advise honourable members that, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking the suspension of standing orders so that this bill may pass through all stages during these sittings. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT  
Assembly Proceedings

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a short statement relating to the proceedings of the Assembly for the remainder of these sittings. For the benefit of honourable members, there will be 2 ministerial statements delivered today, one on the buffalo industry and the other on health promotion. This afternoon, we will deal with the Appropriation Bill. There will be 3 speakers from the government: the Minister for Health and Community Services, the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and one of my other colleagues not yet identified. We intend to take the Supreme Court (Rules of Procedure) Bill to the third reading today.

Tomorrow, Mr Speaker, there will be a detailed and comprehensive statement by the Minister for Education, a statement on the Work Health Authority from the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and a statement from the Chief Minister on his recent Indonesian visit. We will also deal with the Chamberlain Convictions Commission of Inquiry. The Attorney-General will be closing the debate on that item that has been on the Notice Paper for some time. We will also finalise the Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Bill.

On Thursday 24 September, there will be a ministerial statement from the Chief Minister on statehood, and the tabling of reports relating to the Executive Committee. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee will be tabling a report. We will also deal with the Appropriation Bill again and there will be one government speaker: the Minister for Education.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Health Promotion

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I wish to inform honourable members today of a new direction in the provision of health services for Territorians. This new direction concerns itself with an approach to public health care which will save the Territory government several million dollars over the years ahead. I am talking about preventive health care, a concept which should literally be dear to the hearts of every one of us.

People who take up the preventive health philosophy will gain far more than can be expressed in personal dollar terms or savings to the community. They can expect to enjoy a more fruitful, enjoyable life over and above the allotted biblical span. The idea of preventive health is not new. When man first discovered fire, he had to teach his children not to stick their fingers in the flames. The Stone Age warrior who fashioned the first club knew soon enough that it was better to give than to receive. Over time, as man ascended the ladder of knowledge, he deduced that the person who dodged the spears and arrows of his enemy lived longer than the person who relied on his bravado. Those are examples of preventive health: avoid the things you know are bad for you.

In bygone days, when medical treatments relied on an alliance between witchcraft and hope, wise people still clung to the tenets of preventive health care but, as life progressed, modern man discarded some of the basic laws of the jungle. Scientific research lobbies and media hype have convinced many of us that our frail bodies can recover from any trauma with the right capsule, injection or spare parts replacement and stitching.

It has been said that the degree of a nation's civilisation is marked by its disregard for the necessities of existence. Preventive health care is one of the necessities that has suffered at the hands of civilising influences. Today, we have reached such an advanced stage in our civilisation that it costs more than \$300 per day to keep a patient in hospital, a daily rate equivalent to the average person's weekly wage.

The growing cost of curative medicine emphasised the need for another approach to health care. In a medical sense, we might not be described as a sick society but, in terms of health care, we are on our way to bankruptcy. Hi-tech medical advances, that encourage the vision of a modern hospital as a place where diseased or damaged body parts are removed and replaced off the bionic supermarket shelf, are tantalising but the cost to our community should make us question whether it would be better to do something in the first place to prevent illnesses that require costly treatments. We are in a dangerous downwards spiral if we start to believe that throwing enough money at it is the only approach to a problem. We need to remind our community not only that an apple a day keeps the doctor away, but that it will help keep the debt collector off your back as well.

In many cases, medical or scientific treatment is an illusory panacea. The need for expensive public health care can be replaced by the reality of the benefits of prevention. The field of public health care has a long tradition in curative medicine but a relatively short career in preventive health measures. Many diseases and illnesses which affect people in modern society can be prevented by individual effort - little more than what was required to keep tiny fingers out of flames in ancestral caves. We would avoid several problems by simple adjustments to our lifestyles: a balanced diet, moderate exercise and reduced consumption of alcohol and tobacco. But, many of us do not understand these basic messages. The efforts of my department are to be directed towards reawakening our community to the benefits of good health and the individual well-being that is part of a healthy lifestyle.

My department has established a Health Promotion Branch to disseminate preventive health messages. These messages should stimulate positive action in the individuals who want to prolong and enjoy life. The branch uses print and electronic media as well as group discussions, personal counselling and shopfront contacts to target 'at risk' community groups. Health and medical research is the basis of its activities. International and local studies have shown that carefully planned promotion campaigns can have a positive effect on the lifestyles of individuals.

In 1985, my department commissioned a study of the health attitudes of Darwin residents, because Darwin was to be the initial focus for the activities of the newly-formed Health Promotion Branch. Although, in some aspects of their health, Darwin residents compared favourably with people from other states, their consumption of tobacco and alcohol was far higher. These 2 issues became specific targets of health promotion campaigns. An anti-smoking week has become an annual event and a campaign on alcohol will coincide with a national promotion early in 1988. Considering the high number of hospital admissions in the Territory and the cost to the community as a result of the alcohol- and tobacco-related illnesses, the cost of these promotions is justified if they achieve a modest change to community abuse of these substances.

Health promotion campaigns have been successful. An example could be the 'Eat to Peak' nutrition campaign last year. It included media advertising and

other promotions through supermarkets and community groups. The campaign's aims were to encourage people to increase consumption of complex carbohydrates, reduce intake of fats, increase physical activities and increase consumption of water. Surveys by the Menzies School of Health Research before and after the campaign showed that two-thirds of people surveyed had been aware of the campaign. As a direct result, there had been a 22% increase in the number of people taking exercise, a 7% decrease in the consumption of takeaway food, a 16% increase in fibre consumption and a 19% increase in the amount of fruit eaten.

These impressive results were gained at the following costs: \$17 400 in departmental funds, \$13 000 in wages and a direct grant of \$13 000 from a private health insurance firm. About 13 000 people participated in various events in the campaign. The branch staff produced a high-quality, successful program. Even better, it demonstrated that the private sector is willing to be associated with such programs and to contribute to the cost. The branch has prepared a folio outlining some recent initiatives and a calendar of forthcoming campaigns which I hope the private sector will continue to support. Selected sponsors will be approached shortly.

Information on health matters is useful only if people can get hold of it and use it to their benefit. A pamphlet on AIDS, for instance, will not do much good if people at risk of infection cannot read it. To promote positive health messages direct to the public, my department opened Healthworks in November 1985 at Casuarina Shopping Square. It is open on weekdays, Friday evenings and Saturdays. Healthworks serves as a focal point for promotion campaigns in Darwin and as a source of reliable health information. Although it sells materials and products such as stickers, t-shirts, books, posters and videos, as well as free information, Healthworks is not a shop in the commercial sense.

Items on sale are specifically health-related. They provide people with an opportunity to act on campaign information and so reinforce the messages and their positive effect on individuals. Healthworks has been a great success to date. The Darwin public has accepted it as a source of reliable and scientifically-valid advice on health matters. Local doctors and other health professionals refer patients to it. The manager is a highly-qualified community health nurse. All materials are evaluated by a team of Health and Community Services professionals before they are put on display.

Three months after its opening, a survey showed that 80% of Darwin residents were in favour of Healthworks. The first campaign had significantly improved the community's perception of my department as being active in providing information on health issues. Healthworks has consistently increased its community support. Sales figures from January to June this year were 40% higher than for the same period last year. A recent survey showed that more than 1700 people, or 2.7% of Darwin's population, visit Healthworks each month. This compares favourably with figures released recently by the Western Australian Health Department's 'Health Yourself' shop in Perth's central business district where 2600 people - only 0.3% of that city's population - visited each month over the same period. In terms of its impact on the population, Healthworks is nearly 10 times more powerful than the Perth shop. It is in a much stronger position to make positive changes to health behaviour. Furthermore, traffic through Healthworks frequently increases by up to 100% during a campaign, as happened during the recent 'Smoking? No way!' campaign.

Healthworks achieves its success at a relatively low cost. For the year ending 30 June 1987, costs were \$44 400 in salaries and rent was \$41 057. Returns from sales exceeded \$30 000. Due to efficient management of a trust account set up in 1985, Healthworks has not required extra funding, apart from salaries and rent. It has been self-supporting since 1985. Information and services available through Healthworks are constantly reviewed and new services are often introduced.

The wider responsibilities of my new department are reflected in a weekly service which started recently: 'Healthworks on Thursdays'. Different Health and Community Services professionals are available in the shop each Thursday to discuss their role and offer advice and assistance to visitors. Healthworks has become really popular with Darwin's young people, which is a very encouraging sign to me. A new computer lifestyle assessment designed specifically for adolescents is being introduced. It is in a format which is entertaining for young people, but it shows the risks associated with negative health behaviour and the benefits of positive steps. I anticipate that this new assessment program will be as popular with the public as the current model which completed 5500 assessments in 1986.

Healthworks' value as a focus for health promotion campaigns was reinforced during the 'Smoking? No Way' campaign in August. During the week, a 'quit line' at Healthworks received 71 telephone calls, 52 people bought 'quit smoking' kits and 90 people responded directly to advertisements to come to Healthworks to get advice on quitting. 100 people underwent carbon monoxide tests and 228 people took fitness tests. Smokers from this group were given lifestyle counselling. About 1000 people attended a 'quit smoking' day at Fannie Bay Beach and 56 people signed up for 'quit smoking' classes. I was delighted, by the way, to note that 31 people in that group were staff of my department.

The Menzies School of Health Research conducted an evaluation of the anti-smoking campaign to determine its effectiveness. The evaluation, completed late last week, underlines the extraordinary value of this preventive approach to health care. More than three-quarters of Darwin residents were aware that the campaign was being conducted. In that campaign, Aussie Wimbledon champ, Pat Cash, was the most frequently-remembered spokesman against smoking. I am pleased to report that 3% of Darwin smokers quit as a result of the campaign. This statistic represents 900 former smokers who will live a much better life as a result of their decision.

A widely-accepted British study estimated that 1 in every 4 smokers will die prematurely because of smoking-related illnesses. In Darwin alone, based on this study, this campaign has saved 225 people from dying prematurely as a result of smoking tobacco. This result has a tremendous implication for savings in the community's health-care costs when you consider that most tobacco-related deaths result from chronic, lingering illnesses. A typical lung cancer victim, for instance, might be in hospital for 6 months before death.

Let us be positive and assume that these 225 reformed smokers have escaped this illness. To keep the exercise simple, we will disregard the cost of visits and treatments for people with diseases such as emphysema, asthma, chronic bronchitis and so on earlier in their lives. At a cost to the community's health system of, say, \$300 per day for each patient, the net savings to the community, because these 225 people have avoided lung cancer, is a staggering \$12.125m. This figure is extremely conservative because we have not taken inflation into account. The Territory figures are, however,

quite modest when you compare them with the national figures. A recent Western Australian report stated that 23 000 Australians die annually of smoking-related illnesses. The annual cost of treating these illnesses is estimated at about \$1400m. If the 'Smoking? No Way!' campaign has persuaded only 1 Darwin smoker to quit, our community health system has saved \$54 000 in lung cancer treatment. When this is weighed against the \$16 000 which my department spent to conduct the campaign, it is apparent that this kind of health promotion is very cost-effective.

Half the Territory's population lives outside Darwin and, therefore, the Health Promotion Branch has entered the telephone and mail order business. A catalogue of materials and services in Healthworks entitled 'Healthworks Outback Outreach' is being produced for Territory-wide distribution. All outback residents will soon be able to benefit from Healthworks. My objective is to make all major health promotion campaigns Territory-wide by 1988. Local activities and promotions can be planned in advance to complement media advertising.

A full calendar of health campaigns has been drawn up for the new financial year. The Health Promotions Branch will conduct these campaigns in cooperation with other branches of my department. The campaigns include box jellyfish awareness, immunisations, AIDS in urban areas, measles, moderate alcohol consumption and mosquito awareness. Successful publications like 'Good Health in the Tropics' and 'Good Health in the Centre' will be updated and presented in a new format. Campaigns like these are one part of the role of health promotion. Branch officers also deal with requests for information and advice. They conduct workshops and seminars for community groups, schools, government departments and private companies on a variety of health concerns. For example, the branch is working with other units to devise stress management seminars for prison officers in October.

My department has worked with the Department of Education since 1985 to help train teachers in drug education. More than 100 teachers and school nurses have passed through the training program so far. For many years, we have recognised that Aboriginal communities are a priority area for preventive health efforts. An experienced officer returned recently from secondment to the national campaign against drug abuse in Canberra. His experience will be invaluable in addressing Aboriginal health awareness needs.

The branch proposes to use Aboriginal community resources by training existing community personnel through a workshop process so that appropriate messages of prevention will be developed and disseminated by Aboriginal people. Pilot projects, based on this principle, have already led to encouraging results. Another workshop is planned for October.

At times, some people have denigrated health promotion activities as preaching to the converted. These people forget that, as well as targeting people who have bad habits that we would like to change, we must also support the positive attitudes adopted by people who have decided to develop healthy lifestyles. It is essential that health promotions continue to preach to the converted so that we can reinforce positive messages for their own sake and have people in our community who act as role models for others.

In conclusion, to change people's health behaviour can be a slow process. My department has demonstrated impressive achievements in this area in a short period of time. The task of health promotion is important because it represents an investment in the future health and well-being of all Territorians. If less money is needed for institutions and machinery devoted

to curing the sick, it can be used in more positive ways to enhance Territory life.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it saddens me to have to rise to state that this statement represents a most pathetic and shallow treatment of a very important subject. The minister should be both ashamed and embarrassed to put a statement in this form, on such a subject, before this House. He has hit at the very nub of one of the most important issues relating to the future of the Northern Territory: the health of its citizens. What happens, Mr Speaker? We receive 17 pages of drivel mixed with some garbage.

I have heard that this statement has been floating around the corridors of power since May ...

Mr Tuxworth: 1985.

Mr EDE: '1985' is the interjection, Mr Speaker, and if that is true, the minister should be doubly ashamed because you would think that, by now, he could have put together something with a bit more substance than this statement contains. When the amalgamation of the Department of Health and the former Department of Community Development was first mooted, we thought that we would see some action taken on the problem of lifestyle, the community development aspects of health and welfare and how they relate to the institutional aspects as more people are hospitalised. That was what we were told would happen and that is what we hoped for, but what have we got? 'Eat to Peak' or something!

The statement runs for 5 pages before it gives the first bit of basic information. Then we find that, since 1985, when the government commissioned a study of the health attitudes of Darwin residents, it has set up the Health Promotion Branch. That, for a start, focuses on the essential problem in the minister's thinking on this subject. Mr Speaker, I have nothing whatsoever against us conducting programs in Darwin, but the major problem area, the major disease pools, the major morbidity rates are not amongst Darwin residents but amongst the people out bush. That is the area where the prevention programs should have been targeted. The minister stated that, in 1985, Darwin was to be the initial focus. In his reply, the minister may wish to explain to us how, in the 2 years to date, it has moved anywhere from there. Of the 'Eat to Peak' program, he states the campaign's aims: the increased consumption of complex carbohydrates, reduced intake of fats, increased physical activity and increased consumption of water. Mr Speaker, as you know, increased consumption of water is something that I have been talking about for quite some considerable time. I have been talking about the fact that there are many people in this Territory who do not have access to anywhere near the required amount and quality of water. But all we find out is that, at the end of that program, he states that it was 'a high-quality, successful program'.

I am prepared to accept that it was a high-quality and successful program for the people of Darwin. However, there is nothing in this paper which would give me any indication of how that particular program, targeted as it was at Darwin, will have any relevance to the major disease pools that we have in the Northern Territory. The aims of that campaign to encourage people to increase physical activity, reduce consumption of fats, increase consumption of water and so on, are very relevant to all the people who are subject to those substantial sickness rates in the Northern Territory. But how will this



program be relevant to finding out how they are to be treated? It is completely irrelevant.

The minister then spoke about Healthworks. There is no doubt that, since its establishment at Casuarina in November 1985, Healthworks has been of substantial assistance to the people of Darwin in helping them to achieve a healthy lifestyle. But again, what we are talking about is a group of people who are extremely healthy for 90% of the time. The minister is trying to improve on that, when the Territory has a group of people who spend 50% of their time being basically unhealthy, yet he has not targeted that group at all.

For example, he states that Healthworks has been a great success to date and that the Darwin public has accepted it. He says nothing about the people of Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy or anywhere else throughout the Territory - all areas where there are major problems. His comparison of figures for Darwin and Perth are so ridiculous that I am not even going to talk about them. He went on then to talk about the 'Smoking? No Way!' campaign. It is true that, in all my travels through my electorate, I have yet to see any information regarding the 'Smoking? No Way!' campaign. Obviously, it was one more campaign that was confined to Darwin.

We heard next about a recent program called 'Healthworks on Thursdays'. The government made more resources available for this program, but where? Again, in Darwin. They are available in the shop each Thursday, he states, for Darwin's young people. That is all well and good, Mr Speaker, but what about a little balance here? What about a bit of equity? Why not spread throughout the Territory some of the skills that have been developed? How about starting to attack the areas most in need? In relation to the 'Smoking? No Way!' campaign in August, he told us that 71 telephone calls were received and that 52 people bought 'quit smoking' kits - all from Darwin.

After that, he spoke about this amazing 'Healthworks Outback Outreach' program. Healthworks decided finally to get out there amongst the people. Where did it go? It went to Fannie Bay Beach. That was a pretty massive movement, a real leap out into the bush. It was a real attempt to attack the problem where it most evident. Two-thirds of the people who signed up for 'quit smoking' were obviously under orders from the Department of Health because that is where they came from. From that it was determined that three-quarters of Darwin residents were aware of the problem. Again, that is all very well, but it does not attack the problem where it is at its worst.

We then come to a page of the most phenomenal statistics that I have ever come across. For a start, there is an allegation that 3% of Darwin smokers quit as a result of the campaign. That is a completely unsubstantiated statement. There is no evidence for this bald statement that that is the result of the campaign. He says that the figure of 3% represents 900 people. He makes no reference to the fact that 80% of smokers who quit as a result of such campaigns resume smoking within 6 weeks. He has assumed that there has been a 100% success rate for the 3% who were involved in the campaign. He told us that 900 Darwin people quit smoking, referred to what he calls a 'widely-accepted' British study, and stated that 225 people were saved from premature death because of the smoking campaign.

The minister ignores all medical research into the effects of long-term smoking. Research shows that, after smoking for 45 years, you cannot just give up and expect not to die from lung cancer or any other smoking-related disease. There is a point beyond which whether you give up or not makes not

one iota of difference. The minister has simply jumbled together unrelated figures and unrelated research and done a bit of multiplication to come up with a figure of \$12m which somehow he believes has been saved. It is a load of garbage. It is way below the standard that we are entitled to expect in this House.

It is not until we come to page 14 of this 17-page document that we find the first mention of the half of the population that lives outside Darwin. There we find a couple of paragraphs about the introduction of 'Healthworks Outback Outreach'. He gives no information whatsoever about how he is going to make information relevant to the various groups that live out bush or how he will deliver it. He says that his aim is to conduct major health promotion campaigns Territory-wide by 1988. We just heard the Minister for Industries and Development say that he will not assist Imparja, the commercial television network that will be servicing areas outside Darwin. I hope that, in his reply, the Minister for Health and Community Services will inform us that at least 50% of funds available for TV advertising to promote health and lifestyle will be used through Imparja, the network that will be covering the outback areas, because the effects of disease in those places are far greater than in Darwin.

All we have heard from the minister so far is that the Health Promotion Branch will conduct these campaigns in cooperation with other branches of his department. I have become used to that sort of doubletalk coming from him. Basically, it means that he will not provide additional resources. He intends to bundle up a whole heap of gear and send it out to the overworked community health sisters. Those health sisters are currently dropping like flies. It is nearly impossible, because of the burnout rate, to get anybody who can last more than 6 to 8 weeks. That is the situation with the current workload, yet this minister apparently intends to load them up with another program. It simply will not work. As much as those community health sisters believe in preventive health, the necessity for it and its priority, they will just be unable to take further responsibility. They are flat out trying to save people who are sick and dying right now!

On the second-last page of the minister's written statement, we finally come to the priority area: 'For many years we have recognised that Aboriginal communities are a priority area for preventive health efforts'. The minister has already admitted that he has done nothing about it. Everything in the previous 15 pages relates to what has been done in Darwin. On the second-last page, however, he tells us that this priority area will finally be tackled. He says that an experienced officer has returned from secondment in Canberra. I am sure that the 25% of the population who are affected will be really grateful that one experienced officer has come back. This one person, with his invaluable experience, will address Aboriginal health awareness needs.

Are extra resources to be provided to support this superman? Is some major effort to be made? No. The branch proposes to use Aboriginal community resources. Once again, communities will be told that, if they wish to divert resources from their garbage collection or some other community program, they will be able to pay for a health awareness program. The minister does not expect anyone else to do this, but his statement indicates that that is how Aboriginal communities are to be treated.

The minister should be embarrassed. It has long been said of him that you could wade through his thoughts for a month and not get your toenails wet. We were told that the new department, of which he is the minister, would bring together aspects of health which were in the Department of Community

Development with those in the Department of Health and that this would result in a more effective approach to problems.

Mr Dale: That has been done, Brian.

Mr EDE: It has not. The Department of Health and Community Services does not even control one of the most significant services affecting health: water supply. We thought that control of water supplies, as handled by the former Department of Community Development, would benefit from the amalgamation with the Department of Health. We thought that people who had been returning to hospital again and again because of bad water supplies in their communities would finally have their needs for access to good quality water met. What happened? The responsibility for that service in Aboriginal communities has now been placed in Treasury, as an afterthought, and it is not possible to find any allocation of funds for it. It is like the song: it goes round and round and comes out where?

The minister says that the rate of disease in Aboriginal communities is similar to the rate outside those communities. That is patent nonsense. The most recent figures on this subject, which are provided by the Northern Territory Department of Health for 1985-86, indicate that the Aboriginal death rate, on a 3-year average to 1985, was 1%. That is roughly 4 times the non-Aboriginal rate. The life expectancy period for Aboriginal people is some 30 years below that for non-Aboriginal people. If you are an Aboriginal person, you can expect to reach my age of 41 years. That is about the average. That is a factor which preventive health should be looking at. If this government were serious, it would be addressing that. It is one of the major problem areas that we have in the Northern Territory.

The infant mortality rate has risen again to the levels that existed in the 1970s. That has happened over the last 2 years. For a number of years previously, they were slowly decreasing. While Aboriginal infant mortality rates were still 1.5 times those of non-Aboriginals, we had hoped that they were declining. However, over the last few years, they have been increasing again and now are at the 1970s level, and that is a complete tragedy.

Mr Dale: Where are you quoting your statistics from?

Mr EDE: I am quoting my statistics from your annual report.

Mr Dale: 1985?

Mr EDE: The 1985-86 annual report which is the last one that has been tabled. We have not had the 1986-87 report and we certainly hope there has been some improvement.

That rate is twice the non-Aboriginal rate. One of the problems that I see with that is that 17 of the 44 infants whose deaths are included in those figures died away from a clinic or a hospital. That was as many as for the previous 2 years combined. We could question whether that means that the Department of Health is becoming of increasing irrelevance to the people out bush or - and this is far more likely to be the case - it is a result of the decreasing level of services which are being provided in the rural areas. Twenty of the 44 died from 'other' or 'unknown' causes.

The child admission rates for Aboriginal children were above 10% of the child population during that year. During that year, over 10% of Aboriginal children were admitted to hospital. This compares to a non-Aboriginal

percentage of 2.5%, and indicates that an Aboriginal child is 4 times more likely to end up in hospital during a year. In Alice Springs, the figure for Aboriginal children was over 14%. From 1981 onwards, there has been no decrease in the number of Aboriginal children being admitted to hospital in the Northern Territory whereas a 33.3% decrease has been achieved amongst non-Aboriginal children.

Mr Speaker, I use these figures to show that, when a major problem exists amongst 25% of the population, and statistics of this nature are so grotesquely out of proportion to their numbers in the population, the government should indicate its willingness to attack the major problem areas and make every effort to reduce those rates. The minister spoke of the savings to government over the balance of a person's life, and he mentioned a figure of \$12m. I have already shown just how bodgie those figures are. However, he quoted that as a justification for his program: some \$12m saved, presumably over the next 30 years.

In the last year that we are talking about, Northern Territory hospitals were occupied for some 190 000 bed-days. I do not know the breakdown of that figure across the Territory for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Relevant figures are given in relation to most of the illnesses and deaths etc, but they are not provided for admissions. However, from advice that I have had from health officials in Alice Springs, I know that, in the Alice Springs region, well over 50% of the bed-days are Aboriginal occupancies. I know that my figures may be a little bit out on this but, if the figure is well over 50% in Alice Springs, which has the second largest hospital in the Northern Territory, overall they average probably some 50%. According to the minister's figures, the 190 000 bed-days would then give us some 95 000 bed-days for Aboriginal people. The cost of that to the system is \$28.5m.

That is \$28.5m for failure because I consider hospitals to be places where you go if the health system has failed. If the health system is not able to keep people out of hospital, that is where they end up. I know that is not entirely the case, but it must account for at least 50%. Hospitalisation as a result of preventable disease represents over 50% of total Aboriginal admissions. Simple mathematics indicates that, if 50% of hospitalisation of Aboriginals is preventable, then 50% of the total costs can be saved by the introduction of preventive programs. We are talking of some \$14m of Northern Territory funds which are spent in an area where, if we had a preventive program and appropriate facilities in place, that expenditure would not be necessary. But how much does the government spend on those programs out bush? The statement indicates that the government has started to talk about making a move. Somebody has come back from Canberra and the government is about to make a move. It should have been working on this for years.

In going through the budget, I was disgusted to note what I regard as a falling off in commitment to supplying adequate water and to raising the basic standard of life in the rural areas. The Treasurer has said that he will supply communities of less than 50 people with a basic water supply only and that he will not allow government funds to be used to improve their standard of living. He is quite prepared to consign them to a lifetime of continual hospitalisation because of their inability to generate funds to cater for their basic needs and to take them beyond the 40 years of life expectancy that they have at the moment and, hopefully, provide them with some of the standards that the rest of us enjoy.

The minister referred in passing to AIDS. He did not refer to other sexually-transmitted diseases. Syphilis is now being contracted at an

extremely high rate in the Aboriginal communities. We are talking of a rate of about 28.8 per 1000 which is some 70 times the non-Aboriginal rate. It is an increase of 150% on the rate in the early 1980s. Mr Speaker, 28.8 per 1000 is the Territory-wide figure. The rate pertaining in the Alice Springs and the Barkly region is 43.6 per 1000. Syphilis has reached pandemic proportions and it is in danger of becoming endemic.

I read in the Department of Health booklet what the department proposed to do about the problem. The proposals seem to be back to what I saw the Department of Health doing in 1978. It has not learnt anything about coming to grips with the problem. What has the department been doing over the years whilst these rates have been climbing? It decided that, if it sat on its hands long enough, perhaps the problem would go away. It was able to do that because it had a series of ministers who had no commitment or drive or enthusiasm to improve the health statistics.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I am disgusted that the minister did not take the opportunity to place before us a well-reasoned statement giving the goals and directions of his department. I was hoping for a statement whereby it would be clear that finally the minister intended to grab his department by the scruff of the neck and ensure that it confronted the major problems so that we could begin to see some results. All we got, Mr Speaker, was 17 pages of gobbledegook, 17 pages of statements such as 'the Stone Age warrior who fashioned the first club soon knew it was better to give than to receive'. Is that the quality that we expect from a ministerial statement? It is something along the lines that it is better to break arms than have your own arms broken. Is that what preventive health is to be about? That is the attitude of the honourable minister. I do not know who wrote this particular statement but it looks very much as though the honourable minister had a crack at it himself because I cannot think of anyone else in the department who has so little nous that he would inflict such a load of garbage on this Assembly.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in rising to speak to the statement presented this morning by the Minister for Health and Community Services. It is quite obvious that the member for Stuart, the only opposition speaker so far in this debate, has a complete lack of understanding of what the statement is all about. It is about health promotion. This is an important matter which needs to be commented on despite the member for Stuart's opening remarks that it is a waste of time and a nonsense. Whether we like it or not, certain aspects of our lifestyle impact on the health system and preventive health will save us considerable sums of money, and the same applies in respect of education. Promotional work has been carried out in Aboriginal communities as well as in urban areas and I will touch on those a little later.

The member for Stuart placed a great deal of the emphasis on Darwin. The reality is that Darwin is where the population is and there are very real problems in relation to certain aspects of our lifestyle. There is no doubt in my mind that health promotions do have an effect on the community. I do not intend to debate the accuracy of the figures that the minister referred to in his statement but there is no doubt that a healthy lifestyle does reduce the cost to the health system.

Once again, we heard from the member for Stuart a complete knocking of what the government is doing. In fact, I believe that the member for Stuart came very close to misleading the Assembly on a number of occasions in respect of remarks that he made about the minister's statement. He referred to Aboriginals constituting 25% of our population. I understand the figure is

something like 22.4%. Apart from that, there are a number of matters on which the government is making inroads and he and other members of the opposition know that. I think it is about time that he stopped his knock, knock, knocking.

He raised the matter of the 'Eat to Peak' program. Similar programs have been occurring in Aboriginal communities for years. The Department of Health and Department of Education have made great play about the need for Aboriginal people to understand about nutrition and the value of eating correct food, whether it be European food or bush tucker.

We have programs relating to sexually-transmitted diseases. These important programs have been in place on Aboriginal communities for years. This should be acknowledged by the opposition. We hear no mention of the immunisation programs from members opposite, even though they know that the government has introduced a number of immunisation programs which will have a lasting effect on Aboriginal health. The latest program that I can recall is the hepatitis B program whereby, by the year 2000, all neonates will be immunised. I think that that is something that we should all be promoting. It is a wonderful thing for Aboriginal health generally that this is occurring.

Those are some of the positive programs that are occurring. To say that very little is being done is nonsense, and the member for Stuart knows that it is nonsense. Once again, he has used the scare tactics which he uses in relation to health or education or anything else. It is true that more work needs to be done in Aboriginal communities, and no one on this side has ever denied that. We need to continue our efforts in that regard. However, one of the biggest problems is that so little is known about certain aspects of Aboriginal health. For example, why are there so many hearing problems? Why is it that between 60% and 80% of Aboriginal children attending school in some communities have hearing problems? Why do Aboriginal communities have the trachoma problem? We are also ignorant of certain aspects of kava use. There is still a great deal of work to be done on petrol-sniffing. The government acknowledges this and it will continue to work on these problems through the Menzies School of Health Research, an institution set up by the government with considerable outside help. It has done a tremendous amount of work and, when it finds the answers to the questions that I have just raised, we will be much better placed to address Aboriginal health issues more positively. We are doing a great deal already, but those answers will help us to do much more.

It is not just a matter of saying that better water supplies will solve health problems. Whether we like it or not, certain areas of Australia are desert and, unfortunately, lack fresh water. The member for Stuart would have us sink a bore wherever someone wants to live. He really does not know what he is about. His statement has many implications. The sinking of a bore breaks down the Aboriginal's natural relationship with the land, which is something that many of us want to promote. The fact is that, in the days before bores, Aboriginal people moved through that country to wherever there were water supplies. If we have a 10-year drought again, there will be real problems in many of those areas. That fact has never been mentioned in here. It is a fact that many of the bores that have been put down will dry up, and people will start to flow back into communities such as Papunya and Yuendumu. Those implications need to be considered, and the government has considered them.

In the areas where a good water supply has been provided, the positioning of bores must be considered in relation to houses. In areas like Gapuwiyak and Milingimbi, there are problems with sewerage due to the siting of those communities. Those are issues that should be addressed and I am not saying that the only solution is to move the community. At Gapuwiyak, there is a very real problem in relation to sewerage and water and the same applies at Milingimbi, and those are issues that have to be thought about. It is no good sinking bores and putting in sewerage systems until these aspects have been addressed. This government has addressed those issues and is acting responsibly in respect of those matters.

At Yuendumu, there is a health problem because leaking taps are creating pools of stagnant water. These issues are very real. Health people have raised those issues at a number of seminars, and they need to be considered. Very real problems are created because of water lying around those communities.

Mr Ede: Come on, that is just not on.

Mr HARRIS: Is the honourable member saying that that is not a problem at Yuendumu?

Mr Ede: I am saying that it is about 10% of the problem that exists because of the lack of water. I am addressing the 90%.

Mr HARRIS: It is still a problem and it is still an issue that you should be addressing.

Honourable members opposite harp continually about what the government is not doing. I am making these points because these are issues that they should be talking about to the communities, not just knocking us about all the time. There are real problems, and we need to address those problems. I am sure the honourable members for Arnhem and Arafura are aware of those particular issues and will approach those matters in a responsible manner. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition tries to encourage his deputy to look more positively at what can be done to address these issues.

The member for Stuart also referred to occupancy rates in hospitals. I believe that about 80% of patients in the Alice Springs Hospital are Aboriginal people. We should be looking at why this is the case. Mr Speaker, if you look into this matter closely, you will find that many Aboriginal children in hospital will not be allowed to go home because the treatment they have received would simply be wasted. If those Aboriginal children received the necessary initial care, this problem would not exist. In our society, most children who are born in hospital receive the necessary injections and other treatment before they are sent home to be looked after by their parents. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Aboriginal communities. The same applies with adults: after returning to the community, it is only a short time before they are back in hospital.

We also have the issue of referrals. The member for Stuart would know that waste in independent health services and aero-medical services has to be looked at by government because those services are not being used correctly. I am sure that the Minister for Health will be examining those matters. This brings me to the subject of the attitude of some Aboriginal people. I am not saying this in a derogatory fashion but the fact is - and the same applies to education matters - Aboriginal people must realise that they have a part to play. Things do not just happen. If we want to get kids to school, parents

have a big role to play. In relation to health, nutrition and care of children, parents need to learn more. Every opportunity is given to Aboriginal people to do this. There are promotion programs. The member for Stuart referred to the annual report of the Department of Health and the statistics appearing in such reports indicate that there have been improvements in relation to leprosy and other diseases. However, I am not denying that there are continuing problems which the government will continue to address.

I believe that the member for Stuart has misunderstood the purpose of the minister's statement. There are plenty of opportunities in this Assembly to debate issues relating to health. Opposition members know that. They can do it during the grievance debate and they can initiate discussions on matters of public importance. Yet the member for Stuart says that the minister's statement is nonsense and that statements like this should not be presented because they relate to Darwin. He should realise that there are many health problems in our community which relate to alcohol, AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases. These problems are addressed through programs such as those promoted by Healthworks. They are having a positive effect on the community and I am pleased to hear that the campaigns have been successful. We have to make sure that the overall cost of our health system is reduced and, if campaigns do not work effectively, we need to re-think them. I was very pleased to hear the figures quoted by the minister. As I said, I am not going to debate their accuracy or otherwise. The people who collected the data can obviously be relied upon and I have no reason to doubt that the figures are accurate.

There is no doubt that preventive health care has always been promoted as the direction in which we should be moving. Health professionals have long advocated that, and the sad point is that, in reality, if there is a choice between preventive care and acute care, it is obvious that acute care has to take precedence over preventive care. I believe that the minister's statement was made to indicate some of the positive things that have been occurring in the community since the establishment of Healthworks. As time goes by, I am sure we will be expanding those programs into the Aboriginal communities, and we will be making sure that the programs that are already in existence in Aboriginal communities are supported. As a result, we will see improved lifestyles for all the people of the Northern Territory.

I am not referring to the member for Arnhem or the member for Arafura, but I wish the other members opposite would make positive comments in relation to these issues. We want to know what the problems are. I have raised a number of issues which I hope members will take up because they are very real. We need to be responsible in our approach to these matters. The whole issue of Aboriginals, how we look after their interests and how we inform the people in the communities on what is happening, needs consideration. I believe the emphasis of government in asking the Aboriginal people to become involved, whether it is in relation to health or education or whatever, is a positive move and a necessary move. I think all members opposite would agree on that particular point. We must consult with the people in those particular communities. I hope that we can get members opposite to look positively at these issues. This statement is about health promotion and, with the correct promotion of a number of these issues, we can address the very real problems that we have in our community and, hopefully, ensure that the health and the lifestyle of our people improve so that we will have fewer and fewer people in our hospitals.



Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, let me commence by corroborating the positive aspects of this statement. I believe that the process of promoting particular issues through advertising campaigns and so on has a great deal of virtue. Certainly, as they are supported by governments right around the country, they should be supported by the Northern Territory government and by members of this Assembly, as I believe they are by members of the opposition.

There are 2 aspects to this. There is the health promotion aspect, and I noted that, in the minister's statement, considerable attention was given to the Healthworks shop in Casuarina. I am fairly fortunate in being able to take the odd half hour to jog past the Administrator's residence and down Stokes Hill. Unfortunately, I do not have time to visit Healthworks however much I might like to do so. However, I have no doubt that, as a facility, it serves the people to whom it is available very well.

If I do have any criticism of the minister's statement in that respect, it is to corroborate the comments of the member for Stuart about the honourable minister playing fast and loose with figures. I draw honourable members' attention to the last paragraph on page 9 and the first paragraph on page 10 of the statement. In one of those classical cultural cringes that seem increasingly to characterise the style of this government, the honourable minister commented that our figure is far better than that in a Labor state. I thought that was a pretty invidious comparison. He said that in Perth's central business district '2600 people - only 0.3% of that city's population - visited each month over the same period'. The figure for Darwin was 2.7% of the population. That meant that 'the Darwin Healthworks is nearly 10 times more powerful than the Perth shop'.

Mr Dale: You are talking drivel.

Mr BELL: I was not going to say that but, since the member for Wanguri has decided to describe his own comments as drivel, I am not likely to take exception to that.

The fact of the matter is that, if he had wanted to cast it in a negative light, he could have said that nearly 1000 fewer Darwinians attend the Healthworks in Darwin than their Perth counterparts. I do not think that a great deal hangs on that point, but I find it a very interesting use of figures. Having taken an interest in figures for some considerable time, I thought it was worth pointing out. To say the least, the minister is drawing a long bow.

While on the matter of figures, I would like to corroborate another point made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. On page 14, the honourable minister said: 'The annual cost of treating smoking-related illnesses in Australia's health care systems is estimated at about \$1400m. If the "Smoking? No Way!" campaign had persuaded only 1 Darwin smoker to quit, our community health system has saved \$54 000 in lung cancer treatment. When this is weighed against the \$16 000 which my department spent to conduct the campaign, it is apparent this kind of health promotion is very cost-effective'. I am not trying to deride campaigns of this kind but I really cannot refrain from pointing out that, whoever writes these statements for the Minister for Health and Community Services - and he has to take responsibility for them - really ought to do a rather better job with his figures. If 1 Darwin smoker quits as a result of the program, our community health system may have saved \$54 000 in lung cancer treatment. What that assumes is that he stays off tobacco. As the member for Stuart pointed out, relatively few people - like the Attorney-General - who give up smoking

actually give it up for good. Let us assume that 1 person does give it up for good as a result of this campaign. That assumes that he would have contracted cancer if he had kept on smoking. It assumes also that he will not contract cancer now that he has stopped. I feel obliged to corroborate my colleague's comment in respect of the fairly fast and loose manner in which the minister has played with these figures.

The main point that I wanted to make with respect to Healthworks and health promotion campaigns is that, around the world, these have been most effective with higher socioeconomic groups. The better educated the people are, the more literate they are, the more likely the campaigns are to be effective. What bothers me is that a few pamphlets will be circulated around the bush. These will be printed in 5 colours and they will look terrific. However, people will not be able to read them. They will not have a great deal of effect; essentially it will be a public relations exercise. Given the nature of the Territory's population, I believe that there are serious shortcomings in this statement.

It is a very general statement which is described at the top as a ministerial statement on health promotion. It contains some very general statements about what it means to be healthy. It has a very colourful reference to the caveman and attempts to get to the nitty gritty of what being healthy means. The plain fact is that it concentrates purely and simply on programs that will appeal to rich people and will be successful with rich people.

It is only in the last 300 years that whitefellows have learnt that, in order to live in cities, there are certain public health measures that need to be carried out. I do not particularly mean to set up a partisan debate here. I am genuinely seeking to inform members of the government that, historically, environmental health is not something that we learnt from the Bible. We had to learn it through increasing urbanisation from the 15th and 16th centuries onwards.

Mr Dondas: The Greeks had sewerage and the Chinese had sewerage.

Mr BELL: I see my history lesson is falling on deaf ears. I only have 10 minutes left and I will not be sidetracked. If honourable members want a better history lesson and want me to explain the important growth in local government health care measures in the United Kingdom in the mid-19th century, I am quite prepared to do so. However, just now I only have 10 minutes and I do not have the time to do it.

As a backbencher in this Assembly, I am prepared to look at any measures that improve the health of people living in the Northern Territory. What I am concerned about is that this statement is looking at one of the areas where there are fewest problems. For that reason, I think the statement has real problems and really needs a re-think. The honourable minister has seen a copy of this particular document: 'Health Indicators in the Northern Territory'. The minister knows that he has had a statement in his in-tray to deliver about this since March or April this year.

Mr Dale: That is not true.

Mr BELL: I will take that back, Mr Speaker. The honourable minister has not, and I will take him at his word. Obviously, my third-hand advice has not been accurate ...

Mr Coulter: Inaccurate, as usual.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the Treasurer, we do not enjoy an army of public supporters, public servants ...

Mr Dondas: We know you haven't got a lot of public support. Sit down.

Mr BELL: We do enjoy an army of public supporters but we don't enjoy the support of an army of public servants.

Mr Speaker, this statement about health promotion is a drop in the ocean in comparison with what this document has to say about how healthy Territorians are and are not. As far as I am concerned, the minister has his priorities wrong when he talks about improving the health of the already healthy minority without introducing a statement into this House about a document that, in its cold, dull, boring tables illustrates one of the clearest examples of what the Aboriginal movement in this country refers to as genocide. I think that is a bit strong, because genocide implies willfulness. But, in sheer numbers, the impact on Aboriginal people in my electorate is no less serious. I will make the cold, hard statistics available. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard pages 21 and 23 of this report.

Leave granted.

From page 21 (graph not included):

TREND IN ANNUAL MORTALITY 1979-1983

MALES  
RATE (Per 1000 Population)

FEMALES

	ABORIGINAL	NON- ABORIGINAL	RATE RATIO	ABORIGINAL	NON- ABORIGINAL	RATE RATIO
1979	13.0	4.4	3.0	9.8	2.0	4.9
1980	15.1	4.1	3.7	9.0	1.4	6.4
1981	12.6	4.1	3.1	8.0	1.8	4.4
1982	10.4	4.0	2.6	7.9	1.9	4.2
1983	9.7	3.9	2.5	8.0	1.7	4.7

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, page 21 of this particular report refers to trends in annual mortality of males and females from 1979 to 1983. Unlike the infant mortality rates, which are bad enough, and indicate that Aboriginal infants have about half the chance of surviving that other infants have, the annual mortality rates amongst Aboriginal people overall are about 5 times those of the rest of the Territory population. If that is bad, let us turn to page 23 which shows the ratio of age-specific mortality rates amongst Aborigines and non-Aborigines. That, of course, refers to the rates per thousand of population, and I draw to your attention, for example, that the mortality rates for male Aboriginals between 40 and 44 is 6 times the non-Aboriginal rate. The rate for 30 to 34 is similar.

From page 23 (graph not included):

RATIO OF AGE-SPECIFIC MORTALITY RATES AMONG ABORIGINES  
AND NON-ABORIGINES

AGE	MALES			FEMALES		
	RATE (Per 1000 Population)					
	ABORIGINAL	NON- ABORIGINAL	RATE RATIO	ABORIGINAL	NON- ABORIGINAL	RATE RATIO
0-4	10.4	2.9	3.6	10.7	2.4	4.5
5-9	1.5	0.3	5.0	0.7	0.4	1.8
10-14	1.2	0.7	1.7	0.8	0.3	2.7
15-19	3.1	2.0	1.6	1.9	0.9	2.1
20-24	5.6	2.2	2.6	2.8	0.7	4.0
25-29	7.4	2.9	2.6	3.0	0.4	7.5
30-34	11.8	1.7	6.9	5.3	0.4	13.3
35-39	12.1	2.8	4.3	4.7	0.8	5.9
40-44	18.4	3.1	5.9	11.8	1.1	10.7
45-49	27.4	5.9	4.6	12.0	2.4	5.0
50-54	34.1	8.6	4.0	18.3	2.7	6.8
55-59	44.3	12.7	3.5	30.8	6.2	5.0
60-64	47.6	13.0	3.7	39.3	5.5	7.2
65-69	37.4	27.0	1.4	46.1	11.1	4.2
70-74	86.8	32.5	2.7	72.4	19.1	3.8
75-79	123.9	60.7	2.0	95.1	26.9	3.5
80-84	158.1	98.6	1.6	139.1	38.1	3.7
85+	264.0	85.0	3.1	160.0	133.3	1.2

We cannot avoid those figures. I am not necessarily seeking to cane this government about them because I think that there are 2 reasons for them. One reason is the application of resources. I certainly think that this government needs to consider the question of the application of resources in relation to the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition concerning water supplies. The nonsensical comments of the member for Port Darwin about people at Yuendumu dying because they have too much water really do not bear consideration.

Mr Speaker, these figures are personal to me. On the Sunday before last, I had a phone call at 10 am from the Medical Registrar of the Royal Adelaide Hospital. A young man had passed away as a result of head injuries. He was a bright young fellow. I will not put his name on the record because it would be an embarrassment to his family and I am not sure I could cope with it either. I met him 12 or 13 years ago when he was a young student. He was a keen young footballer and a wonderful drummer.

Mr Collins: Oh, that one.

Mr BELL: I will snot you one day.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: He had been through all the business that young Aboriginal men go through and he had a couple of lovely young kids. He is the flesh on these figures.

Mr Speaker, you may wonder why members of the opposition become passionate about these issues. You may wonder why members of the opposition become passionate about health promotion statements that do the health equivalent of helping the rich get through the eye of a needle. It is because we live, day by day, year by year, with the sort of genocide these people are experiencing.

I have one other point to make, and it has not been made hitherto in this debate. It is that we in this Assembly have to come to terms with what Aboriginal people believe is healthy. I genuinely offer this as a constructive comment to the minister and his department because there is an implication in the minister's statement that there is a community consensus about what makes us healthy and that everybody believes the same thing about what is a healthy lifestyle. The member for Port Darwin talked about encouraging people to eat correct food, as though there is a correct food and an incorrect food. We rarely come to grips with the fact that Aboriginal people have different concepts of health. If the minister thinks that a few glossies will address these issues, he can save the money to be spent on them. Whilst it is true that there are some positive programs, such as the health worker program which addressed the Aboriginal concept of health, this statement does not contain much that is positive. There are many greater problems that are not being addressed, that affect me personally, affect my constituents personally, and are the result of 2 things: resources and philosophy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No honourable member may use threatening or menacing words in the parliament. I refer to the honourable member for MacDonnell's earlier remark directed at the member for Sadadeen, and I offer this warning to all honourable members.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to contribute to this debate on the minister's statement on health promotion, I must say at the outset that it seemed to be a breath of air from the past, including as it did the olde worlde homilies about apples and fingers in and out of fires - real Grandma Moses stuff. The minister outlined health promotion and preventive health measures which really should be preventive ill-health measures because we want to encourage good health and prevent ill-health.

I do not wish to knock the minister's statement, Mr Speaker. It was good as far as it went, but it was presented in rather a wandering way. I will be kind. It strayed from the point. I have read better statements from the minister. Really, it did not appear to have much meat in it at all. I believe that the government can only do so much for people in the way of health promotion. Individuals have to consider their own state of health or ill-health. I would like to ask a question, but I suppose it is a rhetorical question and I will not receive an answer. My question is: why do we have to rely so much on the government? Is it because we have become so used to government interference in our lives and expect the government to fix up everything and anything that goes wrong, even to the extent of fixing our bad sexual and smoking habits?

I applaud the government's preventive ill-health program or promoting good health program, as the only way to go is to try to prevent the disease before it happens. People should be encouraged to keep away from doctors. I know that doctors have to make a dollar or two but, if you can keep away from them, you will lead a healthier life. Probably that is a tautological remark. I believe we should be our own health monitors and not rely on another person to tell us whether we are sick or in good health.

Mr Bell: That is because you are in a higher socioeconomic group, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Oh bunkum! I work.

Mr Bell: If you can get a job, you probably are these days.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If there were no jobs, I would still find work to do.

Mr Speaker, people should be encouraged to think good health. Often, if a person gives in to the habit of thinking that everybody is sick and sickness is the only way to be interesting, they get sick. If we think good health, we will stay healthy much longer.

The minister's statement stopped short of recommending natural medicine but, while not being a real nuts-and-honey person myself, I do believe natural food eaten regularly in its raw, natural state goes a long way to giving a healthy body. If, at the same time, one leads an active life, with a healthy outlook, one can wave goodbye to doctors. There is another way to put people on the way to good health which perhaps the minister did not mention because he would not go so far. People who are unfortunate enough to be in a state of poor health can be cured, from time to time, through homeopathic medicine.

I agree with the minister that prevention costs less than cure but, in elaborating on his quoted cases and from the figures that back up his statements, I believe his figures may not be quite relevant. In any good health promotion, the government has to start making amends after it is aware of the ill-health stemming from certain practices, which means health authorities have to monitor all states of ill-health of people that come to their notice.

Finally, if the minister is so concerned about encouraging and promoting good health in the community by preventative means, why did he close the Howard Springs Community Health Centre on 15 August?

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in rising to respond to the statement made by the Minister for Health and Community Services on the promotion of health, if it were not such an important issue, I would have had to say that the minister was being facetious. However, I can see that he is proud of his achievement. I suppose he has to start somewhere and it might as well be with the area of least concern: promotion of better health for the healthy.

I ask you, Mr Speaker, are we to take seriously all this energy being put into jellyfish and mosquito awareness, when the Northern Territory has one of the most shameful health records in Australia? It is wonderful for the minister to be concerned about Darwin people living longer and being fitter, and I am sure that the minister will get many votes from those people in the Northern Territory who enjoy a more fruitful and enjoyable life over and above the allocated biblical span of 70 years. For those people who do not understand the expression, 3 score years and 10, 70 years was the life expectancy of the nomadic tribe of Israel, well before the advent of modern medicine. Many thousands of years ago, an ancient Jewish tribe had a longer life expectancy than does 25% of the Territory population living in hi-tech Australia in 1987. It is not something to be proud of; it is a disgrace. For the record, the life expectancy of an Aboriginal man in the Northern Territory is 29 years less than the biblical span that the minister quoted. In the age group of 30 to 34 years, the mortality rate of Aboriginal men is 7 times greater than for non-Aboriginals.

The infant death rate is 4 times higher among Aboriginal people. Contributing to the high infant death rate is bad water. Little kids are dying because their water is so poor that it is unfit for human consumption. The member for Arafura has spoken about the attitudes which contribute to that high death rate. The minister spoke about the money that could be saved by stopping people from smoking. What would be the reduction in health costs, damage to the community and grief if good, potable water was a right for all Territorians?

Mr Speaker, added to deaths resulting from bad water, we have premature deaths which are caused by sugar diabetes. It is well known that diabetes is a problem for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Generally, it is a preventable problem as bush tucker experiments in New South Wales and the Kimberleys have demonstrated. The Territory health service has the services of one specialist doctor experienced in diabetes practising at an overworked clinic at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is no wonder that Aboriginal mothers are still dying in childbirth because they have diabetes which causes an oversized baby. It is no wonder that many of the surviving youngsters are not living beyond the first 6 months.

This comes back to government attitudes. The minister tells us that he is proud of promoting long life when we have mortality rates like those among my people. I ask this Assembly about the priorities of this government. People are dying, babies are dying and the government is proud of campaigns relating to mosquitoes and jellyfish. Nobody would disagree that prevention of disease, illness and accidents is important. I would be the first to support a program of prevention.

I am very pleased to see that the honourable minister is supporting a stress management seminar for prison officers. It is a small token indeed considering the appalling condition of our jails and the constant tension resulting from overcrowding. By all means, teach prison officers how to handle stress; they are in need of that skill.

AIDS is another area of concern to all of us and I commend the attitude of the honourable minister towards this killer disease. I echo his words of last week and urge the government to continue its commitment to the prevention of AIDS, but I wonder how serious the minister is. He would not put additional funds into this fight until it was known just how much the federal minister would provide. This fight against AIDS is a joint exercise between the federal and the Northern Territory governments. The 1 nurse who is employed on this AIDS campaign does not constitute a major effort. When will the minister replace the second nurse who went off sick and will not be returning? His commitment to AIDS prevention does not stand up under scrutiny.

We must continue to try to prevent illness and to create community awareness of the benefits of good health. I am ashamed by the minister's words that 'if less money is needed for institutions and machinery devoted to the curing of the sick, it can be used in more positive ways to enhance Territory life'. There is a typical statement of the policy of this government. We all agree that it would be wonderful if we had a society where everyone was hail and hearty. The reality is that we do not. On the one hand, this government is proud of saving 225 people from premature death resulting from tobacco and, on the other hand, it is cutting back on and closing down services. Everything it says is based on an economic argument.

The people who deliver health care and who are best placed to establish programs with improved attitudes are the frontline troops. I refer to the

community health workers and the Aboriginal health workers out in the field. Nevertheless, we see the closure of health centres. The Howard Springs Community Health Centre is a classic example which closed recently. In the advertisement in the paper about closures, the Palmerston Community Health Centre was conveniently left off the list of centres that would remain open. Was this done on purpose so that the rural people would not use the Palmerston facility? After all, we do not want queues of people complaining to their local member about waiting time. If this was not bad enough, we had the staff from the Howard Springs Community Health Centre transferred to Palmerston and the decision was taken to reduce the numbers from 12 to 8. What sort of logic is that if you add the problem of the closure of the primary care clinic at the hospital? The equivalent number of staff from Howard Springs now service Palmerston as well, not to mention the overflow resulting from the hospital closure.

There are communities which continue to wait and wait for medical practitioners. Ask the honourable member for Arafura. I believe that Bathurst Island is a classic case. The Everingham health worker program, that held such potential for a real impact, has been squeezed and blocked from being really effective. Where is the political will and the resources to make this worthwhile idea a winner?

We must continue to be excited that 19% of the people surveyed after the campaign ate more fruit. The minister makes the statement that information on health matters is only useful if people can get hold of it and use it to their benefit. I agree with that. However, information will not save children from dying, it will not save them from measles nor from starting life in an environment which has poor sanitation and a poor water supply nor from growing up with poor nutrition. Where is our 5-year public health improvement plan? Where are our long-term plans for programs to raise the standard of public health? Where is our integrated delivery strategy? Where will our after-care and home visit services be with staff reductions and the focus on fast turnaround in our hospitals? Where is the coordination of policy between health-care services and health-delivery units?

We cannot retain level A accreditation for the Royal Darwin Hospital. I suppose we must allow the minister to have his moment of glory over the success of Healthworks because the rest of his responsibilities are in a shambles. He is presiding over the dismantling of a system that took years to put into place. I am pleased that the 13 000 people who took part in the Healthworks campaign are exercising more and eating more fibre. It is encouraging indeed to see such a high level of participation and such good outcomes. I hope the results are sustained and that savings can be achieved from such investment.

I do not agree that it is essential to preach to the converted. It is the rest of the community we must reach. We must reach them first with curative programs so that they are healthy enough to take advantage of important activities. Personal well-being and quality of life are worthy ideals and goals we should all be striving for. Unfortunately, some people have had a head start. Health promotion must be part of an overall public health program. We need a realistic approach that accepts the realities and seeks to address the problems. The stop-go policies of successive CLP governments and health ministers in the last 5 years have eroded services, standards and public confidence. The minister sums up his attitude in his statement that, if you are on the end of a club, it is better to give than receive. Might is right and, in this case, the healthy shall flourish and the weak and the sick can wring what they can out of our shrinking health system.



I believe the minister is wielding a very big club. We are all aware of the problems associated with alcohol abuse and we are all aware that Territory consumption rates are among the highest in the world. I do not believe, however, that the print and electronic media and shop-front contacts will have much impact on this problem. The minister admits that this substance abuse contributes to the cost of health care. I agree that we need to attack this problem and perhaps a major campaign in 1988 would be the most effective strategy.

I noted in Saturday's NT News the comments of Dr John Ridley concerning high alcohol consumption and smoking being signs of stress in the community and contributing to the numbers of people seeking psychiatric help. We all know that psychiatric services are stretched and, despite the initiatives outlined in the budget, we must accept that we need preventive programs to reduce the size of that problem. Drinking is only one indicator of community stress. We need a little more than videos and posters. This social problem needs a strong and vigorous program and we need to change community attitudes in conjunction with crisis and rehabilitation programs. In this way, we will have a real effect on the burden of health costs resulting from excessive drinking.

I am pleased that the health promotion is to be extended beyond Darwin. I hope that it has a real penetration to all areas of the Northern Territory. The concept of prevention is an important one but it must be part of a larger strategy. The success of Healthworks cannot be seen as a substitute for proper public health policies. It cannot fix the problems of poor nutrition and living conditions and it cannot solve the high mortality rates among Aboriginal people. I very much welcome the minister's comments in relation to the 'Healthworks Outback Outreach' program and I am sure that people in places like Nhulunbuy and Alyangula will be pleased to be able to take part in initiatives of the minister's department. I am aware that many people in Angurugu spend time running and doing exercises like people in Darwin do and I only hope that government programs and publications will be made available beyond the Berrimah line in remote communities such as Yuendumu, Barunga, Borroloola and Milingimbi.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Northern Territory Buffalo Industry

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a statement today in respect of the development of the Northern Territory buffalo industry.

Asian swamp buffalo were introduced into the Northern Territory between 1826 and 1843 to provide draught animals and food for early settlers. Following the abandonment of the first settlements, feral herds grew rapidly and eventually colonised the area between the Daly River in the west and Roper River in the east. Most buffalo remain within 100 km of the coast. From 1880, the feral herds were harvested for hides. Since the 1950s, they have been used for pet meat, human consumption and more recently for live export, slaughter or breeding stock.

In recent years, about 30 000 have been slaughtered annually in licensed abattoirs for human consumption, and about 3000 have been exported live. In addition, where destocking is required, safari operators can be involved by arrangement with landowners under the supervision of contract musters. Both

landowners and safari operators are aware of this option. The buffalo industry now has a gross value of about \$6m a year and is a significant sector of the Northern Territory pastoral industry. The advent of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign in the Northern Territory has been a catalyst which has caused critical attention to be focused on the buffalo situation. We had a large, under-utilised and unmanaged resource of feral buffalo which jeopardised the success of BTEC. The question was how best to exploit the resource and, at the same time, bring it under control. The suggestions were many, often self-serving and generally uncoordinated.

In February 1981, a buffalo industry symposium was held which resulted in conclusions and resolutions for the developing domesticated buffalo industry, most of which are still relevant. Subsequently, the Feral Animals Committee, established by the government in 1979, set up a Buffalo Working Party to bring many of the buffalo issues into clearer focus for decision and action.

In December 1982, the Territory government announced its support for the development of the industry, and Cabinet endorsed principles for the implementation of a policy on buffalo. In July 1983, the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation presented a report on the Australian buffalo industry to the Territory government. The report examined many aspects of the industry, including potential for domestic and export markets, consumer acceptance and the impact of BTEC. On 29 May 1985, the then minister for Primary Production, now the Chief Minister, announced that a comprehensive plan was to be prepared to ensure the long-term development of a buffalo industry in the Northern Territory. The plan was to be prepared by the newly-formed Buffalo Industry Task Force. On 10 October 1985, the then Minister for Primary Production refuted claims that there was to be a mass wipe-out of Northern Territory buffalo and gave, in broad terms, a status report on the buffalo industry. Put briefly, the report showed that there were about 7700 buffalo behind wire and that 11 properties intended to have 20 000 breeders within 10 years. It also stated that a survey of feral buffalo in Arnhem Land was almost complete.

In June 1986, the Buffalo Industry Task Force presented its report to the minister. The report was something of a disappointment because the full authority of the terms of reference was not exercised. Consequently, many areas were either inadequately addressed or not addressed at all. The expectation of a comprehensive report with firm recommendations for action was not met. The report's recommendations focused on: the availability of land of a viable size for buffalo properties; the need to encourage producers to replace currently infected herds with clean buffalo breeders from monitored negative or low-prevalence areas; the need to investigate and develop markets for quality buffalo meat, and for live exports; and the continuing need for research work at Coastal Plains Research Station to complement and support industry development.

Recent estimates indicate a buffalo population of about 340 000, but many in the industry consider this figure to be too high. Whether or not the figure is realistic will be proven eventually by data collected through BTEC and other agencies as BTEC is completed. The pastoral industry study, recently tabled in this Assembly, reported a figure in excess of 200 000. By June this year, it was estimated that 12 000 females were under control and intended for breeding purposes on 17 Top End properties. In general terms, buffalo have restricted themselves to a 100 km-wide wet coastal strip of the Territory. Whilst this is clearly the preferred habitat - they are not called water buffalo for nothing - there are also drier areas of the Top End which, with proper management, will support buffalo. Although we know that buffalo can exist in areas drier than they prefer, we do not know how far we can

extend the limits without encountering factors which would render an enterprise non-viable; for example, the need to supplement grazing with hay or grain concentrates.

Land is said to be a constraint in the development of a domesticated buffalo industry. Very little Crown land is available currently, and the only possibility for further government releases would be for purchase and subdivision of pastoral leases as was done with Point Stuart. However, there is suitable land available for development and, in my view, the problem of land availability is secondary to the problems of markets, finance and the inadequate supply of breeders. The difficulty in building up the herd is compounded by the dilemma of having both to supply the market with clean stock and to build a herd when there is little clean stock available. Clearly, it is easier to sell to the immediate market than to make a commitment to long-term herd buildup which entails forgoing income. It has been suggested that the government should intervene in this regard by holding breeding stock under contract, either on private land or on a government block, but this suggestion is fraught with problems without the other changes necessary to stimulate industry development.

Another factor affecting the build-up of the core herd to 20 000 breeders is the BTEC compensation of \$80 a head for female buffalo turned off to abattoirs, which effectively increases by \$80 the price of females not suitable for the live-export trade. This applies to herds being destocked and acknowledges the breeding value above the slaughter value. Unfortunately, that compensation actually encourages the slaughter of potential breeders, but it could be counteracted by applying an equivalent subsidy to the purchase of young breeders. However, there is a major pitfall in applying a subsidy, in that the system could be abused by operators purchasing breeders, receiving the subsidy, and then selling other breeders for live export.

All of this is dependent on producers being convinced of the long-term market potential of the buffalo industry, and it is interesting to note in this regard that buffalo from the Bulman area, which attract no compensation because of their monitored negative status, are still being sold for slaughter.

If land and breeders are available, then the major limitations to increasing the size of the Territory's buffalo breeder herd are defined markets for high-value meat and the availability of finance for purchase of breeders, capital improvements and to cover losses through early years of stock buildup. The low return to capital from agricultural enterprises in general precludes borrowing at high interest rates unless the borrowing represents only a small percentage of capital invested. If substantial investment in the buffalo industry is to be encouraged, then some argue that concessional interest rates are required. The advantage of concessional loans is that they would be easy to administer and that they would be flexible in that each property could decide the best way to divide the money between purchase of breeders, capital improvements and subsidy for early losses. The problem with concessional loans is how to structure such a package to provide the appropriate incentives and checks so that domesticated breeder numbers are increased and so that the system is not abused. Eligibility criteria relating to the owners' resources would need to be determined. Several properties presently running buffalo are owned by people or organisations with substantial asset backing, yet they have not seen fit to invest more resources into holding buffalo. It is questionable whether they should be entitled to concessional loans.

No decision has been made by the government on whether such loans will be made available and clearly, in the present financial climate, the matter would represent real difficulties. The bottom line is that the government wants the industry to stand on its own feet, and the case for concessional loans will have to be compelling for the government to consider that course further and, for the industry to develop, the questions of land, breeders and finance become irrelevant if the market for the product is not sound.

Development of a high-priced market for buffalo meat is crucial to the build up of a profitable domesticated buffalo industry and, to this end, my department has enlisted the assistance of perhaps Australia's most expert distributor of specialty meats. In July 1986, Mr Peter Gowland of Priam Meats, a wholesale distributor of venison and game meats, with direct experience in marketing buffalo meat, was sponsored on a visit to Darwin by the Department of Primary Production. His company has access to approximately 20 000 restaurants in southern Australia, and he is the main importer of venison from New Zealand. The aim of the visit was to increase awareness among buffalo producers and processors of the potential demand for young buffalo as a specialty meat, and of market requirements in terms of quality, processing and continuity of supply. During his stay, Mr Gowland visited buffalo abattoirs and the Coastal Plains Research Station and addressed a meeting of the Buffalo Industry Council. He met producers, processors and government officers.

Mr Gowland believed that a significant demand could be created for buffalo meat, provided a tender product was consistently available. Fillet, being the only relatively tender portion from feral slaughtered stock, is the only cut currently finding its way into the restaurant trade, a situation similar to that which applied before the market development of venison. Following the application of tenderising processes, Priam Meats now utilises about 60% of the deer carcase and the same processes have been used successfully to ensure the tenderness of buffalo cuts other than the fillet.

Potential market volume is difficult to predict but, in any case, only relatively small numbers of suitable animals will be available initially from domestic herds. Priam Meats has taken trial shipments of young buffalo with a dressed weight of between 100 kg and 120 kg from Coastal Plains Research Station over the past 12 months. It has been generally happy with the quality of these but would like to try smaller carcasses of some 75 kg dressed to ensure tenderness of all cuts.

In regard to price, Mr Gowland sees a parallel situation with venison development, where prices started low and increased with successful promotion. He can now pay up to \$5 a kilo dressed weight for venison, but suspects that prices for buffalo may not reach this level due to its coarser grain. This view is not universally accepted. At the Buffalo Industry Council meeting, Mr Gowland enthused producers with the potential he saw for young, high-quality buffalo meat, and the council executive has since discussed ways in which a small and constant supply of suitable animals could be arranged to test the market further. Once determined, some research may be needed on systems of production to ensure continuity of supply.

In the past 5 years, rapid changes have been forced upon the industry by the BTEC program and the expansion of national parklands. There has been a significant increase in numbers of domesticated buffalo. BTEC has reached its peak and, between now and 1992, the target date for impending free status, feral buffalo and cattle will have to be eliminated from the pastoral scene, although parts of Arnhem Land may retain some feral buffalo herds if they are

found to be TB free. The feral buffalo will be captured for slaughter, live export or conversion to controlled, domesticated herds. Those that cannot be captured will be shot, either for pet meat or to destroy potential disease carriers. The latter is a last resort for eliminating the threat of disease in inaccessible or remote areas.

The progressive elimination of infected feral buffalo is essential if the BTEC objective is to be met. Such a program calls for planned and coordinated activities by government authorities, landowners and industries involved. The depletion and eventual elimination of the infected feral herds must also see an increase in controlled herds if an industry is to remain, and the target of 20 000 breeders behind wire in 1992 is to be met.

Nevertheless, the long-term survival of a viable domesticated buffalo industry seems likely to depend to a large extent on the size of the feral herd after BTEC, and the ability of domesticators to fill expanding live-export and meat orders in the face of likely strong competition from feral herd turnoff. The buffalo industry is thus faced with a dilemma. Promising markets have been developed for the live-export of heifers and some young males. There appears to be a continuing demand for slaughter stock, and the opportunity to supply specialised meat markets both within Australia and overseas. Without establishing a quality differentiation between feral and domesticated stock, there is little incentive for expanded domestication.

If a sustainable industry is to be developed, proof of reasonable market potential demanding a higher quality product is essential to support and encourage domestication. Given the current problem, it can be argued that an order of priorities exists for the consideration of issues related to the development of the buffalo industry. This must ensure preservation of sufficient numbers for the future, without causing undue disruption to the continuity of supply in the short term. Those issues, in order of priority, are: the identification and establishment of markets; the establishment of use of appropriate descriptive standards and trademarks to ensure quality controls and to protect the speciality markets for live buffalo carcasses and by-products; the retention from feral herds of suitable breeding stocks, and the mechanisms necessary to ensure this occurs; the identification of options encouraging substantial investment in the buffalo industry; the need for continued support for the research and development programs currently being undertaken by the department; and the development of a suitable land strategy to ensure adequate land is available to meet current and future needs of the industry whilst preserving the integrity of the Top End cattle industry.

The government has identified these priorities and has set about addressing them in a number of ways. The following initiatives have been taken to date. In conjunction with the Buffalo Industry Council, the department has initiated ongoing trials to assess the feasibility of intensive and extensive systems of quality buffalo meat production. It is proposed to continue the trials for a period of a year. The first trial has been completed and the results, in terms of quality, were very encouraging. However, much work remains to be done to encourage price increases for the better cuts, and an acceptance of a much greater percentage of the carcass used at higher prices. On the matters of the retention of suitable breeding stocks and the encouragement of substantial development, the department has prepared a number of financial options. These are being assessed and will be put to government shortly for consideration. With regard to research and development, there is an ongoing program at the Coastal Plains Research Station where the existing herd will be increased to 1000 and will serve as a resource for research under controlled conditions, to preserve the range of

genetic material from feral herds, to carry out genetic improvement, to provide improved stock to industry and to demonstrate buffalo management techniques.

The herd now consists of 140 breeders, 40 heifers, 35 yearlings and 45 bulls. It is intended that it will be built both through breeding and through purchases designed to improve the genetic diversity of the herd. The funds for purchase come from the Cattle Trust Account of the Department of Industries and Development. This activity has also been given a significant boost by the injection of funds from the Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation which has recognised the importance of supporting the development of an industry as a component of the Northern Beef Program.

On the question of land availability, my department maintains constant liaison with the Department of Lands and Housing to ensure the current and future needs of the industry are considered. As I mentioned earlier, although there is little evidence to suggest that land availability is a significant problem, a suitable land strategy to ensure adequate land is available does need to be developed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have attempted today to outline some of the more important considerations involved with, and recent initiatives taken on, the development of our buffalo industry. On a final note, it will be important to take account of the views expressed in the pastoral industry study and, along with the considerations of the working party, I propose that, in conjunction with the Buffalo Industry Council, my department will formulate a plan for its involvement in the buffalo industry as distinct from the cattle industry. Notwithstanding the commitment to BTEC, I am confident that the issues I have outlined can be addressed and specific recommendations obtained that, by 1992, will see us embarked on the road that will allow the Territory to realise the full potential and value of the buffalo industry in the Northern Territory.

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I found the minister's statement most interesting reading. I have had an interest in the past in the buffalo industry and, whilst not having any stock at the moment, I have still retained that interest. I found the statement most comprehensive. It appeared to argue all points of the buffalo industry. In fact, I believe it had several writers.

It seems sad to me that, even after all these years, we still do not have a buffalo industry completely organised. You cannot talk of a buffalo industry in the Northern Territory without talking of Don Tulloch, of the then Animal Industry Branch, who was the first person in that branch to take an interest in buffalo. That would have been in the early 1960s. He was regarded as a little unusual, to put it very mildly, because of this interest in buffalo. He kept them at the Berrimah Farm and they were so unusual that, if you had visitors staying with you, you always made a point of taking them out there to see the buffalo. How times have changed since then. That was over 25 years ago yet, even after all that time, we still do not have the industry completely organised.

Until some years ago, I thought there was only 1 variety of buffalo, the one we have in the Northern Territory, the Asian buffalo. However, there are many varieties of buffalo and, unfortunately for our gene pool in the Northern Territory, we have only the one variety. We have the draught Asian buffalo.

The minister said we have an Asian buffalo, but my information is that it is the draught Asian buffalo as distinct from the milking strain.

There are buffalo in most middle European countries and in most of the countries around the equator. In fact, my information is that buffalo are found as far north as northern Italy. To consolidate the buffalo industry and to make it viable and variable to accommodate all interests, I believe some lateral thinking is necessary or, if the minister thinks that lateral thinking has been used as well as straight thinking, then I suggest a bit more be indulged in.

In the Northern Territory, we have the Asian buffalo of the draught variety. Has the government looked at the possibility of importing genetic material from overseas from animals displaying important milking qualities? Mr Speaker, you cannot tell me that this is impossible. Everything is possible these days; the impossible just takes a little longer. We have investigated the possibilities of the buffalo gene pool in the Northern Territory, I believe as far as we can go, and it is time we looked overseas. This program would be costly, considering the cost of embryo transplants, shipping of breeders to the Cocos Islands Quarantine Station for the required time and final transportation to the Northern Territory. I do not know if anybody in the government or the Department of Industries and Development has studied any breeds overseas recently. I know Don Tulloch did. He is mentioned in a book that I refer to as one of the main textbooks on the varieties of buffalo in the world. It is an FAO publication and I have a copy of it at home. It extensively itemises information about buffalo everywhere in the world.

Who knows, Mr Speaker, we may be able to import genetic material from buffalo somewhere which would give us a more suitable end product than we get now from our Asian buffalo? We may be able to obtain genetic material that would give us animals that mature earlier, that have more condition at maturity, that are more economical to farm, that are more docile etc. Nobody has investigated these possibilities and I am suggesting them to the minister.

This brings me to another point and it involves more lateral thinking. The minister referred only to meat producing qualities of buffalo but they also have other parts of their carcass which we could use to advantage. I am talking about their hoofs, their horns and their hides. Perhaps these are not wasted at the moment and are used for gelatine and leather production. I believe that it is more than time that the Department of Industries and Development looked at giving encouragement to a tanning industry in the Northern Territory which would help not only the buffalo industry but would be of incalculable benefit to the cattle industry.

After a few visits overseas, I have seen what overseas artists and artisans can do with the hoofs and the horns. I believe we could import artists and artisans for a short time from our northern neighbouring countries or send likely people from the Northern Territory overseas with tied contracts to learn everything there is to learn. In this way, knowledge could be gained for treating these parts of the buffalo which at the moment are not used to their best advantage. Interesting and decorative household and jewellery articles can be fashioned from hoofs and horns and this can be of assistance to the buffalo industry. I suggest to the minister that the buffalo industry could be incorporated more into the tourist industry by encouraging that

industry to take more interest in such ancillary aspects of the buffalo industry.

Continuing with my form of lateral thinking, I believe the government could give encouragement to a lease arrangement of stock for breeders on small properties. Any person who has any knowledge of pedigreed stock knows that the registration procedures for that stock, whether it be dogs or pigs or horses, provides for leasing on an official basis. We have the brucellosis and tuberculosis problem practically licked and we have a very sound waybill procedure in place. I believe there would be enormous interest in such a scheme if we published details. We have adequate public and private veterinary services. I am talking about the Top End. The ground rules regarding the holding facilities, lease payment, breeding facilities etc could be laid down reasonably easily.

In conclusion, I commend my suggestions to the minister: the leasing of breeding stock, the use of parts of the buffalo carcass that are not exploited at present, research into other varieties of buffalo that could be bred in the Northern Territory, the examination of current knowledge of the industry and the development of genuine concern for its advancement and a wish to interest more and more people in the industry. I support the minister's statement on the buffalo industry.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have spoken occasionally in this Assembly about buffalo development in the Northern Territory. Being a denizen of central Australia, you may find that somewhat remarkable. Without impinging on the subject of the matter of public importance debate later today, I believe that it is incumbent on me to pick up comments on page 6 of the minister's statement.

The minister said: 'If substantial investment in the buffalo industry is to be encouraged, then some argue that concessional interest rates are required'. He then went on to say in the next paragraph: 'The advantage of concessional loans is that they would be easy to administer and they would be flexible in that each property could decide the best way to divide the money between purchase of breeders, capital improvements and subsidy for early losses'. He went on to rule out the value of the strategy of concessional loans. He said: 'The problem with concessional loans is how to structure such a package to provide the appropriate incentives and checks so that domesticated breeder numbers are increased and the system is not abused'.

I simply draw to the attention of the Minister for Industries and Development - and I do not think he was a member of the Cabinet at the time - that at least some of the transactions over Block H at Finnis River, which was bought for buffalo development, were actually carried out. He has been in and out of the Cabinet like a rat out of a drainpipe but it is a little bit hard to keep in touch with who has been doing what. As the Minister for Industries and Development is charged with the important task of maximising the utilisation of Territory resources, I would like to point out to him that, contrary to his statement today, the government has a very fulsome policy of supporting concessional loans for the purpose of buffalo development.

As I commented in an adjournment debate last week, the Northern Territory government has provided a concessional loan of \$275 000 at 13.5% to Mr Leo Venturin to carry out a buffalo development on Block H. At least, that



is what the member for Casuarina told me back in January and I think that has been echoed by other ministers in this Assembly. I will reinforce that, Mr Speaker. The fact of the matter is that somebody is not telling the truth. Either the Minister for Industries and Development is not telling the truth or the member for Casuarina is not telling the truth or the Minister for Lands and Housing is not telling the truth. Either the government gives concessional loans for buffalo development or it does not.

I suppose I feel a bit sorry for the Minister for Industries and Development. Perhaps he thought that everybody expected that this would be a yawn. If he had not used the unfortunate phrase 'concessional interest rates', I might not have pricked my ears up. I have had a fairly hefty workload these sittings and I will concede that, like most backbenchers, I do not read every statement that comes before this Assembly. I pick up the ones that are relevant either to my electorate or to portfolios for which I am responsible. Industries and development is not a portfolio that I am responsible for. I suppose the honourable minister is really stiff because I could have been outside talking to somebody or having a coffee in the lounge. I happened to be in the House and I picked up that phrase 'concessional interest rates'.

I found these 2 paragraphs particularly interesting. Perhaps the minister in his reply or perhaps the Minister for Lands and Housing or the member for Casuarina might like to offer their philosophy on concessional interest rates for buffalo development. Perhaps the member for Casuarina thinks it is a good idea; perhaps he does not. I think the Minister for Lands and Housing is bound to stand up in this debate and say: 'Yes, Mr Speaker, I think concessional interest rates for the buffalo industry development are the best thing since sliced bread'. It will be a bit embarrassing because the minister for Industries and Development will then have to tell him: 'That is not what we are saying'. I am not sure that I have made myself clear, Mr Speaker. I see the Minister for Lands and Housing is coming back into the Chamber. He might like to put his hand up and say whether he has read the statement on the buffalo industry. No, he is not putting his hand up. He has not read it.

Let me just draw his attention to it. It is a fairly hefty statement but he has more people than I have to help him read these things. However, I accept the fact that he has not done so. I draw his attention to the first 2 paragraphs on page 6 where I am afraid his mate says that concessional interest rates for the buffalo industry are not a good idea. That is somewhat at odds with the actions of the Minister for Lands and Housing. Or is it somewhat at odds with the activities of the Northern Territory Land Corporation? Should we get representatives of the Northern Territory Land Corporation to come here and answer questions about its policy in that regard? I am sure there are strategies this Assembly could use to obtain that information. Or perhaps the minister will leap to his feet and explain to this Assembly exactly why he and the Minister for Industries and Development cannot get their act together.

Debate adjourned.

#### DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANT Government Property Dealings

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance the following matter: the government's failure to deal in property in an equitable, unbiased manner to the benefit of all Territorians.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil Bell  
Member for MacDonnell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, it is more in sorrow than in anger that the opposition initiates a matter of public importance debate on a subject like this. Frequently, issues like constitutional development and statehood are discussed in this Assembly. Nothing will retard that sort of constitutional development more than the impression that the Territory government is not dealing equitably, with forethought and in an unbiased fashion with Territory resources such as land. Unfortunately, there have been some glaring examples of this government not dealing properly with such matters and it is a matter of concern to me that this opposition is forced to raise such an issue in debate today. In the time available to me, I propose to refer to the outrageous dealings of this government with respect to Block H at Finnis River Station. The Leader of the Opposition will outline and discuss the outrageous decisions that the government, particularly the Minister for Lands and Housing, has made in respect of the so-called spot-purchases at Gardens Hill.

Block H at Finnis River became of interest to the opposition in December last year when it became clear that, in September, the government had carried out some extraordinary negotiations that led to its purchase of Block H. First of all we were told that Mr Anictomatis, who purchased the block in September last year, had done so as an agent of the government. When we dug a little further, we found that Mr Anictomatis was, in fact, purchasing the block on his own account. He did so for the sum of \$575 000. In November, after substantial negotiations, the Northern Territory government bought it back for \$635 000 which entailed a loss of \$60 000.

The government's explanations for that discrepancy have been totally inadequate. Presumably, this was a Cabinet decision yet, at no stage, have we been able to ascertain whether the loss was agent's fees, pure profit or something else. We have not been told why, in these straitened times, the people of the Northern Territory lost \$60 000. It is extraordinary.

Mr Speaker, I will not go over ground that I have already covered in debates here. I sought the minister's explanation in January. It was inadequate. I asked questions which he refused to answer. When we referred in June to our concerns about the government's dealings in this matter, he said that the block was sold for \$650 000. Only last week, the former minister, the member for Casuarina, was dashing around the Chamber looking through the Parliamentary Records. In a personal explanation, he said that the amount was not \$650 000 but \$575 000. The remaining \$75 000 was the interest bill over a period of 2 years. As I pointed out last week, Mr Speaker, according to the way the member for Casuarina does his sums, that means that your house in Braitling which is worth, say, \$80 000 and has a mortgage of \$30 000 to \$40 000, is worth \$0.25m. Try and tell that to the bank manager!

After June, things moved on. The opposition continued to monitor the government's dealings at Finnis River. We were told that Block H had been sold. We waited and waited for the title to be registered. We were still waiting when a conscientious member of the Leader of the Opposition's staff suggested that I contact the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Housing because no records could be found of the registration of this title. On 9 September, I telephoned and had a very cordial conversation with the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Housing. Lo and behold, the title was registered the following day; not just the title but the mortgage of \$275 000 that I have referred to, the concessional interest-rate loan for buffalo development. Neither the Minister for Industries and Development nor the Minister for Lands and Housing, however, was game to defend that action in this House. What an outrageous display!

Mr Speaker, that is a brief account of the history of this particular transaction. It is clear that the government is guilty of a massive wastage of public funds. It lost \$60 000 in November. It lost another \$100 000 on re-sale, making a total of \$160 000 and, with this concessional interest loan, it has lost the best part of \$250 000. What would that amount of money do in Braitling? I know it would find a bit of water for a few people in MacDonnell and it would drill a few bores in Stuart. I am quite sure that there are all sorts of services that might have been provided in the electorates of every member of this Assembly with the \$250 000 that these blokes opposite have done cold. They started off doing it cold because the member for Casuarina had got on the phone to his real estate agent mate. Then, they looked as though they might have been getting out of it because subsequently a keen entrepreneur in Darwin entered the scene. He is not a friend of the Labor Party. I believe he is a member of the CLP. At this stage, he wishes to remain unnamed and the reason is not because he hasn't the courage of his convictions, but because he knows the sort of backstabbing that this government has indulged in in the business community in the Northern Territory. The business community ...

Mr Hatton: Absolute nonsense. You have not got anyone. That is why you are making it all up. Put up or shut up.

Mr BELL: I am about to, actually. I will pick up that interjection from the Chief Minister. The fact of the matter is that I have the evidence here.

Mr Dondas: Has it got a name on it?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, there is the name if you can read it from there.

Mr Coulter: Put up or shut up.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am putting up not shutting up.

Mr Dondas: I will table mine; you table yours.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the Assembly to table a statutory declaration saying ...

Mr Coulter: With the names scratched out.

Mr BELL: Yes, the names are scratched out. That is right. This bloke needs protection because of the vindictive behaviour of this government. This bloke wants to continue doing business in the Northern Territory, and he knows that if he stands up and puts his name to it he will be in strife.

Mr Hatton: If it were true, obviously we would know who it was.

Mr BELL: I will tell you what, if he hears a few of your comments today, I think you might be surprised.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members that particular statutory declaration ...

Mr Palmer: It is not a statutory declaration.

Mr BELL: That particular statutory declaration ...

Mr Palmer: That piece of paper!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: For the benefit of honourable members, Mr Speaker, this statutory declaration made by somebody who is prepared to be identified says that he has notes of a conversation with the then Minister for Lands, the member for Casuarina, saying that there were discussions about a purchase at \$650 000. \$650 000! No concessional loans, Mr Speaker, no loss of \$75 000 on the purchase price and no loss of \$75 000 on interest rates. This particular person decided that he would go away for the Christmas break. He came back and surprise, surprise! In February, the block had been sold. It was a big surprise to the person involved in this. He was absolutely staggered. He believed that the Northern Territory government carried out its negotiations in a direct fashion. The fact of the matter is that it does not.

Mr Speaker, I will tell you what happened in January and February. The Treasurer got in touch with his friend, Mr Venturin, and it was he who in fact signed the contract, and that is why the Minister for Lands and Housing ...

Mr Coulter: Now you had better be careful what you are saying there.

Mr BELL: ... is not prepared to show us. I accept the statement from ...

Mr Coulter: Well, then, how do you know what you are saying is true?

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the Minister for Lands and Housing was not involved in the signing of the contract. I appreciate that he was not Minister for Lands and Housing then. It was a problem between the member for Casuarina and the Treasurer. I believe that that contract was signed by the Treasurer and that it is a deep embarrassment, for whatever reason. Far be it from me to dig into the murky motives of the murky mind of the honourable Treasurer, but he is involved in this as well, Mr Speaker. The contract that was signed in February ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw the remark he made concerning the Treasurer. You used the words 'murky mind'.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly. Far be it from me to speculate on the nature of the mind.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that comment.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr Speaker, we had this quicquid libet of a contract that was signed in February by heaven knows who, that nobody will produce, and then we have this Mr X, the real estate agent. It was terrific. Mr Speaker, were you here when he rose to his full height and said that the member for MacDonnell knew nothing about real estate agency transactions and that, if he knew the first thing about it, he would know that it was quite normal practice for a contract to be signed in February and for the transaction to be completed the day after I contacted the department in September. Normal practice!

Mr Speaker, here is a second statutory declaration that I will be seeking leave to table. This particular statutory declaration refers to a telephone conversation between Mr Leo Venturin and a solicitor from the Northern Land Council. There are 6 parts to the declaration, but the part that is material to this debate is this:

On 30 July 1987, I received a telephone call from Mr Venturin saying that he had referred my letter of 9/6/87 to his solicitor, and that his solicitor had told him not to make any decision on the sublease proposal as the sale from the Northern Territory Development Corporation had not been finalised yet.

Mr Venturin went on to say that he did not believe that the sale would be finalised now because of a number of conditions, not related to the Aboriginal community at the mouth of the Finnis River, which the Northern Territory Development Corporation was seeking to have included in the contract.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Lands and Housing has seriously misled this Assembly. I refer you to the comment that he made on Wednesday of last week. No, I withdraw that. He made it on Tuesday last week and I will quote him: 'I am quite prepared to tell honourable members that the block was sold subsequently in February this year'. I will repeat that so that it sinks in. 'The block was sold subsequently in February this year'. If the Minister for Lands and Housing reckons that it was sold in February this year, I have news for him, because the bloke they reckon they sold it to did not believe he had bought it in July.

Mr Hanrahan: Give us your definition of 'sold' and 'settled'.

Mr BELL: I will certainly do that, Mr Speaker. I am quite prepared to accept that money does not necessarily have to change hands provided that there is an enforceable contract for it to do so. We have not seen that. The government has not shown one to us.

Quickly, Mr Speaker, we have these questions, that I will read into Hansard and I want them referred to. Will the minister table the contract that was exchanged with Leo Venturin in February this year? When did the minister, when did the Treasurer and when did the member for Casuarina first sight that contract? Did the Treasurer sign the contract between the land corporation and Leo Venturin and did he encourage the chairman of the land corporation to sign it on the government's behalf? Thirdly, the question that we had no answer to this morning, but that I hope we will get one to now: what steps have been taken by the Department of Lands and Housing since February this year to provide an excision for the White Eagle Corporation, at the mouth of the Finnis River? What were the terms and conditions of a deal done with John Anictomatis in September, October and November 1986? Was there an agreed figure on the amount of money he was to be paid for this transaction? Was it 2%, 3% or 4%, as variously stated?

Will the minister table - and I have asked for this about half a dozen times now - the letter detailing the arrangement to bid for the government with Mr Anictomatis? If the Valuer-General valued this particular property at between \$300 000 and \$400 000 before the auction, why was the government prepared to pay as much as \$600 000 for the block? When was the last valuation done? Is there a current Valuer-General's valuation, and what is it? Was the valuation done prior to sale to Input Pty Ltd? If the valuation was between \$400 000 and \$500 000 after the auction, how could the Northern Territory Land Corporation justify paying \$635 000 for the block?

With regard to the February purchase, who made the offer and to whom was it made? Was it the Treasurer? Was it the minister? If it was made by Input Pty Ltd, it should be pointed out that this company was not registered until 12 March. How could a company that was not registered until 12 March transact a sale in February?

Why did it take from 19 February until 9 September to tie up this deal? The terms of an auction, as the minister would know, are usually 10% down and the balance to be paid in 30 days or 60 days. Why didn't this apply to Mr Venturin or to Input Pty Ltd? Did Input Pty Ltd put any deposit on the block according to the dubious contract in February? Vendor finance is normally at the commercial rate of interest. Why did the Northern Territory Land Corporation charge less than the commercial rate, whether it was vendor finance or not?

When the block was purchased by Mr Anictomatis, had prior arrangements been entered into about the subdivision and had a prior price been agreed upon for the portion of it to be subdivided? If the government was so intent on acquiring land for buffalo breeding, why did it say that Input Pty Ltd would use it for the pastoral industry and, hopefully, the buffalo industry as well? If the \$635 000 to pay Mr Anictomatis was obtained through Treasury, how then was the mortgage or the title registered in the name of the Northern Territory Land Corporation? Why did the Northern Territory Land Corporation not procure its own funds since the minister has no input or activities with respect to the Northern Territory Land Corporation?

Mr Speaker, the issues involved in those questions and in the government's dealings in respect of Block H demand explanation. Not only the Minister for Lands and Housing but also the Treasurer, the member for Casuarina and, in the final analysis, the Chief Minister have questions to answer in respect of this particular deal.

Mr HANRAHAN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I will tender an apology to the member for MacDonnell for not being able to supply him with an answer to all the questions that he gave me this morning prior to about 5 minutes ago. I advised him of the delay. It appears that the computer system in the Chan Building is overloaded. For the benefit of honourable members, I will read my reply to the honourable member:

Dear Neil,

I refer to the list of questions concerning NT portion 3191 which you passed to me this morning. My responses are in the general order in which you raised the points.

(1) There was no contract exchanged in February 1987. If you care to check my previous statements, you will see that I said that an offer was made and subsequently accepted in February 1987. This

constitutes a sale. The contract for sale and purchase was not exchanged until August 1987. Settlement occurred on 9 September when the transfer was registered. The time lapse between acceptance and settlement was due to negotiations relating to access roads. The contract is between the Northern Territory Land Corporation and Input Pty Ltd. You would have to arrange to inspect this through either party. I have not seen the contract, nor am I aware of any other minister seeing it as it is a contract between Input and the Northern Territory Land Corporation.

Mr Speaker, one of the issues raised previously by the honourable member was that an offer and an acceptance does not constitute a sale. He attempted to explain that to the House. As I said to him, if he were purchasing a house on the open market and he made an offer which the vendor accepted, it could take 3 months for the contract to be signed and exchanged by both parties. That is normal commercial practice in real estate today and it happens quite regularly. There is no doubt in my mind that an offer and an acceptance constitute a sale. The reply continues:

(2) As I have said before, the contract is between the Northern Territory Land Corporation and Input Pty Ltd, and no minister is signatory to it. On 12 February 1987, Mr Venturin wrote to the then Minister for Lands proposing a purchase. This was received by Mr Coulter, then acting as Minister for Lands. Mr Coulter immediately referred the matter to the land corporation for its consideration.

(3) A formal application for an excision living area was received on 15 December 1986 from the Northern Land Council. At that stage, the Finnis River Pastoral Lease No 689 had ceased to exist and had been subdivided into a number of Crown leases. As such, it did not fit the guidelines for excision areas and hence was not processed. I am now advised that the Northern Land Council has not submitted this area to the working party established by the new federal minister, Mr Hand, which is considering areas in addition to those which fit the guidelines. Mr Hand has indicated that there are no further areas to be added to the list of negotiations. Accordingly, further negotiations are not planned.

(4) I can find no written agreement but, on advice from my colleague, the honourable member for Casuarina, the former Minister for Lands, Mr Dondas, I understand that the agreed figure for commission was originally 2% and later changed to 3% plus costs incurred.

(5) An opinion of value on the block was given on 28/8/86 by the Valuer-General's office of \$450 000 but more probably in the range \$400 000 to \$500 000. This opinion was given on the basis that the property was not inspected and brief office records were relied upon. The then Department of Lands negotiated to \$500 000 with the receiver who would not sell at that price. After that, the former Minister for Lands negotiated directly and I am not aware of exact details.

I note for the reference of the honourable member for MacDonnell, Mr Dondas' explanation in the NT News of the 6 December 1986 where he stated that he offered Mr Southwell, the receiver, \$600 000 which was refused. The Valuer-General has not since given a valuation for the entire property. No valuation was prepared prior to the sale to

Input. The actual land price paid by the Northern Territory Development Corporation, which was the purchaser, was \$575 000. Mr Dondas has already explained the extra costs of \$60 000 to you. The land cost content of \$575 000 is considered reasonable.

(6) The original offer was made by Mr Leo Venturin to the then Minister for Lands. Refer to question 2. Mr Venturin advised on 3 March that the contract for sale was to be in the name of Input Pty Ltd. As stated previously, the contract was not exchanged until August 1987.

(7) As I have previously explained, a sale consists of an offer and an acceptance. The drawing up of a contract follows. In this case, there was a number of issues which had to be resolved between both parties. I have already advised (Hansard 16 September 1987) that negotiations were taking place regarding 2 camp sites on the land. In addition, there was doubt as to the final alignment of and responsibility for the access roads. This last issue was settled on 18 August 1987, after which the final contract was signed and exchanged on 24 August 1987. The transfer was registered on 9 September 1987.

This was not an auction. However, Mr Venturin did pay a deposit of \$6542 on 10 March 1987. The balance of the \$300 000 was paid on settlement on 9 September 1987. At the time of negotiations, the Chairman of the Northern Territory Land Corporation was advised that the current loan rate for rural development, based on the daily Commonwealth Bond rate, was 13.5%. The land corporation accepted this figure as an appropriate interest rate. It is interesting to note that that bond rate is 11.25% today. I am not aware of prior arrangements being entered into about any further subdivision of Block H prior to the purchase by Mr Anictomatis.

The lease is not a pastoral lease. The lease document says that the purpose of the lease is land use evaluation and development for tourism, recreation, weekender living, rural living, agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture, grazing, small farms and ancillary. Mr Venturin has indicated his plan to expand present buffalo pilot-herd projects onto this block. Under the Territory Development Act, funds for purchases by the Northern Territory Land Corporation could be advanced by the Northern Territory Development Corporation. At that point in time, the NTDC existed only as a legal entity. It was agreed that funds required for this purchase be provided by Treasury under similar conditions as would have applied under the NTDC. The Northern Territory Land Corporation Act commenced on 16 December 1986, and this provided that all contracts, agreements and transactions of the NTDLIC be transferred to the new corporation. Under the new act, monies payable by the corporation could be advanced by the Treasury.

That, in a nutshell, deals with the issues that have been raised ad nauseam in this Assembly by the member for MacDonnell in his efforts to find what he described last week as something that stinks on ice. Quite frankly, Mr Speaker, it does not exist. What I would like to take up with the member for MacDonnell is his ability to raise speculation to the point where he gets so caught up in his own paranoia that reason and logic desert him. He has tabled a statutory declaration in which the name and address are blanked out. I will read it:



In December 1986, I discussed my interest in purchasing Block H of Finnis River Station with the then Minister for Lands, Mr Dondas. During the course of our conversation, of which notes were kept, Mr Dondas led me to believe that an offer in the vicinity of \$650 000 for the block might be acceptable. We agreed to discuss the matter further early in the new year. I requested permission to inspect the block and did so, firstly, on 10 December and, secondly, on 21 December 1986. I once again contacted Mr Dondas early in 1987, only to find that this block had already been sold.

The signature is also blanked out, but the declaration is witnessed and authorised by Neil Bell, Commissioner for Oaths.

Mr Speaker, this is the most worthless piece of paper that the member for MacDonnell could attempt to table in this House, given his comments made here on 16 September 1987: 'The subject of renewed speculation and renewed interest ... phone running hot ... telephone calls from all over the country ... it stinks on ice ... there are serious charges ... I will table in this House documents that will prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the former Minister for Lands made an offer that the block was for sale'. What a lot of hogwash, Mr Speaker!

The member for MacDonnell based his case on the assumption that this mysterious person, in conversation with the former Minister for Lands, made an offer. He did not make an offer. We know the gentleman concerned did not make an offer because we also have a statutory declaration and it will prove very interesting. Ours is signed. If the members of the opposition get theirs signed, they can have a look at ours and we will see exactly what is going on here. I might also point out that the member for MacDonnell has not told members of this House the complete truth either. Originally, he attempted to have his own words on a statutory declaration form signed by the gentleman concerned. He was not prepared to sign what the member for MacDonnell was shoving under his nose. That is a contemptible way of trying to dig up something which does not exist.

Mr Speaker, I have tabled in this House, as has the former Minister for Lands, the exact details relating to the sale and purchase of Block H at Finnis River. If the member for MacDonnell wants further clarification of what happened so that he does not have any further doubts about it, I will read my explanation into Hansard again and the opposition can make of it whatever it wishes:

On 10 November, an instruction for settlement was issued to proceed for \$635 000 to Mr Anictomatis.

The purchase price at auction was \$575 000, stamp duty \$23 000, penalty interest \$4300, legal costs \$5000, loan establishment fee \$3500, stamp duty and mortgage \$1900, interest lost on deposit \$1500, helicopter hire \$3500 and the commission fee \$17 300 - a total of \$60 000 added onto \$575 000 makes \$635 000.

That information was made available by the member for Casuarina as early as 10 June, so I do not know what is so secret about it or what the government is supposed to be hiding. The block was re-sold and, once again, the details have been tabled in the House. The opposition has not said anything of consequence about the sale of the land for \$575 000.

Mr Bell: That is because you would not tell us about it.

Mr HANRAHAN: No, because you have been too busy running around trying to poke untrue statements under people's noses and getting them to sign them. You come in here like some wimp and try and put something before us that is not signed. Well, get it signed!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will withdraw that comment.

Mr HANRAHAN: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

The Northern Territory Land Corporation sold the block to Venturin for \$575 000. That was the price of the land in the contract of sale. The interest rate was 13½% over 2 years. \$300 000 was paid at settlement and the amount of the loan was \$275 000. The total receipts to the government, after taking interest into account, are \$654 262. I am waiting for the opposition to raise some pertinent points rather than attempting to find some non-existent problem.

The member for MacDonnell has attempted in this House, on various occasions, to suggest that there have been underhanded dealings, that commissions have been sought and paid, that various people have been privy to agreements that do not exist and not once has he raised anything of substance as evidence to substantiate his allegations. I happen to be aware of the real reasons behind the statutory declaration and I think that the member for MacDonnell has done himself a great disservice.

The member for MacDonnell said that he is ashamed to be associated with the Northern Territory government by way of being a member of this House because of so-called inequitable dealings in land, and that the government takes a position where it gladly lends money at cheap interest rates and makes direct sales of land to supposed cronies of the CLP. That is usually the catchcry that he comes forth with. Mr Speaker, let me tell you and the member for MacDonnell that it has not been an easy task developing the Territory. I, as Minister for Lands and Housing, will continue to investigate and analyse every application for direct sale that comes before me. I operate, as all ministers do, on very strict guidelines. But, sometimes, it is obvious that a development will have far-reaching economic benefits to the Territory and the Territory government will take a position offering assistance. I am not ashamed to be part of a government that does that, nor will I ever be. One has to wonder what state the Territory would be in if we had to rely on the negative, inward-looking, backward policies of the honourable members opposite who are associated with the Australian Labor Party. They have continually put before this House unsubstantiated allegations of misdealings, accusations of cronyism ...

Mr Hatton: They are not unsubstantiated; they are wrong.

Mr HANRAHAN: Totally wrong, as the Chief Minister says. If we had to rely on them to develop the Territory, there is no doubt in my mind that we would be going backwards at a hundred miles an hour.

Instead, we have some 7 major developments about to appear on Darwin's horizon, not to mention the massive developments taking place at Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Yulara, Kings Canyon, Coral Bay, and so on. Those developments are occurring because the Northern Territory government takes an active role in encouraging development and investment, and it will continue to do so.

Once again, I tell the honourable member for MacDonnell to continue to be involved in his scurrilous behaviour, continue to look for the dead fish that do not exist, and I will get in the ice. But, if he is going to come into this House, if he is going to make threats as he did, if he is going to hold up a piece of paper on television and say, 'I will get you next week', could he at least present something that is reasonable, because that destroys beyond any shadow of doubt any ounce of credibility that he might have had before he started his comments today.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, without commenting on anything else he said, the Minister for Lands and Housing suggested that I had misled the House by means of tabling statutory declarations that were somehow untruthful or contrary to the truth. By way of explanation, I seek leave to table a further statutory declaration.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: The difference between the 2 statutory declarations is that one was taken by a member of the opposition's staff and the other was taken by myself. The first statutory declaration that I tabled originally had the figures for a lesser figure than that discussed with the member for Casuarina. After I had taken the statutory declaration with the person concerned, he rang me back as an afterthought and said ....

Mr Dondas: Give us his name and tell us what he said.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to come to the point.

Mr BELL: I am. My explanation is that both statutory declarations are in order, contrary to the interjections made by government members. The second one that I have tabled more accurately refers to the views of the person making the declaration.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in this business you always know when you have a live issue because you start getting unsolicited phone calls. On the question of the Finnis River land sale and the government's handling of it, the number of unsolicited phone calls that I and the member for MacDonnell have received has far exceeded those on any issue in the last 6 months, other than the question of Hungerford Refrigeration which I believe set a record in the Northern Territory. The phone calls were from interesting people. They were from prominent members of the community, from members of the Country Liberal Party and from public servants with a conscience, who all have a common aim of wanting to get to the bottom of what, in fact, has been a quite disreputable approach by this government to the sale of land at Finnis River. These people want basic answers to some pretty simple questions. That is what this whole debate is about: trying to get some answers to some basic questions.

The first basic question is why the hell the government became involved in this whole thing in the first place. It is a rerun of Annaburroo. No logical reason was ever given as to why the government involved itself in purchasing Annaburroo. No reason has ever been given to us in this Assembly, despite the repeated questioning of my colleagues, as to why this government set up Mr John Anictomatis to purchase a property on its behalf. I want to make the point that, at that stage, it was the purchase of a property on its behalf, not on behalf of the Northern Territory Land Corporation, because that becomes

relevant a bit later. I want to know, as do the people who have been contacting us, some of the prominent or ex-prominent friends of members opposite, why, when it purchased the block back from Mr Anictomatis for \$635 000, the government let it go again for \$575 000. I do not want the government to hide it under the bushel of the Northern Territory Land Corporation and say that it cannot control the Northern Territory Land Corporation because the government knows as well as I know that that is nonsense. The bottom line to that is that the minister appoints the people who go on it.

Mr Speaker, you and I know that the Northern Territory Land Corporation Board consists of senior public servants who have become senior public servants because they know what government wants and they know how to meet the needs of government. It has never been explained to me how the government bought the land for \$635 000 and yet was content to sell it for \$575 000. At the same time, it received only \$300 000 of that \$575 000 in cash and will have to wait for the next 2 years to get the remaining \$275 000. How can that happen when we know that, at the same time, there were people around who had expressed at least an interest, to the relevant minister, in paying a price of about \$650 000 for it. Those are the questions that the people out there are asking, the questions that the member for MacDonnell has been asking in this House for the last week, and those are the questions that are not being answered here today.

Mr Hatton: Have you seen the signature on the statutory declaration?

Mr SMITH: To pick up the question of the statutory declaration and the signatory, I have seen the signature. I have spoken to the person. That person is so concerned about his business livelihood in the Northern Territory that the only basis on which he would provide us with that statutory declaration was that we undertook not to reveal his name in the Legislative Assembly because, like other businessmen in this community, he knows what happens to people and their businesses if they cross the government of the Northern Territory. That is the only reason his name has been blanked out at his request. It is because he is scared about his livelihood. If that is not enough to indicate that there is something odd about all this, consider that the information did not become available on the public record until 9 September although the deal, on the minister's own account, was settled on 24 August. It was not until 9 September, the day after a phone call from the member for MacDonnell to the Chairman of the Northern Territory Land Corporation, that this business appeared on the public record. That is enough in itself to make people suspicious.

It is not the only issue that has prompted us to raise this matter of public importance discussion today. We also have the ongoing saga of Gardens Hill, and I want to spend the last 10 minutes of my time discussing that. Gardens Hill has been dogged by controversy since it, too, was a direct land sale way back in 1982. It was then sold under the carpet amid much controversy. It was sold for the particular purpose, as the then Minister for Industrial Development said at the time, of providing high-rise luxury apartment accommodation.

In what is rapidly becoming one of my favourite letters to the editor of the NT News, in a letter from a Mr G.J. Lewis, who at that stage was vice-president of the Country Liberal Party, the matter was spelt out very clearly. Incidentally, I am glad that Mr Lewis is in the gallery at the moment. I quote:

By allowing a project like Gardens Hill to proceed under the auspices of a group of reputable developers under a lease which will demand speedy progress, the government is ensuring that up-market residential accommodation will be available at the earliest possible time. Let any other developer capable of a quick investment of \$10m come out of the woodwork and put their plans to the government. Perhaps they too could anticipate the same encouragement.

That was ringing praise indeed. What has happened since then? The Crown lease provided that, by 1 July 1984, the developer was required to make improvements to the value of \$1.5m. The only way that the developer met that requirement was by selling to the Housing Commission 20 one-bedroom units and 8 two-bedroom units, at a cost of \$1.9m. In other words, way back in 1984, Gardens Hill was a ruined project in terms of the provision of up-market accommodation and the government of the time helped the developer out of a hole by letting that first Crown lease requirement be met through the purchase of accommodation worth \$1.9m. I asked questions at the time and I was given this answer from the Minister for Industries and Development, who was the Minister for Lands at that stage. It is recorded in the Hansard of 29 August 1984.

The developer proposes to split stage 2 of the covenant into 3 sections. The honourable member for Millner asked if stages subsequent to stage 1, the accommodation units, would be taken over by the Housing Commission. I can inform him there is certainly no intention of that taking place.

On 29 August 1984, I received an undertaking from the minister opposite that Gardens Hill Pty Ltd would not receive any more help through the purchase of Housing Commission accommodation. Now, 3 years later, we find that another \$1.1m worth of Housing Commission accommodation has been purchased from the Gardens Hill developer by the Housing Commission. That is the second time that this government has had to prop up this developer in terms of meeting its covenant obligations which, in stage 2, amount to \$6.5m. Last week, the minister described this \$1.1m deal as a 'spot-sale'. That is a re-definition of spot-sales.

I want to refer the minister to something that he said himself in the appropriation debate: 'The 1987-88 spot-purchase program is an initial exercise' - to me 'initial' means the first time you do something - 'with the purchase of 21 dwellings only anticipated. I am aware that a major shift to spot-purchase could be against the best interests of the whole building industry as well as that of the public. However, a small program of selective spot-purchases could be beneficial in cushioning the impact of periods of market oversupply'.

I have a simple question for the minister. If it is an initial exercise of 21 units, are we to take it that that exercise has been completed by the purchase of \$1.1m of accommodation at Gardens Hill? If the minister can stand up with a straight face and tell me that that is what spot-purchase is all about, and that is what the Chief Minister meant by spot-purchase when he announced a program some 12 or 18 months ago to help out the building industry, he is a better deceiver of this House than I could ever be. The Minister for Lands and Housing has obviously abused the concept of housing spot-purchase with this \$1.1m outlay, and everybody in the building industry knows it.

Spot-purchasing was meant to enable the Housing Commission to buy from small builders, not large developers who supposedly have millions of dollars to invest in the Northern Territory. It was meant to assist small builders who would certainly appreciate some help in the current depressed state of the industry. It is very difficult to build a house now because nobody wants to buy a house. However, instead of assisting small businesses and small builders, the people the Country Liberal Party is supposed to be interested in, what do we get? We get \$1.1m being given to Gardens Hill Development, consisting of Mr Geoff Clark, who lives at Millaa Millaa in Queensland and Mr Hasruddin Koh who, although I have no idea where he now lives, certainly does not live in Darwin. That is a great help to the struggling small builders in this town. It is no wonder, in the light of that sort of behaviour, that this government is on the nose with small business in this town and no amount of ice is going to hide the smell. That is why we raised this matter of public importance discussion concerning the government's failure to conduct its property dealings in an equitable, unbiased manner for the benefit of all Territorians.

Mr Hatton: At least we went to the election telling people what we were going to do.

Mr SMITH: You did not tell them that you were going to purchase \$1.1m of Gardens Hill development.

This motion deals with the government's continued failure to deal equitably and profitably, both in terms of the distribution of land and in terms of the purchase and sale of government assets. We have demonstrated that this government has neither the wit nor the foresight to conduct its land dealings fairly and equitably in the interest of all Territorians. Unfortunately for the government, it will suffer in the end. As a famous person once said: 'You can fool all the people some of the time but you cannot fool all the people all of the time'. The government finds itself in this situation because it has not followed correct procedures and has not ensured that the people of the Territory get a benefit from the money that it spends or the property that it disposes of. The government is rapidly losing the confidence of people in the Northern Territory. That is an unfortunate position for any government to be in and it is an unfortunate thing for an opposition to have to say only 6 months after an election. This government has the job of running the Northern Territory for the next 3 years and, if it is going to do a good job, it had better start soon. The issues we have raised in this debate certainly give no indication of that and they certainly do nothing to inspire the confidence of the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, I suppose I should first congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for the way he has supported the opposition spokesman for land, the member for MacDonnell, whose contribution this afternoon has been part of the ongoing saga he began last year. There was not much to support. I have never tried to hide anything. If you read Hansard for the last 12 months, you will see that, every time the member for MacDonnell asked a question, he has been given all the information.

Even today, he is still saying that there are questions outstanding of the Minister for Lands and Housing. I have a copy of a letter, dated 10 June 1987, that I would like to read into Hansard because it will make it clear that the member has not been asking questions for the purpose of gaining knowledge or to fulfil his parliamentary role. He has been asking questions to try to cause personal embarrassment to me. He has been vindictive. He has run a smear campaign for 12 months and has collaborated with the former member

for the Northern Territory, John Reeves, in trying to win the seat of Casuarina. I have challenged the honourable member on a number of occasions to make any allegations of impropriety outside the House. I can defend myself in the House but other members of the community cannot. I have challenged him on several occasions to make his statements outside the House.

Mr Bell: There are so many. You tell me which ones, Nick, and I will make them. Write them down and I will stand up outside.

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

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, on 10 June 1987, there was a very important response from the Minister for Lands and Housing:

Dear Mr Bell, with respect to the questions you raised in the Legislative Assembly on Finnis River I provide the following responses.

(1) The government is keen to sponsor the domestic buffalo industry. Suitable blocks are difficult to identify. A large portion of Block H has excellent potential for a buffalo block with high lands, areas of river flats and permanent water. After consultation with his colleagues, especially the Minister for Primary Production, the minister decided to attempt to purchase the property.

(2) You are aware that the government attempted to purchase this land just prior to the auction. Having shown its hand, the government could have been at a disadvantage at the auction. For this reason the minister commissioned T.C. Waters Pepper to bid for the land.

(3) Prior to the auction, the minister negotiated with Mr Bob Southwell, the liquidator, and offered \$600 000 for the land. This was rejected.

(4) and (5) The Valuer-General was asked for a valuation on 28 August 1986. Circumstances did not permit formal inspection. A verbal opinion was given on 28 August and confirmed on 1 September 1986 that the value was in the range of \$400 000 to \$500 000. The vendor's valuer, who had the opportunity to do a formal inspection, placed a reserve price of \$600 000 on the land. After the purchase of the land, other valuations were sought to assist the consideration of a subdivision proposal. The subdivision value of the land gave a range of up to \$760 000.

(6) A suggestion to subdivide the land was raised as beneficial to both parties. The government could purchase the required buffalo block at a reduced outlay and private commercial interest could develop the foreshore land. This concept was investigated. Valuations were obtained on various subdivision layouts. The subdivision proposal was rejected by the minister after considering all the factors involved, including access and subdivision details and the structure of the original purpose.

Mr Speaker, that letter was sent to the member for MacDonnell on 10 June 1987. I am not sure whether he responded with any further questions to the Minister for Lands and Housing but certainly he has been raising the matter in this House ever since.

Let us talk about land development for a moment. Land development is a very important tool for the development of the Northern Territory and I have said that in this House on many occasions. Land developments create jobs in the construction industry and in the tourist industry. Look at the Sheratons, Yulara and the Beaufort. Every time we have released land for development, the opposition has knocked such development. When we have built infrastructure for tourism, we have created jobs. That is no thanks to the members of the opposition.

Funds from land sales last year were almost \$21.5m. That \$21.5m went back to the community. It went back into the Minister for Health's portfolio and the Minister for Community Development's portfolio. Land sales are very important. Last year, when I was the Minister for Lands, I was criticised for taking a shortcut or two in an effort to get land onto the market so that developers could develop it. Last year, because of high interest rates, it was pretty hard to get people to invest in development in the Territory. I admit that we took some shortcuts to obtain development and to create jobs for the Northern Territory.

Ever since, I have had to put up with the fox terrier, as he calls himself. If you read Hansard, Mr Speaker, you will see that the member for MacDonnell said that he was a fox terrier and that he would not let go. The thing that I have wondered about over the last 12 months is what variety of fox terrier. The Heinz variety? He has not picked it up yet but he will later on and probably ask me to withdraw it. Hansard will show that, over the last 12 months since this particular matter was raised, we have answered and provided the dense member for MacDonnell with all the information that he has required to the best of our ability.

I am not going to take up the remaining time available to me because I have spoken for a long time, as have other members, on this particular topic. When the member for MacDonnell made all kinds of accusations last week, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'We have got you now, Nick'. I asked what they had got me for and he told me. As we were leaving on Thursday night, because the member for MacDonnell was not in here when the adjournment debate was moved, he said: 'Don't you sleep tonight, Nick'. That is all I have been getting for the last 3 months: accusations and slurs.

He said in this Assembly that he has a document that will bring the government down. Mr Speaker, I have a better document. The member for MacDonnell referred to a consultant who worked for the upper echelons of the CLP. I know whom he is talking about. Let us look at the unsigned statutory declaration which says: 'In December 1986, I discussed my interest in purchasing Block H of Finnis River Station with the then Minister for Lands, Mr Dondas'. Plenty of people discussed it with me. Many people were interested in it but whether they had \$650 000 or intended to make an offer, I do not know. I was happy that somebody was interested in buying it because we bought it to develop the buffalo industry. That was reinforced by the Minister for Industries and Development.

Mr Bell: Tell us about the concessional interest rates.

Mr DONDAS: It is your writing. Be quiet. Let other people hear what is going on.

'During the course of our conversation, of which notes were kept' - and I know who kept the notes - 'Mr Dondas led me to believe that an offer in the vicinity of \$650 000 for the block might be acceptable'. What is wrong with



that? 'Might be acceptable'. Somebody might have walked in the door next day with an offer of \$700 000 or somebody might have said that he would not offer more than \$500 000.

'We agreed to discuss the matter further early in the new year. I requested permission to inspect the block and did so on 10 December and, secondly, on 21 December. I once again contacted Mr Dondas early in 1987, only to find that this block had already been sold'. The member for MacDonnell asked the Minister for Lands and Housing why he didn't accept the offer of \$650 000. What offer?

Mr Speaker, I would like to read my statutory declaration. I will table mine when he tables his with a signature:

'I, John Doe, together with my client of Darwin, visited the then Minister for Lands, Hon Nick Dondas MLA, at 10 am on 18 December 1986 to discuss several matters. We spoke of Block H at Finnis River as being available for sale. I believed from the conversation that Block H could have been purchased for approximately \$650 000. My client indicated interest and said that he would seek an inspection and may subsequently make an offer to purchase the block.

He never made the offer. Your little piece of paper substantiates mine as well.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I frown on interjections generally, but they are certainly out of order when a member is not in his place.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has taken up a great deal of time in this House over the last 12 months in seeking information which, on a number of occasions, has been provided to him. He asked earlier: 'Why did the minister give me a personal briefing?' You would remember that, Mr Speaker, because my response at that time was that 3 departments were involved: the Department of Defence, the Treasury and the Department of Lands. The reason why he was given a personal briefing by myself was that I did not know which department to refer him to for a briefing on Block H so I gave it to him myself. But he had the opportunity, at any time, to go to any of the departmental heads because, when I gave him that briefing, I told him to talk to certain people if he needed to.

Mr Bell: You did not.

Mr DONDAS: He said, 'I am going to write you a letter, and I will follow it up by mail'. He followed it up by mail, as I said once before, on the eve of an election, when we were very busy door knocking.

Mr Speaker, once again, I challenge the member for MacDonnell. If he has anything to say about impropriety regarding Block H, Finnis River Station, let him make his statements outside this House so that both Mr Anictomatis and myself can consider what particular legal direction we might like to take.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88  
(Serial 58)

Continued from 17 September 1987.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the Appropriation Bill, I will address the areas of the 1987-88 Northern Territory budget which relate to my portfolio. I will also put into context for honourable members some elements that went into the planning for this area of government responsibility, and its impact on expenditure proposals.

As the Treasurer mentioned in his budget speech, the creation of my department was a significant feature of the administrative arrangements introduced early this year. Apart from those covered by the Department of Education, my department carries responsibility for delivery of all 'people' services. At some stage in every Territorian's life, he or she will benefit from my department's activities, whether they are aware of the services or not.

In the past, these services were spread across a number of Territory departments. Ministers and departments competed in the budgetary process for funds for activities under their own portfolios. The Territory government brought together departments whose activities complemented each other because it recognised that the old arrangements did not provide the most efficient way to make decisions about the allocation of limited resources. The old arrangements did not allow adequate opportunity for a minister to take a considered overview or develop a planned approach to the Territory's needs across the spectrum of services for people.

The Territory has been on a tremendous development high for some years. It is changing and growing at an unprecedented rate and this development has an impact on our society. However, there are 2 key considerations which must be addressed if the Territory is to develop to its full potential. On the one hand, industry and commerce should be in a position to take full advantage of options provided by our government's dynamic, creative planning. However, this effort will not succeed without the support and commitment of all Territorians. We must provide all Territorians with opportunities for personal development if we want the Territory to be a place where all of us can share in its future prosperity. Also, we must give people confidence, not just in the future greatness of the Territory, but confidence in themselves and their abilities if we expect them to seek goals consistent with that vision.

A planned approach becomes vital if we want the Territory community to move forward into the 21st century with optimism and determination. We hurt the whole community if we leave any one section to lag behind the rest. Divisiveness will hold back our achievements and long-term goals for the Territory. A fair and just balance in opportunities and development must be struck.

The creation of my department is the best opportunity we have had to consider competing needs and to test them against the criteria provided by this government's vision for our future. Mr Speaker, I hesitate to use the word 'competing' in this context because services to the community should not be seen as competing against each other. It is preferable to view such services in a continuum rather than in competition. For instance, money must be spent on junior sports facilities. This investment has a long-term value. As I have said often before, I would rather spend thousands of dollars on junior sport or other community organisations for the young now so that I can avoid having to spend millions on jails in 10 years' time. At the moment, however, we are also faced with the need for more space in our jails and, of course, some balance must be struck.

Acute-care hospital facilities are always in demand. However, we can minimise this oppressive burden in the public health system in the long term if we invest more money in preventive health measures. Our welfare costs can be reduced if we take the opportunity to invest in early intervention techniques and courses in protective behaviour, rather than dealing with substance abuse or, worse, child abuse, after a person has developed the habit of aberrant or dangerous behaviour. The costs of carrying the long-grass culture, for instance, would not exist if the community looked for and developed the potential in every Territorian long before he reached that stage of alienation from society.

The elements which make up the quality of life in a society are firmly enmeshed. When we try to divide them into separate issues, we start looking at problems rather than people. Sporting facilities, travel subsidies for representative teams, grants to arts bodies, ethnic groups or other community organisations are all positive aids to developing the quality of Territory life. These are actions taken to help develop a healthy society in which social problems will have less room to develop. But it is also true that our community suffers if we ignore the immediate needs of the aged, disabled, endangered children or people who are acutely or chronically ill.

We do not have unlimited resources that can be applied to community services. The achievement of an appropriate balance is not a simple task nor is it one that is undertaken lightly. The immediate needs are imperative. However, programs which have long-term benefits must receive some priority. Every request cannot be met. We must test perceived needs against the direction in which we would like our community to progress in the next century. As a result, it is part of my responsibility to ensure that every dollar available is used in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The need for such an approach was underlined earlier this year when the federal government cut back the Territory's funds. I had to achieve a reduction in expenditure of some \$5m. As honourable members are aware, this meant some services had to be cut, but I was pleased that I achieved the bulk of the reduction target through rationalisation and the introduction of efficiencies into existing services. I will continue to review and examine areas of expenditure throughout the department progressively during the year. I intend to ensure that every possible cent is applied to services to the community. Several of these services are investments on behalf of future Territorians. I don't want future Territory governments to be tied down to a perpetual band-aid approach nor do I want to leave a legacy for future Territorians of unresolved and growing social dilemmas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me touch on the staffing side of things. In considering budget proposals in this area of government services, one becomes acutely aware that the success of these services relies, to a large degree, on the delivery provided by the staff of my department. The creation of the Department of Health and Community Services brought together a diverse range of professionals, all of whom work to provide services to the community. The department is one of the largest employers in the Northern Territory Public Service and employs between 25% and 30% of the public service.

The largest part, about 65% of my department's budget, is salary and related expenditures. Consequently, union negotiations and salary changes have a significant impact on cost structures. For example, recently completed negotiations for new salaries for Territory nurses added an extra \$7.6m to our costs. The negotiation process, which took 2 years to complete, was a credit to the Nurses Federation and the departmental representatives who took part.

While the impact on my department is substantial, I am confident that it will have an equally substantial and positive impact on the Territory's health and medical services in years to come. Nurses now have a career structure and associated pay scale which takes them out of the Florence Nightingale charity image derived from the previous century and gives them the professional recognition their skills and duties deserve.

I intend to ensure that all officers, with their diverse skills, are encouraged to participate fully in the total community service approach of my department. I am aware that many public servants feel that their contributions, often of a high standard, are overlooked and that their field of work is neglected or not appreciated. This is of concern particularly in respect of community care areas. My intention is to encourage regular monitoring of service delivery across the department and apply cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis techniques where necessary to review the value of programs. In this way, my senior managers and I will have the information on which to base decisions about programs to be discarded or developed. A spin-off of this approach is that program evaluation must take into account the contribution of staff, thus allowing for proper recognition of effort.

The Appropriation Bill provides allocations totalling \$194.5m for the Department of Health and Community Services. Of this amount, about \$87.4m or roughly 45% is to be expended in the Territory's hospital system. These facilities provide excellent standards which will be maintained in coming years. Negotiations are proceeding for privatisation of 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital pending the opening of the new private hospital on the grounds next year.

The privatisation of wards in a public hospital is another example of the innovative approach of this government. I venture to suggest that every state government in Australia will be watching the progress of this move with considerable interest because its success will give them a lead in ways to deal with problems in their own hospital systems. This privatisation initiative is a result of the long-standing Territory government policy to support the right of Territorians to a choice between private and public care. The siting of the new private hospital adjacent to the Royal Darwin Hospital will help to develop a close working relationship between the 2 hospitals. This will ensure that the services provided complement one another and that no unnecessary duplication of expensive equipment occurs.

The budget allocation for the Royal Darwin Hospital is \$53m for recurrent costs alone. In addition, substantial upgrading works will begin this financial year to remedy what appear to be design and system faults we inherited when we took on this Commonwealth-constructed facility. These works, totalling \$6.7m, include upgrading the fire protection system and the chilled water air-conditioning system.

At Alice Springs Hospital, plans are well advanced for the conversion of the boilers to gas operation. In the long term, this will reduce the high cost associated with the continued use of the present diesel-fired boilers and have the advantage of assisting in the development of the use of one of our own natural resources. The sexual assault referral service at the hospital will also be expanded through the employment of extra staff.

Katherine Hospital is already being upgraded to cater for the rapid population growth in the area. A new 32-bed children's ward was commissioned early this year. Works to modernise other facilities will proceed this financial year at a cost of \$.05m. Provision has been made for upgrading facilities at Tennant Creek and Gove Hospitals as well.

Before moving from the subject of hospitals, I should mention an important aspect of hospital financing. This financial year, the Territory will receive, under the Medicare agreement with the Commonwealth, about \$13m as compensation for extra costs and lost revenue arising from the introduction of the Medicare system in 1984. The agreement ends on 30 June 1988 and negotiations are under way to determine the form of financing likely under new arrangements from that date. I will keep honourable members informed of developments but, for the time being, they can be assured I will be pushing for a basis of agreement that ensures the Territory receives fair funding.

I turn now to the area where the creation of my new department has had its greatest effect: community services. These comprise a wide variety of community programs ranging from health care and mental health services to welfare, sport and recreation and consumer affairs. Funding for this integrated network of health and community services will be \$71.6m or just over a third of the 1987-88 budget. Some programs supported by these funds represent the cutting edge of the government's aim to promote individual and community well-being and so reduce the need for expensive institutional care. The cost of these services is significant, but recognition should be given to the Territory's young, rapidly-growing and widely-dispersed population. The special needs of Aboriginal Territorians and the economic difficulties of delivering services to a relatively small population in a vast empty land also have to be considered.

I am especially delighted that this budget will relieve some of the stress on Territory families with physically- and intellectually-disabled children and adolescents. Funds totalling \$635 000 have been earmarked specifically for facilities which will improve respite care on evenings and weekends for children up to the age of 5 years, full-time residential care for socially-incompatible, disabled adolescents and adults and extra placements for severely physically- and intellectually-disabled people in the 5 to 16 years age group.

\$400 000 has been allocated for extra child-care centres under a joint funding arrangement with the Commonwealth. A new 20-place centre will be established in the northern suburbs of Darwin. In Tennant Creek, child-care services will be upgraded so that a full range of neighbourhood children's services will be available.

Funding for mental health services has been substantially increased. The official opening of Tamarind Centre, the major Darwin mental health services facility, took place on Monday of this week. An additional \$190 000 has been allocated to expand its operations. A substantial upgrading of psychiatric facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital is almost complete. In Alice Springs, a psychiatric assessment team will be established soon and services designed for families and children will be expanded. This government is developing legislation to provide for guardianship of behaviourally-disturbed and intellectually-disabled people who cannot manage their own affairs. Funding of \$45 000 has been set aside for the administration of this legislation which I hope to introduce later this year.

The new renal dialysis unit in Alice Springs will receive extra funding of \$140 000 to expand the service's capacity to dialyse more patients. I inspected this new facility last month when it first began providing regular treatment for patients. Until then, many central Australians with renal failure had to leave the place in which they had grown up to move interstate where such facilities were available. At last count, 8 Territorian sufferers and their families will be back home among their friends by this Christmas.

This extra funding to boost the unit's capacity will enable a further 6 users to arrange transfers from interstate units.

Borroloola township will get a new health centre at a cost of \$830 000 and construction should begin in December. The clinic will be centrally located and should cater well for the town's anticipated growth aided by mining and tourism developments well into the next decade.

This budget gives support to existing preventive education programs on AIDS. An extra \$212 000 has been allocated to hire and equip an AIDS outreach team in the 4 regions of the department. I will be seeking specific funding support from the Commonwealth to partially offset the cost of the expanded program.

Grants-in-aid to community organisations, including disbursements from the Sports Development Trust Fund, will total \$16m this financial year. Grants are made for a diverse range of functions including health services, age and disabled programs and child and family services. There is doubt that community-based agencies operating in their own communities are best placed to service the needs of local people. Accordingly, community organisations will continue to be encouraged to maintain and expand this vital role.

One area which excites considerable interest in the Territory is grants to sports and recreation. It is an area in which my department can focus completely on the positive side of its work in our community. From these grants, we will fund travel subsidies for sporting teams competing inside the Territory as well as interstate. This system allows individual Territorians to achieve recognition and competitive status at a national level and has the benefit of lifting the image of all Territorians around Australia.

Sporting facilities, which will allow our sportsmen and women to develop their skills and achieve to their full potential, will receive funding. Sports scholarships will continue to promote and support Territory sportsmen and women with above-average ability. Many Territorians have achieved national and international sporting fame in recent years. Phillip Devereaux and Kerry Dienelt are examples of Territory success stories. They deserve all credit for their efforts and the scholarship system has given them opportunities to show just how much Territorians can achieve if they have a chance.

This sort of assistance to sporting and recreational activities recognises the contribution which such activities make to the quality of our lives. Healthy, fit people have less need of the hospital system. They also reinforce the messages of our health promotion activities and they help in the development of confidence and competence in our children.

In addition to grants-in-aid to organisations, a major allocation of \$2.7m has been made to continue assistance to pensioners. Some of this assistance includes concessions on interstate travel and local transport and increases to existing concessions on bills for water, sewerage and motor vehicle registrations. This funding maintains the government's policy of looking after our older citizens and encouraging them to stay here.

Another significant proportion of our Territory population is represented by a diverse range of ethnic groups that add a unique richness to our cosmopolitan community. The Territory government has met an election commitment made earlier this year to allocate funding for the appointment of an executive officer to the Ethnic Communities Council. This council serves

as an umbrella organisation supporting the interests of various ethnic groups and complements the continuing work of the Migrant Resource Centres and interpreter and translator services maintained by this government.

This government continues its support for the creative arts through assistance to a multitude of community organisations. Funding through various groups has encouraged development of a wide range of crafts demonstrated in regular public performances and displays. The purpose of diverse community funding is to ensure that all Territorians have opportunities to participate in artistic endeavour, either on a professional or an amateur basis.

In yet another area of my portfolio, we achieved an election commitment in maintaining the child-care salary subsidy. The approach of Senator Walsh, who suggests that community groups who work long and hard in the child-care area should be forgotten, is reprehensible in the view of the Territory government. The brave new world of Labor demeans individual effort and achievement.

The Patient Assistance Travel Scheme, allocated \$2.4m, replaces the IPTAAS arrangement previously administered by the Commonwealth. The scheme will continue but it is my aim that the need for it will diminish as a greater range of specialist services becomes available in the Territory. It is my firm view that the old Territory saying, 'When in pain, catch a plane', must soon disappear. An increasing number of highly-skilled specialists are settling in the Territory. When there is insufficient work for a full-time specialist, we are often able to have a specialist travel to Darwin rather than cause a family concerned with illness the added strife of disruption brought about by uplifting members interstate.

In the area of correctional services, the wilderness camp at Wildman River will be expanded. This facility has been a great success and is recognised around Australia for its innovative approach to juvenile detention. Recently, the Acting Administrator, His Honour Mr Justice Nader, visited the camp. In a letter I received shortly afterwards, His Honour described the camp as 'inspirational'. Mr Speaker, with the permission of Mr Justice Nader, I will read that letter. It begins:

As you know I visited Wildman Wilderness Camp on Wednesday 26 August in my capacity as Acting Administrator. However, my real interest was as a Judge of the Supreme Court. I have been associated with the criminal law for many years and it has always seemed to me desirable that judges have some idea of the fate of those whom they sentence.

Since my appointment to the bench, I have made 2 visits to Giles House in Alice Springs, an outstanding institution. My visit to Wildman, however, was nothing short of inspiring.

I understand that the land upon which the wilderness camp is located will be used as such for the next 4 years. I estimated that the area of the camp was about 10 acres. I was told that the camp was established a little over 12 months ago and is still being developed. It was carved out of virgin land and every improvement is being carried out using the labour of detainees. I could not help noticing, when I arrived, the atmosphere of industry about the camp. Not only were the young persons working hard at various tasks, making cement, building a large septic tank, preparing to build an ablutions block between 2 other buildings, preparing the midday meal etc, but the staff members were working alongside them. The boys, mostly Aborigines, appeared to glow with health. I was told it was

regarded as essential that the boys should burn up their energy so that, by the end of the day, they would be ready for sleep. This contrasts with the prison situation where there is little to do and where unused energy leads to frustrations and negative attitudes.

At the camp, the boys start the day with jogging. After breakfast, they work and, with the appropriate breaks including a lunch break, they work until finishing time. They then engage in sport, including boxing which is very popular. They showed me their boxing trophies which were displayed in their meal room. I was told that their activities include weights training, boxing, running, circuit training, soccer, cricket, touch football and volleyball. The boys are enthusiastic about the fact that a touch football team is to enter outside competition soon. The whole emphasis of the program is towards self-reliance.

It is well known to those concerned with the criminal law that an almost universal characteristic of criminals is that they lack self-esteem. The program at the wilderness camp builds up a sense of achievement in the boys, and this was obvious to me. The boys are responsible for their own survival. They do the cooking, cleaning and maintaining of the camp. They have established a large vegetable and fruit patch, and keep chickens and ducks.

In addition to sporting activities, in the process of establishing the camp, the boys are developing and using the skills of welding, plumbing, concreting, farming, fencing and motor mechanics. They use and care for power tools. They perform domestic duties. They operate, care for and maintain earth-moving equipment, including a backhoe and a grader. They are also concerned with the eradication of the noxious weed, mimosa. I saw their bedsteads. They were made of steel, cut and welded by the boys themselves.

The various duties at the camp are rostered. For example, a group of 3 boys is rostered to do the cooking for 2 days at a time. I understand that some lads who had absolutely no idea of cooking are now able to take part in the preparation of meals for the whole camp.

It was obvious to me that the relationship between the staff and the boys was an excellent one. I was told that the Aboriginal boys are encouraged to perform corroboree dances in which the white boys are welcome and take part. I saw 3 boys who appeared to be non-Aboriginal mingling freely and seemingly on equal and normal terms with the Aboriginal boys.

It appeared to me that the camp was preparing the boys for independence by developing in them self-esteem and the skills necessary for them to maintain that self-esteem and to survive in the outside world. The boys are being taught to be responsible for themselves. The staff told me proudly that every boy who leaves the camp has a skill which will assist him to obtain employment. Paul Nuku, who is in charge of the operations at the camp, is very pleased with the success of the 'old boys'. He takes it upon himself to keep contact with each one and to provide such moral support as he can to maintain them on the right path.

There is no need for me to state the ways in which the wilderness camp contrasts with the ordinary penal institutions; the contrast is



almost total. It was a trite joke in New South Wales to say of a boy who was being sent to a penal institution for the first time, that he would leave it as a properly-qualified criminal. Nothing could be further from the reality at Wildmans. I understand that the boys at the wilderness camp have shown real interest in basic education. I am not sure what arrangements are made in this regard, but it would be a pity if a thirst for basic knowledge were not able to be satisfied.

I did not inquire what is to happen to the camp after 4 years but, if it were to be handed over to some other enterprise and the boys required to commence a fresh camp elsewhere, there might be some basis for a suggestion that their labour is being exploited for the benefit of others. Of course, I do not make that allegation because I know it is not so, but I merely point out that it would be a pity if such a worthy enterprise should become the subject of party-political wrangling.

I was grateful for the opportunity of going to the wilderness camp and I look forward to visiting it again from time to time. Perhaps it is a vanity but I imagine, from what I saw and from what I was told, that the boys enjoy visitors who can give them a legitimate feeling that they are of concern to people in the outside world.

Yours sincerely,  
The Honourable Mr Justice J.A. Nader.

I have been encouraged greatly by the words of Justice Nader and, for that reason, I have taken the step of ensuring this view of the wilderness camp project is part of the public record.

Our efforts to break the nexus between offences as a juvenile and progression to becoming an adult client of our criminal justice system will be reinforced. Staffing of 2 juvenile detention centres, Giles House in Alice Springs and Malak House in Darwin, will also be strengthened. These initiatives will cost \$130 000 this year.

The Territory's correctional services system is yet another area in which we have taken a leading role in the treatment of Aboriginals who make up a significant proportion of the prison population from year to year. We have maintained our impetus in the development of effective community-based programs for adult offenders with further funding support. One program will provide for the employment of an extra 4 Aboriginal Community Correctional Officers under a tripartite funding arrangement with the Commonwealth government and Aboriginal councils.

The cost of the Territory's prison system is estimated at \$14m this financial year. It is unfortunate, but prisons remain a growth industry, and overcrowding is still a major concern. We will continue to steer away from replicating high-cost conventional prison accommodation where its effectiveness in addressing recidivism is questionable. In this financial year, 2 rural ventures will be set up along the lines of the Beatrice Hill Rehabilitation Project. The government is considering whether 1 of these mobile camps for 30 to 40 prisoners might help open Litchfield National Park to the public. Inmates will contribute to the community through the construction of tourist facilities which support Conservation Commission development plans, and receive training in useful skills at the same time. \$1.15m has been allocated for development of 2 sites, one in central Australia

and the other in the Top End. This will cover establishment costs, operational funding and capital works.

The development of other prison industries will continue. Already, we have in place a prison farm at Gunn Point. The showpiece of our system, the metal press factory in Alice Springs, is embarking on other project ventures which will bring more money into the Territory. We will continue to develop our prefabrication workshop which is designing and producing housing modules in Alice Springs. Demand for these houses is increasing and I am certain a similar facility in the Top End would be equally successful. My department will continue to examine other methods of providing work in our prisons. Apart from the benefits for prisoners, productive work adds to the system's revenue-raising abilities and its self-sufficiency.

Mr Speaker, the budget measures I have outlined in the course of this debate will address many of the legitimate concerns of Territorians. However, I want to stress to honourable members that my department is looking beyond the 1990s and into the next century. Many of the programs being developed and consolidated now will have implications reaching far beyond the current financial year. I have sought an extremely important balance between different programs operated by my department and between the long and short-term needs of the community. I believe that, in this budget, given the constraints which exist, I have achieved that balance. I am confident that the integration of health and community services within one portfolio, and the new measures announced in this budget, represent a solid foundation from which we can meet challenging times ahead. I support the bill.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, as Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, I would like to outline the functions and the appropriations for that ministry for the 1987-88 financial year. As minister of the department, I am responsible for the Office of the Public Service Commissioner, the Government Printing Office and the Work Health Authority.

As most honourable members would be aware, the Office of the Public Service Commissioner, in accordance with the Public Service Act, is charged with the responsibility of promoting an efficient and effective Northern Territory Public Service capable of implementing and achieving government policies and objectives. It has responsibility for the functions of personnel services, industrial relations, equal opportunity, employment and training, the Promotions Appeals Board, properties management and the Government Printing Office. Each of these functional areas has a role to play in the smooth running of the public service machinery of the Northern Territory.

Despite the encouraging sounds which emanated from Canberra last Tuesday night, Australia still has a long way to go before it can be said to have pulled itself out of the economic tailspin that it has been in for the last few years. Naturally, the Territory has been affected by the recent fluctuations in our national economic fortunes. However, the overall allocation to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner for the financial year 1987-88 is \$26.41m, an increase of \$1.5m. Of the ministry's overall budget, a total of \$20.58m has been allocated to the Properties Division, \$3.65m to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner, \$1.65m to the area of employment and training, and \$512 000 to the Government Printing Office.

Mr Speaker, I would like to address what I consider to be not only one of the most important areas under my control, but also one of the most important areas of responsibility for any government: employment and training. Apart

from the physical well-being of the citizens and their shelter, I consider there to be no area of responsibility more important than education and, although the ministry does not have any direct responsibility for education per se, it does have to oversee the effective application of apprenticeship and traineeship programs designed to provide individuals with a set of skills which will allow them to confront the future with confidence. Succeeding in that endeavour is a task of momentous importance, not just for the individuals involved, but for society at large.

Currently, there are 1271 apprentices in the Northern Territory. The quality of training being received by our young people went on display recently in Alice Springs in the finals of the Territory Apprentice of the Year Award. The national finals of the awards will be held in Darwin for the first time on 18 November this year.

It is vital to the Territory's further development that the complementary issues of a broadening of our industrial base and a skilled work force to service it proceed in tandem. If we train people in industrial skills without having employment available for them, we run a great risk of driving our greatest resource, our young people, elsewhere in search of work. Conversely, developing industry while doing nothing about ensuring that people are trained in the appropriate skills to work in it, is also an exercise in folly. This government is mindful of the far-reaching implications of this issue for the future of the Territory. We have already shown our willingness to grasp the nettle and to do something about it.

One key objective of my ministry will be the creation of a fully-fledged labour function. This would weld together some of the current functional units of the ministry, providing them with a more finely-tuned sense of direction and purpose. It should ensure the delivery of the full gamut of labour-related services to the Northern Territory community. These services include enhanced interaction with the private sector on industrial relations. The advantages would be substantial. It would mean, for instance, that practices currently limited to the narrow public service base in areas such as equal opportunities and personnel practices could be extended to industry in general. Most importantly, it would allow a more effective extension of employment and training functions from the urban areas to rural parts of the Northern Territory. The government has done much in this area but recognises the need for even greater achievement. While this government has already developed sound initiatives for the employment and training of labour for Territory industry, there is still work to be done on the development of a comprehensive employment policy for the Northern Territory. I foreshadow a full ministerial statement on this matter at a future sitting of the Assembly.

As I have stressed, traineeships and apprenticeships are vital to the future of the Territory, but there is one section of our richly diverse population where such training is, I believe, imperative. That group is the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory. Currently, the Territory government is bringing the future employment needs of this section of our community under closer scrutiny than ever before. The ministry's Aboriginal development initiatives provide a work-based skills development program enabling Aboriginal Territorians to gain new skills that will not only meet the needs of the individual employee, but complement departmental strategies. The Aboriginal development function is also responsible for career guidance and the coordination of training for Aboriginal people within the service. In an effort to broaden the scope for Aboriginal employment, the old Aboriginal Development Division has been incorporated as an autonomous unit into the Employment and Training Division.

Because of the high proportion of Aboriginal people within the Territory population, this government clearly has a responsibility to work towards increasing the level of employment in the Aboriginal community. This goal is, of course, consistent with the activities of the Employment and Training Division whose charter in part calls for the development of job-creation schemes aimed at reducing unemployment and assuring the acquisition of employment and occupational skills. As honourable members on both sides of the House will appreciate, this is a complex and sizeable task, particularly in rural communities where the opportunities for genuinely worthwhile job-creation are limited, to say the least.

Because of the sheer magnitude not only of job-creation but also effective occasional training amongst Aboriginal people and the critical social need for such efforts, the Territory government believes the federal government also has a responsibility in relation to such schemes. We were particularly heartened to hear the federal Treasurer, Paul Keating, announce that his government intends to increase the level of expenditure on Aboriginal employment and training programs this financial year. We have been working on a number of Aboriginal employment and training proposals which we would like to enter into in concert with the Commonwealth. These schemes involve the intake of Aboriginal apprentices for training in a range of areas including the hospitality, construction and automotive industries.

Aboriginal development has already proved the success of Territory and Commonwealth cooperation in the area of Aboriginal employment and training through the Group Intake Program. This program, funded by the Commonwealth and administered by the Territory, ensures employment within the NTPS for a set number of Aboriginal trainees following the completion of a 1-year course. This program is the only one of its kind in Australia and has been attracting considerable attention from interstate. In fact, the persons responsible for the program in my department have been asked to take their skills interstate. A total of 64 Aboriginal people are involved in this year's intake program. A total of 37 permanent positions have been made available for those who successfully complete the 1-year course. Last year, the program placed 22 Aboriginal people in full-time employment within the NTPS.

I have a number of reasons for emphasising the topic of Aboriginal employment and training. The first is that this is part of my ministerial responsibilities, but I have also had a long and close association with Aboriginal people and a particular interest in seeing that Aboriginal Territorians are equipped to meet the challenges of the latter part of the 20th century. Aboriginal people constitute about 50% of my electorate and it pleases me, as the member for Victoria River, to note the level of allocations made in the budget for projects which will impact on them. At the risk of impinging on the responsibilities of other ministers, I will briefly mention some of these.

Roads spending, although reduced, is a major feature of capital works expenditure in the budget. Included in the appropriations are \$3.7m for the reconstruction and realignment of 28 km of the Victoria Highway, a much-needed project, and \$2m worth of construction on the Kakadu Highway.

A total of \$46 000 will be spent on education programs designed to alert the people of remote communities, such as those in Victoria River, about the threat of AIDS.

The Power and Water Authority has been allocated \$94 000 for floodplains mapping of Adelaide River, Timber Creek and Katherine River and a total of

\$192 000 has been allocated for the development of water supplies at Wadeye while the road to Wadeye is to be further upgraded. Work will be done on bore 6 at Pine Creek in the repairs and maintenance program. The authority will also spend \$200 000 on monitoring and maintenance of the Rum Jungle mining site.

The Department of Industries and Development has allocated \$300 000 for the construction of single staff accommodation at the Douglas-Daly Research Farm. Also of importance to Victoria River, an electorate which is largely involved in primary production, is the expenditure of \$600 000 on the upgrading of laboratory facilities at the Berrimah Research Farm. Work to be carried out as part of the repairs and maintenance program at the Coastal Plains Research Station will also benefit my electorate.

The ongoing program of works at Batchelor College will be boosted by \$400 000 towards stage 6 of the college, and the Department of Mines and Energy has set aside \$2.1m for rehabilitation works at the Rum Jungle Creek South. Work in Litchfield Park, as has been mentioned, will continue through the allocation of \$600 000 which the Department of Transport and Works has set aside for access to stage 3. Works already carried out on roads in that park are extremely commendable. The Conservation Commission has committed a total of \$150 000 for stage 2 of the Wangi Falls project and stage 1 of the Florence Falls project.

I am confident, Mr Speaker, that these allocations will prove to be of immense value to the people, not only of my electorate but of the whole of the Northern Territory, and I commend the budget to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT (RULES OF PROCEDURE) BILL  
(Serial 22)

Continued from 6 May 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this bill and, whilst that might seem to be an otiose statement given that the bill is relatively uncontentious, the book of rules that is attendant on it is so copious in fact that the Attorney-General was constrained to write to me and say that not too many copies existed and could I please cast my eyes over it and shoot it back to him.

Needless to say, I will not claim to have internalised the 384 pages of the Supreme Court Rules. What I will say is that the opposition has been in touch with officers of the Law Society of the Northern Territory and members of the legal fraternity in Darwin, and we understand that the profession in the Territory is gradually internalising the rules. I believe that lectures have been conducted on their use this week. One of the advantages of the rules that the Attorney-General may have mentioned in his second-reading speech is that we are incorporating into the Territory, essentially, the Victorian Rules - that is as in Supreme Court Rules, not in Australian Rules football.

Far be it from me to exercise any state-of-origin chauvinism, but I understand that one of the advantages of incorporating a set of working rules is that it will be relatively easy to build on them, and there will not be the time-consuming necessity to establish specific Northern Territory precedents. Presumably, the rules will be amended over time to reflect particular aspects

of court practice in the Territory and, of course, that is what self-government in the Territory is about. We hope that the rules will contribute to the smooth running of the Supreme Court in the Territory.

With those few comments, I place on record the opposition's support, and commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill this afternoon. As the member for MacDonnell said, details of the new rules are contained in this quite lengthy volume here, and I do not think it would be advisable to wade through that particular document page by page.

Mr Dondas: You haven't got time.

Mr SETTER: I certainly have not got time. But let me just say, Mr Speaker, that what this does is provide, for the first time, a formal set of rules applying to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. In the past ...

Mr Collins: Speak louder.

Mr SETTER: I am sorry, member for Sadadeen. I have a bad throat at the moment, but I am doing my best.

Previously, we have worked on precedents set by other courts and by the rules of English courts. Our Supreme Court judges have had to do the best they could with existing precedents that had been established in other courts. These have now been drawn together and rationalised to form a set of rules which are applicable to and can be identified with the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory.

Considerable work over a lengthy period has been put in by the judges of the Territory Supreme Court in studying the various options that have been available and putting them all together in this documented form. Of course, this bill serves to approve and ratify the new rules because it is all very well for the judges to determine a set of rules for their court, but it is appropriate that these be considered and ratified by this Assembly.

The bill is based largely on a Victorian model which was introduced in 1986. Much of the material for these new rules has come from the work that was done in Victoria prior to that time. It is also indicated in the bill that, comprehensive though these rules might be, they really only cover 2 chapters of what will become quite a lengthy volume eventually. In fact, I shudder to think how lengthy it might be if this volume covers only 2 chapters. We can see quite a large document being developed finally.

The other areas that will be addressed in the future will refer to appeal procedure, probate rules, the rules of costs of court and admiralty rules, and that is quite fascinating. In the future, I will take some time to investigate admiralty rules and how they would apply here. I know the member for Ludmilla would be just as interested as I am in that particular aspect. He is a nautical person, Captain Firmin I am told, as I am myself.

Mr Firmin: A seafarer.

Mr SETTER: A seafarer, that is quite appropriate terminology to use in this case.

Of course the most important section of all, which will be developed eventually, is that of miscellaneous rules. That probably covers smokos and things.

The bill also provides an expanded role for the Master because, in the past, even though the Master of the Supreme Court had quite a deal of responsibility, he was unable to hear matters which, under the previous system, had to go before a judge. This bill allows for an expanded role for the Master. It allows the Master to hear some of the routine matters that come before the court which, as explained, previously had to be heard by a judge of the Supreme Court. That will remove quite a burden from the judges because it is all too easy these days to have very busy people like judges of the Supreme Court bogged down with handling trivial matters. In the future, such matters will easily be able to be handled by the Master.

The distinction between the court and chambers, which is a formal distinction, has now been removed and that will give the opportunity for judges and, of course, for the Master to use chambers to consider various matters.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this particular bill will go a long way towards modernising our court system. It brings it up to date and I am quite sure that, in the future, considerable work will be done to introduce all of those other aspects by way of various chapters I referred to earlier. I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table the Supreme Court Rules.

I would like to thank honourable members for their comments in support of the bill and I take the opportunity to thank the members of the Territory Law Reform Committee, the practitioners in the Territory and also the judges, and the recently-retired Chief Justice, for the work they have put into developing these new Supreme Court Rules.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a couple of issues tonight. First of all, I would like to comment on the remarks of the member for Karama in relation to the rural area. I do not wish to indicate that members should not be able to say what they like on any issue. I certainly feel that, if one has something to say, one should say it. Nobody should be frightened of doing that. My only reason for commenting on this matter is that the member for Koolpinyah and the member for Barkly indicated that the member for Karama's view was that of the CLP which, frankly, is not correct. As a member of the CLP, I know that other members on this side of this Assembly also feel strongly that they do not share the views of the member for Karama.

It is natural for people to respond to change with a degree of suspicion. They have a right to comment, which I support, whether they speak as individuals or on behalf of business. It is also important in our system that members of the Assembly are able to comment freely but I want to indicate very clearly that I do not agree with the remarks made by the member for Karama in relation to rural residents. I do not always agree with the member for Koolpinyah's views, but I share her concerns in relation to the registration or licensing of bores. It is natural for people to react unfavourably when it appears that bureaucracy is going to take over.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to touch on Senior Citizens' Week. Yesterday, I was fortunate enough to attend a morning tea at Spillet House. It was one of the activities for Senior Citizens' Week and it was attended by some 200 of our senior citizens from Chan Park, Darwin and the Rural Old Timers. They all had a wonderful time and it was most enjoyable to attend and hear stories about the past. Senior Citizens' Week gives us the opportunity to reflect on the role that our senior citizens have played in the development of the Northern Territory. I refer not only to senior citizens who were raised here but to all the senior citizens who have played such an important part in our progress and development. We acknowledge that role at this time each year and there is an extensive program of activities for this week which I am sure honourable members are aware of.

The program started on Sunday 20 September. Tomorrow, Wednesday 23 September, there will be an open day at the Rural Old Timers Hall and a luncheon. On Thursday, from 10 am until 2.30 pm, there will be a Billy J cruise and luncheon at the Mandorah Inn. On Friday, from 11.30 am until 2.00 pm, there will be a luncheon at Palmerston Golf Club. On Saturday, from 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm, there will be the Fannie Bay race day and, on Sunday, from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm, an open air church service with a closing address. I wish all of our senior citizens well during this period and I am sure that other members would support me in so doing. I urge members, if they are able, to attend any of these functions.

The third and final matter that I wish to touch on tonight relates to a person who has, I believe, performed a wonderful service to our community. Members often speak about people who have performed valuable services to the community and one such person is Leo Izod. He has lived in the Northern Territory since 1946, he has travelled widely throughout the Northern Territory and he has also had a great deal of experience in motor mechanics. Leo lived in Alice Springs for a while and, in 1963, he was a mechanic at Areyonga where he taught Aboriginal people to be self-sufficient in motor maintenance. Perhaps the member for MacDonnell knows of his work there. He was the senior motor mechanic at Bamyili from 1964 to 1969 and a technical instructor at Kormilda College from 1969 to 1987.

During these years, Leo has maintained an interest in machinery used in the Northern Territory, collecting old pieces and restoring them to running order. I am sure that honourable members who have attended the Katherine Show, the Darwin Show or the Rural Show would have seen Leo Izod's displays. In the last 5 years, he has built up a collection of petrol and diesel motors dating from 1900. These have been used for a variety of purposes during the development of the Northern Territory running lighting plants, running bores, pumping water and driving mining machinery. He has restored them all. He restored the first motor from the Adelaide River Railway Station, the 1914 engine from the Batchelor Experimental Farm and a 1939 International tractor used by the army at Coomalie Creek. I have, for honourable members' viewing, an album which details and records all Leo's work. There are



15 different Australian-made Southern Cross engines in the collection. The earliest was made in November 1927. Others include a 1927 Southern Cross motor bought by Brunette Downs in February 1928 to run a bore, a Cooper 32-volt lighting plant from VRD Station from the early 1950s and early engines from Montejinni, Camfield, Ooloo, Roper Valley, Beswick and Gorrie.

I could go through a whole list of items which Leo Izod has restored and I believe that it is very important that we allow him the opportunity to pursue his interest. Leo would like to do so and he is very concerned that these old Australian engines will be lost to collectors from interstate. These people are moving into the Northern Territory looking for old machinery and Leo would really love to get hold of as many of these Australian-made engines as possible for the bicentennial year in order to show the history of development in the Northern Territory. I believe that it is important to hang on to as many of these old pieces of Territory history as possible. Leo Izod is not looking for money. He has his truck and all he is interested in doing is locating these machines, wherever they are, collecting them and restoring them to working order. It really is a worthwhile cause which should be supported by members, and I would call on anyone with old machinery, whatever it might be, to contact Leo Izod.

Naturally, over a period of time, Leo has made a number of contacts throughout the world. He is seen as an expert in his field and that also helps to put the Territory on the map. He has a problem in terms of storing the machinery he has collected. At present, it is stored at his home and you can imagine, Mr Speaker, that his living room is becoming somewhat crowded. He is wondering if the government could assist in relation to storage so that he can pursue his interest. I am sure the government would not object to doing that.

Secondly, he is seeking an area where his collection can be displayed for all Territory people and visitors to enjoy. We are always pushing tourism and looking for activities tourists can enjoy, and I believe a display of the old machinery, properly done, would create tremendous interest. I believe we will be able to find a place in Darwin where this restored machinery can be displayed. It is important that we support Territorians who are talented and dedicated and I believe that Leo Izod is such a person. I will be pursuing this issue but I think that it is important that that machinery be given a place where it can be displayed for everyone to enjoy. I would like to indicate also that Leo has made it clear that all of the machinery that he has restored will be donated to the government at some stage. I think that the government should take up the offer and look to finding a place where he can keep his machinery out of the weather.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I would like to draw honourable members' attention to the death of Burge Brown of Bynoe, who died in the early hours of yesterday morning. Burge was a well-known Top End identity. He was a battler who typified the spirit of the Northern Territory. I think Burge had turned his hand to just about everything over the years that he was here. He was born in Rochester, Victoria, and served in the RAAF in New Guinea during World War II. At one stage, Burge crash landed in the area of what is now Weipa, long before the bauxite mine was established there. According to his family, in the early days before Weipa was established, he spoke often about the beach there which was covered with little pebbles. This was probably one of the first encounters with a passion that was later to dominate his life: prospecting and mining.

After the war, Burge returned to a wheat farm in Corop in Victoria, and he moved to the Territory in 1949. Burge took up life on Murray Downs cattle station near Barrow Creek. He often spoke to me about his life at Murray Downs and some of the things that he did while he was there, and his involvement with the Aboriginal people of the area. Originally, he used to drive cattle overland to Alice Springs and his wife, Ida, who passed away only last year, always accompanied him on those trips. Ida was a magnificent horsewoman. Burge later sent cattle to Alice Springs in 2 trucks that are believed to have been amongst the first cattle trains in the Territory. He began prospecting on the station for wolfram and copper during that time.

He moved his family to what was then Banyan Farm near Batchelor in 1957. Banyan Farm is on what is now known as Eva Valley. There he grew pineapples, pawpaws and bananas and was involved in rice growing at Beatrice Hill. Burge often spoke about that time and the occasions when he explored the area that now forms Litchfield Park. He claims that what we know as Florence Falls, he named as Ida Brown Falls.

In 1962, Burge moved his family to the Darwin River area. He lived near what was known as the RAAF quarry, in what is now the catchment area for Darwin River Dam. The RAAF quarry gained its name because it was used for gravel quarrying for airport construction. It provided the quarry material used for the North Australian Railway also. He was involved in buffalo shooting around the Darwin River area. He sent meat interstate and later opened a pet shop at Parap, in the building that now houses the Weaver's Workshop. His prospecting reached new heights during this period. He prospected in the Howley and Pine Creek area. His daughter, Beryl, can remember the entire family travelling to what is now known as Kakadu National Park every second weekend in a Holden ute and a 1942 jeep on prospecting missions. During those trips, Burge used to pick up Yorkie Billie from what was then known as Dreaming, now known as Yellow Waters. As there were few roads in the area, Yorkie Billie acted as a guide. Burge was believed to be one of the first men to see the original rock art at Obiri Rock. Burge also helped start the Mt Bundy iron ore mine.

Burge and Ida moved to Bynoe Harbour in 1972, and it was not until that time that I became aware of Burge and his family and his activities in that area. It was once again the lure of minerals that drew him across the harbour. He was looking for gold and kaolin and he quarried gravel. The Kenbi Land Claim prevented him from progressing too far with his prospecting activities however. Burge is known as the man who began the legend of the so-called Bynoe Harbour monster. This was supposedly a large plesiosaurus similar to the Lock Ness monster, and had terrified a number of fishermen in the area. He was an active member of the Cox Peninsula Progress Association and the Rural Planning Authority.

I understand that Burge's funeral is likely to be held on Friday, but that is still to be confirmed. I offer my condolences to the surviving members of his family. As a matter of fact, Burge rang me only last Friday to make an appointment to see me this Friday. Unfortunately, that meeting will not come about. Burge was a man for whom I had a great deal of respect. I enjoyed his stories and I certainly respect the work that he did in the Northern Territory over the years.

Another issue that I would like to raise this evening flows on from comments made by the member for Arafura last week. The member for Arafura made what I consider to be timely remarks on what he perceived as the attitudes of members on this side of the Assembly. From the manner in which

he made those comments, I believe he felt that we on this side of the Assembly were not really attempting to do a great deal for the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. I know that the member for Arafura knows that that is not true, but I think that he was led to this by comments made earlier in the day that were brought about by the rather outrageous remarks that had been made by members of his own side which caused some cross-Chamber bickering.

That often happens because a couple of members on the other side of the Assembly tend to treat the facts rather flamboyantly, and it is difficult not to attempt to contradict them. At times, some remarks may appear to be a little racist. However, from my knowledge of the people on this side of the Assembly, and I know them much better than people on the other side of the Assembly do, there is not a racist bone amongst us.

I would like to say a few words about the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory as it impacts on my portfolio. I raised this earlier in the day, but I would like to talk about some of the things that we are doing in the Territory. As members would be aware, something like 23% to 25% of the Territory population is Aboriginal and 70% of the rural population in the Northern Territory is Aboriginal. The nearest comparison to that is Western Australia where 2.7% of the population is Aboriginal and, on average across the whole of Australia, 43% of the rural population is Aboriginal. I do not have any other figures than those.

Looking at those figures, with 70% of the Aboriginal population being a rural population in the Northern Territory, it will be very difficult to provide employment opportunities to that very large number of Aboriginal people. It will be almost impossible for Aboriginal people in remote communities to compete with some of the more developed and progressive industries that are available in the urban areas. We have to find ways of overcoming that problem and it is a big problem. I believe that the only types of industries that will be able to compete in the Aboriginal communities are unique industries that are based on things that Aboriginal people do well. Some of those things happened at Nguiu on Bathurst Island in the years that I lived there. Tiwi Designs was established at that time and Tiwi Pottery, and those are unique industries that do not really compete with others because they provide a unique product.

Those are the sorts of industries that I believe will have to be developed in Aboriginal communities. I am not talking only of secondary industries. There are primary industries that can be developed in Aboriginal communities, producing natural products that grow well in those areas, even if only for the local community. There is great potential there and I am keen to see the establishment of some of the proposals that have come to me over the years to provide employment in those areas.

Aboriginal employment in the Northern Territory is a model for the rest of Australia. As I mentioned earlier, the Aboriginal Development Division of the Employment and Training Branch in my department has been recognised Australia-wide as a model for the rest of Australia. In fact, many representatives from departments in other states have come to the Northern Territory to look at what is happening here because such things are not happening elsewhere. The expertise of the department has been sought by the states. They have asked to visit and carry our programs to their states.

The Australian Public Service enrolls people in the intake system that we have and it believes it to be excellent. The programs for Aboriginal health workers, teachers and teaching assistants carried out at Batchelor and through

the RATE program are second to none. There is no other state or territory that is doing anything at all like that.

Currently, the Department of Labour and Administrative Services is building a policy for Aboriginal training and I would appreciate some input from the members for Arafura and Arnhem whom I believe to be the genuine spokesmen for Aboriginal people in this Assembly. I would be very happy to have them provide input and ideas for that policy.

That brings me to a point that is often overlooked: the commitment that is required from the rural Aboriginal communities themselves. It is easy for members to rise in this Assembly and say the government should do this or do that, provide this opportunity or that opportunity or this facility or that facility but there must also be an equal commitment from the community involved. Too often, that commitment has not been there. There may be a number of reasons for that. It may be that the community did not want what was being offered. It may be that it was unsure of how to go about playing its part or perhaps it was not even asked to provide any input. In fact, there needs to be a commitment to the government programs if Aboriginal communities want them to work. I have been disgusted at times to go into communities and find houses being built by contractors with no local input and to see Aboriginal enterprises that are run and operated solely by imported personnel. There has to be a commitment from the community as well as from government. Without both, none of these programs can work. That is not meant to be a criticism of individual Aboriginal people or individual communities but, in fact, some communities pull their weight in that regard and other communities do not.

With regard to the funding of some of those programs, there are Aboriginal communities that have access to funds of their own and Aboriginal organisations which control enormous amounts of funding but nevertheless demand that the Territory or the federal governments provide all of the funds. The land councils and the ABTA control considerable funds. Individual communities have considerable funds at times. Wadeye community, in my electorate, has built a number of houses using its own resources. The community of Nauiyu at Daly River raises from its own resources about 60% of its annual budget. There are probably very few other communities, white or Aboriginal, in the Northern Territory that are doing anything like that. In fact, those communities are providing some of their own funding and undertaking building projects with their own people, employing only one supervisor, and doing a very good job. There has to be a commitment from the community. If there is not that commitment from the community, not only in personnel but also in funding, I do not believe that any of the programs the government has proposed will work very well.

A year ago, I was involved in handing over to the member for Arafura or another member of the land council on Bathurst Island - I am pretty sure the member for Arafura was there - responsibility for the assets of the forestry project on Melville Island at Pickertaramoor. I certainly indicated to the Tiwi Land Council and others present that the Territory government would be right out of the provision of services to the forestry project on Melville Island by July this year and that it should find joint venture partners to operate the project. I was dismayed to hear its representatives say recently that the Territory government had walked out without a word when there were no funds in the budget this year for the Melville Island forestry. There are a number of sources from which funding could be found. The ADC is one and the Tiwi Land Council is another because it does have funds to spend. There is no real necessity for this government to involve itself any further in that when there are more important social programs required on those communities.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in question time this morning, the Minister for Health and Community Services decided to deride in quite extraordinary terms what I regard as a sensible contribution to public debate in response to the quite incredible headline in the NT News on Saturday 12 September, 'Federal Yes to U-Industry'. He made some quite outlandish comments in answer to his dorothy dixer from the member for Araluen. He decided to get stuck into both myself and the member for the Northern Territory, Mr Snowden. He said: 'I have no idea where he got the idea that it would be a high-level nuclear waste disposal facility'. As I said, the NT News item said that the federal Labor government would 'look sympathetically' at the establishment of a nuclear waste disposal facility in the Territory. It then reported the comments of the Minister for Mines and Energy who:

... confirmed that the government would make a submission soon and said that the news that it would be met sympathetically by the federal government was wonderful. 'The establishment of such an industry would completely alter the balance of the Territory's economy', Mr Coulter said. 'This would be a real secondary industry of major proportions for the first time in the Territory's history. Things we have said in the past about job-creation pale into insignificance if we are allowed to enter the nuclear cycle'.

As the debate rolled on, it gradually became clear that, as the Minister for Health and Community Services said with the benefit of his 20:20 hindsight, the federal minister had made a very low-level commitment to disposing of low-level nuclear waste. That was not apparent either in the comments of the Minister for Mines and Energy or the report in the NT News so I do not think that the answer to the member for Araluen's question about radioactive waste-disposal was entirely unreasonable.

I would just like to pick the minister up on a point of fact. In his answer this morning, he referred to the current inventory of about 1000 m<sup>3</sup> of low-level waste awaiting disposal. Incidentally, I like that word 'inventory'. It suggests that the material is somehow counted and pigeonholed and is therefore safe. I noted that interesting use of language in passing, but it was his next sentence that caused me more concern. He said: 'This is increasing by approximately 50 m<sup>3</sup> per year, if you like equivalent in size to 50 bags of party ice'.

Mr Dale: Jumbo size!

Mr BELL: I hear the interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services and I see he is a little bit embarrassed about it, as indeed he should be. I have seen a lot of bags of ice in my time. I have cracked many of them up and put them into a variety of eskies and I have chilled a lot of beer with party ice, but never in my life have I seen a bag of party ice that is a cubic metre in dimension. That is a pretty big bag of ice. I think he should add a couple of zeroes to his figure of 50. He should also get his facts right before he gets stuck into me about my legitimate concerns for my electorate.

I draw the attention of honourable members to a paper entitled, 'The Nuclear Power Industry: A Responsible Approach and Integrated Management Program' written by Messrs Watters and Chandra. Honourable members will be well aware of the recently-departed Mr Roger Watters whose contribution to the Department of Mines and Energy was entirely positive, although the Minister for Mines and Energy did not think so. On page 5, the paper contains a map

which shows existing installations and those proposed by the authors of the paper. It shows our deposits of uranium and it has a circle around the Alligator Rivers area with the words 'mining, milling and beneficiation'. A little square over Darwin is labelled 'fabrication enrichment plan' and MacDonnell gets the booby prize: it is the region in which reprocessing, storage and disposal could take place. I table the map.

Mr Dale: It has got nothing to do with what we are talking about.

Mr BELL: I appreciate the fulsome interest of members opposite. It does a man's soul good.

The fact of the matter is that, at a press conference, the federal Minister for Mines and Energy gave a yes, maybe, not-sure response to a question about storage of low-level waste in the Northern Territory. This was latched onto by the Minister for Mines and Energy and we have seen the result. The Minister for Health and Community Services, in view of the information contained in publications like the Watters and Chandra paper, has the gall to wonder why I make public comment. I trust I have enlightened him.

A further matter relates to the petition that I tabled in the Assembly last Wednesday. Honourable members will recall that 266 citizens of Yulara signed a petition relating to facilities and community issues. The petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of Yulara respectfully sheweth that they are concerned over the following community issues: the safety of residents, the lack of recreational and child-care facilities for children, the allocation and maintenance of accommodation for permanent residents, the high costs of goods and services, the inadequate ambulance service, the membership and constitution of the Town Advisory Board, the low strength of the police force at Yulara and the fear of victimisation that has prevented some people from freely expressing opinions on community issues.

Mr Dale: Who is representing these people?

Mr BELL: If you sit around and listen you might find out. I can appreciate that the minister's nose is out of joint because I represent all of my electorate and that is a rather more difficult task than he has in terms of representing a pocket-handkerchief area in the northern suburbs of Darwin.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly constitute appropriate action to remedy these problems and specifically guarantee the democratic election of some residents to Yulara Town Advisory Board and the right of all citizens in Yulara and the Northern Territory to freely express opinion on community issues, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I want to make a couple of points in relation to that petition. The first is that there has been progress in respect of some of the issues raised. I want to place on record my appreciation of the expeditious action of the Minister for Conservation under whose purview Yulara comes. I appreciate the speed with which he moved to ensure that elections took place. I am happy to report to honourable members that the situation has changed since March when there was a considerable hiatus because the Town Advisory Board was not

operating. This was partially the result of the Territory election and the subsequent federal election when most politicians in the Northern Territory were not paying close attention to issues such as that. A majority of members of the Town Advisory Board are now elected and I welcome that increase in citizen involvement. People living at Yulara are staying for much longer periods, on average, than was the case a couple of years ago and that is to be commended. The meetings I chaired leading up to this petition and other action in respect of local issues were among the more satisfying aspects of being a member of the Legislative Assembly and representing the interests of my constituents.

It is good to have a win occasionally. It would be good to have wins like that in respect of some of the other people whom I represent, but I particularly want to place on record my appreciation of the efforts of a number of people with respect to the Yulara Citizens' Action Group that have led to improvements in these matters. I particularly want to mention Kathrina Bryen who has done much of the spadework. To be completely politically bipartisan about this, I also want to pass on my appreciation of the work of Dr Paul Cotton, the new Chairman of the Town Advisory Board. I think Dr Cotton has contributed a great deal to the community at Yulara, albeit as a member of the Country Liberal Party. He has earned my respect as somebody who practises ...

Mr Coulter: He talks about you a lot too.

Mr BELL: I have had a number of conversations about a variety of matters with Dr Cotton and I am not surprised that the Minister for Mines and Energy finds that he refers to me. I am sure that it is not always in a glowing light, but that is the name of the game. I think that, if Dr Cotton were to raise with the minister some of the issues he raises with me, that would cause some much needed enlightenment for the Minister for Mines and Energy. However, I suspect that, when directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy, Dr Cotton's words are, as mine are so frequently in this Assembly, simply pearls cast before swine.

I said that some of the problems raised in this particular petition had been addressed, and I refer particularly to the elected members on the Town Advisory Board. I understand there has been some movement in respect of the child-care facilities which are greatly needed. Because people are tending to stay longer, there is an underlying problem that we need to address. I mention this constructively and seriously. On the one hand, we see Yulara as a resort, as a money earner and as tourist industry infrastructure and, on the other hand, the people who live there see it, in addition, as a community and to some extent those aspects are at odds. I am not trying to suggest that there are irreconcilable problems in that respect. I have been associated with Yulara more closely than anybody in this Assembly, with the possible exception of the member for Araluen and the Minister for Industries and Development, and have watched it grow from the time when Malcolm Fraser turned over a sod of soil with a digging stick back in 1982. He was still Prime Minister so it must have been before March 1983. Having watched it from that time onwards, I take considerable interest in it.

I hope that the minister will take into consideration many of the issues raised here, and I will continue to pursue those issues on behalf of my constituents.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about Ayers Rock and the Uluru National Park. I am sure members of this House remember

the 1983 election when Ayers Rock and its proposed handover were the major subjects of debate. In those days, I was the Chairman of the NT Tourist Commission. I remember some media debate about the closure of certain areas of the park and the taking of photographs around the Rock. In those heady days, the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service said that there were no plans to restrict tourist access to the climb and that certain guidelines would have to be followed with regard to filming and taking photographs.

In October 1985, I can remember a press conference held at Yulara during the handing over of the park when the then Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, was roundly criticised by federal ministers and the ANPWS staff for suggesting that the long-term aim was to close the climb. Isn't it funny how times have changed because, in September 1987, film crews are no longer allowed to use the Rock as a background for advertisements, thereby denying the Northern Territory millions of dollars of free publicity, and there is talk of moving the ring road around the base of the Rock. The Olgas Road is still unsealed and the remaining old motel, which was handed over with the park, I am told, is now abandoned and is in a terrible condition. Last, but not least, I believe we now have a concerted campaign by the ANPWS to close the climb within the next 12 months.

I believe we have been softened up for this and possibly honourable members noticed the utterances of the Chief Park Superintendent published in The Australian some 2 weeks ago. He said that 15 people had died at Ayers Rock this year. One died on the ascent and 14 others were reported dead within hours of finishing the climb. Mr Chip Morgan said: 'Most people die after they leave the Rock. 5 people died in June, and we are now almost 100% sure it was because they were not fit enough to make the ascent. Even the federal MP, Mr Barry Cohen, who visited the Rock recently, said the deaths were of epidemic proportions when compared with the more-publicised crocodile attacks'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I suspect that these comments have given credence to Uluru National Park management, which represents the traditional Aboriginal owners, to start a campaign to de-emphasise the climb. The Park Superintendent said: 'Too many people are dying, and the feeling amongst local people is that the climb is culturally inappropriate'. According to Mr Morgan, apparently rangers are now beginning to promote alternative walks in the park. I understand the local people believe that Ayers Rock is sacred and that they do not like people climbing it, but I want to warn them and the tourist operators that, if the closure occurs, visitation will start dropping off. Decisions like this will do immense harm to the industry. Couldn't the park rangers simply pull up the aged or unfit people and warn them of the risk of their undertaking such a demanding climb.

I want to raise one last matter whilst I am on the subject of Ayers Rock. This Assembly is aware of the fee demanded by traditional owners in connection with the filming of 'Crocodile Dundee' in Kakadu National Park, and the potential damage that could be caused to the fledgling film industry in the Northern Territory. I think we need a private film industry body or commission in the NT to advise locals and film makers on how to assist potential movie makers to undertake filming in the NT. I am told by, I believe, a very reputable source that the 'Crocodile Dundee' fee will pale into insignificance with the fee being asked by traditional owners for the production of 'Evil Angels'. The location fee is apparently \$1m. Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope to hear clear denials of this figure of \$1m fairly quickly because, if we do not, we will probably never see another major film



made in the Northern Territory. The people asking such high fees in both Kakadu and Uluru will certainly have killed the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I would like to touch briefly on a matter which was raised in the Assembly some considerable time ago in a question time. It relates to the government's assistance to the yacht called the 'Northern Territory Spirit'. I am able to report that the 'Northern Territory Spirit', which some members have seen on television and in the media, is alive and well and operating efficiently. I thought I would tell members a little about plans for the use of this yacht in the future.

The 'Northern Territory Spirit' entered the Ambon race 10 days after it was launched. It acquitted itself very well by finishing second even though it had been in the water for only 10 days and work was still being done on it when it was leaving the harbour. Since then, some additional work has been done and the yacht has competed reasonably heavily in some of the local race programs leading up to this recent decision to sail in the round Australia race for the 1988 bicentennial celebrations. A considerable number of volunteer skippers and sailors will be required. A selection process has been taking place in the last few weeks to determine whether there are a number of skippers and navigators in the Northern Territory sufficiently qualified to take this vessel on the long distance race around Australia. It is an arduous race, I might add, with 9 legs. It is the first time that a race of this type has been run in Australia. About 4 weeks ago, some 20 qualified yachtsmen in the Northern Territory had a meeting and signified which segments of the race they would like to participate in and what role they wished to play in that race. The selection process was completed late last night and some of those people were advised this morning.

This has provided an incredible fillip to yachting in the Northern Territory both for junior sailors and some of the sailors who, in the past, have had an opportunity to compete only in bay, harbour and minor offshore racing. It has engendered so much interest among the yachting fraternity that an additional 16 people decided that they would sit for the arduous yachtsmaster's offshore qualifications in the course held through the Northern Territory Port Authority. This requires a considerable amount of study and dedication. It requires qualifications in celestial navigation and radio operation and the ability to command a vessel of this size or larger through most of the conditions that they would ever encounter, including disaster conditions. It involves a theory test of several hours duration. It is a particularly difficult test and I know it well because I have had to sit it myself. There is also a practical water test of some 20 hours to complete the examination.

Thus, it has had incredible spin-offs already even though the yacht has yet to compete in a major offshore race other than the international yacht race to Ambon, which used skippers who had sailed in previous Ambon races and had a wealth of experience. The principle behind the government's action to support this vessel has started to reap rewards and will continue to do so for the rest of the year leading up to the race. When the yacht returns, it will remain in the hands of the trustees as a yacht training vessel for future sailors in the Darwin area.

The round Australia race will start in Sydney in August 1988 and comprise 9 legs. The course of the race is Sydney-Mooloolaba, Mooloolaba-Cairns, Cairns-Darwin - obviously, a leg favoured by many because they would like to sail the vessel into their home port - Darwin-Dampier, a very long and arduous

leg, Dampier-Fremantle around the northwest cape, Fremantle-Adelaide, Adelaide-Hobart, Hobart-Melbourne and then the final leg Melbourne-Sydney in the middle of December 1988. That is the finishing line for the race around Australia. Along with all the other participants, the yacht will be invited to compete also in the Sydney-Hobart race, starting on 26 December 1988, which will be the last of the yachting events for the bicentennial year.

As of yesterday, 9 senior sailors have been appointed as skippers for respective legs around Australia. Each of the skippers will now be required to select his crew and will be undertaking a massive training program over the next 20-odd weeks. Some crew members may double up on different legs but we are trying to achieve our aim of having as many people as we can on the water in a yacht of this type. We are encouraging as many sailors as possible to take the yachting course and become participants in the race. We are trying to keep the opportunity for people to sail on several legs or to complete the entire journey around Australia to the barest minimum. We have had 76 expressions of interest for the race so far. Obviously, we have some culling to do to bring it back to the 60-odd people needed for the race.

The training periods then will be divided into 1-week periods so that each of the leg skippers has an opportunity to have the boat for a complete week to train his crew. No doubt, after the Christmas break, the 'Northern Territory Spirit' will be sailing out of the harbour and disappearing for 3 or 4 days at a time, probably sailing around Bathurst and Melville Islands, which takes 2½ days, or perhaps sailing down to Wyndham and back, which takes about 4 or 5 days, or a run up to Goulburn or Elcho Islands or to Gove and back again. We may find that 1 crew will take it out and another crew bring it back so that people can gain experience in the wider ocean conditions. It will also give the navigators an opportunity to ply their trade at sea because the celestial navigator's requirements in the coastal waters are quite different. We need to give our navigators an opportunity to take open-water shots and sightings.

It may sound a long time until August next year but, with 9 specific skippers involved and with only 1 week of training in this first period and some work to be done on the yacht in between, we have a very short time available. Then, there will be another 9 weeks and, after that, the yacht will have to be taken out of the water, freighted to Newcastle, and sailed down to Sydney to shake it out before the start of the race in August 1988. There is not a great deal of time.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, the Northern Territory government put money into the yacht as did many private sponsors and we received some donations as well. The yachtsmen involved are all contributing in their own way at the moment as the sponsors of the yacht in a membership scheme. The yachtsmen who will be racing around Australia will have to pay for their own air fares to the point of embarkation on their leg and on their return voyage. They will pay for their own food and victualling for the whole of their section of the voyage, and any accommodation costs and so on when they reach their point ready to take up the next leg of the sail. A considerable amount of money will be spent by the participants out of their own pockets. And now comes the crunch.

We still have a problem with some sponsorship. I believe this will be a magnificent project for the Northern Territory. It will put our Northern Territory spinnaker on the front pages of many international newspapers and certainly will produce incredible footages of television coverage. As some members may have seen, the Northern Territory tourist logo features very

strongly on the yacht's spinnaker. Of course, the yacht is called the 'Northern Territory Spirit' and it shows sponsorship by Northern Territory firms and international firms that are based in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, whilst at the moment we are reasonably well-suited to be able to sail the yacht in local waters for training purposes, we have no funds at the moment to provide the yacht with the sails necessary to sail in the heavy conditions that we will certainly encounter in the southern part of the continent. We are short of minor headsails, we do not have a satellite navigation backup system on the yacht and, as yet, we have been unable to purchase a considerable number of wind instruments and engine gauges because we do not have enough money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at this point I would like to invite members of this Assembly to let me know if they would like to look over the yacht at any time. I think most members would like to do that. If they wish to avail themselves of this opportunity, I will arrange for them to have a look at the yacht and, if at all possible, I would like interested members to experience sailing in the yacht. A racing yacht of this type is nothing like the ordinary yacht that we see racing around Darwin Harbour at the moment. It is a high technology yacht. It has a very specific purpose and that is to race very fast and very hard, and I can assure members that, whilst it looks very pretty from the outside, unfortunately but necessarily, it is extremely Spartan and very few creature comforts are provided. It is a high-class, high-speed, racing yacht which will perform extremely well. It is a Frers 42 design and we have seen several others racing around Australia at this time. It should perform so well that I think that we will have a very good opportunity in the handicap and IOR ratings possibly to put the yacht up in some of the top placings when we get to the final leg of the race.

I was handed a note earlier today to say that, as one of those participants who wish to take the yacht on one of the legs, I have been given the singular honour of taking the Melbourne-Sydney leg, which is the final leg of the race, so I will have the opportunity to race the yacht over the finish line some time in December 1988.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a few comments in the adjournment about the celebration of National Aborigines Week which was held from 7 to 12 September. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Chairman of the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee, Mr Lindsay Ahmat, who is employed by the Northern Land Council, for coordinating the programs effectively, also members of the committee such as Johnny Ah Kit, Darryl Cronin and Alison Mills for coordinating what I believe was one of the biggest and best events that we have ever observed in the Northern Territory.

Events were held around town, beginning with the flag-raising ceremony at the Darwin Civic Centre conducted by His Worship the Mayor. That was attended by a number of people. The family barbecue at Bagot was attended by a number of people from the Northern Territory, people of all persuasions and I believe they enjoyed a very good family barbecue there. There were sports events and a talent quest was held at the Nightcliff Hotel, and I was very pleased that the Soft Sounds from Elcho Island took out the award for that night.

I would like to congratulate the winners of the Aboriginal Scholar of the Year Award which went to Tom Bakamana Yunupingu and Norma Joshua of Roper River. I believe those 2 certainly deserved the awards which were given to them earlier by the Deakin University and, in recognition of that success, the National Aborigines Week Committee thought it only fitting to name them as Aboriginal Scholars of the Year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether you would be aware of Mr Bill Parry? Mr Bill Parry was named the Aboriginal of the Year for his support in the outstation movement in the Victoria River district. Mr Parry lives on an outstation close to Peppimenarti and has been living there for some time. I believe the Northern Territory government has given him some funds to assist him with the development of his outstations. I would also like to congratulate Peter Coles for his outstanding contribution to sport in the Northern Territory. He is a lad of under 19 years. He plays rugby, Aussie Rules, cricket and several other sports.

Finally, we had the march, which was attended by well over 300 people. It started from Government House and passed down Mitchell Street to Raintree Park and more people were at Raintree Park waiting to greet the marchers on that day. It was a sight I have not seen for some time. Many people gathered round. Tourists came to take photographs of the dancing and the singing and it was very moving from my point of view. Marches took place in other centres such as Alice Springs. In Tennant Creek, I believe some people marched to the office of the member for Barkly on that day and even small centres such as Nhulunbuy, Milingimbi and Umbakumba had their own events which shows that the people out there are willing to be recognised and to promote such a national event. I would like to call upon the Chief Minister - and I certainly will be making representations on behalf of my people - to recognise one of the days during that week and call it National Aborigines Day so that people around Australia will be able to participate in some of the events that are held during that week. I think that it would be one of the best things that could happen in recognition of the contributions we have made in the Northern Territory.

Lastly, I would like to catch up on something which happened over the weekend. I had the pleasure of attending and officially opening the fete at Umbakumba on Saturday. For honourable members who may not know Umbakumba, it is on Groote Eylandt. It is about an hour's drive north-north-east of Alyangula, the main township. The fete was attended by well over 700 people and I would like to congratulate the school principal, John Scully, and his staff for a day which was very well organised and calmly coordinated. People from Angurugu and Alyangula certainly appreciated the time the students at Umbakumba spent to obtain crabs, fish, turtle and even deer steak which was on sale during the afternoon. It was beautiful. I believe the students went out to Chasm Island to kill a couple of rusa deer especially for the event. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that I really enjoyed being out there and, once again, I would like to congratulate Mr John Scully and the staff at Umbakumba for a very eventful day.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, before I start on the main content of my speech, I would like to add my expression of sympathy to the family of Mr Burge Brown. Burge and his wife, Ida, were old Territory characters and I think the Territory is certainly poorer for their loss. No doubt their family will carry on Burge and Ida's traditions of individuality.

I would also like to add my congratulations to those of the member for Port Darwin to Mr Leo Izod, for his work in restoring old engines and machines. I know Mr Izod also and heartily agree with all the comments of the member for Port Darwin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, last Wednesday, the member for Karama certainly made himself a niche in the annals of CLP arrogance towards little people. His harsh, cruel and unthinking diatribe was directed against people in the rural area in my electorate, people who are a bit short of the ready and who are

doing their best, despite a lack of finance, and using a variety of materials to build their homes and associated structures. These people unwittingly attracted the wrath of this purveyor of disdainful CLP ideas. The member for Karama said he was sick and tired of hearing me go on about my electorate. The poor little diddums! I really feel so sorry for him. If I have to listen to him, he has to listen to me.

It is accepted that members try to score off one another, but not that they do so through the denigration of constituents. I know that the Chief Minister and the member for Palmerston have dissociated themselves from the member for Karama's remarks. They had to do that, but I do not think it has done any good. Through the member for Karama's remarks, the CLP has been done like a dinner in the rural area. I still have friends in the Koolpinyah Branch of the CLP and, after hearing of the member's disparaging remarks about their lifestyle, they rang me. They were absolutely ropeable and I am pretty certain they and others rang the offices of the Chief Minister and the member for Palmerston which resulted in their dissociating themselves from the member for Karama's remarks.

The member for Karama may have apologised publicly for his outburst, but I believe he was carrying on like a pork chop, retelling the seedy little words of wisdom he uttered on Thursday evening in a bar at the Sheraton for the edification of an audience that was just as tired and emotional as he. How dare someone who holds down a \$45 000 a year job, having moved into it from a comfortable public service position, poke fun at and try seriously to incommode with his cheap and nasty schoolboy humour, people who are not as fortunate as he? People who build dongas in the rural area from secondhand material do not necessarily do that from choice. It is more from necessity. They too would like to live in an \$80 000 home like the member for Karama does. They cannot do so and therefore they do the best they can. We should not forget that some people in the rural area live in nice homes and some actually belong to the CLP. To put it very mildly, they were not very amused by the member for Karama's remarks. My information is that they are fed up to pussy's bow with him.

The member for Karama said that all of our blocks are environmental disasters. Are the 2 crocodile farms in the rural area, each worth several million dollars, environmental disasters? Is the only Top End dairy farm in the rural area an environmental disaster? Are approximately 10 fairly large plant nurseries in the rural area, one with active trade links to the Middle East, environmental disasters? Are the blocks contributing to the largest amount of horticultural produce in the Northern Territory, which comes from the rural area, all environmental disasters? Is the Northern Territory's largest pig farm, which is in the rural area, an environmental disaster? Do all those people who have the expertise and finance to buy and breed expensive livestock in the rural area live on blocks that are environmental disasters? Are the 3 largest poultry farms in the Northern Territory, which are in the rural area, environmental disasters? The answer to all of those questions is no, and that just goes to show that, coupled with the thousands of ordinary peoples' blocks which are a pleasure to see in the rural area, the statements made by the member for Karama are not worth two knobs of billygoat poop.

This is the Year of the Homeless and what matter if a man builds a donga from secondhand material on his block in the rural area? It is his and he built it. It shelters his family and it is all he can afford. Would Big Brother Palmer have the Building Board inspectors record all these dwellings, as they have done recently by photograph and, if not up to code or to the standard of his \$80 000 home, have them all bulldozed? The first time

this is tried - just in case the member for Karama gets his CLP mates to support his Big-Brother ideas - I will be out there with the family on the block doing a greenie in the Daintree in front of the dozers.

To hear the member for Karama speak at all in this Chamber is in itself an occasion of note. He behaves very much like the doormouse at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in Alice in Wonderland: he only wakes up now and then. I wonder if he still expects to be a minister after what he said. I suppose we all live in hope.

Those of us who live in the rural area do not need to hear sermons from the member for Karama about all the pitfalls and expenses of our way of life. We all know the cost of putting down and equipping a bore at our own expense, not the government's. We all know the price of having the power connected - at least \$5000 these days - and that is at our expense, not the government's. We all know the cost of fencing a block at our expense, not the government's.

On the other hand, the government has a duty, as it has with residents of any town, outstation or pastoral property, to provide roads for us and schools and teachers for our children's education. It has a duty to provide us with health services equal to those available to people in outstations, cities, towns and pastoral properties. It has a similar duty to provide us with police protection. The government is assisted in the provision of fire protection services by the 13 volunteer bushfire brigades in the rural area. We did not want local government in the rural area but we got it and I bet ours is the most economical. In the rural area, we only receive what is our due.

What we do not want is public servants always poking, prying and spying by checking our homes and businesses and trying to license our bores. As I have said repeatedly, we are independent in the rural area. We save the government millions of dollars by living there rather than inhabiting Housing Commission homes in Darwin or Palmerston. We do not appreciate rhetoric from the CLP whose contemptuous attitude towards ordinary people is well known, despite what the Chief Minister says. Its supercilious, discourteous disdain for ordinary, ocker, conservative people of limited means is exemplified by the puerile outpourings of the member for Karama.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise a few points tonight. The first concerns the imminent petrol price increase in the remote areas of the Northern Territory. This results from the federal government's removal today of further assistance for the freight equalisation subsidy scheme.

Mr Smith: Reduction.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition would tell me it is a reduction but it is almost a total removal except for about half a dozen consumers in the Top End who happen to get their fuel by barge and are paying enormous prices for it.

The reality is that it was another one of those sneaky moves that was buried very deeply in the budget papers and has only just come to light. The ramifications for people in remote areas are quite severe. In effect, the freight equalisation differential, which is in excess of 10.1¢ per litre will be subsidised but, where that differential is less than 10¢, the consumer will pay. In fact, consumers at places like Borroloola will pay an extra 2.4¢ a litre for their fuel. On top of the 3.5¢ a litre that was imposed by the

Territory government, this will make the cost of fuel in remote areas pretty expensive. It will lift it close to 75¢ a litre and, by anybody's standard, that is very expensive.

The point I want to raise is very simply that we need to be looking at a system of equalising fuel prices within the Territory for Territory consumers. I raised this earlier this year before the election because I think it is something that has to come. It is a policy that should not be out of favour with the government or, in fact, any member of this Assembly because it is one that we have used extensively for 30 years and applied to electricity, water, sewerage and other costs that consumers have to bear in the Territory. When you start to apply the actual cost, it becomes so burdensome that people in the remote areas cannot afford it and drift out.

The reality is that the wealth of the Territory is not being created in the Smith Street Mall or the Todd Mall; it is being created in the backblocks of the Territory where people go without a lot, put up with a lot and generally do not ask for much. One of the things we need to consider is a formula now for enabling people in the remote areas to buy petrol at a reasonable price. If it goes above 75¢ a litre, I think I can say that many Territorians will decide that enough is enough and that there are better places to live. They will move out quietly and vote with their feet, and that would not be to the advantage of anybody in the Territory.

Mr Smith: They would not be able to afford the fuel.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition treats the matter with jest, but he gets his petrol for about 55¢ a litre. When he has driven around the backblocks for a bit and has filled his tank up at 75¢ a litre, he will start to understand just what people are talking about. I have said it a dozen times in here and I will say it again: there are many people in our community who are hurting very badly. They are having great difficulty making ends meet, paying their bills and just surviving. For small businessmen, public servants and hard-working Territorians in private enterprise right across the board, things are tough. It is not a joke when you have to pay an extra 20¢ a litre for your fuel.

Turning to the issue of the recent celebrations that took place on National Aborigines Day, we had our traditional march in Tennant Creek this year to celebrate National Aborigines Day. It went off pretty well except that, when they reached my office, they thought they would have a bit of a demonstration. I have never seen an Aboriginal demonstration in Tennant Creek quite like the one that occurred in front of my office because it comprised about 150 adults and 150 children who should have been in school. Setting that aside, the leaders of the demonstration and the ones that were causing all the trouble were again the yellow-fellows and the imports from Queensland who were razzing the locals to get with it Queensland-style and give the townspeople a bit of a turn on. The whole thing turned into a very unfortunate spectacle because the local Aborigines were dreadfully embarrassed at the way their leaders behaved and some were embarrassed that they had been conned into the march in the first place.

I would like to thank a couple of Aborigines in the community who came to me on the weekend at the baseball and said: 'We would like to say we were sorry about the other day. We never knew that was going to happen'. They were young blokes whom I have known for a long time and I can honestly believe that they did not know it was on. I think it is also quite significant that 2 Aboriginal women came to my office and left a message and their names to say

that they would like to apologise for what happened in the march. They said they were ashamed of it and, if they had had any idea of what would happen, they would not have been in the march because that is not the Tennant Creek way. They were very sorry that it occurred and they will not be involved again. I think it is significant that, since the march, Aboriginal people have had the strength to stand up and say that they are sorry, that it was an embarrassment to them and that they will not be involved again. I believe that is the making of things to come.

To the people who organised the march, the imports and the would-be's if they could-be's, I say: 'Think twice because you are not going to get away with that sort of political behaviour in the Northern Territory'.

Mr Smith: You are going to stop their right to march?

Mr TUXWORTH: No, I would not stop the right to march. However, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that, if he had been there to hear some of the things that were said by some of the leaders that day, he would have been ashamed too. Some of the stuff that was said was so foul and outrageous, you would never put it in print. It was an embarrassment to everybody and it certainly did the Aboriginal cause, the march and the National Aborigines Day celebrations a great deal of harm. Many of the white people in the community who witnessed it felt sorry for the Aboriginals who had been set up by these others.

The last issue that I would like to raise relates to a pre-election promise that was made during the lead-up to the election. As is normal in elections, people make promises about all sorts of things. There is an expectation in the Territory community because it has always been one of the hallmarks of government in the Territory that, if you make a promise in an election, you deliver it. It does not matter what it is. On one occasion, I recall that the Chief Minister at the time promised to a community a water supply that would cost an outrageous amount of money. Everything was done, and you would recall this, Sir, to ensure that that promise was met, and I believe that it was.

During the course of the election, the Minister for Education paid a visit to the new high school and was duly shown around by the school council. He discussed the shortage of accommodation in some areas and some of the things that needed to happen. He made a commitment to ensure that demountables were put in place pretty quickly to ensure that the accommodation crisis was overcome. There were no strings attached. The people involved tried to make contact with the minister after the election but they were not able to make direct contact. They were told by his staff that the minister did not really promise that he would fix it; he promised that he would take it to Cabinet and they would not know what would happen until Cabinet had considered it.

I just say to the minister, Mr Deputy Speaker - he is not here tonight but he will find out about it - that people do understand the difference between a commitment such as 'I will get it fixed' and 'I will take it to Cabinet to see if something can be done about it'. It does not do anybody any good to treat people like idiots and try to tell them that they do not know the difference between the 2 things. The minister would do himself a great favour to acknowledge the commitment and do something about it because, if he does not, he will only bring great disrepute on everybody involved. The minister did the right thing by acknowledging there was a problem. He said it should be fixed and guaranteed to fix it, and I say to him that it would be a very honourable thing for him to honour that commitment.



Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this morning I asked the Chief Minister a series of questions concerning ministerial travel, his own travel and travel of his staff, and we obtained some of the answers. I must say that I find it amazing that, in one particular year, the Chief Minister can spend \$148 000 in travel, but I make that comment in passing. What I find particularly disconcerting is the figure of \$95 000 which was spent on charter travel within the Northern Territory in the last financial year. What the Chief Minister did not tell us was that that \$95 000 was part of \$100 000 which was the total amount he spent on travel in the Northern Territory in the last financial year. In other words, well over 90% of his total travel in the Northern Territory last financial year was by charter.

Mr Hatton: So what?

Mr SMITH: The Chief Minister says, 'so what'. I can accept that the Northern Territory is a vast place. I can accept that there are a number of different communities in the Northern Territory that are not serviced by regular airline schedules. I can accept that the Chief Minister is a busy man and, from time to time, may not be able to take advantage of regularly-scheduled airline services. But, I cannot accept that all of that amounts to a situation where 95% of the time, when he is travelling in the Northern Territory, he is travelling by charter aircraft. Mr Speaker, to me that is not good enough, and it is an abuse and a waste of the taxpayer's money.

Mr Hatton: That shows why you are not suitable to be Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH: If that means that I am not suitable to be the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, I would think the majority of people in the Northern Territory would consider it to be time that we redefined the job of Chief Minister so that the taxpayer obtains a slightly better deal out of it.

Mr Speaker, I say it again: \$95 000 out of \$100 000 spent by the Chief Minister was spent on charter flights when we all know that the majority of people in the Northern Territory are serviced by scheduled airline services. That amazes me and it concerns me, and I am sure the people of the Northern Territory will be concerned too when they hear about it. We all know that it is cheaper to travel by regular, scheduled services than to travel by charter, particularly the type of charter that the Chief Minister uses. I will use the Barkly by-election as an example. He spent 2 weeks flitting around the Barkly electorate in an 11-seater Conquest aircraft. The point that particularly concerns me about the use of charters is this ...

Mr Hatton: I did not take my wife to Alice Springs and then to Tennant Creek at government expense.

Mr SMITH: Yes, I did that. I was specifically invited by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services to attend an apprentice presentation with my wife.

Mr Speaker, the point that particularly concerns me is that the Chief Minister's \$95 000, together with other charters undertaken by ministers and staff, accounted for \$0.25m of taxpayers' money in the last financial year. At least, \$225 000 was spent on charters. There are no procedures within the government, as far as I am aware, that guide ministers on how to select charter aircraft. Certainly, no tenders are ever called or expressions of interest sought from airline companies, and it is well known within the airline charter industry that the majority of that work goes to Air North. In

fact, in airport circles, a common view of Air North and its parent, Henry and Walker, is that Henry and Walker is the parent company of the Northern Territory government. That is common talk at the airport and arises from the fact that Air North, almost exclusively, obtains charter work from the Chief Minister, his ministers and their staff. It obtains it without tenders being called and without other companies being given the opportunity to put in bids prior to particular jobs or on a period contract basis.

Mr Dondas: They get quotes.

Mr SMITH: Yes, I would like to see some of the quotes. Certainly, the people I have spoken to in the industry, who own alternative charter airlines, do not get the opportunity to tender and they do not get the opportunity to quote.

Mr Speaker, this Chief Minister has been hailing air charter flights from Air North like taxis and the ordinary taxpayer has been footing the bill. Let me go back to the beginning. We are talking about \$250 000, the majority of which goes to Air North. None of that work is put out to tender. What makes it smell is that everybody in the Northern Territory knows that Henry and Walker is a major campaign contributor to the Country Liberal Party.

Mr Hatton: You are wrong there.

Mr SMITH: Henry and Walker is well known as a major supporter of the Country Liberal Party and a major campaign contributor - either directly or indirectly, to pick up the smart-alec comment of the Chief Minister. It is well known for a fact that, in election campaigns, the Country Liberal Party swans around in free Air North flights or gets them at a very substantial discount indeed. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that they do that for a very good reason because it gets its payoff through this massive injection of taxpayers' money into charter flights that goes on right throughout the year. \$225 000 is spent on charters and the majority of it goes to Air North. No wonder it is so free and generous with its money at election campaign time. That is the sort of cronyism, almost corruption, that is going on in the Northern Territory at present. We had examples of it this morning.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition has effectively accused the government of cronyism. Either he withdraws that remark or he proves his point.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, there is no point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the honourable member speaking to the point of order?

Mr SMITH: No, I won't. It is not necessary. There is no point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: My advice is that there is a point of order because the Leader of the Opposition was referring to government members, not the government in total, as being corrupt and I would ask that he withdraw those remarks.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, if that is your wish, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker, all I can say is that serious questions must be raised in the minds of fair-minded people when so much public money can be spent with so little accountability by the Northern Territory government. Let us remember that this sort of information is not made available by the Northern Territory

government to the people of the Territory. The budget estimates contain the bald statement that, during the last financial year, ministers of the Crown spent \$1.2m on travel, including my efforts. We know that that has been increased by \$72 000 this year. We now know that the Chief Minister alone spent \$95 000 on charters and, with his ministers, air charter expenditure totalled \$225 000.

We know that the government has no formal basis for ensuring that people in the airline charter industry get a fair and equal opportunity to benefit from that expenditure. We also know that the majority of that amount goes to Air North, a company which has very close connections with Henry and Walker, itself a company that has close connections with the Northern Territory government. Those are the matters which are concerning people and those are the matters that the government should address itself to in future when it is looking at its chartering arrangements.

The government should also consider whether it is necessary for the Chief Minister, who thinks his time is so valuable, to use charters to travel around the Territory rather than using regularly-scheduled airline flights like the majority of people, those people who can afford to travel by air. The Chief Minister might like to address those matters.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I did not plan to speak in this adjournment debate but, after listening to 15 minutes of vicious and misinformed drivel from the Leader of the Opposition, I felt it necessary to stand up and speak. Since I entered this Assembly in February 1984, I have listened to Opposition Leaders spreading innuendo, lies and distortions of fact.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will withdraw his reference to lies.

Mr HATTON: I withdraw that remark, Mr Speaker.

We have heard the opposition, particularly the current Leader of the Opposition, pick up a few disparate facts, knit them together in his own imagination and dress them up with remarks like: 'We all know about this'. The 'we' is never defined. He never makes specific allegations. He refers to the government generally using Air North for its charter work and ignores the fact that we do use other companies. He ignores the standards of aircraft and where they are available from. He says that very little ministerial travel within the Northern Territory is on RPT routes, conveniently forgetting that those routes basically service Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt, Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Yulara.

Mr Ede: Lajamanu, Dagaragu, Papunya...

Mr HATTON: Yes, you can get on small aircraft visiting those places if they happen to be available when you want them.

Mr Speaker, the fact is that my ministers and I move around this Territory a great deal. The member for Barkly has spent 12 months trying to convince the Northern Territory that all we do is sit in Darwin and all we think about is Darwin. Now the Leader of the Opposition is saying that I spend too much time outside Darwin. Mr Speaker, I must be doing something right if I am being criticised from both ends of the spectrum.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Denis and I have not criticised you.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I must say that the members for Koolpinyah and Sadadeen have not criticised my travel around the Northern Territory. They know how arduous it is.

Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I have no desire to spend any more time away from home than is absolutely necessary but, equally, I take my job as Chief Minister of the Northern Territory seriously and I am going to visit as many communities as I can as frequently as I can and as efficiently as I can. Whilst I may have spent \$95 000 last year, I am sorry to say that that is considerably less than the amount expended in previous years by previous Chief Ministers. There has been restraint and there are restrictions on the nature of aircraft used in order to reduce the cost of Chief Ministerial travel around the Northern Territory. I do not, however, apologise for one cent of that expenditure.

People like the members for Stuart and MacDonnell criticise this government for not getting out and talking to the Aboriginal communities and for not understanding their electorates. The member for Barkly would lay the same claim in relation to any city-based politician who spent his days in his office shuffling paper, like the glorified clerk the Leader of the Opposition would have me be. I intend to move around this Territory, consult with the Territory people and gain an understanding of the Territory's problems and its industry and growth potential. Yes, that will cost money. The fact that the amount is close to \$100 000 is an emotive issue to people who are not engaged in extensive business travel. They could ask what is the value for that expenditure but nobody asks about the consequences of not travelling.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the other people who have to pay for their trips around the Northern Territory. How many people does the Opposition Leader know who have to pay for their work-related travel? It does not happen. The Leader of the Opposition has access to travel on the same basis as a minister. The fact that he chooses not to use it and therefore does not get to know what the Territory is all about is his problem. It will condemn him to remain perpetually in opposition and that is one blessing the Northern Territory can be grateful for.

Mr Smith: The taxpayer might be thankful.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, he says the taxpayer might be thankful. I take the interjection up because it exemplifies the mean-minded and vicious nonsense that he carries on with. The taxpayer might be thankful if we did not spend \$95 000. Would the taxpayer also think it wonderful if we did not take any initiatives to develop industries and develop a tax base and therefore lacked a couple of million dollars of revenue to provide services to the community? We need to get out and develop industries. The Northern Territory is young and underdeveloped and we need considerable work and drive to get it going. I am never going to apologise to this House for my travel. I am prepared to substantiate my travel and to stand up and be counted in respect of it.

The Leader of the Opposition has thrown around the fact that I travelled a fair bit during the Barkly election. I would like him to take the opportunity of looking at what my travel requirements were to get to Darwin to do my job in Darwin. I travelled backwards and forwards for about 3 days. I might say that one of those trips that was required was a trip to Tennant Creek for a long-standing engagement with a local government association. Another unscheduled trip required an aircraft to get me back to Darwin for meetings with the senior executives of News Limited.

Mr Smith: Did you have to fly in a 11-seater aircraft?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the reason that was there was to get me back to Darwin in time. Under normal circumstances, I travel in a much smaller aircraft but that was required at that time. I am not going to stand here and go through this clerical debate with the Leader of the Opposition. I will travel in aircraft that can enable me to get on with my job. I would expect every one of my ministers to travel around the Northern Territory and that necessitates the use of charter aircraft.

The other thing I would like to raise is the continual carping criticism directed against Henry and Walker Ltd and the build-up of animus against that company by the opposition, in particular by the Leader of the Opposition. Every time that company's name is mentioned, they have to throw some dirt. That company was the first public company in the Northern Territory. It has invested extensively in the Northern Territory and has contributed significantly to the development of the Northern Territory in a diverse range of operations. It happens to be a very good company and the fact that it is continually denigrated by the opposition does the opposition no credit whatsoever. The opposition talks about Henry and Walker and sweetheart deals with the Northern Territory government but, in 8 years, to my knowledge it has not proven one. In 8 years, it has not been able to demonstrate any such thing but, nevertheless, it keeps building up this public and community attitude against a good and reputable company.

I for one have had a bellyfull of it. I have not commented for 4 years in this House about this gut-wrenching nonsense that the Leader of the Opposition persists in but it is about time somebody said it. All the Leader of the Opposition is doing is tearing down the credibility of the Northern Territory business community and undermining the confidence of the Northern Territory. I might say that, in every case where he does so, it is without a shred of evidence. It is simply a lot of imaginative mind-bending. One could be forgiven for thinking the honourable member smokes pot before he comes into the Chamber, given some of the imaginative thoughts that he has. I am not accusing him of actually doing that, but one could be forgiven for thinking it a possibility.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to continue the debate on travel, that is fine. However, while he is at it, he should tell the people of the Territory about each one of the trips he has made. We must remember that the Leader of the Opposition has no governmental or administrative responsibilities whatsoever. He should tell the Northern Territory people what value his trips have had for the growth and development of the Northern Territory. What has he put into the Northern Territory except negative knocking and bitching? He contributes nothing towards the Northern Territory. He does not mind travelling around and taking the odd trip to Perth, Canberra and other locations. Given that he has no governmental, ministerial or administrative responsibilities and he criticises my travel, if he wants to continue this debate, he should explain how he is contributing to the Northern Territory by the trips that he has made.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in the debate tonight I intend to concentrate most of my discussion on the completely irrational remarks made by the member for Araluen earlier on.

Mr Perron: You have been in the bar for the last 2 hours so I suppose that you had better do something.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that is absolutely outrageous. I have been down ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Minister for Industries and Development just made a completely outrageous suggestion as to where my colleague has been during the last 2 hours.

Mr Perron: Every day is the same, isn't it?

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the minister to withdraw that remark.

Mr Perron: I will withdraw the remark, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Stuart.

Mr Perron: Where have you been?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, 2 hours ago, I was given a 51-page ministerial statement which will be delivered in this House tomorrow. I have been spending my time going through the 51 pages, negotiating with the federal government over some of the issues raised and discussing it with my colleagues.

The completely outrageous remark made by the minister bears on the point that was made a couple of minutes ago by the Chief Minister when he attempted to claim that we on this side of the House do not do our part to assist in the government of the Northern Territory. Only a week ago, when the budget was brought down, I found a \$9m shortfall in the funding allocation to the Northern Territory which had inadvertently been overlooked in Canberra. I got on to the people in Canberra to get that \$9m for the Northern Territory. When I attempted to contact the Minister for Education, I could not get any reply from his office. When I tried to contact the Treasurer, I could not get any reply from his office. When I tried to contact the Chief Minister, I could only find his press secretary. This was only 2 hours after the federal budget was brought down. You would have thought, Mr Speaker, that they would have been at their desks working on the figures. \$9m is not a bad effort from this side of the House. I would think that a bit of regard could be given where regard is due rather than that sort of outrageous statement.

Mr Speaker, I would suggest to the Chief Minister that, for 95% of his travel expenditure to be spent on charters, is probably a little outrageous. Perhaps if he spent a bit more time on RPTs, and in economy class, he might get a better understanding of ordinary travel habits and what the average Territorian is on about. He does not gain a great deal by his continued use of very expensive charters.

Mr Speaker, before I move on to the other issue, there is a point that I wish to raise with regard to the rural area outside of Darwin. This is prompted by some extremely outrageous remarks that were made by the member for Karama last week. Over the weekend, I was able to borrow a vehicle and spend some time in the Darwin rural area discussing with people there what their lifestyle is, what their dreams are and what they are attempting to achieve. I was quite happy to see the hard work and determination that is apparent there, the work that people are doing on their blocks to make them productive or to develop them to suit a particular lifestyle. I was quite amazed at the remarks that were made about the general conditions down there. It may have been true 10 years ago, but it certainly is not now.

Many professional people and people who own quite substantial businesses in Darwin live in that area. They certainly would not be able to afford to do so unless they had connections in Darwin, given the costs that have been lumped on that area by the government opposite. What is worrying is the way the government has increased the cost of water down there. It has reached the stage where people have been pushed out of horticulture. Some people who had substantial plans have already pulled out or are planning to do so if the government goes ahead with its plans.

Mr Speaker, the point which I wish to discuss tonight is the damage that the member for Araluen continues to do to the tourist industry. I really find this quite difficult to understand because he has some background in the tourist industry which he took on after his previous work in the hire-car field. I find it strange that, having used his experience in the tourist industry to gain preselection for the CLP in the Araluen electorate, he now turns around and attempts to damage the industry.

Even when insignificant members of the Country Liberal Party engage their brains before putting their mouths into gear, it can do damage. By trying to drive a wedge between the operators, the tourists and the traditional owners at Uluru, he has done no service whatsoever to the industry in the Northern Territory. What we have here, and it has been spoken of even by people on his side of the House, is the possibility of developing a form of tourism which involves Aboriginal people and their culture. I have been told time and time again by international people in the field that that is one of the big growth areas that is available to us in the Northern Territory. But, when politicians like the member for Araluen attempt to make unsubstantiated and quite ridiculous attacks on the traditional owners, it really does put that development in jeopardy.

He was talking about advertising. It is a fact that national parks right around the country require people to obtain permits before they can do that type of filming and they reserve the right to veto the advertising if they believe that it is not assisting in the development of the park or if they feel it is not portraying the park in the correct manner. Not long ago, there was a situation where MacDonalds was portraying Uluru as a huge lump of meat in a hamburger. That is not the image we are trying to portray for Uluru. A Japanese bank attempted to use Uluru as a corporate symbol. Again, that is not a symbol we are trying to portray. We are not attempting to give away the symbols that we have in the Northern Territory. We are attempting to utilise them in a manner that will assist us. We have respect for Uluru, many Australians have respect for Uluru, and the traditional owners have respect for Uluru. Uluru is not a symbol to be used by greasy carpetbaggers, but by the people who have genuine respect for Uluru and who believe that it can be developed as a great tourist enterprise with due respect for it as an evocative symbol of the heart of our country.

The member for Araluen talked about plans to divert elderly people from climbing the Rock by introducing alternative walking tours. His attack on that was an extremely senseless approach. Does he really believe that the death of more than a dozen people this year alone, either during or after climbing the Rock ...

Mr Palmer: Everyone who climbs the Rock later dies at some time.

Mr Collins: Or is run down by a tram in Melbourne.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is their business.

Mr EDE: The absolutely ridiculous interjections that are coming from the other side of the House clearly show that those members have done no research and made no attempt to check on what actually has been happening. We are saying that we should play down the climb, not by banning climbers but by promoting alternatives. Anybody who has had a serious look at the Rock will know that there are many areas which are extremely interesting. There are many places where people can go and feel the spirit of the Rock. That is what we are trying to promote. The fact that numbers of people have passed away either while or just after climbing the Rock is something which will discourage people. We are trying to dissuade them from climbing it for a similar reason to that for which the Minister for Conservation is trying to stop people from swimming in crocodile-infested pools. It is simple common sense. There is no plan to close Ayers Rock. The traditional owners and the members of the board care about people. They care for their health and they worry about them. The traditional owners certainly do not understand why people want to climb the Rock but they do care for the old people. They worry about people dying during or after the climb and they are keen to promote alternatives.

The member for Araluen made one good point in relation to the film commission which is something that the opposition has been pushing for for some time. I am glad to see that he has finally taken it up. We believe that, given the enormous attributes of central Australia, a Northern Territory film commission would be able to promote the use of this area as a base for a substantial film industry. Imparja Television is training many people in front-of-camera techniques, as gaffers and cameramen. The facilities are being developed and I am sure you would realise, Mr Speaker, that this will provide the infrastructure which can allow the development of a substantial film industry. Such a development would be advantaged by a Northern Territory film commission which would negotiate with people who wanted to film here and would work with them to assist in finding the correct locale and in negotiating any red tape which might be involved.

The member for Araluen's statement about a \$1m fee was absolutely ridiculous. It has absolutely no foundation in fact and it is a farrago of absolute rubbish. It is just not true. I can tell you that negotiations are proceeding in a very friendly manner and the publicity on these has been undertaken by a company in Sydney. What is being discussed is nothing more than the good old Country Liberal Party practice of charging a fee for service. Payment for production assistance is being negotiated, together with rehabilitation of areas used by the film crew, recoupment of the cost of hiring rangers and assistant rangers, payment for extras and, of course, some guarantees of privacy and protection of sites. That is what is being negotiated. In his efforts to make a great fuss about some mythical \$1m figure, the member is doing nothing more than damaging the film industry in the Northern Territory and attempting to destroy the chances of establishing a viable industry here.

Members opposite are always talking about the need for Aboriginal people to get away from dependence on handouts and welfare. However, every time they try to negotiate a reasonable fee for their services or negotiate the use of their assets, members opposite knock, whinge and carry on and say that this cannot happen. Members opposite seem to want to prevent the development of an industry where benefits will flow to people such as the Aboriginal Territorians of Uluru. The same occurs in relation to Aboriginal people in Kakadu and in many other areas throughout the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION

Report of Commission of Inquiry into  
Chamberlain Convictions

Continued from 4 June 1987.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, having listened to the contributions of honourable members in this debate, I find that their composite views could all have been contributed by one honourable member. This is unusual, as views have been expressed by members of the ALP and the National Party. Conspicuous by their absence are any views from the CLP other than the report of the Attorney-General himself. No doubt other CLP members are waiting to be told what they should think, and we are all waiting to hear what they will say when they are told which way to think. However, I do not think we will hear, Mr Speaker, because they have not said anything yet on this matter.

Honourable members who have spoken before me argued points of law with the erudition and the deep, self-assumed pantological propriety of legal lilies when, in reality, they were mouthing the cliches of bush lawyers. However, I believe that it was worse than that and that they were floating on the clouds of visionary extravagance. I have no formal legal training and my knowledge of legal procedure is minimal, a lacking I share with the greater number of my constituents and, I would hazard a guess - in fact, I know - with the greater number of people in the Northern Territory and other honourable members in this House.

There has never been so much discussion about a murder case nor arguments expressed with such strong feelings as has occurred from the date of Azaria Chamberlain's death on 17 August 1980 until the release of the Morling Report. People read the newspapers at the time and heard the radio and TV reports and it engaged everyone's attention. Because the Northern Territory is such a small place, often the public reports of the Chamberlain murder case were elaborated on from eyewitness accounts or from third-party opinions. You might say, Mr Speaker, that that would be all hearsay, repetition and embellishment, but it is only by hearing every little scrap of information about a matter and mulling over it that one can arrive at a personal line of thought.

From my personal experience I believe that Aboriginals, in making up their minds about a serious matter, discuss every detail down to the tiniest facet back and forth repeatedly until their views have crystallised. Speaking generally again, another group of people does the same thing. People who work manually in the country, farmers and others, may not be the smartest thinkers or the most brilliant orators but they also listen to everything that their friends say about a serious matter. They contribute their own views, weigh up the points, bounce them off other friends and arrive at their own personal judgments of the matter after having considered it from all angles.

Mr Speaker, the people in the Northern Territory could be considered thinkers, especially on such an important and bizarre case as the Chamberlain murder case. We lead a less hurried life than people in the southern cities. We have time to think. Initially, when the verdict went against Mr and Mrs Chamberlain, I would say that the vast majority of people were in agreement and considered the jury had made the right decision. I know there were a few who believed that Mr and Mrs Chamberlain were innocent. In fact,

from time to time, I passed on to the relevant ministers submissions supporting this view when they were put to me. Justice Morling's finding that, if the evidence presented at his inquiry had been presented at the murder trial then the Chamberlains would have been acquitted, has left everyone in a state of confusion.

There would be hardly anyone out on the streets who could form an opinion now, from what they have heard, as to whether they believe the Chamberlains are guilty or innocent. Apart from the tedium of the issue to the vast majority of people in the Northern Territory, it is my firm belief that, if it were humanly possible to get a guilty or innocent verdict from everyone then, in the final assay of results, we would have an overwhelming verdict of guilty again.

I do not care what legal opinions contribute to this argument, I am entitled to my views. I know I am in tune with what ordinary men and women are thinking and, in a nutshell, most believed the Chamberlains to be guilty. This has become confused now in the minds of many as a result of the Morling findings, but with the underlying thought that the jury in the first trial was probably right. That brings me to ...

Mr Hatton: Is this arrogant attitude from the rural area?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We did not hear your contribution to this debate.

That brings me to a very important aspect of this case: the jury. No one before me, to my knowledge, has given a thought to the unenviable task these men and women had. To sit on any jury is an onerous task. To make a decision to deprive a person of his liberty is the most serious decision possible, apart from a decision to deprive an accused person of his life in the interests of justice. A jury is supposed to represent one's peers and can include anyone. The jury in the Chamberlain case represented all of us, as well as being on the same level as the accused themselves. Nobody would have wanted to swap places with members of that jury. They had an unenviable job to do.

Mr Justice Morling implied in the conclusion to his inquiry that, if the additional expert evidence presented at this inquiry had been presented to the jury, it was his opinion that the jury could not have properly convicted the Chamberlains. That is the learned judge's view but his expression of a change of decision by the jury is not a cut-and-dried statement. In my view, it is open to speculation and should in no way pre-empt a future or past jury's conclusions. In fairness to Mr Justice Morling, he is entitled to his view with the learning that he has and on the basis of his interpretation of evidence presented to him. The jury, myself, and men and women in the street are entitled to our views, no matter how we arrive at them.

I turn to the matter of compensation and here my views are definite. There are no grey shades; it is black and white. I do not believe compensation should be paid. I am not a gambler but I will lay odds that not too many of the general public would disagree with me. I have tried to express ordinary people's views when speaking today, despite the tiresome ennui this may cause some people who are listening to me.

On the matter of whether the Chamberlains should be paid compensation, I note the Attorney-General has left his options open. My first question is why? The Northern Territory government has footed the complete bill for the Morling Inquiry. There have been exclusive stories and interviews with

women's magazines and TV and radio stations that must have netted the Chamberlains many thousands of dollars and I believe friends have contributed money to their cause as well. This matter of compensation has and will raise an enormous amount of antagonism in the minds of ordinary men and women, most of whom have no argument with the matter of extending a pardon if it finishes there. We are told that times are tough and the Northern Territory government has no cash reserves. Where will this compensation come from?

Mr Speaker, in stating my views today, I may appear as a voice crying in the wilderness on this whole issue of the Morling Inquiry but I believe that my views are shared by many ordinary men and women. An old Scottish law stated that 3 verdicts could be handed down: innocent, guilty or not proven. It is the latter, not proven, that would best sum up the case of the Chamberlains. To my way of thinking, the Crown drew a long bow several times in presenting its case. The defence had some incidents to explain that were completely out of character and it has been said to me that one can get as many opinions from expert witnesses as there are expert witnesses. Where does all this leave us? It leaves us with lots of doubts but trying to be fair. A not proven verdict would have summed it up.

At the beginning of my contribution to the debate, Mr Speaker, I omitted, as is the custom of parliamentarians, to declare an interest. It is not a current interest, but it is an interest of sorts. I am not introducing levity or facetiousness at all in mentioning it. I was the first person to breed dingoes in the Northern Territory, and one of the first - if not the first - to seriously breed dingoes in Australia.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I did not intend to speak in this debate but the outrageous contribution of the member for Koolpinyah cannot go unrebutted. What she is proposing is a return to trial by the mob, trial by vigilantes. She would have us return to the bad old days when vigilante squads sought out anybody that the mob decided was guilty, hounded them down and dragged them to the nearest tree to be strung up by the neck because that was the mob's decision. That is the result of what the member for Koolpinyah is proposing. It is a most outrageous attack on the judicial system of the Northern Territory and Australia and on the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom and justice that we on this side of the Assembly hold very dear. She believes that people should be convicted by innuendo and rumour.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Those people were tried by jury.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I believe that, in relation to this particular case, the press did not come out smelling of roses. There were many instances where the media took rumour and stories which were circulating and gave them a credence which fed on itself until the type of beliefs which the honourable member has referred to were current in the community. I am certainly not saying that the jury was affected by the press campaign, but what the member for Koolpinyah is saying is that that sort of campaign is all right. She believes that such a campaign should be taken into account and should be the basis upon which democracy and freedom is decided. She believes it should be the basis upon which we decide the guilt or innocence of parties that come before the judicial system. That is absolutely outrageous.

She went on to dismiss Justice Morling and his findings out of hand. She said that he was quite entitled to hold his own views while she could hold hers. Justice Morling heard all the evidence and went to great lengths to bring before him all the expert witnesses and all facts pertinent to the case and to conduct a most impressive examination. He is a judge of the very

highest repute and, at the risk of having a point of order raised, I would say that the member for Koolpinyah could not put herself in the same league. She attempts to decry the findings of Justice Morling because she believes there is a mob view that the Chamberlains were guilty. She believes that the mob view should take precedence over the finding of a judge of the Supreme Court. I find that absolutely outrageous.

The member for Koolpinyah stated that no compensation should be paid. She dismissed it out of hand. Her reason was that the government had already spent a lot of money on this case. It is true that the government has spent a lot of money on this case but what price freedom and what price justice? Do we put a price on various cases and just throw the key away when we have spent a certain amount of money? Chequebook justice is creeping into our legal system. Fortunately, it is not occurring to anywhere near the same extent in criminal cases as in civil cases. It is ridiculous and unjust to say that there should be no compensation because a certain amount of money has been spent. What price do you put on years in jail? What price do you put on a family? What price do you put on a reputation, the chances of that family ever getting its act together again, of ever being able to walk down the street anywhere in Australia without the finger being pointed at them? What price do you put on children having to grow up with the inane questions: 'Who did it? Did your mother do it?' Those are the sorts of questions that inane people like the member for Koolpinyah will ask.

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

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw.

Those children will have to wear the outcomes of this matter for the rest of their lives. That family has been torn to pieces. The baby who was born after the case had to spend its early years without a mother's love. It did not have the bonding between mother and child which is so essential. The younger child went through those very important years without its mother. To dismiss that suffering on the basis that the family received large amounts of money for TV appearances or for selling their story to magazines is outrageous.

The Chamberlains' legal challenges have been incredibly costly and they were not all paid for by the government. They were paid for by people around Australia who attempted to see that justice was done. Initially, people within the church stated their belief, based on personal knowledge of the Chamberlains, that they were not guilty. People from all walks of life then began to have very grave doubts about the findings. Ordinary people around Australia contributed \$5 or \$10 and assisted in the fund-raising so that the Chamberlains could continue their defence. Those people did not propose mob action to break in and free Lindy Chamberlain. They worked within the law in an attempt to have the facts revealed and the conviction quashed. But the member for Koolpinyah does not display that attitude. Now that a legal opinion has been given, her attitude is: 'Let the mob rule. Let the mob decide. The mob has decided on guilt'. She believes that is what should decide the case.

I believe that the Chamberlains will never get over what has happened. I believe that no amount of money can compensate for the pain and suffering that they have endured. If, however, an amount of money is sufficient to enable them to relocate somewhere where they can try to gather together the pieces of their lives and attempt to start again, I would say good luck to them. I believe, though, that their outstanding legal bill would cut very

substantially into any amount of compensation, no matter how great, that they might be granted.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing the debate, I must comment on what the member for Koolpinyah has said this morning. It is obvious that she does not understand our judicial process or our criminal justice system. The member for Koolpinyah has confused her personal views with due legal processes and the criminal justice system. She began by saying that the CLP members of this Assembly did not have individual views and that there was something sinister about that. Thankfully, most members of this Assembly are fully aware that it is not the individual views of members of parliament which decree whether a person is innocent or guilty or how he should be treated as a result of an accusation that a crime has been committed. I believe that every member of this House - except, obviously, the member for Koolpinyah - is aware of how our court procedures work and that the court system is entirely independent of the government and the parliament. That is how it should always be in a democracy.

Many years ago, as the member for Stuart pointed out, the majority views of the community were those which determined how an issue would be dealt with. We have all read about women who, having shown an ability to do things out of the ordinary, were burnt at the stake as witches. That was what the community decided. It is unfortunate, but the sort of processes that the member for Koolpinyah was talking about are exactly those processes: the view of the community is taken as the standard by which someone's behaviour is judged and punishment determined. We have moved a long way from burning people at the stake because the community thought they had done something wrong and, as the member for Stuart pointed out, we do not have groups of people taking somebody whom they believe to be a wrongdoer and hanging him from the nearest tree. It is important that we differentiate between the right of individuals to hold viewpoints on any matter and the right and the role of the courts and the judicial system to carry out the processes of justice. There is a definite difference. Legal processes must be kept entirely separate from the legislative or executive arms of government.

In concluding this debate, I wish to mention the contributions of honourable members. The member for Barkly certainly contributed very positively to the debate and, if honourable members have not read his contribution, I would urge them to do so. The member for MacDonnell also made some positive and sensible suggestions. I intend to seek the leave of the Assembly to introduce a bill, the passage of which will accomplish the aims of the government. It is also my intention to move for the suspension of so much of standing orders as would prevent the bill from passing through all stages of these sittings. It is the government's intention to have the legislation in place as soon as possible and in my view there should be no delay in allowing the Chamberlains access to the court.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Criminal Code Amendment Bill (Serial 67) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT Bill  
(Serial 67)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, you will no doubt be familiar with calls for this legislature to quash the Chamberlains' convictions following on from the Morling Report and the exercise of the prerogative of mercy by His Honour the Administrator. I am pleased to note that, with one exception, it is probably the view of this Assembly that it is not appropriate for this Assembly to enact laws to quash a conviction. This Assembly should not be seen to interfere in the judicial process. I am strongly of the opinion that only a court should be able to quash a conviction and I am concerned that it would be contrary to both modern constitutional convention and to the public interest in the due administration of justice for this Assembly to so act. I am not espousing some modern constitutional theory. I draw the attention of honourable members to Lord Coke's head note in the decision in the case, *Prohibitions Del Roy* handed down in 1608:

The King in his own person cannot adjudge any case, either criminal or betwixt party and party; but it ought to be determined and adjudged in some court of justice according to the law and custom of England.

The King may sit in the King's Bench but the court gives the judgment. No King after the conquest assumed to himself to give any judgment in any cause whatsoever which concerned the administration of justice within the realm; but these causes were solely determined in the courts of justice.

The King cannot arrest any man.

The principle was recently restated in the case of the Queen and Foster, where the court alluded to the fact that the Crown no longer has the prerogative of justice but only a prerogative of mercy.

Mr Speaker, I consider that it is vitally important for those preceding comments to be made so that the public of the Northern Territory has a clear understanding that this Assembly does not consider it appropriate to interfere in the judicial process. To do so would be an affront to our society and to the democratic process.

I also make these remarks in response to what I consider to be some particularly scurrilous press reporting and editorial writing. I believe it relevant to both the passage of this legislation - for this legislation hopefully demonstrates how responsible parliaments should act - and to the public interest, that I draw the attention of honourable members to the most irresponsible of these press articles. I refer, in particular, to the editorial and cartoons relating to the Chamberlain case which were published in *The Age* newspaper on Wednesday 3 June this year. I table a copy of that edition of *The Age*.

While I respect the rights and freedoms of the press, in particular its right to express strongly-held views and to strongly criticise government, I consider that, on this occasion, the items to which I will refer are not only

an insult to the Northern Territory government but a slur on this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory.

The editorial describes this government's reaction to the Morling Report as 'unjust and mean-minded'. It infers that, by not quashing the conviction, the Northern Territory government seems to be standing the basic principle of Australian justice on its head. I would ask the writer of that editorial to ponder upon what he or she has written and the consequences of parliaments acting in the way he or she suggests. Do they really wish parliaments to quash convictions? Do they wish parliaments to acquit? Do they wish parliaments to convict? The editorial is ill-conceived, ill-considered and incorrect.

While I consider that the cartoons relating to the Chamberlain case in The Age of that date to be offensive, I consider the cartoon on the editorial page to be almost seditious. I consider that the cartoon may excite disaffection against the Northern Territory government, the Assembly and the administration of justice in the Northern Territory. While I trust that both the editorial and the cartoon were published in good faith, I am still gravely concerned that a paper with what I believed to be a fine reputation could be so wrong. I condemn the publication for its irresponsible behaviour and I call on all members to do so as well.

I now turn to the bill, which is of general application; that is, it does not specifically relate to the Chamberlain convictions. The proposed legislation is designed to recognise that, on some exceptional and extraordinary occasions, it may be expedient in the interests of justice, after all other judicial avenues have been exhausted, to allow for a conviction to be quashed. While I consider that section 431 of the Criminal Code currently provides some degree of recognition of this situation, I believe that it does not go quite far enough. The Northern Territory Criminal Code is not unique in this regard, as I consider the position is the same throughout Australia. At present, I believe that there would be inherent difficulties if I were to refer the Chamberlain case to the court for a determination pursuant to section 431. I consider such a reference may necessarily result in a further reopening of the matter, or part of it, may present evidentiary difficulties and may be inappropriate in that the prerogative of mercy has already been exercised.

I have also considered whether it is appropriate for a further appeal to be instituted to the Court of Criminal Appeal, in accordance with the code, with a request that the court use its supplemental powers to consider new evidence. While it is not for me to be the arbiter of the correctness of such a procedure, I consider that such an approach, apart from presenting further evidentiary problems, could be contrary to existing authorities.

I consider that the Chamberlain case perhaps highlights a deficiency in existing law. I can appreciate in some circumstances that it may be appropriate for persons who are granted a free pardon to seek to have their convictions quashed. Until now, the general view throughout Australia seems to have been that it is unnecessary. It is not possible to generalise about the effect of a free pardon. In any given case, it depends on what the pardon says. In the Chamberlain case, the pardons recite Mr Justice Morling's final conclusion, which says:

It follows from what I have written that there are serious doubts and questions as to the Chamberlains' guilt and as to the evidence in the trial leading to their conviction. In my opinion, if the evidence

before the commission had been given at the trial, the trial judge would have been obliged to direct the jury to acquit the Chamberlains on the ground that the evidence could not justify their conviction.

Mr Speaker, the pardons go on to pardon, remit and release the Chamberlains from all penalties and punishments ensuing from their conviction. I accept, however, that a free pardon does not wipe the conviction. I also accept there is a need for a mechanism whereby the court can determine whether a conviction should be quashed. The bill provides such a mechanism in a general way.

While the steps I am proposing in this legislation do not as yet have a precedent in Australia, I would point out that they are not entirely without precedent. The English Criminal Law Act would allow for a similar application, perhaps in more general terms, and the South Africans also have a similar legislative scheme.

The bill amends the Northern Territory Criminal Code by providing a new section 433A. Subsection (1) of that new section provides that the Attorney-General may, on application of the convicted person, if he considers it expedient in the interests of justice, where the prerogative of mercy has been exercised, refer the matter to the court for it to decide whether a conviction should be quashed and a judgment and verdict of acquittal be entered.

Mr Speaker, you will note that only the Attorney-General may refer the matter to the court under this provision. This approach is consistent with existing mechanisms - for example, section 431 of the Criminal Code and legislation throughout Australia and England such as section 17 of the English Criminal Appeal Act of 1968. The use of this provision must not be seen as allowing further avenues of appeal or redress to convicted persons, except in extraordinary circumstance. In my opinion, the legislation should only be used after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted and if the case is considered exceptional and other avenues such as section 431 are not available. I would call on our courts to strongly criticise any overuse or attempted misuse of the proposed provision.

I should clearly state here that this provision is not a rubber-stamp provision. A reference under this proposed section must be considered. Our courts do not act otherwise. If the court does not, after considering the matter, consider it appropriate to quash the conviction, then so be it. Having said that, it is not intended that this legislation allow for a reopening of the hearing. The only question to be decided is whether the conviction should be quashed. Proposed subsections 433A(2) and (3) allow for notice and representation by the convicted person if the court considers it necessary.

Proposed subsection 433A(4) gives to the court those powers necessary for it to determine whether it should quash the conviction and set aside the verdict, and such other powers as are necessary to determine the question referred to it. Proposed subsections 433A(5) and (6) allow the court some flexibility in the evidence it may place before itself. In appropriate circumstances, this will enable the court to take cognisance of what may have already been heard or determined in relation to the matter. I would point out that subsection (6) is not unique. A similar provision exists in the Legal Practitioners Act: section 52(5).



Let me say that it is unusual that a court at this level should not be bound by the rules of evidence. I believe that, in the exceptional circumstances that necessarily will have to arise before a reference under this section can be made, such a provision is acceptable. Those exceptional circumstances will arise only where the exercise of the prerogative of mercy has been such as to warrant a request to the court to exercise its prerogative of justice.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION  
Australia Card

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

(1) that this Assembly unanimously condemns the federal government's decision to introduce the Australia Card in its current form, believing it is a gross infringement of the civil liberties of all Australians;

(2) that it is this Assembly's view that the Northern Territory government should refuse to cooperate in the implementation of this proposal; and

(3) that the terms of this resolution be transmitted to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Speaker, the resolution before us today is, without doubt, one of the most important ever to be introduced in this Chamber. It goes to the very heart of our society and the sort of political system we want for our future and for the future of our children. It deals with the essence of democracy, the question of who ultimately controls our destiny - the people or the bureaucracy. It is concerned with the issue of whether the state or the individual should have pre-eminence in citizens' lives and it focuses on the central question confronting modern man: the proper role of technology, with its potential to dominate mankind and to extinguish human dignity. Superficially, these matters may seem rather remote from the technical arguments about the effectiveness and security of the Australia Card but, to my mind, they are the real and the most crucial questions.

My personal opposition to the card is based fundamentally on ethical grounds. I believe in democracy and individual rights and liberties. I believe that the power of the state should be limited, carefully-controlled and defined. I believe that technology should benefit man, not control him. I believe that the bureaucracy should be the servant rather than the master of the people. All of these beliefs are offended by the motives behind, the reasoning about and the implications of the Australia Card. I want to stand and be counted amongst those who would see the traditions and the contemporary character of Australian society, imperfect as it may be, triumph over the proponents of 1984 or Big Brother. I cannot say it better than Geoffrey Robertson who is not, of course, of my political persuasion. He said: 'People need, or a society needs, to feel free. The feeling of freedom is almost as important as freedom itself. If you have an identity card in your back pocket, then there is a feeling of Big Brother watching - and that is chilling'. My hope is that all members share those values. I know that my colleagues on this side of the Assembly do.

My government's position on the Australia Card has already been made abundantly clear. We believe that it has the potential to be abused and to become a virulent cancer in the body politic. Over time, it will erode and eventually eradicate individual rights and liberties. It will elevate the state and its elaborate control apparatus to a dominating pinnacle. Individual rights will cease to have any meaning, other than that which is defined and allowed by the state. Such rights will not be qualities inherent in democratic societies nor will they be the natural entitlement of a citizen of a liberal pluralistic society. They will be grossly distributed, and meagrely at that, by the state. The Northern Territory government is not in any way satisfied that the guarantees so far spelled out by the federal government are sufficient protection for the liberties of citizens, nor does it accept that those guarantees, even if their worth is conceded, will ultimately endure. They will be weakened or will lapse, leaving an unbridged and cancerous system without check.

Nor does my government admit the necessity for this draconian control mechanism. All the evidence available points to the inability of the card to carry out the purposes for which it was designed and the existence of alternative mechanisms to carry out the stated objectives more economically and more efficiently. It is therefore doubly damned: not only is it not secure, it is also purposeless. Its sole and very dubious value is to provide employment for a vast array of newly-recruited bureaucrats and the purchase of enormously expensive computer equipment. The Australian taxpayer will pay handsomely for the loss of his heritage and his liberty. That is indeed ironical, but it is consistent with the ideals and practice of socialism, authoritarianism and despotism. It is, as Hawke so rightly pointed out, the road to serfdom.

Let me turn now to the oft-repeated claim that the federal government has a mandate to introduce the Australia Card. What nonsense and unmitigated gall! The very concept of a mandate is of questionable value and it has been thoroughly debased in Australian politics, principally through its abuse by the ALP. No party can claim a mandate for every part of its platform. That assumes that elections are won purely on the basis of policies and that voters have given support for all planks in a party platform. To believe that is to believe that leadership, party unity, past performance, habit, irrationalism, sheer bloody-mindedness and the like play no part in election victories. This is Alice-in-Wonderland stuff. What is even more objectionable in the case of the Australia Card is that, even though it was a trigger for the double dissolution, it received almost no publicity during the election campaign. It disappeared without trace. It was as though the ALP was thoroughly embarrassed about its earlier support for the measure. How Mr Hawke, Dr Blewett and Senator Ryan can now lecture the Australian people about the purity of the mandate for the card's introduction is beyond my comprehension and, I would guess, beyond that of most thinking Australians.

Whilst the Australia Card was certainly the trigger for a double dissolution, the federal government did not go to the people and say that it had not been able to govern because it could not get this legislation through, legislation which is vital for Australia. It did not say: 'Vote for the ALP to get this law in place'. The government said nothing about it. It ran from it. Now, after the election victory, it seeks to use the technical provisions of the Constitution to drive the legislation through the federal parliament.

What also astonishes me is the insistence of the Prime Minister on pursuing this thoroughly-discredited project in the face of clear evidence

that public opinion is flowing strongly against the Australia Card. I draw members' attention to the recent Newspan poll in which 57% of respondents were opposed to the card. If there is one thing at which the Prime Minister has shown himself to be very adept, it is his jettisoning of policies which, in his view, are proving unpopular. His pragmatism and his expediency have reached legendary proportions. Why, then, this persistence? It cannot be pressure from the ALP left which has serious reservations about the card, mainly on the grounds of intrusion into privacy and the erosion of individual liberty. It cannot be pressure from the bulk of the trade union movement which similarly suspects the implications of the card. It cannot be pressure from business, Premier Unsworth, most professional organisations, most intellectuals nor, it seems, most Australians. Who, then, supports it?

The Taxation Department is the leading advocate. Its interest is the increase of its power and control over the political system. The Australia Card will be a powerful instrument in its hands. Why does the Prime Minister agree? Perhaps he is seduced by the lure of more tax and less social welfare expenditure. More plausibly, he may be motivated by his overtly-expressed corporatism and his belief that society should be tightly organised, disciplined and manageable. I believe that he would agree with the alarming views of Neal Blewett who, at the 1986 South Australian ALP Conference, made the following sinister comment:

Let me say, as a socialist, that it is the interests of the community that should be put before individual rights. We should not get too hung up as socialists on privacy because privacy, in many ways, is a bourgeois right that is very much associated with the right to private property.

Contrast that with the words of another long-time ALP luminary who, thankfully, has different views. I refer to Diamond Jim McClelland, who commented in the Sydney Morning Herald of 18 November 1986: 'Even if the ID card would ensure that everyone that dodged tax would be caught in the net, I still don't think it is worth the price of making every citizen wear a dog collar'. I agree entirely.

An even more intelligent and devastating refutation of the case for the Australia Card is contained in an article by Morris West in The Australian of 9 September 1987. He isolated 5 arguments which have been put in defence of the card and eloquently debunked each of them. The first was that 'the government of the day is the vigilant and benevolent defender of our rights and liberties'. West says that that is never so. In fact, he argues that governments never willingly cede power and constantly seek to increase it. As elected governments come and go, they are less of a danger than the permanent part of government, the bureaucracy, the greatest foe of individual rights and liberties.

The second argument is that 'the efficient collection of taxes and the prevention of fiscal crime are overriding priorities of our society'. Again, West says no. He points out: 'Already the tax collector functions in breach of a fundamental principle of equity. He can, in effect, presume guilt and impose penalties on the mere presumption. To allow him, as this legislation does, to penalise the innocent for the delinquencies of the guilty is a perversion of legal principle. To allow him to curtail our liberty because others abuse theirs is a grievous injustice'.

The third argument is that 'the criminal manipulation of the banking system will be reduced along with the fraudulent misuse of the social

services'. West believes that experiences in other countries do not substantiate this claim. Indeed, he feels that the legislation will greatly reduce the freedom of every Australian 'to use and enjoy, in his own fashion, the fruits of his own labour'. In some cases, hitherto legal actions are rendered criminal. In all cases, the legislation will involve greater expense and complexity for ordinary citizens.

The fourth argument is that 'all the information required by Australia Card legislation is presently available through other card systems, so all that is involved is increased efficiency'. West disputes any similarity with other systems because they are voluntary. The Australia Card 'is a forcible diminution of liberties'.

The fifth argument is that 'invasion of privacy by government or government agencies will not and cannot occur'. West here agrees with the analysis of most critics of the Australia Card. He points out that there 'is as little hope of incorruptible government as there is of finding virgins in a brothel'. The only protection for the individual is to withhold his agreement from the legislators or to protest their proposed misuse of it'.

I do not wish to say very much on the issue of security in relation to this wretched bureaucratic device. My colleagues will no doubt cover that aspect thoroughly. However, it is very clear already that any guarantee of privacy and any sanction against misuse has been proved demonstratively to be flawed. Witness the leaks, prejudiced or otherwise, from the bureaucracy itself, particularly from the instrumentality responsible for the administration of the card itself: the Health Insurance Commission.

When one turns to the penalties contained in the bill itself, one can only express one's total abhorrence. There is very little that a citizen can do in the financial or commercial context that is not affected and, if not done in accordance with prescribed regulation, will attract harsh and unreasonable monetary penalties. Allow me to give a few examples.

The Australia Card is crammed with provisions for fining, jailing and regimentering ordinary, non-criminal citizens. If a card is destroyed for any reason that cannot be proven to be accidental, there is a fine of \$5000 or 2 years' imprisonment or both. If you lose a card and fail to notify the government within 21 days, there is a fine of \$500. For failing to produce the card on demand of a tax office, there is a fine of \$20 000. There is a fine of \$1000 and or 6 months jail for failing to attend a compulsory conference if ordered by the ID card agency. There is a fine of \$5000 and or 2 years jail for businessmen failing to submit a customer's card number to the government. There is a fine of \$20 000 for businessmen employing casual staff and not submitting their card number. There is a fine of \$5000 for selling a block of land without submitting the purchaser's card number to the Registrar of Land Titles. I might say, Mr Speaker, that it goes on and on. You cannot get access to your own bank account or withdraw your own money from your own bank account without ...

Mr Bell: That is rubbish.

Mr HATTON: This intrudes itself right through our lives. Those examples themselves are enough to explain ...

Mr Bell: Rubbish!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will be heard in silence. Other members will have a chance to contribute to the debate later.

Mr HATTON: The examples that I have enumerated are in themselves enough to clearly demonstrate the extent of the card's intrusion into people's day-to-day lives. It will be the most abhorrent attack on the liberties and lifestyle of this nation that has ever been attempted.

Throughout my entire life, I have supported the rule of law, the appropriate processes of government and obedience to the law. I am not a revolutionary of any sort or a dissenter in the popular mould. I have been described by some people as what psychologists would call a high normal. I try to fit into the mores of society generally. But what I am, Mr Speaker, is a fourth-generation Australian. My forefathers worked to build this country and have given me the heritage of a free and liberal society of which I am proud. They fought to defend those freedoms. I have inherited that from my forefathers. Am I to be less of a man than my forefathers and allow these attacks on the liberties not only of myself but of my children and to see the state take control of the day-to-day lives of the citizens of this country of which I am so proud?

Mr Ede: It will stop your mates, the tax rorters.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will take on that interjection. There are plenty of opportunities to attack tax rorters without destroying the freedom of every Australian. All the federal government has to do is enforce and police its laws through the normal mechanisms that are available now to government. It is not necessary to destroy the lives of honest, free-living Australians.

Mr Speaker, if I am to stand honestly with the heritage that I have inherited and work to pass on that inheritance to the young people, to my children, I must stand up against this card in any way that I can. I intend to do that. I do not intend, personally, to accept the card, and I will accept the consequences of that. For the first time in my life, I will say something else. I will not be paying the fines either, and the federal government can work out how to handle that itself.

Mr Ede: Like you wouldn't pay the money to the pre-school that you promised that you would pay.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I appeal to everybody in this Chamber, even the clowns opposite ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will withdraw that remark.

Mr HATTON: I withdraw the remark, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker I appeal to everybody in this Chamber to think very seriously about the implications of this legislation, to put aside political beliefs and political party loyalties for a moment, and think as Australians. Think about our children and the future we are going to leave behind for this country and for our children.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: And your constituents.

Mr HATTON: And our constituents. And those young people who are in the public gallery. What heritage are we going to leave them? Are we going to

leave them with the freedoms and privacy that we have enjoyed or are we going to leave them bound up with red tape? I intend to fight this legislation in any way that I can. I have already stated my personal position, and I ask each and every person to fight this card with everything that he has available to him in the defence of the freedom that we have inherited.

Mr Leo: Bloody hypocrite.

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

Mr Leo: Mr Speaker, I withdraw it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, equally, I appeal to the Prime Minister, not as the Prime Minister but as an Australian, a man who expresses pride in being Australian, to think again about this card and remove it.

The member for Nhulunbuy is snarling and sniping away in the background over there about the information that is in computers. The thing about this card is that it provides the opportunity for government and the bureaucracy, through the use of a single number, to link all records together and to intrude into every file on every computer, because everything tracks back to that number. That is the thing that is not available now. If honourable members opposite talk to computer people they will discover that, because of the different phases of the systems, it is almost impossible to cross-reference between those files. There is information on computer files and computers can be used to assist society; they should not be used as a method of social control.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that' (first occurring) and inserting in their stead:

(1) this Assembly unanimously condemns the Northern Territory government for systematically and comprehensively collecting, and storing on its computer network, personal and private information on Territory citizens without putting in place legislative protections regulating the use and access to the records; and

(2) this Assembly further condemns the Northern Territory government for denying Territory citizens the right to inspect and challenge the information contained in those records.

Mr Speaker, quite clearly, the debate on the Australia Card has been and will continue to be a very emotional one. In one sense, that is understandable but in another it is a pity because it means that the issues become obscured. I must say that, although the Chief Minister's speech was high on rhetoric and emotion, it did not address the issues that the Australia Card addresses. I accept the point made by the Chief Minister that it is a matter of concern to everybody. It does not matter whether you are a fourth-generation Australian, as he is, or a fifth-generation Australian as I am, or an untold thousands-of-generations Australian, as are my colleagues the members for Arnhem and Arafura, it is a matter of concern and interest to all of us, and certainly it is a matter that is worth the time of this Assembly.

I was extremely disappointed in the position taken by the Chief Minister when he said that, if it came to the crunch, he would defy a decision taken by the elected government of the day. That is not a position that it is fitting for an elected leader to adopt, particularly the Chief Minister of the

Northern Territory. Without being overdramatic, his statement that he may find himself in a moral position where he cannot accept a decision made by another government certainly leaves potential for people in the Northern Territory to take similarly moral stances about individual decisions taken by the Territory government.

I think it is particularly unfortunate that the comment was made in the light of comments made by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services in this Assembly in June when he publicly congratulated public service members who had worked very closely with him in putting together the government's position on changes to the public service terms and conditions even though, in many cases, they violently opposed those changes. That is the correct attitude. We should be able to expect public servants to carry out the wishes of the government of the day and we should be able to expect, equally if not more so, the Chief Minister, an elected official of a sovereign entity - the Northern Territory - to be able to accept decisions made by other levels of government in this country. For him not to be able to do so is inviting many people in the Northern Territory to consider similar action on many different issues.

All I can say is that, if it does come to the crunch - and hopefully it will not - and the Chief Minister is forced to spend some time in Darwin Prison, he will be treated in the same manner as other prisoners. As a result, we may well get an improvement of the deplorable conditions that currently exist in Darwin Prison.

Mr Dale: You have seen them have you, Terry?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I have.

Mr Speaker, what I want to do is speak both to the amendment and the motion. The opposition has been thinking for some time that it was necessary to move a motion similar to the amendment that we have put forward, to address some issues of real concern we have about the collection and keeping of records in the Northern Territory. That is why we have moved this amendment.

I will run through the range of information that is currently kept on computer records in the Northern Territory. It contains public-sector employment records including the Interpers system, which relates to payrolls and personnel. It also includes superannuation information on public servants. All power and water consumers have their records kept on computer. All Housing Commission records including tenants, purchases and welfare cases, are on computer. Health-care records are on computer, including dates of individual visits to clinics and hospitals, complaints and treatment given. Police records are on computer, including offences and complaints against individuals and police. The work health system is computerised, including exemptions from the provisions of the Work Health Act and claims under the act's provisions. Computerised welfare records are held in various departments, particularly the Department of Health and Community Services. Court records for all jurisdictions from the Small Claims Court to the Supreme Court, including records of juvenile offenders, are on computer. Driving licences, which now have photos on them, are computerised. There are computer records relating to prisons and prisoners. Aboriginal community profiles are all on computer. Education records are computerised, including enrolments, family details and, I understand in some cases, reference to disciplinary action taken against children. Registration of land ownership is computerised, including financial standing, as are motor vehicle registrations, land titles and mortgages, births, deaths and marriages, business registration and corporate affairs records, the electoral rolls ...

Mr Dale: Is there a number which will collate all that information?

Mr SMITH: ... mineral claims, applications for licences and holders of licences ...

Mr Dale: Is there a dog tag?

Mr SMITH: You will get your go. I will answer your questions if you just shut up.

Mr Dale: Don't get upset.

Mr SMITH: I will get upset because you are so rude.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will address his remarks through the Chair and other members will cease interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I continue: applications for licences, holders of liquor licences, explosives licences, operators of equipment, shotfirers' licences, registrations of medical practitioners, chiropractors, dentists, surveyors and many others are all on computer records in the Northern Territory. Who knows what else, Mr Speaker? I am certainly not putting that forward as a comprehensive list. Some of these are integrated through NCOM, but who knows which ones are integrated? Some of them stand alone, but who knows which ones they are?

When we are talking about computer records held by government - and I am not saying that computer records should not be held by government - there are 3 main issues that one needs to discuss. The first is access to those computer records. The second is control; in other words, protection from unauthorised access and from hackers. The third is the use of the records for genuine purposes rather than simple curiosity or even suspect motives.

On a number of occasions, this government has claimed that we have one of the most sophisticated computer systems in Australia. That is true. We have one of the most sophisticated gathering and manipulative computer systems in Australia. It has been claimed by this government, and it is probably true, that we are in fact leading the rest of Australia in this area. What concerns me is that the controls we have in place to protect that information are less than adequate. We have no legislative controls on access to computer information. All we have are administrative controls and they are simply not publicly known. We rely on the professional skills and integrity of government departmental staff to ensure that those safeguards are in place. It is an honour system and, 99 times out of 100, it will probably work. There is, however, no legislative backing for the system.

The public of the Northern Territory does not know what guidelines or mechanisms are in place to ensure protection of privacy. We do not know what files are kept on us. I do not know what files are kept on me although I know of at least one, dating back to 1973, because it was dragged out and used against me in the Assembly sittings last November. I thought that was an appalling thing to do at the time and it is an example of the lack of protection for the ordinary person in the Northern Territory against the political use of information held on the computer files of this government. That is what this debate is about. We do not know whether there are individual files on people in the Northern Territory. We do not know where such files are kept. We do not know whether there is cross-indexing, transfer or linking of information and we do not know what the information is used for.



We have no idea if there is any protection against snoopers or hackers and against inappropriate use of this system. This point is valid, particularly in view of the increasing politicisation of the public service. We need to know what safeguards exist to guard against the improper use of all the information that is on computer record in the Northern Territory.

Mr Dale: By you.

Mr SMITH: Not by me, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dale: You authorised it. You said all your mates would come and rob the files.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, from time to time, some prominent people oppose this government, people like Frank Guivarra of the Transport Workers Union or Pat Dodson from the Central Land Council. We do not know what is on their files, if there are files on them, which I am sure there are. They do not have the opportunity to check their files and to check the information that is on those files. That is simply not good enough. We have the situation now where the National Party Senator for the Northern Territory, Senator Tambling, has gone on public record supporting a system of freedom of information for the Northern Territory yet this government consistently refuses to provide that basic protection for people who live here.

We do not know what checks are undertaken by the public service or the government to validate or verify information that is held on individuals. We do not have a statute of limitations about the time that records may be held and how often they should be purged to make sure that they are kept up to date. All that we have, except in very specific instances, is a requirement that records will be kept for 20 years. Something you did 19 years ago, Mr Speaker, may well come back to haunt you under the system that the Northern Territory government has put in place, and something you may not have done 19 years ago which for some strange reason may have been entered on your file may be brought up to haunt you, and that is even worse.

We have had glaring examples of information going astray or being lost. Very recently, a large box of files was found on the footpath outside the Supreme Court. It came from a government department and it contained personal information on a file about a union official. How can we trust the government of the Northern Territory with a massive bank of data on people all over the Territory if it cannot keep a basic paper filing system under control?

There are no guidelines in place that govern the rights of private companies, such as insurance companies, gaining access to public information. We do not have any guarantees that people whose employment is terminated or who leave employment in the Northern Territory have their files closed satisfactorily. I am aware of a few examples where people's files have been endorsed with the words: 'Never to be employed again'. They were not advised of that at the time. They only found out much later when they attempted to apply for positions in the Northern Territory. That is part of the problem we have here: there is nothing to protect the privacy of individuals and there is no protection for the individuals who are covered.

Mr Speaker, New South Wales has a privacy committee that works well. It includes lawyers, community representatives and parliamentary representatives and is established under a charter. If the Northern Territory government is not to be classed as hypocritical in adopting its current position on the Australia Card, it needs to look in its own backyard and to tidy up the lack

of personal safeguards and the lack of privacy which exists there. As I have demonstrated, the Northern Territory files on ordinary citizens contain much more information than is proposed by the Australia Card.

Let me go through the elements of the Australia Card, what it is all about and what it does. It is a program to establish people's identity, specifically for taxation, Medicare and social security purposes, and no other purpose. I will take the example of banks. This morning, the Chief Minister ran the hare that, every time you want to go to a bank, you will have to take your ID card. The card will be needed once only to verify an existing account or to open a new account. The card will be used for the following transactions, and they are limited: opening a new bank account; buying or selling real estate; sending funds overseas; investing in shares and futures; receiving rental income; commencing new employment; receiving payments from marketing authorities or produce agents; and applying for Commonwealth benefits, including Medicare and social security. Those are the only occasions on which production of the Australia Card will be necessary.

Mr Dale: You don't believe that.

Mr SMITH: I do. Apart from that, you will not require the Australia Card. You are not required to carry it around with you on a day-to-day basis. In fact, the average Australian will use the card only once or twice a year, excluding Medicare. If you have a great use of Medicare, obviously you will need your card. I will say that again. The average Australian will only have to use the card once or twice a year.

Mr Dale: Tell us about how you agree with pilfering from files. You have before, you know, and you would do it yourself if you were a public servant.

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

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, let us look at the privacy provisions in respect of this card, and I point out the contrast between the wealth of information that the Northern Territory government has on file, with no privacy provisions whatsoever, and the limited and extremely well-protected information which the Australia Card will contain. Let us not forget that the Australia Card will stop the welfare cheats and the tax cheats. That is the reason behind it.

The Minister for Education is scoffing. He obviously has some personal interest in not stopping tax cheats. He can scoff, but let us remember that that is the prime purpose of the Australia Card and let us look at the existing safeguards. They may well be insufficient, but let us see how thorough they are at present. They are the most comprehensive and far-reaching protections for individual privacy that have ever been enacted.

The bill contains an armoury of measures to prevent and deter any unauthorised disclosure of information from the Australia Card Register. For example, every person will have the right, once a year, to receive free of charge his full entry on the Australia Card Register. For a small cost-recovery fee, he will be able to receive additional copies of that information. A person can ask that information on the register be amended and, if the request is refused, can request a review by the Data Protection Agency. Every access to an individual Australia Card will be logged and a record of this will be made available to the individual. The privacy legislation stands as a landmark, as the most comprehensive legislation in Australia to protect privacy in the handling of personal information.

The bill makes it an offence, with significant penalties, for any unauthorised requirement that a card be produced or for an unauthorised disclosure of information. For example, police will not be authorised to ask for the Australia Card as identification. They will commit an offence if they do so. The only government agencies which will have access to the basic information will be the Tax Office, the Department of Social Security and the Health Insurance Commission. The Australia Card system will use dedicated communication lines which are in no way connected to the telephone system. Hackers who gain access to computer systems through telephone linkages will have no possibility of accessing the system. Access through computer terminals will not be to multiple records but only to individual records. In addition to the recording of all accesses to the system, any unsuccessful attempts to access the system will also be recorded. Multiple attempts to obtain unauthorised access will result in the complete suspension of system access. That is the most comprehensive list of privacy safeguards that any government in the world has come up with.

I hear the Minister for Education saying this is naive. It certainly shows a far greater concern for people's personal liberties than does the Northern Territory government, which has whole personal histories of families on computer without any safeguards. What access do parents have to school computer records on their children? Most would not even know those records exist. Not only the children's names are on file, but the parents' names as well. Disciplinary procedures taken against those kids are on the file and test marks will be on that computer file. What rights have parents in that situation to check what is on their child's school computer file? I would point out that there is nothing in writing that would provide any access.

That demonstrates, on a very small scale, what the problem is in the Northern Territory. We have information in computers all over the place, both at a very local level and also on the mainframe. There is no protection for people to check information on themselves, to be able to request that it be changed if it is inaccurate nor even to know what information is there. That is the problem that we have.

Mr Speaker, the broad requirement in the Australian Card debate is to weigh up 2 possibly conflicting interests. One is the desirability that all Australians, as far as possible, pay their fair share of tax and that Australians do not rip off the welfare system. When you realise that individuals have been known to rip off the welfare system to the tune of up to \$200 000 per year, you start to realise that there is something wrong. The second interest is to ensure that, in correcting those abuses, the personal liberties of people are not infringed upon. What the Australia Card proposal tries to do is to balance those 2 interests.

It may not be to the satisfaction of everyone. Quite clearly, there are many people in Australia who are concerned, particularly at the lack of civil liberty safeguards. I know that the Prime Minister has already indicated that the federal government is keeping the matter under review and is looking at the prospect of increasing those civil liberties safeguards. That is right and proper. For this government to have the cheek to move this motion - obviously for political grandstanding purposes - when, in its own backyard, it has a system which offers no protection to people on whom information is stored in its computer records is worse than contemptible and deserves the contempt of this Assembly.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I have never seen such a load of tripe in all my life as the amendment moved by the Leader

of the Opposition. I rise to speak to the amendment and I reserve my right to speak to the motion later.

It is obvious from the Leader of the Opposition's speech that he has not read a single paragraph of the report by the joint select committee of the federal parliament on the ID card. I would challenge those members opposite to listen to some of the facts and figures that I am about to give because the majority of them come from that joint select committee. Some of the quotes can only be of educational benefit to members opposite.

The amendment seeks to do no more than allow the opposition to attempt to avoid the motion before us. Members opposite seek to hide behind some pretence because they simply cannot face the Australia-wide opposition to the Australia Card. They are in a minority. Once again, they are embarrassed because they are tied to federal ALP policy. They do not have the ability to stand in this House and give a view of their own.

Mr Speaker, I thought I would try to give you a scenario of what it will be like. I guess the way to start is to address everybody as my fellow card subjects. If the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, has his way, that is how you can expect to be addressed in the future because that is what the ID card legislation calls Australians.

I thought I would start by telling honourable members how the ID card legislation will affect them once it has been rammed through the joint sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives. The first thing honourable members should know is that the ID card is not compulsory. You do not have to have one. Of course, you might find it difficult to get by without one. Your employer, for example, will face a fine of \$100 000 if he or she has not sighted your card. Presumably, that means that you will lose your job. You will not be able to open a bank account either. Your current bank accounts will be frozen. You will not even be allowed to look into your safety deposit box. You will have to find some other way of obtaining money, but you will not be able to trade in shares or deal in offshore currencies or buy into unit trusts or have any financial transactions.

Perhaps, to keep the wolf from the door, you might consider becoming a landlord. Bad luck! You cannot do that either without an ID card. In fact, you may not rent any land or speculate in property or buy any real estate, not even a home. Perhaps you decide then to become a primary producer. You then discover that you cannot sell your grain without an ID card. Thus, if you do not have an ID card, all your current liquid assets and means of obtaining income will be cut off.

It will be time to apply for social security. However, you cannot apply for social security without an ID card. By now, you will probably be starving to death but - you guessed it - without an ID card, you are not eligible for medical benefits. But, as I said, the ID card is not compulsory.

Under the circumstances, you may decide it is in your best interests to get yourself an ID card and a 10-digit prefix. It will be up to you to apply. It is not up to the government to give you one. You will have to write a letter to the Health Insurance Commission asking to be put on the central data bank. After a while you will receive a letter inviting you to come for an interview. You will have to be ready to prove who you are. You will need a birth certificate, tax file number, passport number and anything else you can find that proves you really are who you say you are. Your own word will not be good enough. You will need time off work. Everyone can expect at least a 15-minute interview and you will be photographed.

There could be a queue. Every Australian over 16 years of age will be lining up for an interview. However, there should be a well-staffed office near you. All the existing Medicare offices will be relocated or refurbished and there will be another 42 new offices established across Australia with 2150 new public servants appointed to cope with the interviews and the entering of all the data. You might as well use these people, Mr Speaker. You will be paying for their salaries, estimated at around \$64.5m per annum. Although the government cannot seem to come up with a precise figure, that is only a minor part of the total cost of the ID card. Originally, the government said the total cost would be \$381m. In its submission to the joint select committee of parliament on the ID card, it said the cost would be around \$100m over 10 years. In September 1985 it revised that figure to a mere \$733m. In December that year, it changed its mind again and estimated the total cost at \$827m.

The real cost will be much higher. The government figure does not include the cost to territory, state and local governments of putting ID numbers on their payrolls nor does it take account of the private sector's compliance costs. The Confederation of Australian Industry claims that the private sector's compliance cost will be \$540m. The Australian Bankers Association says the compliance cost for the banks alone will be \$60m. You can expect some increased bank charges. According to the Small Business Association, every small business can expect costs in the order of \$2000.

The government estimates totally exclude the costs to business of updating staff records and computer software to include ID numbers and of meeting the demand for data on financial transactions, rents collected, sales of luxury items, real estate, dealings in precious metals, deposits in trust funds, bank accounts, cash management funds, overnight deposits, share transactions, futures exchange transactions and all the other activities of the market.

The Australian National University Department of Information Systems believes that costs will be in the order of \$653m. The consensus among independent observers is that the total public and private sector costs will be \$200m. Federal government departments that might be expected to know have run for cover. In evidence to the joint select committee, the Department of Finance said that it would not be held responsible for figures provided by the Department of Health and the Health Insurance Commission on either future costs or revenue estimates.

The government argues that the cost, whatever it is, will be worth it because we are going to receive all that extra revenue or, more precisely, the government will get all that extra revenue. But, just as it is with the costs, the government is unclear as to exactly how much extra revenue it expects from the ID card. In September 1985, the government estimated that implementation of the ID card would retrieve some \$540m per annum from 1992-93 onwards. Five months later, it claimed that that figure would be \$674m a year. Nowadays, Susan Ryan talks about \$4600m over 10 years or a gross amount of \$5400m over the same period. Let us examine that figure by looking at the areas which the government claims justify the imposition of the ID card on Australians, starting with illegal immigrants.

The government estimated that tracking down illegal immigrants would retrieve \$1292m. The joint select committee refused to accept that figure, stating that estimates of illegal immigrants were based on guesswork, that the percentage of those working illegally was based on guesswork also, and that the entire estimate of revenue to be gained through the identification of illegal immigrants was no more than 'crystal ball gazing'. As a result of the

committee's finding, the government no longer intends the Department of Immigration to use the ID card system so both the revenue gain and that justification for the ID card are now lost.

Secondly, we come to dole cheats. The joint select committee was told by the Department of Social Security that its main problem with social security overpayments - dole cheating - was not the question of identity, but with the failure of people to declare other income. The ID card would have no effect at all on such cheating. Further, the same department has estimated that its costs of implementing the ID card scheme, at \$18m per annum, are exactly equal to the estimated revenue gain over 10 years - also \$18m. Thus, in respect of dole cheating, the government's own agency claims that the ID card will be ineffective in the main area of cheating and that the net benefit to the public purse will be nil.

Tax fraud is interesting indeed. On the face of it, the government should be able to justify the ID card on the basis of retrieving revenue lost through tax evasion alone. By far the greatest amount in additional revenue to be had from the ID card will come, according to government figures, from catching tax cheats: \$4070m of the total \$4600m over 10 years. But the fact is that that figure is a fraction of lost revenue through tax evasion and avoidance. In the Financial Review of 11 September this year, it was revealed that a confidential report had just been given to the Attorney-General by the Prime Minister's special tax adviser, Mr David Block. That report estimated the annual cost of corporate fraud and tax evasion at between \$3000m and \$14 000m, not over 10 years, but in 1 year.

Separately, the Australian Federal Police have also estimated the annual cost to the government of fraud at \$14 000m a year. Again, according to the government's own figures, the ID card will retrieve at best less than one-tenth of the annual cost of tax evasion and corporate fraud to the public purse. The big tax evaders will not be touched by the ID card. Their game is about offshore banking, complex corporate structures and creative accounting, not about the non-declaration of savings account interest, which is the area in which the ID card will be most effective.

The other main area of tax evasion is through the cash economy or black economy as it is known. The ID card will not touch it. Are you going to ask to see the ID card of the man you just gave \$10 to mow your lawn or \$30 to clean your windows or \$200 to fix your plumbing? Of course not. The ID card will have no effect in the 2 major areas of tax evasion: corporate tax fraud and the black economy.

Someone who knows a lot about tax evasion is Frank Costigan of the Costigan Commission. He is against the ID card, saying: 'There are much cheaper and more effective ways of coping with the problems which arise from tax evasion and avoidance' - like applying current laws and improving identification procedures when bank accounts are opened.

So far, Mr Speaker, I have dealt only with the stated justifications for the ID card. Let me take up some of the arguments against it. The main objection, apart from cost and the massive increase in the size of the bureaucracy, concerns the invasion of privacy. Firstly, we should look at the bureaucrats who will have access to your file. Those agencies with direct access will be the Health Insurance Commission and Medicare, the Australian Tax Office, the Department of Social Security and the Data Protection Agency. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Federal Police, the Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Immigration will be able to apply

to the Health Insurance Commission for information. The National Births, Marriages and Deaths Register, to be set up under a separate data bank, will be available to all the above plus the Australian Institute of Health and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

That is quite a few bureaucrats and, despite the protestations from Senator Susan Ryan, there is still real doubt about others who may get into the system, either through a terminal or by hacking, as it is called. But the real threat of the ID card central data bank comes from other directions. We already know that the administering authority, the Health Insurance Commission, has at least considered maintaining secret files on card subjects - files which would be unavailable to the individuals themselves - and that it has investigated the possibility of including information on files that should not exist under the act.

Even if we accept Susan Ryan's assurances of today, what guarantee is there that some future, less ethical, more totalitarian Australian government will not be tempted to follow that path? We know that public servants today have drawn up the blueprints for such a system. Will politicians or the public servants of tomorrow implement them? To answer 'no' is to indulge in what the joint select committee calls 'crystal ball gazing'. World history shows that people have most to fear from their own governments.

That is the threat of the future but there is a threat in place already. It comes quite simply from the introduction of a reliable link - something raised this morning by the Chief Minister - between your name and your every activity. The link is the 10 digit ID card number. While there may be limited access to your file in the central data bank, anyone and everyone can know and will know your ID card number. State and territory governments will have to know it in order to pay you, as will Telecom for its 94 000 employees and BHP for its 62 000 employees - in fact, anyone who employs anyone. In addition, banks, superannuation funds, trusts, solicitors, stockbrokers, futures traders, stock and station agents and hospitals will all hold the link between your name and number, and any details that are relevant to the conduct of their business with you.

It is argued that a future such as that envisaged by Orwell can only be achieved through a central data bank holding all information. But, the same result can be achieved through a multiplicity of data banks as long as they are linked by a common identifier. Some people have claimed that the ID card will put Australia on a par with the systems of Eastern Europe but, in fact, we will be well ahead of Eastern Europe which has neither the technology nor the small population base advantages here for such a system. Australia is the only advanced western nation that does not have laws regulating the use and transfer of personal data, a problem anticipated 10 years ago in countries like Sweden, the UK and America.

While it is true that an unauthorised person is prohibited under the intended legislation from demanding your ID card, there is nothing to prevent someone from asking you to volunteer your number. It would be an entirely natural request for a credit bureau, for instance, to ask you for your ID number, simply for verification. Once such an agency has that number, there is virtually no limit to the amount of information that can be amassed on you for valid or nefarious reasons. We already know that the Credit Reference Association of Australia maintains 6 million individual files. Purified with the addition of an identifying number, that is a powerful threat to your privacy. We also know that the trade in 'lists' is expanding fast.

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

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable minister from concluding his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: In the private section ...

Mr Ede: Photostat it and send it around.

Mr HANRAHAN: What are you, a moron?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will withdraw that remark. Honourable members will cease interjection.

Mr HANRAHAN: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The interjection from the member for Stuart is nothing short of outrageous. How many times has he stood before this House with a prepared text that he has spent many months on?

Mr Ede: Very rarely.

Mr HANRAHAN: Many times. Because he does not want to hear the facts on what the ID card is and what it represents for all Australians, he says that I should circulate the speech and not let people out there know what is really happening.

Mr Speaker, in the private sector there are already lists compiled from credit card applications, club memberships, magazine subscriptions, airline ticket sales, hotel accommodation, insurance policies, private superannuation applications, share trading and even video rentals. With the single common identifier of the ID number, the link will be established. Private organisations will have no trouble in compiling a dossier on you from lists that are readily for sale from direct mail organisations and others. Individual lists will show where you travel, what you owe on your mortgage, the value of possessions in your home, your marital status, your income, your credit card rating, your hobbies and interests, your medical history, your assets, club memberships and so on. To a certain extent, that can be done now due to the weakness of current privacy legislation but, until there is the identifying number, some privacy is guaranteed simply because information cannot be matched reliably.

In terms of the ID card, the government places far less importance on breaches of privacy than it does on breaches of revenue protection. Fines for revenue protection breaches are set at \$20 000 for the individual or \$100 000 for a company but a breach of privacy data protection attracts a fine of only \$5000. The government has a poor record on privacy protection, particularly the authority that will administer the ID card - the Health Insurance Commission.

Members are probably all aware of the case in which teenage girls in Melbourne were forced to give intimate details of their sex lives before a court when Medicare decided it was in the public interest to breach their privacy. In order to prosecute, a doctor's confidential Medicare files were used and several girls forced to give evidence in open court. One girl lost her job as a result. The doctor was acquitted. But there have been other instances where public servants have decided to use confidential information to support their cases. In April 1985, in the midst of a dispute between



doctors and the New South Wales government, the Sydney Morning Herald carried a scoop, front-page story on doctors' income levels. It was in direct contravention of section 130 of the Health Insurance Act which, like the ID card bill, makes the release of such information an offence. It was a clear attempt to use such information to put pressure on the doctors to settle their dispute. The then Minister for Health, Dr Blewett, declared that the Health Insurance Commission data system was so secure that, if such information was illegally released, it would always be known who had accessed the raw data. Yet, when police investigated the breach, they failed to find the culprit.

A final instance of such use of confidential data came about when the Canberra Territory Health Commission was in dispute with orthopaedic surgeons. It was discovered that the Department of Health was conducting an audit of the orthopaedic surgeons' records. The doctors claimed that such action was political, but were told that a complaint had been made and it had to be investigated. They asked who had made the complaint, and were told that the Department of Health's public interest policy prevented the department from revealing that. The doctors called in the Ombudsman who quickly established that the complaint had been made by none other than the Chairman of the Health Commission, the person with whom they were in dispute.

These instances show that, in the past, bureaucrats have decided for themselves that information should be released or used in the public interest, whatever the legislation might say. The public interest is a powerful argument that can be used both to justify unauthorised use of data and to expand the information on a data bank. We know that the Departments of Immigration, Veterans' Affairs, Housing and Construction, Education and Community Services and state police forces would like to gain access to the ID card system. We know that banks and credit control agencies would find it useful.

How long will it be before the argument of the public interest warrants an expansion of those with access or new information being entered on the central data bank? Who could argue against placing information on your ID card about voluntary organ donations, for instance? Wouldn't it be in the public interest to have gun registrations linked to the ID card? Shouldn't maintenance defaulters be noted on the card, and why not criminal histories, traffic violations, debtors and people with a history of mental illness? Would not such information on individuals be in the public interest? Bob Hawke and Susan Ryan will deny such intentions and we may choose to believe them, but they cannot speak for future governments. The ID card establishes a system that is open to abuse, now and in the future. It may even increase the risk of fraud. The Health Insurance Commission admitted to the joint select committee that there are 20 000 false Medicare cards in use, many obtained in order for people to create false identities.

The only way to guarantee against abuse is to pressure the federal government to dispose of the system now. Once it is in place, there will be too many vested interests to dismantle it. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. It should be realised that the bureaucracy first served the idea of the ID card up to the Fraser government. It was rejected. That did not worry the bureaucracy; it waited for a change of government and then sold the idea to Bob Hawke: 'Yes, Minister' at its best.

Given the convincing arguments that exist against the ID card, you may wonder, Mr Speaker, why it has been foisted on us all. The clue is in the fact that, in the past 4 years, the Australian Tax Office had had \$76.7m

allocated to it to upgrade and update its tax file system, but it has managed to spend only \$31.5m of the money allocated. The Auditor-General has been harshly critical of the Tax Office, stating that often it has the information to catch tax cheats, but has been unable to match information from banks with information from taxpayers. The fact is that the Australian Tax Office and the Department of Social Security have failed in their allotted tasks. Rather than admit their fault, they have grasped the life raft offered by the Health Insurance Commission and its empire-building ID card system. They would rather convince government of the need for such a new, expensive, intrusive and draconian system than admit past error.

Mr Speaker, you do not have to take my word for it. In evidence, before the joint select committee the Tax Office stated: 'If we followed the Australia Card identification requirements, and purified existing records on that basis, we would expect to achieve similar revenue gains to those under the Australia Card option'. In stark contrast, the then responsible minister, Dr Blewett, said that a tax file number with integrity would not raise anywhere near as much revenue as promised by the ID card. But, cross-questioned by the press, he admitted that no costing had been done.

What should be done, Mr Speaker? The answer is quite simple. The Tax Office and the Department of Social Security should do their job. They should enforce existing laws. The government should act on the recommendations of both the Auditor-General and the Costigan Commission, and administrative arrangements in the Department of Social Security and the Department of Immigration should be tightened. A national register of births, marriages and death should be established, but that is the only central data bank that is needed.

I will finish, Mr Speaker, by doing something that I do not often do, and that is read a bit of poetry. It is a verse from a ballad by Australian poet, Les Murray, and I think it carries a timely warning:

Hey, true blue, they are slipping it to you.  
They'll do it in the end in all positions.  
They are sliding in a card, while you are off your guard,  
Between you and your traditions.

Australia - and particularly the Northern Territory - takes pride in its freedom, its easy-going nature, tolerance and live-and-let-live lifestyle. What sort of future do honourable members hope for under a system that invades our privacy so much?

In conclusion, let me say that I consider the opposition's amendment to be nothing more than facile. Not only does it not comply with standing orders but it is not relevant to the motion moved. It should have been thrown out but we are happy to allow it to stand because it shows how afraid opposition members are to stand up and support the ID card. They are tied, as always, to federal government policy. They do not have minds of their own or any initiative of their own. They are simply wimps, followers of the Canberra cartel which the Northern Territory has been trying to liberate itself from for many years. I totally oppose the amendment moved by the opposition.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I would like to thank the Chief Minister for providing the Legislative Assembly with the opportunity of debating this very important matter. All members are aware that this matter has been addressed over the last 6 to 12 months by almost everybody in Australia with varying degrees of ferocity, feigned sincerity and absolute

hypocrisy. In bringing this matter before the Assembly, the Chief Minister has exposed the real motives behind opposition to the Australia Card. The debate on the card has been significant in 2 respects: for the incredible emotion displayed whilst defending a position of absolute hypocrisy and for the absolute ignorance of financial reality displayed by the card's opponents. With regard to the emotional opposition generated by people like the canting hypocrites opposite ..

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I think the word 'hypocrite' is unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, despite its accuracy, I withdraw that remark.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will withdraw the remark without comment.

Mr LEO: I withdraw the remark.

Mr Hatton: Try to settle down, Danny.

Mr LEO: I am happy to take on the interjector in this parliament or anywhere else. This apologist for spivs has been sitting in this Assembly ...

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

Mr LEO: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

The total disregard for human intellect which has been displayed by the opponents of the Australia Card is absolutely breathtaking. I want to ask these great civil libertarians where they were when young men were being conscripted to die in Vietnam. Where were these civil libertarians then? Where were these civil libertarians when the Queensland Premier banned public demonstrations of dissent? Where are these great civil libertarians when those sorts of things happen? Nowhere in sight.

Mr Hatton: Where were you?

Mr LEO: You were probably still in your cradle, son. These great civil libertarians were busily hiding behind whatever convention they could find. Their contribution to this debate is totally diminished by their activities over a decade. They have no credibility and the most that they can aspire to is to apologise for rip-off merchants and spivs.

For too long this country has been carried by the PAYE taxpayer, the average Joe Bloggs who goes to work with his lunch box, who sits in his workplace and eats his lunch under a tree or wherever he can, and who pays for the bludgers and rip-off merchants who are endemic in our society. If this card gets rid of one-tenth of those parasites, it has my applause. I have listened to a lot of absolute garbage in this House over many years, but the hypocrisy that has been displayed on this debate would have to take the cake.

Ask the citizens of the Northern Territory if they know that their police record is on file in the Chan Building, that their medical records are on file ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member used the word 'hypocrisy'. I would ask him to withdraw that remark and, in the interest of somewhat more rational debate, to tone his voice down somewhat.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I withdraw and, as long as you provide me with protection, I will certainly control my voice.

Mr SPEAKER: The request is fair. Honourable members will cease interjecting.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, ask the average citizen of the Northern Territory whether or not he knows that his police record and his medical records are held by the government, whether or not he knows that his driving licence and, if he is a public servant, his entire employment record, is on computer. Ask him whether or not he knows that he has no access to this information. If any Northern Territory minister wants to hold information about a member of the public on a computer file, it can be done. I have heard the 2 government speakers so far say that the Australia Card will not be secure. I am not a technocrat and I cannot speak to that but, if you think this bunch of nongs here can make a ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that remark and I remind him that he is skating on thin ice.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is the only way to skate.

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

Mr LEO: I withdraw.

Mr Dale: Are you a private patient or a public patient?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I do not doubt that the minister's medical record is on computer and shows when he got his last pox shot.

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

Mr LEO: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The average citizen in the Northern Territory does not know what details of his private life are held in the computer in the Chan Building. An even more profound problem is that he has no opportunity to view it and no opportunity to correct anything which may be incorrect on that record. There is no opportunity for people to do that in the Northern Territory, yet we keep hearing from people opposite about what great civil libertarians they are and what wonderful flag-wavers they are for the average individual.

In fact, they have displayed a gross disregard for the people whom they govern by entombing details of people's private lives over there in Block 8 with absolutely no opportunity for redress if any of the details are incorrect. Nevertheless, members opposite have the absolute audacity to criticise a technological development which will carry far fewer details on the average individual than those they have locked up across the road.

Mr Hanrahan: What is your theory on the 10-digit number?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, do I still enjoy your protection? If not, I will have to raise my voice.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members will cease interjecting.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I can cope with a lot of ideological nonsense from members opposite. I can cope with many things but there is one thing I cannot cope with. I cannot cope with behaviour which can only be described by one word, a word I will not use. It is a word which applies to people who conveniently change their attitudes for what they perceive as short-term political gains. It is a word which describes members of this government; they conveniently change their entire opinion on whatever subject matter may be being discussed because of the short-term political gain which they perceive. I have never been able to accept this convenience of attitude and I never will be able to accept it. The facts of life are that these people have no more interest in civil liberties than I have. They are pursuing a single line of political debate, and it has nothing to do with the Australia Card. It is about propping up a Chief Minister who is in a very shaky position. That is all this debate is about. The civil libertarian facade is so thin and such an obvious charade that no member in this House can honestly believe it.

Mr Speaker, as to the financial debate ...

Mr Coulter: This must be the unity. These are the 3 that voted for the deputy over there now.

Mr Dale: That's right.

Mr Coulter: The other 3 are out.

Mr LEO: As to the financial debate, Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again I ask that honourable members cease interjecting.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As to the financial debate, almost every single argument on the financial aspects of the Australia Card has been aired publicly during the last 6 months. Once again, I do not claim any particular knowledge. But I am not going to get up here and make selective readings from selective quotations about the card, as did the Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing. However, there is something that must be clear even to the dumbest member opposite. If the Australian government can collect a fairer share of revenue from all persons who are obliged to pay tax in this country, it could do 1 of 2 things, not the least of which is that it will guarantee the Northern Territory's financial future. I find it difficult to understand the Chief Minister once again leading us all to his personal suicide. However, besides guaranteeing us, as a Territory, our personal financial future, it will do another thing. The average John Doe on the street ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about Mary Doe?

Mr LEO: Okay, John and Mary Doe, and young Jonathan and young Mary - and I hope it is not pure delusion - will feel that this contribution to the income of the federal government is reasonable and fair. At the moment, the average John Doe feels he is being ripped off, that he is being touched by the mugs and the spivs members opposite continue to apologise for. That will be the consequence of the Australia Card. There can be no great hope that the

passage of any legislation will solve all the problems in the world. Of course it will not. We legislate against drink-driving but that does not stop drink-driving. We legislate against murder and mayhem but it does not stop murder and mayhem. Of course, the Australia Card will not solve all the problems, and it is ridiculous to suggest it will. People opposed to the card feel quite free to say that the card is supposed to do this and that. Of course, everybody would wish that the card would provide a perfect tax system but, of course, it will not. But, the average John Doe on the street, the average wage earner, the average PAYE taxpayer, will feel that his contribution is, at least, a fair share of the government's resources.

In conclusion, I suppose the best that can be said is that there are those who are for the card who will use whatever arguments they feel fit. Those who oppose the card, at whatever sacrifice to their own morality - and I suspect that there is no sacrifice to their morality because they are basically immoral anyway - will use whatever arguments ...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am sick and tired of this member directing a constant barrage of insults at this side of the House. All it is doing is showing exactly the integrity of the man himself.

Mr SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr DALE: The point of order is that his comments are unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member is obviously aware by now what type of language is regarded as parliamentary. I would ask him to withdraw that remark, and that is a last warning.

Mr LE0: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Certainly, I will withdraw and I would like to talk to you about it later.

Mr Speaker, their opposition is as shallow as are their personalities. The proponents of the card are making an honest endeavour to redress the basic inequalities and the basic injustices that have been suffered by PAYE taxpayers for too long in this country. I do not suppose for a second that the card will be an overnight success or that it will achieve what everybody hopes it will achieve. But, it is an honest endeavour to overcome the inequalities which have existed in this country for too long.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I had quite a speech worked out for this afternoon, following along the lines of those of the Chief Minister and the Leader of Government Business, but I thought I would take the opportunity to head the debate off because the next 2 or 3 hours of it might be quite futile. Honourable members may be interested to know that the ID card and the legislation are all but dead. This afternoon it was learnt that the introduction of the card, under the terms of the legislation, would be by regulations and, under that system, the Senate could defer the regulations and not pass them. It could be anticipated that the government would then change the legislation to commence it by proclamation, but the legislation has to go to the joint sitting in its original form. The feeling around the traps at the moment is that it is history and therefore I will save my speech for another day.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will not do as the member for Barkly did and save my speech for another day because I feel very strongly about this matter. I know that pressure has been mounting in the federal parliamentary corridors of power and I know that the general consensus amongst

people behind the scenes is that the Australia Card legislation will not reach the statute books, at least not in its present form. However, I think it is very important that, as elected members in this House, we make our views very strongly known.

First of all, I will speak against the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. His contribution to this debate this afternoon was appalling. He listed every item of government records that are held in the Territory, indeed held by any state government anywhere. We heard about drivers' licences and there was an implication that, for some reason or other, photographs on drivers' licences make it all the worse. Of course, honourable members realise, as does the Leader of the Opposition, that a driver's licence with a photograph is only a 1-off. The only person who has it is the holder of the licence himself. No copy of that photographic licence is kept anywhere. School records, liquor records, land records and police records are all records which are held confidentially. I would like to see the Leader of the Opposition try to obtain his police records, if he has any. The Leader of the Opposition commented that parents could not obtain intimate school records. At the same time, he advocates that the Assembly condemn the Territory government's collection of records because it will make them available to people.

Mr Speaker, government records are not available to people. They are not available to any Tom, Dick or Harry. They are utilised for the provision of government. One point that the member for Nhulunbuy was quite emphatic about in his usual mixed-up, excited, shouting manner, was the idea that the records held in the Chan Building are somehow available to people such as ministers who work in the Chan Building. That is absolute rubbish; it is absolutely ridiculous. The suggestion demonstrates total ignorance on the part of the member for Nhulunbuy. Mr Speaker, I shall say in this Assembly that, without any doubt, the records are absolutely unavailable to any person who is not authorised to access them. There is absolutely no access to members of this Assembly or to any unauthorised personnel. To suggest that that may be so is complete and utter nonsense.

Obviously, the government has to keep records. Governments have always kept records. Governments have kept them in files in filing cabinets. At present, those records are held on a database in separate areas and they are accessible only to separate departments. The police cannot access the school records. The Liquor Commissioner cannot access the motor vehicle records. There is no method of cross-referencing those records.

If the concept of the Australia Card is adopted, we will have a central database and the fears that the Leader of the Opposition so naively cast aside will become realities because there will be the ability to tap that information from one source. That is one of the great problems about the concept of the Australia Card: the ability to collect all the data that is available presently in government systems, to put it all under one roof and to have it available to governments for their own manipulation or whatever they deem is suitable for the benefit of the state.

The Leader of the Opposition said there were 2 issues. He said there was the need to ensure that people pay tax and the need to ensure people did not rip off the welfare system. There are only 2 issues, as he said, but one is the issue of personal liberty, the individual's rights, and the other is the concept of whether the state has the right to collect and manipulate an individual's records. I accused him of being naive with some of the things he said because he was making out that all is hunky-dory.

Cast your mind back, Mr Speaker. History is the great teacher. What happened in Hitler's Germany in the 1930s? We had a man who was democratically elected to lead Germany which, at that time, was the hub of western civilisation. It had the greatest culture in terms of music and Vienna was the world leader in medicine. The universities of Germany were famous throughout the world for being centres of intellectual and philosophical discussion. If anyone had suggested, in 1930 in Germany, that there would be the holocaust within the next 10 years, he would have been locked up as being mad. Nevertheless, it occurred and this man stands there naively and says that no such thing could ever happen.

Mr Speaker, we have statements such as that made by Dr Blewett at the 1986 South Australian ALP conference. The Chief Minister quoted it and it is important. Dr Blewett said: 'Let me say as a socialist ...'. Remember that the people sitting on the opposite side of the Assembly are socialists. This applies to them; this is their philosophy and their thought process. 'Let me say as a socialist that the interests of the community should come before the individual right'. That is accepted by members opposite as a basic part of their political philosophy. 'As socialists, we should not get too hung up on privacy because privacy, in many ways, is a bourgeois right that is very much associated with the right to private property'.

Mr Speaker, that is the philosophy. There was no such philosophy in Germany in the 1930s, yet a very short time after the election of Adolf Hitler, identification cards were issued. We all know that Jewish people had to carry identification cards. People were identified by their ethnic origin and they had to paint a yellow star on themselves. We know what the end result was: a blight on the history of humanity.

We have a group of people who espouse the philosophy that the state comes before the individual and they are asking us to trust them. The Prime Minister says that it is to protect us and that the government would not let anything happen with all this information because it has controls. I am sure that that is what Adolf Hitler said. We can laugh about it. We can be rubbished about it. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition denigrate any comments against the ID card. We heard the rantings and ravings of the member for Nhulunbuy and, out of the 20-odd minutes he was on his feet, he attempted for 1 or 2 minutes to cast aspersions on those who have the backbone to stand up and say that this is not something we want to see occurring in our country.

Blewett says that the interest of the community comes first. Exactly what does that mean? In the future, because we do not have enough people to dig ditches, will we say that the next thousand children born will be designated as ditch diggers? Is that in the interest of the community? Will that sort of manipulation take place in the future? We do not know, but it will be possible with the Australia Card. Will we say that people who have left school at 14 can only have 1 child because we do not want a great number of people from uneducated families? Will we designate how many children those people can have because it is better for the community?

The reaction to that is an open mouth. I bet the people in Germany would have reacted similarly in 1930 if they had been told that people would be exterminated in gas ovens 10 years after Adolf Hitler was elected. That is the sort of thing that can happen and we sit here and we laugh about it. We are talking about people whose philosophy is that the community comes before the individual. If we have to lock up or destroy a few individuals for the benefit of the community, do we do it?



The Leader of the Opposition has decided to come back into the House. It is very nice to see him again. He spends most of his time outside but, occasionally, he comes in. He is having a bit of a laugh there because he believes that privacy is all-important. Does he? Let us have a look at the Hansard. Let us go back to 28 July and see his concept about the interests of the community coming before the individual. This is a wonderful example: 'I have to say the public servant who leaked that information has performed a very real public service'. Somebody interjected: 'So you do say that?' He said: 'Oh yes, I do because that is a public service'. There is another interjection: 'You would do it too, would you, Terry?' He replied: 'I would indeed. That sort of information deserves ...'. In other words, it is on record that he condones government information being leaked and provided for the purposes of other people.

He loves that sort of thing. He stands here and says the Australia Card is terrific and there would be no danger to anyone's privacy. He believes that people's privacy must be protected yet a few months ago he was saying that leaking of information is a great thing. The man has double standards but he has been caught out, as he always is.

The community must be made aware of the sort of problems that we will have in future if we have a system of recording the identity of people and making them carry cards and produce those cards when demanded. It will go further than that because we cannot control what will occur in the future. We do not know what sort of world we will be living in. We do not know what sort of pressures will be brought on governments. However, you can rest assured that such legislation will never be repealed. The Income Tax Act was brought in as an emergency measure during wartime. It was to be repealed after the troubles were over. It has been repealed all right; we are all suffering it.

The Chief Minister mentioned some provisions regarding fines and jail for offences relating to the Australia Card. I will just run over a few of them and ask a few questions about them. First of all, there is a fine of \$5000 or 2 years imprisonment or both if the card is destroyed for any reason that cannot be proven accidental. I suppose the onus of proof will be on the prosecution or perhaps it will not. Maybe it will be a regulatory offence and the person accused will have to prove that the card was accidentally destroyed. Does it have to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt or the balance of probabilities? Who knows? But we know that, in the end, anyone who cannot produce a card will be charged with an offence.

There is to be a fine of \$500 for losing a card and failing to notify the government within 21 days. I am sure the member for Stuart, the member for MacDonnell and a number of other members have constituents whose lifestyles will make it hard for them to keep safe custody of an Australia Card. Do we stand up for them and say that they should not be fined \$500 or do we say that it is fair that they should be treated the same as everyone else if they lose a card and do not notify the government within 21 days?

There is a fine of \$20 000 for failing to produce a current card to the Tax Office on demand. Is the Tax Office a tax officer or could the office be deemed to be a building where a taxation officer is working? The fine is \$20 000 for failing to produce a card on demand. You would not want to be wearing your swimming togs when you are asked for it unless you have pockets in them. Another one is a fine of \$1000 or 6 months jail for failing to attend a compulsory conference if so ordered by the ID card agency. There is a fine of \$5000 or 2 years jail for businessmen failing to submit a customer's card number to the government. What about this one? A fine of \$20 000 for

businessmen employing casual staff and not submitting their card number. How is 'casual staff' defined? Under what circumstances? This stuff is absolutely ridiculous! There is a fine of \$5000 for selling a block of land without submitting the purchaser's card number to the registrar. What happens if ...

Mr Smith: Think of all the tax which is being avoided.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, let us get rid of that argument once and for all. Most members of this Assembly would agree that Mr Costigan would be one of the most knowledgeable men in this country in regard to tax evasion, tax avoidance and the steps that should be taken to prevent such things occurring. I think that most intelligent members in the Assembly would also accept that the select committee of the federal parliament which considered the ID card had access to more detailed information than that which the Leader of the Opposition has seen. However, both Mr Costigan and the select committee have said categorically that the ID card will not change the situation in respect of tax evasion. That is a furphy and the Leader of the Opposition is talking rubbish. You are putting an argument which has been discredited. It will not happen. We are all sick of that argument. You can say as many times as you like that the sun will set in the east, but it never will. The same applies to this argument in respect of the Australia Card.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I simply point out that the increasingly frequent use of the second person singular or second person plural pronoun by the Attorney-General indicates quite clearly that he is refusing to direct his comments through the Chair and that he should be restricting his references ..

Mr Dale: Stop pointing. You look like ET again.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services who might like to pick up his standing orders. Pointing is not contrary to standing orders. Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chair and I would appreciate your pointing that out to him at some appropriate time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that any person who had his ears open would have been well aware that all remarks were being addressed through the Chair. The member for MacDonnell's point of order typifies the behaviour of members of the opposition when the argument is starting to go against them: they look for some way of squeezing out of it. At least, I will give the member for MacDonnell credit for attempting to do that with some intelligence, completely contrary to the member for Nhulunbuy who has a strange way of making himself heard when he is having trouble.

The Department of Social Security gave evidence to the standing committee that the ID card would result in no net savings in relation to welfare fraud and would be ineffective in tackling the real issues in that area and in the misstatement of personal income. However, the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy know better. They are experts. They know better than their colleagues in New South Wales who have also said that the Australia Card is something that our society does not want. Members opposite berate anyone who suggests that the Australia Card is a nasty thing on the basis that they are obviously supporting tax cheats and dole bludgers. What a load of rubbish! The Department of Social Security has told the parliamentary select committee that the card will not stop fraud or the misstatement of income.

We have heard about all the matters which were reported on by the select committee. The Australia Card will not do any of the things that the member for Nhulunbuy and the Prime Minister claim it will do. Why do they continue to attempt to defraud the Australian public with their arguments that the card will stop tax cheats and welfare fraud? I can only believe that there must be an ulterior motive and to find out what that is we must go back to what Dr Blewett said to the 1986 ALP Conference in Adelaide: that the Welfare of the community must come before the welfare of the individual. If you are a government looking for ways and means of manipulating individuals, what could be a better tool than an ID card?

Before I conclude, I want to point out that those who advocate the use of the ID card have not come up with anything that suggests that tax cheats will be picked up. They have come up with no arguments which contradict what the Tax Office has said, what Mr Costigan has said or what the select committee reported. They have come up with no arguments which demonstrate that it will stop welfare fraud. The Department of Social Security says it will not work. There have been no plausible arguments in its favour but the Prime Minister of Australia and the Leader of the Northern Territory Opposition persist.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to make a few brief comments in this debate today. The first is that it is entirely inappropriate for this Assembly to debate this issue. There are myriad issues which are of deep concern to the people of the Northern Territory and, whilst this certainly is one of them, we have 3 representatives in the federal parliament, 2 Labor representatives and 1 CLP representative. It is their job to lead the public debate in the Northern Territory on this particular issue. As far as I am concerned, the only motive the Chief Minister has in this matter is to do some grandstanding. He and his conservative mates have decided that the Australia Card is the campaign of the month and they have decided to go for broke on it. We therefore have his extraordinary announcement that he is a fourth-generation Australian and liberties this and privacies that and so on and so forth. He was actually outdone by the Deputy Chief Minister, followed by some rabble-rousing from the usually rational Attorney-General. It has been quite extraordinary.

My point is that, just as I found it quite inappropriate for the Alice Springs Town Council to pass motions about Pine Gap, I find it inappropriate for the Chief Minister to introduce this motion when we already have a far more relevant matter to debate. I am referring to the Minister for Education's 51-page statement, which we will all be debating from about 5 pm until 10 pm. That statement deserves the most reasoned and thoughtful debate today and it will be the last cab off the rank.

I hope the Chief Minister's efforts prove fruitful and that he gets a couple of paragraphs on the front page of the NT News and an interview on Channel 8 to satisfy his ego so that, when he gets together with the shadow premiers, whoever and wherever they are, to abase themselves at Joh's feet, he will be able to say: 'I did my bit. I introduced a statement about this'. The fact of the matter is that I do not believe that this is a particularly appropriate matter for debate, given the large number of issues that need to be debated in this Assembly. Frankly, the Chief Minister is wasting his time. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, his comments were long on rhetoric and high on emotion. His emotionalism was only exceeded by that of the Deputy Chief Minister who did not raise much of value.

Since we are on the question of emotionalism, I notice that one of the people that the Chief Minister referred to was Mr Geoffrey Robertson, who is well known to all of us, particularly the Minister for Mines and Energy, as the host of the Hypotheticals program. It is a very interesting and incisive program and Mr Robertson is involved in this highly emotional campaign. He is personally opposed to the card, but I would just like to draw the attention of honourable members to an interview with him. It appeared in the Times on Sunday of 13 September and was accompanied by a lovely photograph of him saying, in his appealing way: 'People need to feel free'. I think that is probably true. In the interview, Mr Robertson concedes that the card is unpalatable mainly for emotional reasons. I suggest that the hysteria and lack of objectivity that is being whipped up by people like the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, who are bringing more heat than light to this debate, is not in the interests of the Northern Territory, not in the interests of rational debate and not in the interests of the country as a whole.

I remember when I first smelled a rat about the opposition to the Australia Card. I must admit I had not read a great deal about the pros and cons of it, except in fairly broad terms. It was not an issue I had studied particularly deeply. I first smelled a rat when I heard that one of the chief opponents of the Australia Card was that arch defender of civil liberties, that well-known proponent of the freedom of the individual, that firm defender of the right of people to protest publicly - the Premier of Queensland. It occurred to me that, when the Premier of Queensland decides that civil liberties are being invaded, it is time to smell a rat.

Along with the Chief Minister and his other conservative mates, the Premier of Queensland has been given his marching orders by the white shoe brigade and the army of people who do not pay taxes. To corroborate the comments of the member for Nhulunbuy, significant numbers of people will be caught up with who are not paying their fair share of tax. They are worried that, for the first time for many years, we have a federal government that is fair dinkum about finding an equitable means of raising government revenue. It is not prepared to let wages increase and leave the tax scales the same so that there is an increasingly unreasonable burden on PAYE taxpayers. The people opposite are just joining the campaign on the part of people who do not want to pay their fair share of tax.

Mr Dale: Tell us what your constituents think of it?

Mr BELL: I will respond to the Minister for Health and Community Services. I think there will be many administrative problems with the Australia Card in relation to traditionally-oriented Aboriginals, people on pastoral stations, people at Yulara, people living at roadside inns and so on in my electorate. However, I find it quite extraordinary that the Chief Minister has decided to waste the Assembly's time with this.

If the people on the opposite benches are so concerned about privacy, let me just draw to their attention the fact that the Rhyolite satellite that is monitored from Pine Gap is in fact capable of picking up all sorts of telephonic communications.

Mr Manzie: It is not available to a central database.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I understand how concerned the Attorney-General is about the rights of the individual and invasions of privacy. I draw to his attention a wonderful little volume by Mr Desmond Ball, a former Minister for

Transport and Works, who has made a study of the defence implications of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line. He is a very responsible public policy analyst. In his book, 'A Suitable Piece of Real Estate', relating to US installations in Australia, he refers to the capacity of the Rhyolite satellite to monitor telephonic communications. He raised the question of what happens to the recording of any Australian transmissions once they are sorted out. He asks:

Are they destroyed or passed back unread to the Australian intelligence and security agents or are they retained and those of interest read and analysed by the CIA and NSA? It is most likely that the latter possibility was what Christopher Boyce was referring to when he stated during his trial that the CIA was deceiving Australia 'on a daily basis'.

Mr Speaker, bear in mind that I did not bring on this debate but, if you are interested in the general issue of privacy, I suggest that you take those comments on board - you won't be able to of course - and attempt to find out just how well your privacy is secured in that regard. On the same theme, I endorse the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The further hypocrisy of the people on the government benches ...

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

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

I find a fundamental contradiction in the government's espousal of a concern about privacy, not only with respect to its failure to research the misuse of intercepted telephonic communications but also on the basis of its own use of computer data, which the Leader of the Opposition has so carefully described. It is high time that some sort of privacy legislation was provided in that regard. As an unashamed socialist, I have no hesitation in endorsing such privacy legislation.

A Member: Like Neal Blewett.

Mr BELL: Members opposite must have been pretty light on for material because all 3 speakers quoted Neal Blewett. I am quite sure that, in quoting Dr Blewett, the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister were well aware of the context in which the comment was made. It was made at a Labor Party conference. If either the Chief Minister or the Attorney-General is interested in hearing some spicy rhetoric, he probably should come to the public gallery of the next Northern Territory Labor Party conference. I suggest he wear a raincoat; otherwise he will need to take a shower afterwards because the blood does not necessarily stay on the floor. I have no doubt that that particular comment has been taken drastically out of context. I am sure Dr Blewett is more keenly aware than either the Attorney-General or the Chief Minister that the tension between the freedom of the individual and the need for collective action is one of the reasons why we have parliaments.

What I am suggesting, Mr Speaker, is that what the government is running is essentially an emotional and ill-informed campaign. There really was no need to address this particular issue. On the question of civil disobedience, I must admit I found the prospect of the Chief Minister actually leading the charge, tearing up his Australia Card and going to Darwin Prison really quite extraordinary. I suppose that, when he was an angry young student, he burnt his draft card for the same reason. Since we are cutting a fairly broad swathe through civil liberty issues, he might like to tell us his attitude

towards conscription. It sounds as though Mitchell Street will become a Vietnam moratorium revisited, with the Chief Minister burning his Australia Card ceremonially. I hope he will make it a state occasion and that I get a written invitation.

Mr Dale: You would probably be tied up at Pine Gap.

Mr BELL: Speaking of Pine Gap, I presume the Chief Minister and the whole Northern Territory Cabinet will be fronting up there because of their deep concern about the invasion of privacy that is represented by Pine Gap. I presume that the people opposite will be consistent about this.

Mr Speaker, this statement and this whole debate does no credit to this House and does no credit to the Chief Minister for introducing it. I bitterly resent the time of this Assembly being wasted on it.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I find it extremely difficult to believe that the member for MacDonnell should suggest that this topic is no business of ours and that it is something for the 3 federal members. I do not know of any topic which is more important to the Australian people than this Australia Card.

Whilst the member for MacDonnell seems to think that emotionalism is a bad thing, I personally feel that the people of Australia have every right to become very emotional about this particular card and the implications it could have for this country of ours. I believe that we live through our emotions. To try to decry that is wrong. Our emotions are vitally important. The freedom of the people of this country and that of our children is at stake. I am reminded of my neighbour who came from Czechoslovakia. He told me that, just after the end of World War II, people started to warn about communism taking over in Czechoslovakia. They were pooh-poohed and now it is a fact of life, and he had to flee the country because he was not prepared to live in that situation.

Mr Speaker, for evil to triumph, all that is needed is for good people to sit down and do nothing. I am delighted that, since they started to find out the implications of the Australia Card, the Australian people have risen up and are voicing their opinions very strongly. It is something for every Australian, it is something for every town council, it is something for every state and territory parliament and it is something for the federal parliament to get their teeth into. To try to say that the 3 members representing the Territory are the only people who have any right to say anything about the Australia Card, that we are wasting our time and it is none of our business, is ridiculous. That is the very attitude that I believe the Australia Card would try to introduce and the very thing that we have to fight against.

Every sinew and every muscle that we have has to be brought to bear. Maybe the member for Barkly is right. Perhaps a mechanism has been found to snooker the Australia Card in the federal parliament.

Mr Hatton: Don't you believe it.

Mr COLLINS: I would not like to bet on it either, and that is why I am trying to put an extra nail in the card's coffin. That is the right of every individual and that includes the people of my electorate. I am here to speak on their behalf. There is great opposition to this card, and so there should be.

I would like to have a look at some of the factors that appeal to me in the debate about this matter. This afternoon, the Leader of the Opposition produced a red herring with his examples of information held in the database of the Territory government. I do not trust any government particularly. However, I think the Attorney-General explained very well that, although that information is on computer, it is still compartmentalised: it is not cross-referenced.

Mr Ede: So is the Australia Card.

Mr COLLINS: There will be a single number which can access everything.

Mr Leo: Wrong. Absolutely wrong.

Mr COLLINS: Stop trying to interject.

I think that the Leader of the Opposition persuaded me more than anything else that the Australia Card should be opposed. Taken in that context, it was an excellent speech.

The joint parliamentary committee set up by the Hawke government, on which there was a majority of Labor members, together with Liberal, National and Democrat members studied the ID card proposal and examined the 7 ways in which the government believed the Australia Card would assist in solving the problems of tax evasion, illegal immigration and so on. That joint committee produced a report which, on every count, said it did not believe that the card would work. Members of that committee have had a much better chance than any member here will ever have of going behind the scenes, talking to and questioning public servants and whatever else. Remember that the committee had a majority of Labor members. I heard a snide comment from a Labor Party member over there that the committee was not well chosen. We know of the divisions in the Labor Party and obviously they are real. It is pretty clever of Bob Hawke to try to give at least a public impression of unity. That is all to his credit as a leader, although the media has certainly given him a lot of help. The select committee's report is one thing that persuades me that the Australia Card should be opposed: it will not meet the objectives that the government has set for it. It will be costly, it will add a tremendous amount of red tape and it will not do its job.

This afternoon, we have heard terms such as 'spivs', 'supporters of spivs', 'mugs' and so forth. I am not too sure what those terms mean, but the implication was pretty clear: that anybody who opposes the Australia Card is supporting tax evaders and cheats. I resent that, Mr Speaker. I resent that very strongly. Mr Costigan, who established the National Crimes Authority, pointed out in his statements on the Australia Card that ample legislation is in place to combat the crimes of cheating, tax dodging and so on. What we need is for those laws to be enforced.

I would like to relate a story which was told to me. A lady dropped into my office a couple of weeks ago on a matter which is irrelevant to this debate. She told me that, a couple of years ago, she worked for a doctor in Alice Springs for a year. She said that many patients asked to pay by means of a social security card. They were given a card to fill out for the doctor's record and, besides name and address, there was a space to indicate the person's employer. Quite a number of these people apparently wrote down the names of their employers. They were paying by means of the dole card and were writing down the names of their employers. They must have been a little thick. That is not the thing that concerned me. The lady said that she

reported such cases to the social security office and was told that it did not want to know. The people who are supposed to be implementing the laws are not doing it. I just wished she had come to me. I do not know how far I could have got but, by gosh, I would have had a go. It was too late because she had been out of that job for a couple of years.

That is the problem. The laws are there. There are people who are condoning tax dodging and cheating, for whatever reason. With a little imagination, one could think of many. I believe Mr Costigan was right and that simple example illustrates the nature of the disease. The public service is not implementing the rules. If it were and everybody who was supposed to be paying tax was paying tax, perhaps the rate of taxation could go down. However, knowing how greedy governments can be, I would not like to bet on it.

In my view, governments exist to serve the people. We are servants and, as such, we are in a lower position than our constituents. That is the way it should be. We are here to serve them, not to serve our ends and have them bow and scrape to us. The ID card is a step along the line whereby the people will be there to serve the government and to make it easy for government. That leads eventually to totalitarianism and I oppose it.

It is often said that, in politics, very strange bedfellows come together. On the issue of the ID card, this is indeed true. I never thought I would want to stand shoulder to shoulder with Peter Garrett. I oppose his attitudes on Pine Gap, but I will stand shoulder to shoulder with him on the Australia Card. I have not had a great deal of regard for the Democrats but Senator Janine Haines has a great deal of courage. What a terrible pity that the opposition, the National Party ...

Mr Ede: And the Communist Party.

Mr COLLINS: Indeed, I am delighted that the left of the Labor Party, some 32 members according to The Australian, is stirring. If they cross the floor in the joint sittings, then the bill will go where it deserves to go. I do not care that their motivation is that they think that a future right-wing government would increase the power of the card and hurt their liberties. It is left-wing governments I am worried about but, if these people have common ground with me in terms of the Australia that we wish to live in, I will join with them. I do not care what their basic motives are. We do not want anybody having such powers.

Mr Speaker, I obtained a copy of the bill and I sat down one afternoon and read it. The Attorney-General and the Chief Minister have given examples of some of its provisions, which sent shivers down my spine. The ID card will not be part of the Australia that I want to live in. It is not an Australia Card; it is a very un-Australian card which has been well-described as the Moscow card, a totalitarian card.

I am prepared to stand alongside the Chief Minister in this particular issue and we will destroy our Australia Cards together. I believe that there will be millions of other Australians who will do the same because we will not tolerate this nonsense. We respect our freedom far too much and there are plenty of other ways the government can achieve the goals it claims the card will achieve.

Mr Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's motion and I oppose the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.



Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, unfortunately I had to leave the House for a short time and missed some of what honourable members have said. I would, however, like to start by indicating my disappointment at the attitude of the member for MacDonnell who said that we are wasting the House's time because this matter should be dealt with on behalf of Territorians by our 3 representatives in the federal parliament. What he is really saying is that this Assembly has no role in debating matters which are primarily the responsibility of the federal government. That means we should not raise in this Assembly matters such as airports in the Territory, national parks in the Territory, Telecom, offshore mining, offshore fishing or, of course, uranium mining. These are all federal government responsibilities, as is defence activity in the Territory or the lack of it. All of those things impinge very much on the day-to-day lives of Territorians and therefore this House has a very definite interest in them. The honourable member for MacDonnell is a reasonably intelligent fellow and he should therefore understand and agree with what I am saying. I suppose he just raised the matter in order to score a point.

To move on to the matter itself, I will start by saying that the federal minister who seems to have public carriage of this affair, Senator Ryan, seems to have done an appalling job of handling it politically during the last couple of weeks. I want to take up 2 of the points that she has fumbled. I will refer to her press release of 14 September as Special Minister of State and I will concentrate on 2 short quotations from the statement. The first says: 'The Special Minister of State, Senator Ryan, today denied that there would be a secret dossier attached to the Australia Card Register'. The second says: 'The Australia Card Register will only contain basic identity data such as date of birth and address'. That sounds pretty straightforward, innocent and clear-cut. However, within a couple of days, the organisation calling itself the National Campaign Against the ID Card released some documents. Mr Robertson, a member of that organisation, produced a document showing the existence of an Assessing Work File which would include far more detailed information than that included in the Australia Card Register. The Australia Card Register, of course, is the file that individual citizens will have access to.

Senator Ryan used the usual line against Mr Robertson. She said that the document was out of date but, on Monday 21, 1 week after her original press release, she admitted that the Assessing Work File did in fact exist. The Australian of Tuesday 22 September published an article by Mike Seccombe headed, 'Second ID card file not secret, says Govt'. That article contained the following:

There would be a second computer file on citizens kept as part of the working of the Australia Card legislation, but it would be neither a secret nor a permanent one, the federal government said today.

Some details of the operation of the second computer file were given yesterday in answer to claims by an anti-card group, the Australian Privacy Foundation, that leaked information that proved the existence of the secret data bank that it had previously claimed would be established.

A spokesman for the minister responsible for the Australia Card, Senator Ryan, said the file, known as the Assessing Work File, would operate as a mechanism for updating information held in the main Australia Card Register. She said that, because information gathered about card holders would be constantly changing, the second file would hold details for short periods while they were being verified.

This matter is very important because one of the arguments which the federal government has used in support of the card is that members of the public will have access to the information on their own files. There is a system whereby an individual can apply to have information on his file changed and there is a system whereby the federal government can change information, such as addresses and so forth, on individual files. That sort of information will be changing all the time. However, the system which allows individual access to the Australia Card Register does not apply to the secondary section of the computer files, the Assessing Work File which I have mentioned. This is very important because it puts the lie to the argument that the individual will have access to all the information on his file.

Let me first look at some of the items which will be included on the Australia Card Register, the computer program to which we will all have access. We have been told by Senator Ryan that it will contain only basic identity data such as date of birth and address. That sounds pretty reasonable and difficult to object to. Why, then, does the Australia Card Register computer program contain 150 headings, of which 70 are to contain information by the time a card is issued? Apart from current name and other names one may have used earlier in life, residential address, postal address, sex and date of birth, the headings also include the name of responsible adult number 1 and the name of responsible adult number 2. Presumably, one's parents' names are entered on one's file, together with their Australia Card numbers. In addition to your parents' name - perhaps they cannot be trusted entirely - there is provision for the name of a third party. It seems that one will have 3 referees. This is in the section of the computer which we will all have access to.

There is also a heading for place of birth. Senator Ryan said all that would be recorded was date of birth and address. It will include place of birth, mother's maiden name, father's name, eligibility status - whatever that means - and, if you are a naturalised citizen, the date on which citizenship was granted. If you are a permanent resident of Australia, it will include the date of your arrival and the date on which permanent residency was granted. If you are a visitor to Australia, and I presume people who are legitimately working in Australia will have to carry ID cards, the date of your arrival, your nationality, and proposed date of departure will be included. All this may sound pretty innocent but it is much more than basic data such as date of birth and address.

Other headings include one which says: check that list under the heading 'registration' matches against external files. This seems to mean that much of the information you provide will be assessed against external sources of the same sort of information. I guess this is to make sure you are telling the truth. There are other headings such as the 'returned mail' flag which is indicated on the computer when something goes wrong and you should perhaps be given some attention or, some awful people would say, investigated.

I have a flow chart about the computer system which is to be used. The chart shows everything that the program can do. This information has come to light through the release of information which is embarrassing to the federal government. One of the things that will flag on your file and bring people's attention to it is 'undelivered mail'. One presumes that this is undelivered mail from the Australia Card Authority. I would hope that it does not have information about other undelivered mail. However, if the organisation writes to you and you do not write back or if the mail is returned, your file is flagged and the resultant action is directed to your parent or dependant. After your mail is returned to the organisation, your parents are asked where you are. There are many mechanisms like that.

My point is that the federal government is asking for much more than your date of birth, address, name and mug shot to be on the register you have access to. But, what about the register to which you do not have access? Senator Susan Ryan has now admitted that this exists and is called the Assessing Work File. It is a file which, she explained, would hold information while it was being verified and updated prior to being transferred to the actual Australia Card Register.

The Assessing Work File contains quite an interesting list of headings in its computer program. I would like to read a few of them out because the legislation before the federal parliament does not give individuals access to this computer program containing information about themselves. The Assessing Work File has 37 classifications. These include things like Medicare number and group indicators. The group indicators are of concern because we have not heard much about them. These are: Aboriginals, remote localities, institutionalised, aged. Why is this identity card, which is only to contain basic information, to include whether or not you have been in an institution, or live in a remote locality, or are an Aboriginal as opposed to a non-Aboriginal person. It goes further. There are sub-group indicators. There is, for example, a reference to code for institutions. One would assume that this means that institutions will be classified so that it will be known whether a person has spent time in a jail or a mental home or an educational institution such as a university. Would a hospital be classified as an institution? Perhaps so.

I would have thought that, if all the federal government was interested in was your date of birth and address, then the fact that you live at some number on East Point Road should be enough. The fact that that might be Fannie Bay Jail is somewhat irrelevant to your identity. It is more relevant to other factors about your private life which, we are being told, nobody is interested in.

The heading, place of naturalisation, obviously applies only to naturalised citizens. Place of naturalisation, in Australia, no doubt. Place of arrival - why is the government interested in the place of arrival? A migrant may have come to Australia 20 or 30 years ago, have an ID card, a respectable address and a respectable job or business yet the government wants to know where he arrived. The nationality of the permanent resident - now we are collecting nationalities. We have already heard that we can collect information on who is an Aboriginal and who is not, but I did not think that we were into this sort of thing according to the federal government's information.

Other items can be held on the Assessing Work File to which we do not have access. There is a list here of 'Documents Presented in Branch Office Registration'. I presume these are documents that are presented in support of your application for a card or for a change to your card: naturalisation certificate, marriage certificate - we are getting into a new field here - defence force ID card, Department of Social Security card, Medicare card, divorce document if you have been divorced, driver's licence - and here is another one which is of some concern I am sure to honourable members - the baptismal certificate.

Mr Hatton: You are joking!

Mr PERRON: It is right there - baptismal certificate. It would seem that the Assessing Work File certainly has a computer classification for you to declare whether you have been baptised and, presumably, if you produce a certificate, it will indicate the religion within which you were baptised ...

Mr Smith: Where has this come from?

Mr PERRON: ... and if you do not produce a certificate, then I guess that classifies you as well.

For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, Senator Susan Ryan has acknowledged publicly the existence of the Assessing Work File which is a second component to the computer program of the Australia Card. You will not have access to the information held in that component which, in her words, will be used only to 'collect information to update your Australia Card register'. Supposedly this thing is then wiped. However, it is interesting. If the government does not want this information, why is there a computer heading for it in here? Even if it is not wanted now, someone must think it will be wanted one day, otherwise why even bother with the heading. There is no heading asking: 'Do you own fox terriers'. Presumably, someone has made a decision that this is on the list and that is off the list.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one question is obviously fundamental to it all. It is: what exactly is the identity card supposedly going to save Australia? I understand from information provided to me that the Prime Minister has claimed, on a number of occasions, that the card will save \$1000m per year. In fact, he has challenged anyone to disprove his figures and I guess that is a pretty good ploy for a Prime Minister, having the resources that he does and knowing other people do not have those resources. However, in an interview published in the Australian newspaper on Saturday 19 September, Senator Ryan claimed net savings of \$3800m over 10 years or \$380m average each year. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not convinced the card will save that money. I certainly do not have scientific information on which to make that assessment, but I have a feeling it is correct.

I would be very surprised if these ID cards, complete with your own photograph, will not be available in King's Cross within a month of their coming onto the streets. Once that starts to happen, once you can buy a false card, then in my view the system will collapse. I am quite sure that, with the resources and ingenuity of criminals, these cards will certainly be available and, if they do not make them right from scratch, they will be obtaining blanks and completing them themselves. We can be sure that they will start to produce them and, from that point, the entire system will crumble. I do not believe that the people who currently cost the Australian tax system somewhere between \$380m and \$1000m a year, according to the federal government's figures, will let a little plastic card with their photo on it stop them continuing their practices. I just do not accept that this is the way to tackle the problem in Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's motion and oppose the amendment.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will preface my remarks by saying that I rise to speak to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition and reserve my right to speak to the motion when the amendment has been disposed of, because I intend to move a further amendment at a later stage.

The Leader of the Opposition, in putting forward this furphy and expecting us to vote for it, was having himself on. There is no comparison or similarity between what he claims is an invasion of our privacy, the information that is kept by the government on its computer files, and the information and restrictions that it is known will occur if the Australia Card

is introduced. Unlike the Minister for Lands, I say 'if' it is introduced not 'when' it is introduced, because I believe that while there is a bit of fight left in us, we should fight as hard as we can and not accept that this will be introduced until the very last moment, if at all.

I know that the Leader for the Opposition has not been up here as long as I have. I do not know how many people he knows around the traps, but I would like to say to him that Darwin and, in fact, the Northern Territory is such a small place that, if you want to find out something about anybody, you can find it out. Anybody can find out anything about anybody, given enough time. We do not hear people prattling on about information they know about other people because they respect people's privacy. The fact that we know details about the other people does not mean that the information that we have in any way restricts their freedom of movement. To compare the information that is in the computer files of the government - information about other individuals that we could possibly obtain ourselves - to the information that will be on the computer files associated with the Australia Card, is a comparison that does not stand up to hard scrutiny.

I do not believe that the second part of the Leader of the Opposition's amendment is very relevant to the argument either. It says that 'this Assembly further condemns the Northern Territory government for denying Territory citizens the right to inspect and challenge the information contained in those records'. If he knew his way around, he could find out what was in those records. I do not know what he is on about. The information that he says is over in the Chan Building and the information that will result from the Australia Card legislation do not bear comparison.

I do not know if there is any information about me over in the Chan Building. It does not really worry me because, if somebody wants to find out something about me, he would be able to do so if he is reasonably intelligent. It is not affecting my freedom of movement. It is not affecting my basic feeling of being an individual responsible for my own actions and not having somebody else always looking over my shoulder. I do not have a feeling of somebody holding a rein or a collar on me, demanding that I do this or do that. The sort of information that is held by the government here does not result in that sort of restriction.

The Australia Card would introduce such restrictions on us that it would make the insurrection that occurred as a result of the Eureka Stockade issue, which was a great event at the time, pale into insignificance. I believe that Australians have become rather complacent about their freedom. It is up to each of us to make certain that every one of our constituents knows exactly the details of the proposed Australia Card legislation. To this end, I have personally placed a petition at selected parts of my electorate. This petition will be forwarded to the relevant authorities in due course. I would urge all other honourable members to do their utmost to ensure that their constituents know the full extent of the restrictions that would be introduced with this Australia Card.

Many Australians are frightened to stand up and be different from other people. When speaking to another matter this morning, I knew that I was going against the tide of public opinion on that particular matter but I believe I was entitled to my views and to express those views. I was not necessarily forcing my views down other people's necks but I believe I have a right to express them.

If the Australia Card is introduced, the restrictions contained in the legislation itself and indicated by the Minister for Industries and Development will only be the start of the restrictions on our lifestyle. Debating it here, being reported in the media and forwarding petitions are but small ways of objecting to something that is directed against our basic right of freedom.

We have to do much more than that. We must be prepared to put our money where our mouth is, so to speak. I would like to hear more details from the Chief Minister with respect to exactly what he intends doing. Whilst I have had my disagreements with the Chief Minister in the past, and no doubt I will have some in the future, I do like a good argument. If he intends to get into an argument or a good stoush in standing up for his rights, I will be there with him. I would like some details about what he intends because that is the sort of thing that I agree with. He might find that, even if he does not have much support from the people in the urban areas, he might have support from some of my constituents. If he is thinking of another Eureka Stockade issue, what better place to start than in the rural area.

I cannot put it more strongly than that and still be polite. I will not continue in that vein because I might be asked to withdraw some statements. My feelings are very strong on this matter. My feelings about personal freedom are the same as those of any right-thinking Australian and I cannot find words strong enough with which to oppose the amendment of the ALP opposition. I will oppose the Australia Card legislation with even greater ferocity, if that is possible, but I will be speaking on that at a later time.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, what a disgraceful performance we have seen from the opposition in this debate. If members opposite have ever had any vestige of independence or autonomy from their southern-based Australian Labor Party, it has certainly gone out the window today. They will have little respect left in the Territory after today's performance. They have walked away from their responsibilities, following blindly the desires of their southern leaders.

This is epitomised by the comments of the member for MacDonnell who told us that we have no right to be discussing the Australia Card in this Assembly. There are few current issues which are of more concern to Territorians than the introduction of the Australia Card. If this subject had not been raised today and had not been debated fully, we would be considered in a very poor light by the people of the Territory. As for the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, it will be seen by the people of the Territory as the cheap, hollow and diversionary tactic that it is, an abandonment of its responsibilities by the opposition. It is a particularly shameful exercise that members opposite have been through today.

I would like to strongly support the Chief Minister and members of this government in condemning the federal government on the proposed introduction of the Australia Card. The Australia Card proposal is an affront to the free lifestyle and the expectations of Australians and, in particular, Territorians. It is the means for domination and total control of our society by the state. If introduced, each person will have to apply, be interviewed and provide documentation simply to verify his existence. Through legislative power, the Health Insurance Commission, as administrator of the Australia Card, will have access to other government agencies which hold information and to cross-reference the information provided by individuals.

The Leader of the Opposition is not concerned about these prospects. In fact, he told us today that we can gain access to our computer entries once each year, presumably to check our existence. Great stuff, Mr Speaker, but he has not told us that to access the file may take up to 3 weeks and that this will not include information used initially in establishing the file and verification of identity. Just imagine 3 weeks delay and, in the meantime, you are attempting to convince some bureaucrat somewhere that you are right and that the computer is wrong. Imagine conducting your life and your business under such circumstances.

The people of Australia have no confidence in what the Leader of the Opposition refers to as comprehensive and far-reaching security. They are more concerned with the powers of the Data Protection Agency. The ability of the Data Protection Agency to use information for any purpose reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law, of a law imposing a fine or for the protection of public revenue or for medical research, is typical of the things that are concerning the people of the country.

The Leader of the Opposition has the temerity to tell us that we will be protected by comprehensive and far-reaching security. With an agency operating under guidelines such as those that I have just outlined, security of any kind is a joke and nothing will be sacred. Security would be almost impossible to maintain. NASA, the technological leader of our time, last week became the victim of an amateur computer hacker who violated its computer network. I would suggest that if the NASA system is not secure, no system is. The Australia Card would not be isolated from such action. Additionally, there is the likelihood of staff with grievances taking action, or possibly even some form of corruption. It would be impossible to protect our rights.

The Australia Card is un-Australian. Little wonder that it is attracting strong opposition right across the socioeconomic spectrum of the country. Groups as diverse as trade unions, professional groups, business and community interest groups are as one in opposing the introduction of the Australia Card.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been circulating in my electorate a petition in opposition to the Australia Card. In that short time, over 1000 people have signed the petition. I believe that that clearly indicates that the matter is of great concern to Territorians and clearly puts down the theory of the member for MacDonnell who suggested that it is not a matter for discussion in this Assembly. The people of Australia will not accept this plastic tattoo or what will amount to an internal passport. Nor will they accept Senator Ryan's whitewash, cover-ups and other attempts to camouflage the real intention of this Australia Card. They will not accept that it will not be compulsory for everyone to have a card when they know that they will face heavy fines for non-compliance with certain provisions, that they will be unable to access their bank accounts or open new ones, or sell land, or conduct a host of other activities without the card.

People will be further disturbed by Dr Blewett's comments, some of which have been referred to by other members today. Surely he made those only in the belief that they would not be widely reported. How else could he consciously state that the introduction of the Australia Card was the only chance of obtaining a redistribution of wealth in Australia? This clearly illustrates the socialist intent of this proposal and is the reason why we are experiencing such opposition to the Australia Card.

The member for MacDonnell told us that, because the Premier of Queensland opposes the Australia Card, he smelled a rat. Perhaps it was the company that

The member for MacDonnell told us that, because the Premier of Queensland opposes the Australia Card, he smelled a rat. Perhaps it was the company that he keeps. If Joh opposes the card, there must be something good in it, according to the member. As usual, he and his colleagues have missed the point. The fact that people like the Premier of Queensland have joined the opposition to the card indicates the strength of the opposition and epitomises the Australian attitude towards it. It has brought together a diverse group of Australians revered in opposition circles: trade unions, Labor lawyers and, heaven forbid, even the socialist left. They are all opposing the Australia Card. It has formed a common bond between all sections of Australian society to an extent which we seldom experience. I am very pleased to support the motion moved by the Chief Minister and I would encourage all other members to do so.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the amendment and oppose the motion and I would first like to clear up a couple of points that were made. The first relates to the mandate for the ID card. The Prime Minister made it extremely clear at the very outset of the campaign that the first task of a re-elected Australian Labor Party government would be the re-introduction of the Australia Card legislation. In fact, the first ALP election advertisement concerned the Australia Card. It stated that the Australia Card would be promoted and pushed through immediately after Labor won the election. The Financial Review of 20 August 1987 said: 'According to Liberal sources, the opposition did not campaign strongly against the ID card in the last election mainly because market research showed 64% of the electorate were in favour of the card and it was judged too difficult to turn around during the election campaign'. That shows to me the hypocrisy behind the opposition to this card.

The people who are now coming out, late in the day, in opposition to this card are simply jumping on a bandwagon which has been set in motion by the greatest load of misinformation and codswallop that this country has seen for many years. To enlarge on that point, I will quote from the Sydney Morning Herald of 11 September 1987: 'For emotional claptrap, it is hard to go past the present debate on an identity card. There has seldom been a subject on which there has been so much misunderstanding, so much misrepresentation and so much downright irrational fear'.

Again and again in this debate, the issue of penalties has been trotted out. As is the case in all Commonwealth legislation, the penalties are a maximum. It should not be necessary for me to point this out to honourable members opposite and I would not have done so if they had not continually referred to penalties in an effort to bolster their campaign of fear. The penalties referred to in the legislation are maximum penalties. The actual penalties will be applied by the courts and will take into account factors such as the seriousness of the offence, the surrounding circumstances and so forth. Any given offence is surrounded by particular circumstances. It may be that a person destroys the card in a moment of heat and frustration. On the other hand, it may be an action akin to that which has been proposed by the Chief Minister. He has stated that he will promote the campaign against the card and, if he ever gets one, he will burn it. That would not be a private action by an individual in a moment of frustration or anger, which would receive a lesser penalty, but an incitement to civil disobedience.

I was disgusted to hear the Chief Minister, the minister responsible for the police, stating that he would go to jail over the Australia Card. It is not possible for the minister responsible for police to apply a certain standard to himself and another standard to others. I will predict now that



matters, will argue that they are in philosophical opposition to the particular laws involved. Like the Chief Minister, they will take whatever penalties are involved, but they will use their philosophical objection as a means of making extremely public cases which will contribute to the breakdown of the framework of law and order in our society. When the Chief Minister states that he will not abide by the law of the land, how can he ask others to do so? It is very difficult, Mr Speaker. It places this government in an invidious position. He stated that he was aware that his strong statement would provide the lead for civil disobedience by Territorians. He stated that he knew that he was provoking this type of reaction, but he did not outline his government's major argument against the ID card.

The Northern Territory government's major argument against the Australia Card is that its own administration maintains a massive amount of data on individuals without a skerrick of legislation to protect individual rights. It has no data protection agency and it does not allow people access to information. The Attorney-General has made the incredible statement that the rationale for the government's database is the need to bring together all the information to make it available for government to manipulate. That is the rationale for this government's database and the reason why, for example, people have no access to computerised motor vehicle registration files which will soon indicate whether the owner of the vehicle still owes money on the car or owns it outright. Computerised information on drivers' licences lists all offences. Are the details correct and have they been accessed or incorrectly added to? We do not know. We do not know about the accuracy of hospital records and the diseases which are recorded against individual names. We do not know whether the details of treatments are correct. We do not know whether records containing information such as penicillin allergies are correct and we do not know if we are taking our lives into our hands when we next go to hospital because of the incorrect information which could be recorded on computer files. We are unable to access that information.

All the details of Housing Commission home loans and tenancies are recorded on computer and that is fair enough. What is not fair is that there is no agency to protect the interest of the people of the Northern Territory. This government is not prepared to introduce legislation which would provide those protections for Territorians. When this government sees what the federal government is about to do in terms of protecting privacy and allowing individual access, it realises that it will be shamed into compliance. It is not willing to subject its information systems to the audit of the people of the Northern Territory.

I hear the Attorney-General mumbling into his non-existent beard. He cannot stop Territorians from seeing through the Northern Territory government's opposition to the Australia Card because we know that it is proposing to extend its information system so that private individuals will have access to its databases. Real estate agents, lawyers and others will be able to access those databases. It will not be just a matter of worrying about whether public servants have access to your personal information; it will be whether hackers or the whiz-kid child of the local lawyer can get into the database to access private information.

The Australia Card is quite different. It contains 3 completely autonomous databases. You cannot move from one to the other and you can only access each one from the outside. The Minister for Industries and Small Business says that there could be access into the system. The problem with his government's system is that it uses telephone lines which are extremely easy to access and it is very difficult to find out if access has been

achieved. It is more difficult, but nevertheless possible, for somebody with the right equipment and sufficient knowledge to access and corrupt this government's database by changing recorded information. This is in total contrast to the dedicated communication lines which will be used for the Australia Card system. If the government knew a little about computer systems, it would realise that there is a complete difference between dedicated lines and lines that move through the Telecom switching network.

You can attempt to break into dedicated communication lines, but you cannot do it undetected. That is the big difference. This is controlled by the system itself. Any attempt to obtain access is recorded and the unsuccessful attempts are recorded as well as the successful attempts. If multiple attempts to gain unauthorised access are made, the system closes down as far as that point of entry goes to allow the operators to check out what is occurring.

At the moment, it is very difficult for my constituents to obtain ready access to social security benefits because of the difficulty in establishing identity. Again and again, people in my electorate and also people in town tell me that they are required to produce proof of identity because they do not have a job and need to go on unemployment benefits. Some have come from Queensland and now need to provide a copy of their birth certificate. Anybody who has ever attempted to get a birth certificate from the Queensland system will tell you that you can wait for weeks until the request is acknowledged and for months before the certificate arrives. A driver's licence is also required but, unfortunately, the people who come to see me often do not have a driver's licence. One document is not enough for identification purposes; they require 3 different proofs of identity.

This problem arises regularly, particularly in relation to the special benefit for women who are stranded in town through no fault of their own. They tell me they need help immediately because the husband has gone. Mr Speaker, try to get some money out of the Northern Territory government system through the Department of Health and Community Services and you will find how difficult it is to obtain emergency relief. It is almost impossible and therefore you send them to the Department of Social Security to try to obtain the special benefit. What happens? They are required to produce these proofs of identity. These are the problems which will be overcome by the ID card because it incorporates all of those different proofs of identity into one card and the person is able to use it to obtain immediate relief.

Mr Speaker, getting people on to the register in my electorate will not be a problem, as I see it, because of the mobile teams that are already being organised. I have heard a red herring being run that Aboriginal people will lose their cards. People already have a Medicare card and that system is operating effectively because the people make agreements to locate them centrally and that will be available under the proposed system if both parties agree to it. They will be able to place their cards in a central location and be able to use them when necessary. The point is that the card is required for the first transaction of a particular nature. From what members opposite have said, it sounds as though you have to trot it out every time you make a transaction. That is a load of rubbish.

Prosecution under the privacy provisions goes far beyond anything which has existed previously in Australia. I do not know whether members opposite are aware of this but, since shortly after the end of World War II, it has been possible for the Department of Social Security and the Taxation Department to provide each other with information of an extraordinarily

been possible for the Department of Social Security and the Taxation Department to provide each other with information of an extraordinarily wide-ranging nature. Section 135TF(1) of the Social Security Act says that notice can be served personally or by post on a person requiring the person to furnish, in the manner specified, any information the officer specifies in the notice. The person has to produce, within a period, in the manner specified, any of those documents. He must appear at a time and place specified in the notice, before the officer specified in the notice, to give evidence etc, and a person who does not do so is open to a fine of \$1000 or imprisonment for 6 months. That binds the Crown in right of the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island.

Mr Speaker, that gives really wide-ranging potential for federal public servants to intrude on people's lives and to enter their houses in order to extract documents which, at whim, they may decide they require. Under paragraphs 88(1)(c) and (1)(d), the Data Protection Agency can investigate whether the authority has exceeded its entitlement to request information and, under clause 25, the authority cannot provide any information other than that provided in schedule 1. Schedule 1 gives the name, date of birth and the number. That is all that is in schedule 1 and that is what all this fear is about. The authority has then to prove that it needs to find the address and the Data Protection Agency may say that the address is not needed in order to establish that person's identity.

Clause 25 provides for access to all the information by individuals. The information can be obtained free of charge every year and, for a small fee to recover costs, additional copies can be obtained at any time. Every access to the Australia Card Register will be logged and a record of this will be available to the individual. In my view, it is one of the best moves that we have had the courage to make in Australia in an effort to stop the rip-offs and provide some money where it is needed, amongst the poorest people in this country.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, once again we have heard an outburst from the member for Stuart. I will start off by picking up a couple of points he made. Firstly, he interjected this morning, when the Chief Minister was speaking to the motion, to the effect to that the Chief Minister was totally wrong with respect to any problems connected with banking. I suggested, by way of interjection also, that he ought to refer to clause 41 and he said that had nothing to do with it at all. I will start by reading clause 41 to him so that he has some understanding. He referred to many clauses a moment ago but, obviously, his references are very selective.

Mr Ede: Have you read the whole bill?

Mr FIRMIN: I have read a fair bit of it and it all makes a great deal of nonsense.

Clause 41 relates to borrowing money and it says:

A prescribed borrower shall not, on or after the relevant day, borrow money from a person, repay to a person, or pay interest to a person in respect of money lent, on or after the first relevant day to the prescribed borrower or, on or after the second relevant day, repay to a person or pay interest to a person in respect of money lent before the first relevant day to the prescribed borrower, unless the current card has been produced. Penalty: \$20 000.

Mr Ede: A maximum penalty.

Mr FIRMIN: It may well be a maximum penalty, but it is a penalty of \$20 000. The effect of that is that it immediately seals your bank accounts unless you have presented your identification card to the institution that you are banking with or borrowing from. The same thing applies right throughout the bill.

The only point in the member for Stuart's 20-minute diatribe a few moments ago related to the inability to access the information by using leased lines. It was the centrepiece to his argument when he was trying to draw a very long bow between the Northern Territory government's computer sections and the ID card provisions. The line that the member referred to would have to be a line leased through the Telecom system. In the Northern Territory, it would be a telephone line. He said that the Territory system could be broken by hackers because we use telephone lines. However, he then said that ID card computers could not be accessed if they were using leased lines. The argument is spurious, especially in respect of a government agency out of the Northern Territory and having to use the same lines that we in fact use ourselves. We use leased lines to distribute and receive information from our Northern Territory government agencies for placement within our computer operations - from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and so on. Exactly the same leased lines would be used for the Australia Card. His argument is totally spurious on that point alone.

He had no other arguments to support the ID card. As members have probably realised, the opposition members are fighting a battle in which they really have no heart. Whilst they have been unified in terms of the arguments that they have tried to present, most of them seem to be embarrassed to listen to the arguments being presented by this side. They leave as soon as they have spoken in this debate.

Let us look at where the Labor Party sits on this matter. A few minutes ago, we had supposed unity of support for the card. The member for MacDonnell told us that we ought not to debate it because it is the province of the federal parliament. Senator Collins not only supports the Australia Card but, in contrast to members opposite, does not decry our Northern Territory computer arrangements.

It is reported in the Centralian Advocate that, in an interview on Wednesday 9 September, Senator Collins called on the Territory government to centralise births, deaths and marriage registers on one computer to help fight organised crime. Nevertheless, for most of today, members opposite have been carping about the way in which we collect information. We have always collected such data manually. Computers enable us to do it more speedily and enable easier access to the information. The computer systems are not interlinked. We do not allow other agencies to access them. There are checks and balances in our system. We have Senator Collins urging us to centralise the whole system and get on with fighting organised crime in the Northern Territory. One half of the Territory ALP is saying one thing and the other half is saying another. Senator Collins is certainly supporting the Australia Card legislation. In the Centralian Advocate of 2 September, he is reported as claiming that the Australia Card would be one of the most effective and innovative tools in the fight against tax evasion, social security abuse and illegal immigration. He went on to say many other things as well.

I have an interesting letter to the editor in the Financial Review of yesterday. It was written by the President of the Society of Labor Lawyers in Melbourne, a Mr Damian Murphy who says:

After failing to spend its allocation on computers for many years, the Tax Office is now going to spend \$700m on computers as well as shifting significant resources into compliance and auditing. What the revenue gains from these activities will be is unknown but they will surely be significant ... It is important to note that the Commissioner for Taxation, Mr Boucher, does not necessarily support the Australia Card.

He does support a unique numbering system to allow proper matching of revenue and taxation data.

We support the proper use of the taxation system and that is what we have been arguing for all along. If existing systems are used properly, the problem can be solved. We do not need any more Big Brother computers and we do not need a Big Brother government to support the collection of taxes and chase dole cheats and tax-avoiders.

Another group which opposes the ID card is the Australian Public Service Association. In The Australian this morning, APSA is reported to have reaffirmed its long-standing opposition to the ID card at a meeting yesterday in Sydney. It claims that 2000 extra personnel would be needed to administer the card and they would be better deployed if they were spread between the Taxation Office and the Department of Social Security. That is exactly what we have been saying all along: get on with doing the job with the tools which are available now. We do not need more government structures. The APSA spokesman also said that, if the Australia Card is proceeded with, a recommendation would be put to the national membership of the Health Insurance Commission to ban its implementation and not to process any work associated with it. The Australian Public Service Association covers the 200-odd extra staff that will be needed by the Health Insurance Commission if the card is instituted, so I suspect that it will be able to bring that action into effect without too much trouble.

The federal government is so worried about the fate of the card that it has just established a new troubleshooting arm with a key ministerial adviser appointed to it to try to sell the ID card. I vehemently oppose the introduction of the ID card as do many of my colleagues and an enormous number of people in my electorate. I am not a latecomer to the ID card debate. I have been speaking about it since well before the last election. I recently distributed a petition within my electorate to see what response it would bring. I did not solicit signatures but simply placed the petition on shop counters and in industrial estates within my electorate. After 10 days, the petition was collected last night and sent to Canberra. More than 700 people signed the petition to indicate their opposition to the Australia Card and that was in a small electorate and without publicity or soliciting. Any member who has sought support for petitions will know that it requires a very strong public feeling for a response of that sort. To my mind, that demonstrates a very wide reaction within my electorate and, I suspect, the Leader of the Opposition's electorate also, even though he seems too dense to see it. Perhaps he is just toeing the party line and trying to make himself look good.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I consider the use of the term 'dense' to describe anyone, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, as most unparliamentary and ask that the member withdraw his remark.

Mr FIRMIN: I will certainly withdraw. It is just that the Leader of the Opposition is totally unenlightened and cannot discern one thing from another.

In closing, I would like to quote something which Woodrow Wilson said in 1912: 'Liberty has never come from government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of it. The history of liberty is a history of resistance and the history of liberty is the history of the limitations of governmental power and not the increase of it'.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been sitting here for much of the day listening to the bruised and battered comrades of the opposition trying to defend their federal colleagues' position on the ID card. I must say that they have come out of this debate very badly indeed because they know that there is very little community support for the Australia Card. It is just another example of the creeping socialism that we have seen in this country during the last 5 years or so.

I can recall the time Gough Whitlam came to power back in the early 1970s. He had an altogether different approach. He went in with a wham-bam, crunching approach to the socialisation of this country. That is how the Whitlam government approached the socialisation of Australia. The Hawke government has been far more cunning. Stone by stone, it is attempting to dismantle everything which has been held in great respect since federation in order to implement socialist policies. Last year, it introduced the Bill of Rights, another socialist initiative which was enshrined in the Labor Party policy. There was a tremendous outcry, just as there is now, and there was a major debate in this parliament. Eventually the legislation was withdrawn and siphoned off to a constitutional commission. We have not heard the last of it yet. It is a socialist initiative like this ID card and you can bet your bottom dollar that it will come back at some time in the future.

The member for Stuart made some outrageous claims, as did a number of his colleagues, but I will concentrate on his. He claimed that the ID card was in fact part of the Labor Party's federal election campaign and he hastened to add that it was included in one of the first advertisements.

Mr Ede: It was the first advertisement and it was a full page.

Mr SETTER: If that is the case, it was the first and only advertisement on the ID card. I personally cannot recall it. It is quite obvious that the ALP must have received a tremendous negative reaction and dropped it because it certainly disappeared from the election agenda.

Mr Hawke claims that he dissolved the previous parliament because of the rejection of the ID card bills by the Senate on 2 separate occasions. This is the third time it has been before the Senate after being rejected twice previously. He claims that he dissolved parliament because of that issue, but it was certainly not the major issue in the election campaign. Perhaps it raised its head during the first few days but it then disappeared under the blanket and that is where it stayed until just a few weeks ago when it was the first thing that the government rushed into the parliament. It was kept under wraps so that it was not raised as an election issue. Had it been raised, the ALP would be sitting on the opposition benches right now. It is government by stealth and it was one of the biggest con jobs that has ever been perpetrated in this country.

The member for Stuart talked about how a Sydney Morning Herald editorial on a particular day during the election campaign supported the ID card and claimed that the opposition stance against the ID card was not justified. The Sydney Morning Herald has quite a reputation for saying things that create trouble from time to time. However, let me quote an editorial from a Murdoch

newspaper. In fact, it is the well-known NT News. Its editorial of 18 September said, under the heading 'Assault on our Freedom':

The ID card has provoked an angry murmur of protest in the Northern Territory likely to grow to a roar as its implications sink in. This card is the biggest threat to our liberties Australia has ever experienced. It is the enemy within. The aptly-named Moscow card is crammed with provisions for fining, jailing and regimenting Australians.

That is another editorial which puts a point of view totally contrary to that put forward by the Sydney Morning Herald.

The honourable member went on to criticise the stance taken this morning by the Chief Minister. He said it was totally unjustified. I am very pleased to support the Chief Minister - and I am quite sure that the majority of Territorians will do the same - in his proposal. He is prepared to put his own liberty at risk in order to bring home to Territorians the importance of opposing this card. It is absolutely critical that we all get behind the Chief Minister and argue against this card as often as we possibly can in the weeks ahead.

The member criticised the Northern Territory government's computer system. We have heard the member for Ludmilla put the lie to his arguments in that regard. They were totally incorrect; there is no similarity at all between the 2 systems. In my opinion, Labor's ID card proposal is the greatest threat ever seen in Australia's history to people's privacy and individual rights. It will lead to massive abuse and duplication. It will cost nearly \$100m, at a time when we have been walking around almost with the seat out of our pants. It will require over 2000 additional public servants. That is great for unemployment, but remember what has happened to the Commonwealth Public Service in the last 5 years. There has been an enormous expansion, with a corresponding enormous cost to the taxpayer and that is one of the reasons why the federal government continues to introduce new taxes. The public service has to be paid for somehow.

Even Senator Walsh said, the other day, that there were hundreds of useless schemes which should be abolished, and they are costing the taxpayer enormous sums of money. Even though Senator Walsh is the government's Minister for Finance, it has not taken his advice on that issue. The sad part about it is that, ultimately, the proposal simply will not work because it is totally impractical.

Mr Speaker, let me quote some details of what happened in Sweden. In Sweden, the use of a 10-digit ID number, similar to that planned for Australia, has proliferated over nearly 20 years to take in nearly every field of human activity involving the government and the private sector. In fact, the architect of Sweden's data protection law and its chief enforcer since 1970 resigned recently because he felt the system was out of control. That is the danger. At the beginning, only 3 departments will have access to the information. Mind you, when it was first proposed, some 13 federal departments applied for access to this system. That was culled down to 17 and finally down to 3, and that is a fact.

Mr Smith: Yes, good culling.

Mr SETTER: Go and ask your mates in Canberra.

Mr EDE: 13 culled to 17.

Mr SETTER: Yes, but the reason that has been done is so that it can be sold more easily to the population of this country. However, once it is in, watch the additional access granted to different departments as time goes by until everybody can access the system. The federal government talks about privacy but that is a load of nonsense. Certainly, computer systems can be accessed illegitimately and that has been proven over and over again, but they can also be accessed legitimately by a whole range of people. There will be literally thousands of access points throughout this country, and anybody who has access to a VDU will be able to obtain access to anybody's personal information if he has the number.

It is no good saying that leaks will not occur. We come into the Assembly and we see leaked documents referred to by members of the opposition quite regularly. How can we possibly expect the same thing not to occur with this particular database? Of course, it will occur. There will be all sorts of reasons for doing it; for example, a person who has access to the database may get into some sort of strife and someone puts pressure on him to obtain information. There is no point in saying that it will not happen; it will happen. It has happened over and over again in the past, and it will happen in the future.

I would like to quote you from Dr Blewett who, I believe, was the minister responsible for the ID legislation in the previous federal parliament. Earlier today, the Attorney-General read a couple of quotes from Dr Blewett. Here is another quote from Dr Blewett: 'The ID card is the most crucial weapon for the redistribution of wealth in our society'. There is a socialist policy if ever I heard one. That is what it is all about: socialising Australia. It has nothing to do with reducing tax fraud or identifying social welfare cheats. That is just an excuse. The real reason underlying the whole exercise is the redistribution of wealth in our society. Socialism is the bottom line.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me quote you the concerns of a number of prominent Australians. We can all stand here and express our concerns, but let us talk about some very prominent Australians who have expressed their concerns over the past few months. Mr Ashley Goldsworthy of the International Federation for Information Processing warns: 'The proposed Australia Card would usher in a dark world of extensive computer surveillance not seen in any other western democracy'. I am sure even the members of the opposition would have heard of Justice Michael Kirby. I believe that he was Chairman of the Law Reform Commission of Australia for quite a number of years. Mr Justice Kirby says:

Many prominent Australians have raised serious concerns over the invasion of privacy involved in the national ID card. What is at stake is nothing less than the nature of our society, and the power and authority of the state in relation to the individual.

In another article, Mr Justice Kirby said on 6 March 1987:

It remains for those who are aware of the special relationships that exist in countries of common law between authority and the citizen to point to the dangers. A survivor of Auschwitz may declare that the best thing about living in Australia - it could equally be Canada, United States or England - is that he is never liable to be stopped on the corner by someone in uniform with the demand, 'Papers'. Yet provide an ID card and the risk exists that the database will be



enhanced and that more and more officials will seek access to it in the name of efficiency and that, in due course of time, carrying the card and producing it will become commonplace and, ultimately, in response to some outrage, obligatory.

Let us have a look at a comment from Mr Frank Costigan QC. He was quoted earlier but here is another quotation from him: 'There is no doubt that the introduction of an Australian Card of the kind contemplated by the submissions that I have read is a significant intrusion into individual privacy. I have no doubt about that at all'.

Mr Speaker, I could give dozens of quotes. I am sure that the opposition would not want to hear them because it is becoming quite embarrassing to them. Members opposite have had such a hiding this afternoon that they must be black and blue.

This card will develop into an internal passport because people eventually will have to produce it for almost any activity that they undertake. It is no good saying that it will be restricted to the 3 areas that I mentioned earlier because that is only the thin end of the wedge. We know what happens in socialist countries because we have only to look at Europe to see what has happened there. In time, we will have to produce our ID card when we go down to the shop to buy our fish and chips. It will be that bad. I could repeat what other speakers have said with regard to the way that the ID card is intended to be used. Probably the most critical provision is the need to produce it in order to seek employment. There is a whole range of other issues, but I will not canvass those again because it would be going over old ground.

It will not be very long before we will all have to carry this card at all times. You never know when you have to duck into the bank or make a claim on Medicare or whatever. It will be carried in your wallet like any other plastic card. There was a comment about the police being able to see your ID card. I am not sure whether that would be possible under Northern Territory legislation - I certainly hope it would not be - but it is an option that may be available in some states. I for one hope it never becomes law in the Northern Territory.

While I am in the mood for quoting, let us have a look at what the Canberra Times said on 14 September 1987 in relation to the Australia Card in its page 1 story: 'Documents leaked at the weekend showed that the government has misled the people about its Australia Card database, and that there was in existence what amounted to a handbook for hackers to obtain database information'. The paper reported: 'The Health Insurance Commission documents revealed a secret file to be compiled on all Australians. This file, accessible only to the government, would contain the vast majority of information on card subjects'. The Minister for Industries and Development commented on this earlier.

The Age says: 'The government last night would neither confirm nor deny the authenticity of documents said to be departmental papers on the proposed Australia Card. The 19 pages of documents include the first page of a 5-page draft application form and a departmental discussion paper on alterations to the Australia Card database'. That confirms what the honourable minister said a few minutes ago. The paper continues: 'If genuine, the documents will be highly embarrassing to the government which has stressed the inviolability of the card security. The documents are said to have come from within the Health Commission'. The security is shot down in flames.

The Australia Card legislation is probably the greatest assault on our national civil liberties in our entire history. By the introduction of this seemingly harmless plastic card, the federal Labor government is introducing a whole new relationship between the Commonwealth and its citizens. If this bill is rammed through federal parliament against the wishes of the majority of Australians - and if it goes through, it will be rammed through by a joint sittings - the Australian people will have a fundamentally changed relationship with the Commonwealth. About that, there is no doubt. In a democracy, the state exists to serve the people. With a national ID card, the people will exist to serve the state.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak briefly in this debate. I speak against the amendment introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and in support of the motion moved by the Chief Minister.

Honourable members will recall that I raised the matter of the Australia Card in this Assembly on 7 May this year. At that time, I was concerned because the issue was not receiving the publicity that it should have received. The issues that have been raised today by my colleagues on this side of the House and indeed by some members on the crossbenches are indicative of the feelings of the Australian people. I heard an interjection during the course of the member for Stuart's speech to the effect that he had been conned. That is exactly what the situation is. Some Labor people do realise that there are problems. Members opposite should acknowledge that there are real problems within their own ranks in relation to the Australia Card and that is a fact that cannot be denied. Those people will be fighting to try to change Hawke and his direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to the matter of the so-called mandate to introduce the Australia Card. There was no mandate from the Australian people. The federal government called the election on the issue of the Australia Card but, after that, there was no mention of it at all. We on this side of the House stand condemned for not raising the issue. I am not saying that I support what happened in any way whatsoever, but the fact is that the issue was not raised until Janine Haines raised it the day before the election. On the Friday evening, she raised the issue and that is the first time it was mentioned. To say that Hawke has a mandate to introduce this card is nonsense.

The matter that the member for Stuart raised in respect of security is nonsense. I think the member for Ludmilla put him down very definitely. It is interesting to note that the President of the NT Chapter of the Australian Privacy Foundation in the Northern Territory is in fact the Deputy Director of NCOM and officer-in-charge of computer security in the Northern Territory. There is concern among people who do understand computers.

The Minister for Lands and Housing echoed most of the comments that I made on 7 May and I would recommend that all members read that speech because it spells out very clearly the concerns that people have about certain statements that are being made by ministers of the Hawke government and where they have indeed contradicted themselves. I close by quoting from that speech:

On 24 October 1986, the National Assembly of Tanzania passed a bill making it compulsory for all residents of Tanzania to carry an identity card. I refer honourable members to 'The Parliament' of January 1987, particularly parliamentary reports in that particular edition. These refer to the identity cards and state that on 24 October the National Assembly passed a bill for the registration

and identification of persons resident in Tanzania. Carrying the card would be voluntary but officials could arrest those who did not comply with the law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, does that sinister gobbledegook remind you of some Canberra-inspired legislation? You did not have to carry the card but, if you did not, you would be arrested! In Tanzania, members of parliament protested about the violation of human rights and the danger of turning the country into a police state, but the bill was passed. Does Australia want to become another Tanzania?

There are major concerns about abuse of the ID card. There are concerns about the security of the ID card and we should do everything we can to oppose its introduction. I oppose the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition and support the motion.

Amendment negated.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting the word 'unanimously' from paragraph (1) of the motion and, in the absence of the member for Koolpinyah, by inserting in paragraph (1) after the words 'its current form', the words 'or in similar form'.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Women in Remote Areas

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, for the information of honourable members, I table the Report of the Study of Women Living in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory. This study was commissioned by the Women's Advisory Council and looks at the lives of women living in remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Living in remote areas was identified as an important issue by the Women's Advisory Council during its inaugural year. This study was the first of its kind to be commissioned in Australia and has broken new ground in research in that it is the first systematic study which examines Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal women, and the first which covers women living in such a variety of remote locations. It has generated considerable interest within the community.

The project was approved in August 1985 and, after advertising in Territory and national newspapers, a Victorian firm of consultants, Geraldine Lazarus and Company, was invited to conduct the survey. The survey work commenced in February 1986. The research program covered women living in 4 types of settings: pastoral properties, mining towns, Aboriginal communities and the tourist village of Yulara. The subjects of the study were defined as women aged 16 years and over living at least 5 hours by road from the nearest centre with shops and services and or living on land leased by a company and or on independent non-urban Aboriginal communities.

Information was gathered through the distribution of a questionnaire and the holding of meetings with women on pastoral properties at Mt Allan, Tanami Downs and Alexandria Stations, and at the town centres of Yulara,

Jabiru, Nhulunbuy, Alyangula and at the Aboriginal communities of Yuendumu, Yirrkala, Angurugu, Port Keats, Daly River, Alice Springs and Angula outstation. The approach adopted to survey Aboriginal women was quite unique. Cassette tapes were compiled and distributed to identified key women in Aboriginal communities explaining why the survey was being conducted, what information was being sought and how it would be used. This enabled women to talk within their communities before the consultants arrived. The consultants then attended largely informal meetings where women identified issues which were of importance to themselves.

The report is presented in 2 parts. The reason for this was that the study showed a contrast between the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women at most levels. It was considered that the 2 groups required separate reports. Section 1 deals with the background and recommendations of the study in general and section 2 relates specifically to non-Aboriginal women. Comprehensive recommendations by the consultants are contained within the report, relating to all groups surveyed through the study.

Recommendations on Aboriginal women covered the spectrum of issues, from education and employment to health and other issues relating to their culture and lifestyle. Recommendations for non-Aboriginal women covered issues such as IPTAAS funding, accommodation for women from remote areas visiting towns either for a day or longer, counselling services to people in remote areas, the development of child-care services in remote communities and the provision of accommodation for women needing care for their children in emergencies.

In addressing education issues, the recommendations were directed towards assisting mothers to become more effective teachers of their primary school children. Suggestions were made regarding the need for parents and older children to discuss the establishment of secondary schools for students in remote areas of the Territory. For the women themselves, there is a recommendation covering the development of outreach courses for people in remote areas.

Some of the issues raised in the report have already been addressed. For example, honourable members will be aware that the IPTAAS scheme has been replaced by the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme operated by the Department of Health and Community Services. Honourable members will also be aware of the establishment of the Northern Territory Open College. There were also specific recommendations in regard to conditions at Yulara. The Women's Advisory Council has already addressed these by visiting Yulara and meeting with people there.

In part 2, on Aboriginal women, the consultants have extended their findings by incorporating the work of contemporary anthropologists. The government, through the Women's Advisory council in commissioning this research, has shown its readiness to consult with Aboriginal women. The Women's Advisory Council has been closely involved with this study since its inception, acting in the capacity of community liaison with the researchers and with distribution of questionnaires and travel arrangements. The council also monitored the study in its final stages through a subcommittee established for this purpose.

This report endeavours to address a very broad range of issues that are of importance to women living in remote areas of the Northern Territory. However, honourable members will appreciate that, with such a wide-ranging review, it would not be appropriate at this stage for the government to indicate what action, if any, will be taken on individual recommendations.

That response will emerge over time as the report is studied. It should also be noted that the members of the Women's Advisory Council do not necessarily subscribe to all the report's recommendations. In the process of examining the report, I will be discussing it with the Women's Advisory Council.

Publication of this report will be followed by a period of consultation and coordination throughout government and the community. In particular, this report will be communicated to the different groups of women living in communities included in the study so that they have the opportunity to discuss the findings amongst themselves. This will enable recommendations to be given priority for implementation within the confines of the current economic climate.

In conclusion, my government and I personally wish to express our appreciation to the Women's Advisory Council for its involvement in bringing issues of concern to Cabinet. I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I received a copy of the report this morning but no one else seems to have received one. It is unfortunate that the system has failed on this occasion.

I would like to take the opportunity of congratulating the Women's Advisory Council for its initiative in setting the needs of isolated women as a priority. I think this occurred about 12 months ago, shortly after the new convener of the Women's Advisory Council took over. It is very good to see her in the gallery.

It is too easy to forget the needs of women in isolated communities. We too often forget also the role that women in isolated communities have played in opening up the Northern Territory. They have tended to be somewhat neglected by history and it is important to recognise today the good work that Barbara James is undertaking in her book on pioneer Territory women, which will be published either this year or early next year. It will be a very important contribution to the bicentennial year and, according to reports I have had, it will recognise the achievements of women in opening up the Territory. They were certainly equal partners with men in many ventures and, on many other occasions, they led the way in creating Territory history. A couple of the more prominent women are quite famous, or perhaps infamous, as hotel keepers of some distinction. Some of these people are still living. It is important that we recognise the role that women have played in the history of the Northern Territory and Barbara James' book will play a very important role in providing that recognition.

It is equally important that we recognise the situation of women living in isolated communities today. Frequently, they live under very difficult circumstances and face exceptional problems from time to time, in particular where there is marital breakdown. Women in that situation find it very difficult to go to someone for help. It is almost impossible for them to get away from an environment in which they are suffering mental anguish as well as physical distress on some occasions. I hope that the report addresses these problems. I have some close personal friends who have been in that situation and who have given me quite vivid accounts of the problems resulting from marital breakdown in small and isolated communities. That is not the only difficulty that women in isolated communities face and I hope that the report has managed to identify other problems and, more importantly, offer some practical strategies for alleviating them.

It is important to recognise that the report has addressed the concerns of Aboriginal women in isolated communities which is where most Aboriginal women live, at least in our terms of what constitutes an isolated community. Episodes of extreme hardship sometimes come to light such as the recent case in which an Aboriginal woman was tied to a tree. That sort of treatment, which differs from European cultural standards, attracts newspaper headlines. I would certainly be interested to see what sort of issues concern Aboriginal women in isolated communities. It is a pleasing aspect of our multicultural society that a report on women in isolated communities includes a study of Aboriginal women. Hopefully, it identifies their problems and recommends some strategies for addressing them.

We are all at a disadvantage, not having seen the report or having had the chance to study it, and I would hope that the opportunity is given for this debate to be continued after everybody has received the report and has had the opportunity to digest its contents.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Northern Territory Education System

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, the years since 1979 have seen a renaissance of the Northern Territory's education system. It can be truly said that now we have an outstanding government education system which spans the full range of educational services from pre-schooling to university. Indeed, there can be no question that our education system is now comparable with the best in Australia. This achievement, which is something my colleagues and I are justly proud of, did not come about by accident. Rather, it is the result of landmark government initiatives, major curriculum development, rapid expansion of teacher training and professional development, improved staff levels, a much-increased supply of equipment to schools and a massive construction program. A good indicator of the Territory's improved performance is the increased retention rates in the senior years of our secondary schools. At self-government, only about 25% of our Year 10 students went on to Year 12. That level has now risen to about 50%.

The process of improving the Northern Territory education system, which began in 1979, was already well advanced by March 1983, when the Territory government issued a major policy document, 'Northern Territory Schools - Direction for the Eighties'. That document was the blueprint for major upgrading of our education system, and set goals to be achieved during the remainder of the 1980s. It is worth noting that 'Direction for the Eighties' was the first comprehensive policy statement developed on education in the Northern Territory, and it was the culmination of 2 years of consultation between the government and the community. More than 40 initiatives and statements of direction were contained in 'Direction for the Eighties' and, although some of them are of a continuing nature, virtually all of them have been substantially achieved.

One of these goals was to establish a Northern Territory Board of Studies with the aim of bringing the Territory into line with the rest of Australia and adding weight and credibility to course accreditation and certification procedures. That system is now in place and the board has assumed responsibility for issuing secondary certificates and advising the secretary of the department on accreditation of Territory-based senior secondary courses and curriculum matters from pre-school to Year 12.

Another aim of 'Direction for the Eighties' was to introduce the Junior Secondary Studies certificate in addition to the Senior Secondary Studies Certificate which was already in use. The JSSC was introduced at the end of 1984, and provides students, parents and employers with a record of student achievement at the end of the compulsory period of schooling. I might also point out that the whole system of recording student achievement and issuing both certificates has now been computerised.

One of the areas which was identified in 'Direction for the Eighties' as needing urgent attention was that of computer education. At that time, there was only a very limited use of computers in Northern Territory secondary schools. However, the Northern Territory government realised that school leavers without a working knowledge of computers would be limited both in their employment opportunities and in their ability to cope with the increasing rate of technological change. The government has since made computer education a compulsory study area in the core curriculum in all schools, not just secondary but primary as well. Indeed, through an intensive in-service program for teachers, free issue of computers to all schools and financial incentives for schools to raise funds for additional computer equipment, the Territory has been placed in the vanguard of computer education in Australia.

Another objective outlined in 'Direction for the Eighties', and one that is fundamental to the development of our education system, was to encourage students to stay at school longer. The statistics that I referred to earlier show how the Territory's senior retention rates have been transformed from the worst in Australia to levels which place us on an even par with the states. However, the Northern Territory government realises there is room for improvement, and we will be striving to better our performance in this area. An integral part of improving our retention rates was the need for schools to provide upper secondary programs that would better meet the needs of our senior students. In turn, these programs would encourage senior students to stay at school longer to improve their skills and gain further qualifications.

At that time, there was no real middle ground available to senior students. There were matriculation courses for the more academically inclined and some alternative programs for the less academically minded. However, there were few alternative courses for the large number of students who had the ability to complete senior secondary education, but did not want to go on to university. Since then, there has been a great improvement in the senior course offerings in the Territory's high schools.

The most important change, and the most dramatically successful, has been the introduction of a wide range of school-assessed subjects. These high-quality subjects have opened up a whole new world of employment and further education and training opportunities for many of our senior secondary students. Not only do they provide entry to the Northern Territory Public Service, the Australian Public Service and many other occupations, they also enable students to qualify for many advanced education courses including, in some cases, university courses. For example, honourable members may be aware that the University College of the Northern Territory accepts some school-assessed subjects for entry to many of its courses.

This burgeoning acceptance of the standard of school-assessed subjects means that Territory students can study a mix of school-assessed and publicly examined subjects and feel secure in the knowledge that they will obtain meaningful and acceptable qualifications. As you will appreciate, Mr Speaker, this has given secondary students a much broader range of options and, indeed,

more and more students are choosing to undertake a mix of school-assessed and publicly examined subjects.

'Direction for the Eighties' also stated that schools would be encouraged to create a separate identity for their senior secondary section. In fact, this was the precursor to the debate on the senior secondary college issue. The subsequent public discussion and debate on the issue, and the highly successful introduction of senior secondary colleges in Darwin and Alice Springs, is now a matter of history. As part of this process, senior secondary students now have access to a far greater range of subjects and courses, and facilities for senior secondary studies have been greatly improved. For example, our computer laboratories for senior students are the best in Australia. However, I must stress that this activity has not meant that junior high schools have been ignored. On the contrary, their facilities have been considerably improved and, in their new format, these schools are now better able to meet the needs of students in Years 8 to 10.

At the time when 'Direction for the Eighties' was published, assessment of students was carried out entirely by their own teachers, with the sole exception of students who sat for Year 12 matriculation examinations. 'Direction for the Eighties' foreshadowed the introduction of a Territory-wide primary assessment program, and Year 5 and Year 7 students in urban primary schools now undertake this assessment in mathematics and English annually. A similar assessment program for Aboriginal schools has been developed and was introduced last year.

The Northern Territory government also targeted community involvement in education as something which had to be encouraged. When 'Direction for the Eighties' was published, the government had already passed legislation to allow the formal creation of school councils, but the first school council had yet to be gazetted. I can proudly say that this government's efforts to encourage community involvement in education have been very successful. We now have 54 school councils in operation and it is the policy of my department to support the creation of more school councils. I am particularly concerned to see more school councils established in remote settlements where the success of the school is often highly dependent on the rapport between teachers and the community.

This leads me to the topic of Aboriginal education which was also identified in 'Direction for the Eighties' as an area needing urgent attention from the government. That statement still holds true, Mr Speaker, although the Northern Territory government has taken great strides in Aboriginal education and leads the country in many areas. One of the most important programs now under way is a 12-point plan which was developed by FEPPi, the government's consultative group on Aboriginal education. FEPPi developed the 12-point plan after considerable discussion with Aboriginal communities and my department. The government has accepted the plan and is now working to put in place the various proposals it contains.

The 12-point plan puts great emphasis on the increasing Aboriginal involvement in many facets of the delivery of educational services to Aboriginal people. The proposals include: more trained Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal communities; more Aboriginal teachers in positions of responsibility; increasing the opportunities for post-Year 7 education in Aboriginal communities; providing for vocational training programs for Aboriginal students; devolving capital works used to create local employment; increasing staff housing for Aboriginal teachers; continued development and expansion of the Bilingual Education Program; giving more



assistance to teaching English as a Second Language courses in non-bilingual schools; and introducing the primary assessment program for Aboriginal schools, which I have already referred to.

The 12-point plan was launched nearly a year ago and substantial progress has already been made on the path towards achieving its goals. For example, the number of Aboriginal people undertaking teacher training courses at Batchelor College and in their home communities under the Remote Area Education Program is continuing to rise. The primary assessment program is fully in place and the number of Aboriginal teachers and principals is increasing steadily.

However, I must point out that improvements in Aboriginal education have not been restricted to the introduction of the 12-point plan. The great majority of Aboriginal students can now undertake pre-school, primary, post-primary and adult education programs in their own communities, and are able to go on to full secondary programs and tertiary education if they reach the required standards. A large amount of excellent curriculum material has been developed specifically for use in our Aboriginal schools and special programs have been developed for teaching English to students whose first language is not English.

In addition, the Bilingual Education Program has been developed to the point where it is now based on the Northern Territory core curriculum and the Primary Assessment Program. This gives bilingual students equal opportunity to enter mainstream secondary education. In fact, bilingual education is one of the areas of Aboriginal education where the Northern Territory is setting the pace for the rest of the country. There are only 3 other bilingual schools in Australia, 1 in South Australia and 1 private and 1 government school in Western Australia. The Northern Territory now has 3 fully-accredited bilingual schools and substantial bilingual programs operating in 13 others.

As an aside to this, the Northern Territory Department of Education has just been contracted by the federal government to develop a national curriculum for the teaching of an Aboriginal language. I believe Pitjantjatjara is the language that has been chosen and I think that might be dear to the heart of the member for MacDonnell.

There are many other Northern Territory achievements in Aboriginal education which include: improving the teaching of mathematics to Aboriginal students through the development of specific curricula and curriculum-support facilities; expanding the curriculum for homeland centre classes through the production of 122 School of the Bush workbooks for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal assistant teachers series which is now being used in the states as well as the Territory; providing post-primary programs to a continually increasing number of Aboriginal communities; producing curriculum materials in all subject areas which have been designed to cater for the needs of Aboriginal students attending urban schools as well as those in remote communities; employing more than 200 Aboriginal assistant teachers in community schools throughout the Territory - these assistant teachers play a key role in bridging the language barrier between students and teachers; increasing the amount of parental and community involvement in Aboriginal schools; conducting many in-service courses in various aspects of Aboriginal education - these courses have attracted a very high level of participation by teachers; and providing facilities specifically designed for Aboriginal training programs at all TAFE colleges in the Territory.

The Northern Territory government has moved to provide better opportunities for Aboriginal students to have access to high-quality, formal secondary education programs. This move has resulted in the restructuring of the operations of Kormilda College in Darwin and Yirara College in Alice Springs. Kormilda is presently undergoing a transition into a boarding high school which will also provide transition courses for Aboriginal students preparing to begin secondary schooling and post-primary courses for students who do not have access to these courses in their own community. These courses will be integrated into the normal secondary program for the use of vertical timetabling.

Kormilda will be run as a fully-independent school from next year by a board of governors with a broad representation from educational, religious and Aboriginal groups. I should point out that at least half of the trustees at Kormilda will be Aboriginal. I must also stress that Kormilda will be required to make specific provision for Aboriginal students, contrary to the claims of some of the members opposite.

The changes at Yirara have been in place since the beginning of this school year and so far have proved to be an outstanding success. I am sure you will well remember, Mr Speaker, the doom and gloom and the outrageous accusations this government was subjected to by members of the opposition when the changes to Yirara were announced. The gist of their accusations appeared to be that the government should not expect black students to be capable of the same intellectual feats that white students could cope with. In fact, the member for Stuart is on record, on commercial radio on 8 October last year, as saying that the changes to Yirara would 'condemn Aboriginal people to be hewers of wood and porters of water'. As I pointed out to the honourable member at the time, that well may be his paternalistic view of Aboriginal people but it is a view that is definitely not shared by members of the Northern Territory government.

For the record, there are now 28 Aboriginal students boarding at Yirara and studying at the Alice Springs High School; 12 in Year 8, 15 in Year 9 and 1 in Year 10. That is a marked increase over the number of Yirara students attending Alice Springs High since the beginning of the year: 6 more from Year 8 and 3 more from Year 9.

Mr Ede: 12 out of 15 000.

Mr MANZIE: The reason that there has been an increase is because of peer group pressure. The students at Alice Springs High School are progressively finding it easier to cope. They are enjoying their time at school and they are achieving so well, in fact, that their teachers are already able to objectively state that a considerable number of these students are capable of proceeding through the high school system to Year 12 and that, with continued support, so too will others. This government is proud of the fact that the changes we are making to Kormilda and Yirara will give Aboriginal children the opportunity to compete in our society on equal terms with other Australians.

Mr Speaker, I note the honourable member's comment about 12 out of 15 000. We are all aware of the fact that we have a long way to go but this change has brought about positive results. Not only are students attending Alice Springs High School, there are students at Yirara saying that they wish to attend. That is a great contrast to the claims of the honourable member. Contrary to his beliefs, I certainly see Aboriginal students graduating. I know they can do it and I am sure we will see it in the near future.

Mr Speaker, I would like now to turn my attention to Technical And Further Education. I can confidently state that the great gains that have been made throughout our school system have been mirrored by improvements in the TAFE sector. In addition to the Northern Territory government's own heavy financial commitment to TAFE, we have also been successful in persuading the federal government to contribute significantly to building up the Territory's TAFE facilities and programs. As a result of this support, the TAFE sector has undergone remarkable growth. We have a strongly-coordinated infrastructure of TAFE colleges. This infrastructure services the needs of students and industry, not only in the major centres but also in the Territory's smaller centres and remote communities.

Since 1981, the participation rate in TAFE in the Territory has grown from 5.2% of the population to an estimated 7.5%, and TAFE enrolments have grown from nearly 6400 to an estimated 11 700 in the same period. TAFE in the Territory is administered by the TAFE Division of my department and the Darwin Institute of Technology, which is autonomous. Both are responsible to the TAFE Advisory Council which is chaired by the secretary of the department.

TAFE services are provided by 5 main institutions: DIT, the Alice Springs College of TAFE, Batchelor College, Katherine Rural College and the Northern Territory Open College. The Alice Springs College of TAFE, formerly the Community College of Central Australia, is now established in a new complex at Sadadeen. In addition to this campus is the Centre for Appropriate Technology, which is helping to improve services and training in many Aboriginal communities, and the School for Tourism and Hospitality which is making a highly important contribution to the development of the Territory by training young Territorians for employment in our rapidly-growing tourist industry.

Katherine Rural College has developed from very modest beginnings into a major training institution. The college now has impressive residential facilities, extensive training facilities, a 3440 ha property north of Katherine and a 1000 km<sup>2</sup> property at Mataranka. It now offers a 2-year certificate course in rural studies, a 3-month course for station hands, intensive programs to train young Aboriginal stockmen and a wide range of short-term courses.

Batchelor College has developed from the old Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre into a much larger institution with completely new facilities and a wide range of courses. The training of Aboriginal teachers and assistant teachers remains the college's primary role, although it now operates on a much larger scale than before. It also now offers a training program for Aboriginal adult educators and courses in community management. Batchelor College has become a major agency for the advancement of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

A major initiative by this government was the establishment of the Northern Territory Open College which began operating this year. The Open College combined a number of existing services into a new and effective TAFE institution which also provides support services for secondary correspondence and students taking external studies from other institutions. The campus of the Open College is, in effect, the whole of the Northern Territory. By utilising an expanding network of regional centres and distance education techniques, the Open College is opening new educational horizons for people who live in smaller and isolated communities. It also provides opportunities for people who are unable to attend normal classes at other established institutions.

The Open College is expected to take on an increasingly important role in Aboriginal education through the establishment of a network of community education centres. This program is already under way and nearly \$1.2m of the NT and federal funds has been allocated this financial year for the construction of community education centres at Willowra, Numbulwar and Ngukurr. The first community education centre has already been completed at Milikapiti.

One of the prime responsibilities of the TAFE sector is the training of apprentices. Since 1982, there has been average annual growth in the number of Territory apprentices in training of 5.7%, although there has been a slight decline in the number of commencements this year as a result of the present economic climate. There has been an encouraging increase in the number of apprentices training at TAFE institutions with a corresponding decrease in the number of Territory apprentices who have to be sent interstate for specialised training. Only 83 out of a total of nearly 1100 apprentices in the Territory this year have had to undertake part of their training outside the Territory.

The development of the TAFE sector is a continuing priority of the NT government. Our commitment is not based only on the need to provide training opportunities for young Territorians but also to break our heavy reliance on and recruitment of skilled workers from interstate.

I believe it is important to point out that, while the federal government has made a significant contribution to the development of the Territory's TAFE sector, the bulk of the recurrent funding has come from the Northern Territory. Federal recurrent funding has risen from \$1.6m in 1984-85 to \$2.6m this financial year. However, Territory funding has increased in the same period by \$10m to a total allocation this financial year of \$34.9m. It is unfortunate that cuts in Territory funding have forced the Territory government to slightly reduce TAFE funding in real terms this financial year. However, we have managed to restrict that reduction to 5% and negotiations are under way with the Territory's TAFE institutions to ensure that the impact on courses is as minimal as possible.

I now turn my attention to the Darwin Institute of Technology. The history of DIT, formerly the Darwin Community College, is one of rapidly continuing change. This change has been a response to the needs of educational institutions to prepare students for a rapidly changing and increasingly technological society. As the major provider of professional and vocational courses in the Northern Territory, DIT's brief is broader than any other institute in Australia. With the use of vertical integration, DIT is able to offer both advanced education and TAFE programs within its 4 faculties. In fact, DIT now offers 128 accredited award programs which provide qualifications for technicians, professionals and tradespeople at both apprenticeship and post-trade levels. DIT now provides off-the-job training for about 85% of all apprentices in the Northern Territory.

DIT has recorded strong growth in enrolments in recent years. In 1984, there were 990 enrolments in advanced education courses. This year, enrolments have reached 1535. TAFE enrolments have increased by 11% in the same period with an expected final enrolment this year of 4630. There has also been an encouraging growth in the number of Year 12 school leavers entering advanced education courses at DIT. While TAFE has traditionally attracted many school leavers, advanced education enrolments from this area have been low. However, the level of Year 12 school leavers studying advanced education at DIT has risen from 5% of new enrolments in 1985 to 12.5% this year and the Darwin Institute of Technology is confident that this trend will continue.

The level of advanced education students enrolled full time has now risen to an impressive 50%. This has enabled DIT to increase the opportunities open to students by creating links between its TAFE and advanced education sectors through techniques such as tiering of courses and credit transfer mechanisms. This means that students can progress to higher qualifications without having to repeat work done in other courses. In this matter, DIT leads Australia. Students elsewhere in Australia who transfer from TAFE courses to advanced education courses often receive no credit for past study.

DIT is now developing a number of academic initiatives in areas of specific importance to the Northern Territory. The Faculty of Applied Science will expand its advanced education programs in the areas of engineering, including electronic engineering and computer science. In fact, plans are under way for a full degree program in computer science. Basic nurse training was introduced to DIT this year and it is expected that this area will continue to expand as more people are attracted to the profession. A Bachelor of Applied Science is being developed in the areas of park management, plant science and water science, including aquaculture. All of these are relevant to the Northern Territory. The Education Faculty will continue to develop speciality strands and will encourage increasing numbers of students to enrol for teacher education courses.

As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, there is a high turnover of teachers in Northern Territory schools and, as a result, the Northern Territory government has placed great emphasis on the expansion of teacher training at DIT. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of enrolments. In 1983, there was a total of 296 students in the various teacher education courses. This number has now leapt to 531. Projected enrolments for next year will exceed 600. We are aiming to increase the number of teachers trained locally until we are self-sufficient. This will do much to stabilise the teaching force, with the added benefit of saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in recruitment costs.

I would also like to make special mention of the development of Aboriginal education at DIT. Since the establishment of the Aboriginal Task Force at DIT in 1980, more than 1000 Aboriginal students have enrolled in both access and award programs. Present enrolment in the Aboriginal Task Force is more than 200, a substantial increase from the 25 students who enrolled in its first year of operation. In fact, the task force has grown to such an extent that it has earned recognition as a separate division of the Faculty of Education and, in the near future, it is to become the Division of Aboriginal Education. The total number of Aboriginal students enrolled at DIT, including the Aboriginal Task Force and Department of Linguistics at Batchelor, is probably the highest of any tertiary institution in Australia. Last year, the total enrolment exceeded 700 and final enrolment figures for this year are expected to be even higher.

Mr Speaker, you would be aware of this government's policy of developing closer relationships with our northern neighbours with the aim of increasing our trade and cultural links. In keeping with this policy, DIT has mounted a major program to encourage full-fee-paying students from overseas to study in Darwin at secondary schools, TAFE institutions, DIT and the University College. The first student in the program has already arrived from Brunei and I believe will commence studies next year. As a result of recent advertisements, another 50 applications have been received. DIT has also successfully negotiated the establishment of an information and coordinating office in Brunei and will also be marketing programs throughout Indonesia next month. This year, there are 11 full-fee-paying overseas students at DIT. The

target for next year is at least 30 new and continuing overseas students and 15 new students have already been recruited. I would like to draw honourable members' attention to a very important fact about DIT's entrepreneurial efforts to attract overseas students: the overseas student program is entirely self-funding; it does not cost Territory taxpayers a single cent.

I must also mention the Menzies School of Health Research which was established in 1983 as a joint endeavour of the Northern Territory government and the Menzies Foundation of the University of Sydney. The Menzies school is a post-graduate research institution which researches health problems of special significance to tropical and central Australia. Although the Menzies school has been operating for a short period - short in terms of research at least - it has already established an enviable national and international reputation for the excellence of its work.

I now turn to the University College of the Northern Territory which opened its doors this year. The establishment of the University College is one of the Northern Territory government's most significant achievements in education since 1979. For the first time in our history, Territory students now have access to the entire range of education from institutions in the Territory. It is a university in the fullest sense; that is, an institution engaged both in teaching and research for the benefit of the community. There are some degree courses which are not yet available but many of these will be phased in over the years. A case in hand is the second year of law which, hopefully, will be introduced next year following great demand this year.

The debate over the positioning of the University College is no doubt well known to all honourable members. I do not intend to cover it all again in detail. However, I believe it would be wrong of me not to rebut once more the opposition's oft-repeated lie that the federal government would have funded the University College if it had been built at DIT. That is not true, Mr Speaker. It is a gratuitous attempt to cover up the federal Labor government's intransigence over the matter. The simple fact is the federal government never offered to build the University College at DIT. Its sole offer was for 20 university places a year to be based at DIT in the existing buildings. That was 20 places a year for 3 years. At no time did the federal government offer any capital funds for the establishment of the University College at DIT. It offered only to squeeze a few - and I emphasise 'few' - more students into DIT. If this government had proceeded to build the University College at DIT, we would have been liable, after just 1 year, for more than the \$6m it cost us to refurbish the old Darwin Hospital. Indeed, the \$6m spent on the hospital site has gained the Territory an asset worth between \$35m and \$40m with room for expansion over the next 10 years.

I might also point out that, if the Northern Territory were given its fair share of federal university funding on a per capita basis, we would have received \$12.264m this financial year. Instead, we did not get 1c of either recurrent or capital funds. More than 250 students enrolled at the University College at the start of the year, although that has settled during the year to 238. To achieve this impressive enrolment figure in the face of the great uncertainty about whether students would be eligible for federal student allowances is a tribute to the Northern Territory government's foresight and determination to give Territory students the same rights as those enjoyed by other Australians.

One of the most important functions of a university is to carry out and train postgraduate students in research work. The University College offers Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees as well as doctorates. There is

now a total of 37 post-graduate students enrolled for these degrees: 22 for Master of Arts, 10 for Master of Science and 5 for doctorates.

Care is being taken to prevent any significant overlap in the operations of the University College and the DIT. In 1981, the Commonwealth Territory Education Commission recommended that DIT should not provide a Bachelor of Arts degree. However, in the absence of any other institution in the Territory to provide the degree, DIT introduced a Bachelor of Arts program. This has now rightly been taken over by the University College and the DIT is now concentrating on its Applied Arts degree. DIT has also developed other courses of high quality, particularly in psychology and sociology, and the University College does not intend to enter these fields.

Staff in the relevant departments of the University of Queensland have examined the DIT courses and have agreed to accept certain subjects as being equivalent in content and standard to some of their own subjects. This has enabled DIT and the University College to enter into a memorandum of understanding so that University College students can take these DIT subjects and have them counted towards their degree. In turn, DIT students can take certain University College subjects such as English literature and history and have them counted towards their DIT degrees. I believe that both institutions deserve to be congratulated for their efforts to give Territory students access to the broadest possible range of tertiary courses. Indeed, the University College Council has even waived the \$250 administration fee for students who are taking subjects at both Territory institutions, who would otherwise have had to pay the fee twice.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my very brief outline of how the Northern Territory's education system has developed in recent years. I believe that I have more than substantiated my contention that education in the Territory has gone through a renaissance and that we now have a system which matches the best in Australia and provides the full spectrum of services. We must continue to consolidate and build on the solid foundations that have been laid. This does not mean an end to the exciting developments in education. Education is a dynamic and sometimes volatile area and there will always be new projects on the drawing board. By the same token, our population growth is the fastest in the land so there will need to be growth in the number and size of our facilities for many years to come. In the near future, I see the path of education as one of stability and measured growth. Certainly, we can only hope that the Northern Territory is not forced into another situation like that which we faced after this year's Premiers Conference. Honourable members will be well aware that the reductions in funding announced at that time meant that the Northern Territory government had no option but to cut services across the board and education was no exception.

It is unfortunate that these reductions followed cutbacks in federal education funding in the 1986-87 federal budget which had a severe effect on several programs in the Northern Territory. These cutbacks were: reduction in the English as a Second Language Program by \$30.6m in a full year, which entailed a 46% loss of funding to the Territory in this area; reduction of capital grants by \$16.6m in a full year, which reduced the forward commitment of the Territory in this area by 20%; the termination of the Multicultural Education Program which wiped out \$53 000 which had been used for education grants to our many ethnic groups; the axing of the Professional Development Program, which cut all Territory funding in this area and also faced it with the added burden of having to fund in-service courses for Territory teachers; the cutting of the Special Education Program by \$3.2m in a full year, which lost us \$26 000; and the termination of the \$5.6m computer education program

at a time when the Schools Commission recommended that a special focus be given to computer education in primary schools. This came on top of a decision by the federal government at the end of 1985 to cut all support to pre-schools. As you will be aware, Mr Speaker, the Territory government pioneered the provision of universal pre-schooling in this country and we were left with no option but to pick up where the federal government left off.

I should also point out to honourable members that there have been further reductions in education funding in this year's federal budget. The basic Learning in Primary Schools Program, under which the Territory receives \$174 000, has been axed. So too has the Loan Video Scheme which assisted our School of the Air students and was worth \$318 000 to the Territory. The Participation and Equity Program, for which the Territory would have received \$360 000, has also been terminated.

In this context, I believe the Northern Territory government deserves congratulations, not recriminations, for the support we have given education. Yes, there have been cuts to over-entitlement staff in our secondary schools but our staff-student ratios ensure that Territory secondary schools are still staffed as well, if not better, than those in the states. Yes, there have been some reductions in the per capita grants to schools but we are still providing a higher level of service than the rest of the country. Indeed, we are frequently criticised by the Grants Commission for doing so. Any cuts in education are bad news; they are bitter medicine to swallow. However, I utterly refute any allegation that our education system cannot undergo some reductions in funding and still provide a service of very high quality. It can, it does and it will continue to do so.

The Northern Territory government's 1987-88 budget contains provision to meet promises made in the Territory election in March this year. This year's budget will expand our teacher-training program by providing 49 new scholarships next year in line with our commitment to move towards self-sufficiency. In fact, total funding for NT Teaching Service scholarships, Batchelor College bursaries and University College postgraduate scholarships has been increased by \$200 000 in this financial year to \$710 000. The number of Aboriginal teachers will be increased. Provision has been made for 40 Aboriginal trainee teachers at Batchelor College this year, 7 more than last year. In addition, enrolments in the Remote Area Teacher Education Program have been boosted from 50 at the beginning of last year to 120 this semester. Our links with South-east Asia will be strengthened by providing places for overseas students in our secondary schools and at DIT. In addition, 2 more students will be able to take part in the annual exchange scheme with Indonesia.

Under a joint scheme between the NT and federal governments, in which we meet the housing and recurrent expenditure, 13 new schools will be built in homeland centres. Provision has been made to develop courses for the planned centres of excellence in Territory secondary schools. Centres at Taminmin High and Tennant Creek High have already received the go-ahead. The Community Policing Program, which is already largely in place, will receive continued support. It is worth noting that this Northern Territory initiative has attracted attention from around Australia. We will continue to fund the University College until the federal government meets its obligations to Territory students.

Another budget item which I would like to highlight is the increase in funding for professional development programs for Territory teachers. As I mentioned earlier, the federal government completely axed all of its funding



for in-service programs for teachers and the Northern Territory was left with the choice of stopping this highly important service or stepping into the breach. In fact, we have increased professional development funding by a total of \$110 000 this financial year and \$72 000 of that will go towards providing in-service courses for teachers. The extra \$38 000 has been allocated to reimburse the \$250 tertiary administration fee for teachers who undertake part-time external studies to upgrade their teaching qualifications.

While I am discussing financial matters, I would like to take the opportunity to lay 2 matters to rest. Those matters are claims by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation that, firstly, the Northern Territory government does not spend enough on education in comparison with the states and, secondly, that the Department of Education is allowing its administrative area to increase at the expense of funding to schools.

The federation bases its first allegation on the fact that the Northern Territory spends a smaller proportion of its total budget on education than the states. Ipso facto, the federation argues this means the government does not give high enough priority to the education of Territory children. What a load of garbage! This government certainly does spend a lower proportion of its budget on education than the states. However, that is not because we are not spending enough on education. It is because we are spending disproportionately more on our essential infrastructure at this point in our development and on providing services to our small but widely-dispersed population.

In fact, the Northern Territory government spends more on education on a per capita basis than anywhere else in Australia. Indeed, recent data received by my department from the federal government has actually caused us to revise our figures downwards. In 1985-86, the most recent year for which full figures are available, the Northern Territory spent double the national average on education on a per capita basis. We spent \$967 per capita compared with \$436 elsewhere. We also spend far more on the education of each student than the rest of Australia does.

In 1985-86, we spent \$3860 on each primary student, compared with a national average of \$2380, or 162% more, and \$6440 on each secondary student, compared with a national average of \$3620, 178% more. As you might imagine, Mr Speaker, this level of expenditure is frowned upon by the Grants Commission. According to the commission, we spent \$29m more on education in 1982-83, based on the Australian standard, than we should have. The commission has not yet completed its assessment for 1983-84, but it has already indicated that we may have overspent by between \$15m and \$50m. Needless to say, we disagree with those assessments, and we will fight hard to maintain our level of funding but, at times, it is nothing less than sickening to see the Teachers Federation attempting to wilfully mislead the public in such a manner.

The federation's allegation about administrative growth is equally ill-founded. Since 1979, school staffing in the Territory has increased by more than 20%, but office-based administrative staff has been reduced by 25%. The Northern Territory is the only place in Australia to have achieved that kind of reversal, and it is interesting to see that other education authorities around Australia are now following our lead. The thrust of the Northern Territory government has been to increase the amount of school-based services and we have been remarkably successful in achieving that aim. The ratio of teachers to public servants in schools is 2:1. However, the ratio of teachers to office-based public servants is about 6:1 and the ratio of total

school staff to total office staff, which includes some teachers, is more than 6.5:1. The 348.5 office-based public servants in the Department of Education include our speech and occupational therapists, physiotherapists, library service officers and so on. The others, who make up the majority of staff numbers, are employed to provide services which directly affect school staff, salaries, travel, housing, recruitment, transfer facilities and communications. Any further reduction in the number of administrative staff would affect directly the level of services to schools, and I am extremely surprised that the Teachers Federation would suggest such a move, which can only harm its own members.

The final point I would like to speak on is the discussion document on education in the Territory, 'Towards the 90s'. This document has been prepared for one reason only: to promote community discussion on areas where the Northern Territory education system can be streamlined and improved. It is unfortunate, therefore, that various groups and individuals have persisted in telling the public that this document is a fait accompli, and that all the proposals it contains are to be implemented in full.

For the record, I would like to quote from the foreword of 'Towards the 90s', which makes its status perfectly clear.

'Towards the 90s'. Excellence, accountability, and devolution in education is a selection of discussion papers on the proposed new initiatives. Just how far and how fast the changes will take place has not yet been decided. That is really the purpose of this publication. Some quite revolutionary changes are proposed and they are outlined here to acquaint schools and the wider community with the initiatives, and to give people the opportunity to respond constructively to these suggestions.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier that education in the Territory is now entering a period of consolidation. I also said education was a dynamic area, and I believe it is important that we realise that the 2 are not mutually exclusive. Consolidation does not mean stagnation: it means building on what we have to meet the needs of future. As Territorians, we should all be acutely aware of the importance of that process. It is simply not possible to deny the existence of change unless you either live in a vacuum or have a mind like one. The Northern Territory is most emphatically not in a vacuum. In fact, it is one of the most exciting and progressive places in Australia, and we cannot afford to let any facet of our system stagnate.

In addition to this is consideration of the national scene, economic and social. Australia is now undergoing a time of economic austerity and education around the country is suffering the effects of that. At the same time, educational issues have come to the fore, and it is clear that some sections of the community are concerned about where education is going. The headlines from interstate newspapers in the past 2 months tell the story:

Parents Win Say in Choosing Most State Principals; State Plans Radical Overhaul of Education; Testing Time Ahead for the Three Rs; Victorian Children to be Tested on the Three Rs; 'The System Adds Up to a Failure' - Solicitors; 'Discipline Incompetent Teachers', Say Parents; Government Targets TAFE to Meet Industry's Skill Needs; 'Schools Failing Industry', Button; South Australian Schools Face Quality Control Assessments.

Mr Speaker, those are just a few examples, and they indicate clearly that we must ensure that our education system meets the needs of the community. However, because of our stringent financial situation, we must also examine our system closely to see if there are any ways in which we can operate more effectively. This was the background to the preparation of 'Towards the 90s' and I would like honourable members to consider some of the questions that were asked during this preparation.

Are our schools preparing students adequately for the world of work and to participate in the Territory's development? What do the community employers really expect of our schools? How can the wider community assist in teacher development? How can schools maintain their enthusiasm and quality in a declining economic environment, when they have to manage with reduced resources? How can teachers and parents motivate students to fully utilise curriculum options? Who creates excellent schools; is it the community, teachers, parents, students or all 4? What do schools have to do to encourage greater community participation?

'Towards the 90s' is a challenging document, but it cannot be discarded simply because it poses difficult questions. I do not subscribe to the theory that we should not try to achieve something because achieving it would not be easy. In 1983, 'Direction for the Eighties' put forward ideas and goals that have included: increased community involvement in education; accountability to parents in the community; increasing the influence of parents in the community; striving for competence and excellence; the need for accreditation, assessment and certification; community involvement in education; and school financing.

It is interesting to note how many of those issues are part of the current debate about 'Towards the 90s'. To put it simply, these issues are part of an ongoing debate on how to get the best results in education with existing resources and with full community involvement in taking the decisions necessary to achieve this. In the past, especially in the goals set in 'Direction for the Eighties', this process has served the Northern Territory well. Considered in this light, 'Towards the 90s' is part of that evolutionary process of continually trying to improve our education system. The government has always supported the rational and consistent development of education in the Northern Territory. In the foreword of 'Towards the 90s', it was stated:

For some time, the Department of Education has been considering a number of new initiatives in accordance with the government's education policy. Many of these initiatives have been foreshadowed in previous education documents.

For example, the accountability of schools to parents and the wider community is a consistent theme in the government's education policy, as 'Direction for the Eighties' makes clear and as 'Towards the 90s' continues.

Devolution is not a new idea. School communities have been encouraged consistently to establish school councils for their schools and the government continues to maintain the approach outlined in 'Direction for the Eighties'. 'Towards the 90s' now outlines what new functions can be adopted by school councils. It is important to recognise that many school councils have already taken on functions as part of the devolution process and are enjoying the benefits it provides. These benefits include: greater efficiency and accountability in the case of cleaning or ground maintenance contracts; financial benefits from taking on funding for repairs and maintenance or minor

new works contracts; and, of course, the advantage of having the job done now, and not next month or next year.

The third theme of 'Towards the 90s' is excellence. This has been a constant concern of the Northern Territory government. Our education policies are designed to foster excellence in students and teachers, as well as in schools and their administrations. Striving for excellence must be the concern of all involved in the education process and this was as much a concern of 'Direction for the Eighties' as it is of 'Towards the 90s'. However, I should point out that the proposal to expand the existing Master Teacher Scheme is far more than merely an attempt to encourage excellence in teachers. What it amounts to is a proposal for a separate career structure in the Northern Territory Teaching Service to enable teachers to progress in seniority while remaining in the classroom instead of being forced to move increasingly into administrative roles.

This is an extremely important issue and I think it is a great pity that there have been attempts to reduce it to a trivial exercise in semantics. The main debate on this issue seems to be whether to call teachers in the scheme, 'Teachers of Excellence' or 'Master Teachers', as they are now. On the one hand, I have been told that, in calling some teachers 'excellent', I am insinuating all other teachers are not capable of excellent work and, on the other hand, I have been told that 'Teacher of Excellence' is an admirable title because 'Master Teacher' is discriminatory. I suppose it is possible to have 'Mistress Teachers' but, as you will appreciate, Mr Speaker, it is difficult to know what position to take on this matter.

The Education Advisory Council has now received community submissions on 'Towards the 90s' and it is now collating these submissions to identify broad areas of agreement. Areas of contention will be included in a second document for further public discussion and I hope to have that document out in the community by the end of this year or early next year.

Territorians can and should be proud of our education system and its achievements. However, we cannot ignore the need constantly to build on our achievements. That is what 'Towards the 90s' is all about. Having successfully laid the foundation of our education system, we must continue building the Territory's education future. If anyone has any doubts about our direction, he should make no mistake: we have an education system that is second to none, we have excellent staff, we have excellent schools, we have excellently-resourced schools, we have the best staffing ratios and we provide opportunities from pre-school right through to tertiary level.

It is also a fact that our education spending, per capita, is almost twice that of any other government in Australia. We must continue to keep up with changes in our society and provide the means for our Territory students to take up opportunities in the education field. If there were any doubt as to the direction we were travelling in, I think they were dispelled yesterday by Mr Dawkins in comments in the federal parliament on higher education. On page 12 of his statement, he listed a number of areas that 'Towards the '90s' advocates. These include incentives for performance, resources distributed according to efficiency, incentives to achieve defined results, a competitive system which emphasises specified outputs and measurement of results, institutions to increase revenue from private sources, collaborative course arrangements with industry and reform of institutional management and decision-making processes.

I think it is also relevant to quote from the Adelaide Advertiser of Friday 18 September where Mr Crafter, the South Australian Minister for Education, said: 'South Australian parents would be given detailed performance assessments of their children's schools under a radical education audit plan. Under the plan, to begin next year, individual schools will establish achievement targets in such areas as standards of learning, quality of teaching and subjects'. In its editorial of that date the Advertiser said:

Parental concern about public schooling is widespread, as it is about the freedom of choice. There are frequently repeated industry suspicions that teaching such fascinating subjects as human development is at the expense of insisting on, and testing thoroughly for proficiency in such basic skills as reading, writing and arithmetic. Communities felt uneasy that schools do not always impart the required moral and social values. Money is not the only answer. Unease about schooling has, if anything, increased this decade despite better teacher-pupil ratios and school equipment.

Mr Speaker, I think that those who keep their eye on the education world and the systems throughout Australia will be aware that there is a movement in this direction in all areas of Australia. It is important for people in the community to become involved in education because one of the problems is the fact that the perceptions of the community as to what the schools teach and what students achieve do not tally with the facts. It is important for people in the community to become involved and to be aware of what is occurring in our schools.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I thank the minister for making this statement. I was a bit disappointed that he departed from his script towards the end of his remarks. We had an agreement that we would receive this statement the day before it was delivered. Nevertheless, I do not think he added anything significant. If he did, we will be able to pick it up in Hansard and another member from this side of the House will raise it later in the debate.

This debate is long overdue. The last broad-ranging statement we had before the release of what people in Tennant Creek call 'Plummeting Towards the 90s', was back in March 1983 when we had 'Direction for the Eighties'. From my reading of Hansard, it seems that that major statement was also not presented to this House for debate. If, as the minister says, the statement he has just made is the first comprehensive public statement and the culmination of some 2 years of community consultation, it would appear that Education Ministers in successive governments have been remiss in not bringing these matters to the parliament for discussion. I believe that parliament needs to regularly review the directions of major social portfolios like health and education.

It was my concern that 'Towards the 90s' was floating into place without any parliamentary review or debate. It was for that reason that I requested that the minister make a broad-ranging statement advising this House of the current state of education in the Northern Territory. I wanted him to set it in the context of developments since the 1983 report and to let us know how we now stand in comparison to the states in terms of the national goals set by the federal Labor government. There are national goals relating to retention rates and the development of an education system which will react better to today's changing world. We wish to know whether we will attain those goals,

whether we will be among those lagging behind or whether, as the minister stated several times in his speech, we will be ahead of the rest of Australia.

To do that, we have to know where we are now to be able to obtain that measurement. We need to then set the goals. We need to assess whether they are realistic or not and, having determined where we are now and the goals we are trying to achieve, we need to set some signposts for the journey. We need to have some signposts which will allow us over the intervening years to be able to gauge whether our education system is moving towards the achievement of the goals that we in this House have assigned to it.

I asked the honourable minister to address all those matters in a statement. He has presented us with a very long statement which totals 51 pages. It is longer if you take his concluding remarks into account. I would like to thank him. He gave us 24 hours notice of his intention to make the statement and provided us with a copy of it. As we proceed in this debate, we will see how well he has done the job that we set for him.

The first point that I would like to make relates to retention rates. While retention rates are not the sole indicator of a good or bad education system, they are one of the items that have to be taken into account when we are deciding how we are performing in terms of both the national goals and in terms of our obligations to our children. It is theoretically possible to keep students in school for 12 years of their lives and not teach them anything: retention rates look good but no education is occurring. However, in most courses, children do continue to learn during that period and those retention rates, as a percentage of the total numbers of students going through, are one of the ways we can measure whether we are increasing the skill levels of our students or their ability to operate at the level that we expect of them in today's society.

I have a couple of figures on retention rates which do not tie in with the minister's. He stated that a good indicator of the Territory's improved performance is increased retention rates in the senior years of secondary school. He then became extremely specific and started talking about Years 10, 11 and 12. Those are not the retention rates which apply in terms of the national plan. The retention rates apply to students who start in the system and go on to complete Year 12, not those who stay on from Year 10 to Year 12. The minister states that 23% of Year 10 students went on to Year 12 at the time of self-government and that figure has now risen to around 50%. That is fair enough. If one looks at the figures broadly, one might think we are heading towards the 65% which the federal government has set as the national goal. In fact, however, those are the figures from Year 10 to Year 12, not the figures through to Year 12.

Unfortunately, I have not had the figures from Year 1 to Year 8 long enough to be able to make comparisons. I assume, though, that there will not be a large drop-out rate during those years and that figures for Years 8 to 12 are indicative of the retention rates. According to a paper that was handed to me, our retention rate in 1986 was 35.7%. Before we throw ourselves about in shock and horror over that figure and the fact that it is so far below the 65% which we would be hoping to achieve to reach parity with the states in 1992, we should note that it represents a significant increase for the Northern Territory. We were a long way behind. In 1983, our retention rate right through the system was only 20.6%. It climbed to 24.4% in 1984, then to 32.7% and is now 35.7%.

Those figures are, to an extent, inflated by the fact that we have a strong net migration of children into the Northern Territory. Many of those children come straight into the secondary school system and therefore they have not actually come up through the lower years of our education system but through another system. They are therefore inflating our figures. The national figures put together by the Commonwealth Schools Commission were, I thought, fairly kind. They deflated the Territory's 1986 retention rate figure only by 1.6%. They did, however, put the lie to the minister's statement that we were on a par with the states. I am afraid that is not true. The Commonwealth Schools Commission has our 1986 rate at 34.1%. It is not the worst rate - Tasmania, God love it, has a rate of 30.3% which is the worst of any state or territory. The average, Australia-wide, was 48.7%. The figures range from Tasmania's 30.3% to 77.7% in the Australian Capital Territory.

I wish I could stand here and challenge the minister to reach 65% by 1992, but I know that that would be unrealistic and that it will not be achieved. I hope that he surpasses the national target which the Commonwealth Schools Commission has set for the Northern Territory: 45%. If we achieve that, it will put us on a par with Tasmania on the bottom of the barrel. I do not want our retention rates to be the bottom of the barrel. I do not want to believe that our education system is incapable of achieving better than that because, by then, places like Victoria will be achieving rates of 70% and the ACT will be achieving 83%. It will be many years before we can achieve rates of that level, but I hope that we will be able to surpass 50% by then so that we can say that we have done the right thing by our students and that our achievement is within cooeee of what is being achieved in the rest of Australia. I hope that, in replying, the minister will identify his target for retention rates. I am very disappointed that he has not done it to date. He should indicate those goals and he should let us know what he is attempting to achieve.

The minister commented on the Teachers Federation claims that education spending, as a percentage of total spending, is lower in the NT than any Australian state. It is a fact that the percentage for the NT is 19.7%, as against a national average of 33.3%. It is a fact that it is easily the lowest of any territory or state. That has not been denied by the minister, who uses other figures. He says that per capita expenditure in the NT is \$967 and this compares with a \$436 average for Australia. I do not know how these figures have been arrived at and, to be perfectly honest, I am not fundamentally interested. I can find another set of figures which can be used to put us somewhere in the medium range. The Leader of the Opposition will make some comments on funding and on the Grants Commission reports.

An evaluation of expenditure levels requires taking a couple of things into consideration. One is that the Northern Territory Department of Education bureaucracy, from PEO level upwards, is 4 times the size of the ACT's. The ACT has twice the number of students and teachers. The problem is not quite as bad as it sounds because we have the problems of distance and of ethnic and cultural diversity but, on the face of it, there is a fairly substantial difference. Another factor which inflates the expenditure levels is the cost of recruitment. To recruit a family of 2 teachers costs around \$14 000 each and the present turnover rate is about 20%.

The minister spoke about administrative growth compared to schools growth and asserted that the department has made major cuts to administrative staff. That is a myth. From what I have seen, the staff cuts have involved those who directly support teachers in the schools. One example of this is a reduction

of \$233 000 in funding of the Curriculum and Assessment Branch. That is a group which directly supports the teachers out in the schools. This is where cuts are being made, not in the purely administrative areas where people such as the ex-director of the statehood section are employed. He is currently wandering around somewhere in the Personnel Branch, I am told, being responsible for the 10th South Pacific Symposium, of which the kindest thing you could say is that it is a gabfest. He is still being paid at director level; all that has happened is that he has moved offices. A person who has been the highest-paid officer in the department for some years has been sick for quite a number of months. He is not the boss of the department. I am advised that he has been replaced in his job and will not be coming back, but we will be paying him for quite some time.

The \$749 000 reduction in school supplies, which can be seen on page 42 of the budget figures, indicates the government's priorities. This cost will now have to be met by parents through user-pays and I wonder how they will be able to cope with that. In that context, we find that pay rises have been given to the assistant and deputy secretaries of the department. It is not a national wage-case increase but a straight case of classification creep. Two of them have been given increases of \$4774 per annum and another has been given an increase of \$9548 per annum. It continues to be far easier to obtain extra dollars if you are in the administrative section of the department than if you are out there at the pointed end of the stick trying to run a school.

I want to refer now to the formula which relates to teacher and student numbers. It is not sufficient for the minister to say that the number of teachers has risen overall. According to the formula, as more students enter our schools, numbers of teachers will increase. In reality, the government has unilaterally revised the secondary-school formula downwards. In Years 11 and 12, it has moved from 1:13 down to 1:12.8 and, in Years 8, 9 and 10, it has moved from 1:16 to 1:15.8.

The government will probably try to claim that that is only a small movement in percentage terms even though it would have to acknowledge that it is quite substantial in respect of large schools with large numbers of teachers. What has actually happened is that librarians, school counsellors, resource teachers and so on have been counted in the formula calculation. While those people used to be over-establishment and so were available to perform distinct functions, they are now included in the formula. Effectively, this means there has been a reduction in staff numbers by the number of librarians, school counsellors and resource teachers, which represents a substantial reduction in the number of staff available to run schools. This has resulted in the dropping of a number of school programs. We have heard the complaints of people involved in matriculation music and various matriculation languages, saying that they are no longer able to run programs and classes, and students who had been working towards matriculating in those fields find that they will not be able to do so.

The largest cut in office-based positions has been in respect of special education. Once again, these people directly supported teachers. In many cases, they were involved in teaching on an itinerant basis themselves. Who were they teaching? They were the ones who looked after the deaf, the blind, the behaviourally-disturbed, the slow learners and the emotionally-disturbed. When the going gets tough, this government chucks overboard anybody who is not tough enough. \$311 000 has been cut in that area. It disgusts me that this government cares so little for the interests of those people that it is prepared to wipe out that whole program overnight.



The Labor Party applauds the Northern Territory government for its sentiments in producing a document on the directions of education in the next decade. We have always taken the view that government must take the lead role in laying down the educational framework of society. We also agree that the goals of excellence, accountability and devolution, where they are aimed at improving efficiency in the delivery of services, must underpin the direction of education in the Northern Territory. Documents such as 'Towards the 90s' can be the stimulus for a healthy public appraisal of the educational system and provide a means of focusing community views. They can encompass community concerns, recognising not only a system's strength but its weaknesses. They can provide a means for addressing those weaknesses and help to build confidence in the school system.

The government had the opportunity, with the production of 'Towards the 90s' to put the debate into focus. Instead, it dropped on the community an ill-prepared, rushed document full of internal contradictions which is certain only to alarm and confuse the public, further demoralise our teachers and bring education in the Northern Territory into disrepute. The minister has said that there will be no rush in implementing the measures proposed in the document but his actions in releasing it indicated otherwise. The document was delivered to delegates of the Education Advisory Council late on the night of 15 June, prior to their meeting on 16 June. The next day, the departmental secretary, in a meeting from 9 am to 2 pm, sought their immediate reactions and indicated they would be brought back together in August for final discussion before implementation. Contrast that with the 2 years of community consultations that went into the preparation of 'Direction for the Eighties'. In the department's instruction to school councils when 'Towards the 90s' was released on 17 June it was advised that a short discussion period of some 12 weeks was to occur. The document was released in the final week of the semester, when teachers were about to go on a 4-week school holiday.

Turning to the document itself, the minister's introduction refers to it being a discussion paper. It talks about a start on implementation in 1989 but, in reference to external exams, it makes reference to the 1988 school year. The minister called for the implementation of the goals of excellence, accountability and devolution. He never defined those terms. The objectives of government are referred to in passing, and they are accompanied by a reference to the 'Direction for the Eighties' document with goals and objectives scattered throughout the proposal, but never clearly stated.

Looking at a few of the proposals, there is the school improvement plan. Schools already plan their future direction. If we were talking about a redefinition of that plan, we would have no problems with it. We would like to be able to find out how it will be organised if there is a dispute between the Department of Education and the Regional Superintendent of the school. We cannot see why 3-year plans are mentioned. We do not know what the basis of the 3-year plan is. Is the government going to introduce triennial funding for schools? Clearly not, Mr Speaker. What is going to happen? Are the yearly updates going to become a new plan written every year, in which case, there is no reason to have planning?

He states that excellence will hang on external exams in mathematics and English. We recognise that there needs to be improvement in the information parents are receiving about their child's progress, but we believe that the method that has been chosen is retrogressive. Final attainment cannot be measured simply by an uncommented mark on the examination paper. There are too many other influences at work on the student which will determine that mark. Parents will not be any more enlightened. Teachers will teach to the

exams and, subsequently, the school curriculum will be narrowed. That is compounded by assessing the overall student achievement on the basis of 2 areas only. Neither of these will help provide a realistic assessment of a student's performance.

The proposal is made worse by subsequently linking funding to schools to improving literacy and numeracy standards. This has received the outright rejection and condemnation of every group in this debate, and I add to that the views of the opposition. This makes the assumption that all schools will start from an equal footing. It is my experience, in my electorate, and from travelling around the Territory that that is not the case. It will foster competitiveness and encourage teachers to teach only to the exams. Funding must remain on a per capita or needs basis.

The discussion on teacher rewards will be dealt with by the member for MacDonnell when he speaks in this debate.

The determinant of accountability in 'Towards the 90s' is business confidence. The government isolates one source of dissatisfaction and then makes schools totally accountable in respect of it. The question must be asked: on what qualitative research has business relied to validate its assertion that there is a fall in standards of literacy and numeracy? Newspaper headlines are not adequate indicators of a fall in literacy and numeracy skills. More children now continue on to Year 12 and, if you graph children's abilities on a bell curve, you will find that those who leave school at Year 10 generally have lower standards of literacy and numeracy than was the case when Year 10 was the final school year for the majority of students.

The government never questions this and, in fact, agrees with it on page 8. It says at one stage that standards are high and at another that they are not good enough, which is why further external exams are to be introduced. It is a major contradiction.

The document recommends the placing of business people on school councils, ignoring the fact that they already have the right to attend, not only as parents but as part of the school community. That is not a major contention, but what does seem particularly strange is the adopt-a-school system. I am wondering if that is a continuation of CLP activities. At the last CLP conference, some branches proposed to adopt a community. We have heard the member for Araluen talking about adopting a phone box, and now we are talking about various businesses adopting a school. I believe it would be an open invitation to the development of an elitist, nepotist system that, once again, would conveniently ignore the bush communities where business people can be very thin on the ground.

Mr Speaker, given the fact that this is a very long document and that the minister was able to speak for something like an hour on the subject, I hope that honourable members will be willing to give me an extension of time so that I can complete my remarks.

Under the entrepreneurial skills proposal, the real point of the document becomes clear. The government wants to cut the cost of education. It wants competition for scarce resources, ignoring the fact that funding should be on the basis of need. In the government's mind, a successful school is one that costs taxpayers the least. In the light of this aim, devolution can only be seen as a further means of cost-cutting. While we support the concept, I am concerned that this government will set in place mandatory commitments on

school councils whose membership is untrained to handle such commitments. When I was in Tennant Creek recently, that was brought home to me very clearly by people who said that, in that community, there were only a limited number of people who were able and willing to handle that type of executive administration. They pointed out that not everybody was on the school council. There are people looking after the golf clubs or the tennis clubs, on the hospital board or involved in various other activities in the town. They would not be able to find enough people to be able to handle the job.

The government, however, has given no indication of its intention to be flexible about what is devolved or any indication that it will resume a power should a school council opt to return it to the department. I fear too, and it is already occurring, that more and more of the workload of what are, after all, voluntary bodies, will be assumed by the school principal and staff, and a school's education standard will drop as a result.

The principals in our schools are supposed to be the best teachers in the schools. They are not the best administrators necessarily. What they should be able to do is to spend what time they can as principals, working at passing on those skills to other teachers in their schools so that they are the centres of excellence. They are the ones who are providing the range of their expertise to the teachers in the school so that they can increase the standard of education. In my discussions with teachers, I was quite shocked to find out how rarely it is that teachers are involved in discussion with their peers on the actual teaching of particular subjects. It appears that, after leaving teachers' college, a teacher rarely finds himself in a class with another teacher. From our own experience at school, we all know that some teachers have an excellent ability to impart knowledge of a subject whereas a subsequent teacher may not have the same ability to follow that through. That aspect is not covered in any way in this particular proposal.

It would be far better if the principals, being the best teachers, were able to ensure that they became the means of cross-fertilisation, taking good ideas from some teachers and passing them on to others. The government must outline its views on this matter in greater detail and allay the fears of a community that has shown in recent weeks that it does not trust this government one bit in relation to education policies.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move an extension of time be granted to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to enable him to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Darwin Institute of Technology is in real trouble. It is rapidly showing signs of the cinderella syndrome in relation to the more-favoured institution, the University College. One can only come to that conclusion after seeing the general dissatisfaction evident on campus amongst both students and staff. There are consistent and strong criticisms of the administrative processes and evidence of high staff turnover. There are clear indicators of significant problems.

Morale is very low. From a recent campus survey of staff by the Staff Association, the following quote has been extracted: 'Not one member expressed support for or recognition of anything positive about the management of the institute'. There is criticism about the politicisation and the

bureaucratic nature of the administration. The rigid approach of this imposed bureaucracy has led to low morale and loss of direction for the institute. The administration is a cross between a public service structure and a university structure. Neither are appropriate for a CAE hybrid and this has led to the confidence of the academic staff being destroyed as well as doing great damage to the environment of the educational institution. This inappropriate structure is unique to the DIT. It can be argued that the ratio of administrators to academics is low, but the structure is perceived to be unworkable for this type of organisation. The reputation of the management does not help with interstate recruitment and the inability to recruit staff will lead to courses being cut.

The institute has also been hit by reduced funding. In some areas, this will lead to the abandonment of courses. There are at least 9 courses now under threat and, at the moment, the Council of Advanced Education is undertaking a pass-the-parcel exercise about which courses to cut. The access program is one that I have been told will go. The axing of this course is of great concern. It is clear that Territory government funding for the program will cease at the end of the year. Not only does this program provide bridging between secondary and tertiary education, but it provides support for the students who are already enrolled.

There is an idea that the secondary colleges can plug the gap. They do not have the resources to pick up the extra workload and I have seen nothing in the budget which would indicate that the minister will provide the extra staff. The students in the access program had problems with the system of secondary education and it seems ridiculous to send them back into that same system. There is also a problem that, generally, they are now adults and they find it difficult to return to an adolescent environment. That short-sighted idea will particularly impact on women who wish to take up tertiary studies and will ensure that the business criticisms of the system have substance.

This action has been criticised by the staff at the institute. It is of particular concern with respect to apprenticeship training. In fact, apprenticeship training is a major area of concern to this side of the Assembly. No matter what the minister may say about statistics relating to apprentices, there is no doubt that numbers are down. In June 1986, the final figure was 1329; in June 1987, it had dropped to 1282. There will be even fewer next year if the government continues to reduce its own numbers of apprentices. The reason that children go interstate for apprenticeship core training is that we cannot recruit lecturers. In June this year, there were 3 positions in the trades area and applied science has the second-highest vacancy rate in the institute. The diesel mechanics fiasco of early this year is another example. The cancelling of indentures is increasing. There are serious suggestions that fees should be charged for trades courses and post-trade training. These fees will be dressed up as administrative charges and materials fees but the upshot will be that they will start to affect the numbers of apprentices.

There will be a further impacts on apprenticeship training as a result of federal government policies arising out of the recent budget. The federal Labor government last year put \$1.77m into this area in the Northern Territory. There will not be a drop in funding, but a change in the system is mooted. It is interesting to note that the federal government has been trying to involve the Northern Territory government in a feasibility study to investigate a real extension for the group apprenticeship scheme here. I am sorry that it took so long before the Territory government eventually came in to the tune of \$20 000.

Apprenticeship is not the only area under a cloud at DIT. The fine arts area has no materials and, for some subjects, no lecturers. Students are distressed that their courses may lose accreditation because standards are not being maintained. The Aboriginal Task Force, which is doing such an outstanding job, is still battling to hold its own. It does not even figure on the list of priorities for funding. In fact, while the minister was waxing lyrical about the Aboriginal Task Force and talking about the large numbers of people it has put through, the fact is that only 1 of its programs is funded by the Northern Territory government. The remainder are funded by the Commonwealth with some contributions from the Northern Territory government for staffing costs. We struggled last year to obtain enough enrolments for DIT to obtain CTEC funding. It does not augur well for next year for DIT if you put that in conjunction with the \$300 000 it has lost in this year's Territory budget.

Down the road, we have the University College. While the college received an additional \$600 000 in funding this year, that will not overcome the many problems that are being experienced. The university is not geared towards full-time students; it is geared towards part-timers. For the University College to prosper, it will need to attract many more full-time students. This problem has not even been addressed by the minister this evening.

That is not the only problem. For a university to meet its academic and intellectual aims, it needs a comprehensive and effective library facility, not corridor upon corridor of empty shelves. It is a disgrace that our University College cannot provide the monographs and other learned journals that our students need to develop the intellectual discipline and research capabilities which are the building blocks of any university education.

The University College, if it is to be a success, needs to continue to expand the scope of its courses. That is also something the minister has failed to address. It is a shame that, as a result of government policy, the University College and DIT are both fighting for a share of the same limited resources. It defies logic that any government with a professed commitment to developing a comprehensive tertiary education sector would deliberately make the 2 tertiary institutions slug it out with each other for funding. That is a recipe for educational disaster which will manifest itself in the education that is available to the sons and daughters of your constituents and mine.

The opposition believes that the Territory government must ensure that the University College and the DIT do not compete with each other for the Territory education dollar. One way this can be done, and it is one which the opposition will support, is for the Territory government to approach the federal government with a view to negotiating a detailed agreement covering tertiary education funding which recognises the unique status of tertiary education in the Northern Territory.

Nowhere else in Australia is there a multi-level CAE-type institution as well as a newly-formed university college and that alone dictates a new and uniquely innovative approach to tertiary education funding. The challenge to the government is there and I hope that it will seize the opportunity. The influx of overseas students who will pay for their education is slow to materialise. The students who are supposed to be paying full tote odds for their education are paying the princely sum of \$4500 at the University College. I am advised that that is the lowest fee paid by any overseas students in Australia. DIT overseas students pay \$6000. How is it that, if the overseas students at the university are also covering their costs, the costs at the university are \$1500 per year less than those at DIT? I do not

believe that that could be true. I believe that the Territory taxpayer is subsidising the sons and daughters of wealthy overseas people so that they can attend a local university which many of our taxpayers cannot themselves afford.

While we are on the topic of exporting education, I would like to know how many Territory kids are at the Katherine Rural College. I am told that there are only 13. I am told that the cost per head last year at the Katherine Rural College was \$52 000. The college would have the best student-staff ratio in the country. I hope the honourable minister would not try to justify it on the basis that he is training a few Aboriginal ringers because that does not cost \$52 000 per person per annum. If it were not for the Territory Training Centre Annexe, the whole place would basically operate for the staff and it would be a principal's dream: a school with no students. I find it incredible that this government argued for many years that the cost of \$17 000 per student at Kormilda was the reason why it had to take action and yet has taken no action with regard to the \$52 000 per year per student at the Katherine Rural College.

In the short time left to me, I would like to discuss some of the issues involved in Aboriginal education. Obviously, it is impossible for me during a debate of this nature to give this the attention that it requires. I was most disappointed to see that the minister did not relate his figures on the numbers coming out of Batchelor College to information paper 6 where his predecessor as minister, now the member for Port Darwin, set us an objective of 100 qualified Aboriginal teachers by 1990. The National Aboriginal Education Committee set us a national quota of 137 as part of its objective of having 1000 qualified Aboriginal teachers throughout Australia by that date. I do not know whether we will achieve our 137. I would very much like to believe that we could exceed it because, as I have said repeatedly in this Assembly, it is essential that we create a situation where every Aboriginal child in the community schools is taught by an Aboriginal teacher. It is only then that the education of Aboriginal students will take off.

The minister's comments about Yirara were inappropriate because the numbers he quoted do not even equal the numbers who were undertaking the JSSC there last year. If, however, he is able to achieve a good retention rate for those students so that large numbers come through the system, I will be the first to congratulate him and shake his hand. But I warn him that I will be watching the retention rates with a very vigilant eye, to see just how many of those students are getting through Year 12.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I must say that it is an indictment on the government that, on an issue that has galvanised more comment from the people of the Northern Territory than any other in the last 2 or 3 months, it cannot even find a second speaker tonight.

Mr Hanrahan: I told you we were going to speak tomorrow.

Mr SMITH: The government does not feel it is important enough to speak on tonight. Members opposite want to go home. As I said, it is an indictment of the attitude of this government to this important statement is that it is not prepared to start debating it tonight.

I want to concentrate my comments on 'Towards the 90s' because it is a subject on which I have some strong feelings. Before I do, I want to pick up the minister's comments in relation to Grants Commission figures. He made the strange statement that the Grants Commission figures for 1983-84 were not

available, but he thought they would show that we had overspent on education by somewhere between \$15m and \$50m. Let me inform the minister that the Grants Commission assessments for 1983-84 have been available for some time, at least 2 years, and they do not indicate that there has been an average over-expenditure of somewhere between \$15m and \$50m. They indicate that there was an over-expenditure of \$4m. The figure was \$138m against \$134m.

What is disturbing is that in the 2 key areas of education in the Northern Territory - that is, government primary and secondary schools - there was in 1983-84 an under-expenditure by the NT government compared to the standard effort throughout Australia which, of course, is the yardstick. The standardised expenditure on primary education required of the NT in 1983-84 was \$64.5m. We spent \$63.8m. It is not substantially less, but it is certainly less. In secondary education, the standardised amount was \$40.5m and we spent \$38.7m, which is a more substantial shortfall considering that there are fewer students in secondary education than in primary education. If that is the quality of the research which has gone into the paper presented to us by the Minister for Education, we have a paper which is no more use to us than the 'Towards the 90s' document has been.

Mr Speaker, I said that I wanted to direct most of my comments to 'Towards the 90s'. It has become clear that it was prepared by 1 officer in the Department of Education in 2 or 3 days, and its lack of substance certainly has betrayed the lack of preparation behind it.

Mr Hatton: Read the statement.

Mr SMITH: I have read the statement. 'Towards the 90s' has had an important outcome and I congratulate the minister on that: it has stirred a major education debate in the community.

Mr Dale: It is a discussion paper.

Mr SMITH: It is a discussion paper now. It certainly was not a discussion paper when it was first released. The irony is that, if it had been a reasonable document, it would not have stirred as much debate as it has. The fact that it was so bad is the reason there has been so much debate.

The major concern underlying the document is the number of children who are leaving school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. To put that another way, if a system turned out kids with basic literacy and numeracy skills, most of the dissatisfaction with the system would disappear and we would not have this major debate. I accept that employers do not want to control the system or inculcate it with their values. They want to see kids who can read and write coming out of the system. I sympathise with them because they have a right to expect the education system to turn out kids who have those skills. I accept that, much as it is difficult to stomach, kids are coming out of the education system without those basic literacy and numeracy skills.

That is not to say that standards have fallen over the last 20 to 30 years. I think that sufficient research has been done to indicate that there has been a general increase in literacy and numeracy standards but we still have the problem of kids coming out of the school system without those basic skills. As my colleague pointed out, one of the problems is that, with rising standards of education, more people are going on to tertiary education. Employers of apprentices are now tapping into students who have not reached the standards which their counterparts 20 or 30 years ago would have reached.

Nowadays, students who would have taken up apprenticeships 20 or 30 years ago are continuing on to tertiary education.

I do not resile from the obligation of the school system to ensure, as much as possible, that every child who goes through it should develop basic literacy and numeracy skills. I do have problems with the assumption that it is the school's fault if students do not come out with those skills. In fact, one of the most interesting comments that I heard in the whole of the 'Towards the 90s' debate was that many kids, for whatever reason, choose to be educationally deprived. In other words, they say that they do not want the things that we are teaching in our schools. They do not accept society's values and do not value the formal education that society is offering.

Mr Dale: And they are different from kids of other eras?

Mr SMITH: I thought that observation about the attitudes of some kids was interesting.

Mr Dale: Is it different?

Mr SMITH: Different from what?

Mr Dale: Other eras, other times.

Mr SMITH: I do not know.

Mr Dale: No, course you would not. You just make a bland statement like you always do.

Mr SMITH: I am sorry. I was trying to make a serious point.

Mr Dale: It might be serious but is there any logic to it?

Mr SMITH: The point was made by a school principal whom I respect and who has a long history of teaching in the Northern Territory. I will repeat it: there are children in the education system who, despite the best efforts of teachers, despite the resources provided by the Territory and Commonwealth governments and perhaps even despite their parents in some cases, choose not to take advantage of what is being offered to them. They choose not to accept what their teachers are offering, not to take up the opportunities that school provides and, as an end-result of that choice, they come out of schools without the basic literacy and numeracy skills that we all consider to be desirable. When you sit and think about that for a while, it makes sense.

Teachers are now better trained than they were 30 or 40 years ago, class sizes are smaller, teachers work as hard, if not harder, than they did 30 or 40 years ago, but we still have not seen dramatic improvements in literacy and numeracy. In my view, we have to look further than the resources we provide to schools and the efforts of teachers in order to find solutions. Perhaps one of the keys is that, consciously or unconsciously, the kids are turning off and do not want to learn. If we accept that, it puts a whole new perspective on how we might go about developing strategies.

We have to accept that kids are not empty vessels waiting to be filled. They do not come to school without preconceptions and without their own attitudes. They come to school with very well-formed attitudes and preconceptions. Some of these preconceptions come from society at large and some come from parents. I think it is about time, in this debate on education



and what schools are about, that we looked closely at what society is saying to our kids today. One of the things that it is saying is that it will be fairly difficult for them to obtain a job when they leave school. Recent figures indicate that they have a 1 in 5 chance of being unemployed for a considerable period of time. That is one of the most important things that our society is saying to kids today. If you think about that, Mr Speaker, and what the consequences might be for kids, you can see why they might ask themselves certain questions: 'If that is the case, what is the point of going through school? What is the point of achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills? What will society offer me in return?' For many of those kids, the answer may be that society does not have a great deal to offer them in return. I do not want to get carried away with that point but it did strike a nerve with me, particularly as it came from a person who is an experienced practitioner and who, in my view, knows what it is all about.

I hope that in the ongoing debate as 'Towards the 90s' is redefined and comes back for more discussion, we look beyond schools in an attempt to discover why some kids are not achieving in our system. It is not simply a matter of schools and the resources we put into them that determines whether kids are successful or not. There are other societal factors and it is about time we recognised them and took them into consideration when we are dealing with the problem.

Mr Speaker, the other major point that I want to make in this debate relates to what disturbed me most about 'Towards the 90s'. Forget all the references to devolution, standardised testing and results because there will always be controversy about such items. People will always have different views on how desirable outcomes are to be achieved. What disturbed me was that I thought 'Towards the 90s' was slipping away from a very important principle that has governed education in Australia for the last 100 to 150 years: that the state or the government had an obligation to provide all children with roughly equal educational opportunities.

If that principle is taken seriously, it means that some kids will require more financial resources supplied by the state than others in order to obtain that roughly equal educational opportunity. In other words, you cannot necessarily say that you have 50 000 kids and therefore you will need to spend \$300 000. It does not work like that. For a variety of reasons - family background, community environment, physical or mental disabilities etc - some will need more assistance from the state in terms of resources in order to obtain that roughly equal educational opportunity. I believe that one of the tenet's driving 'Towards the 90s' was a significant backing away from that concept.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give you 2 or 3 examples. One is that the user-pays principle is a very important element in 'Towards the 90s'. That would be to the detriment of kids from poor families and poor communities. Taken to its logical conclusion, it would make it difficult for them to experience the full range of desirable educational activities that richer kids in richer communities could obtain.

A second example is the concept in 'Towards the 90s' that the best teachers, those who achieve the best results, are the ones to be rewarded, and the best schools, those with the best results, are to be rewarded in the form of extra funding. We all know that the best teachers want to teach at the best schools with the best kids because that is the most satisfying life there is for a professional teacher. It is easier to teach good kids, in good schools with good conditions, than it is to teach deprived kids in conditions

that are not so good. The concept in 'Towards the 90s' would give encouragement to the best teachers to move to the best schools because they would have the best facilities and the best kids to deal with.

Mr Manzie: You are another one who has not read it either.

Mr SMITH: I have read it very carefully and that is the problem. You may well laugh at this, but that is the perception of many teachers, particularly teachers who have been working hard in areas - and there are such areas in Darwin although I do not intend to name them - where the kids are not as well off, the parents are not as well off and the community is not as well off as those in other areas. The implementation of the proposals in this document would take away the incentive in those schools. The incentive would be given for rich schools to become richer and it would be difficult for the poorer schools to maintain their standards and their teachers. That brings me to another point.

Already there are schools in the Northern Territory which service lower socioeconomic groups. Such schools are perhaps starting behind the 8-ball and necessarily concentrate on the basics. They do not have the time or the money to become involved in some of the more esoteric activities that are undertaken in other schools. Again, they will be penalised under the proposals in 'Towards the 90s' because that document provides considerable incentives for schools that can increase the basic standards of the kids in literacy and numeracy. That is one of the basic principles underlying the document.

What I am saying to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that there is no room in many of those schools to improve the standards because the teachers are already working damned hard to achieve the highest standards possible. In some other schools, where more time is spent on other activities - and that is desirable - there is more potential to improve those basic skills simply by spending more time on them. That is another basic flaw in 'Towards the 90s'.

I do not want to be over-critical of the document. I would have been highly critical of it if it were to be the final word, as seemed to be the intention 2 or 3 months ago. However, I want to point out that there are some basic educational flaws in that document that need to be addressed. The best way to address the matter is for someone in the Department of Education or the group that is revising the document to start from the basic premiss that every kid deserves a roughly equal chance to gain a decent education. That basic premiss will require a recognition that more resources will need to be spent on some kids in order to provide them with that equal opportunity. If we have those 2 principles firmly established in any new document outlining our directions for the 90s, we will have a good chance of establishing a system that will do us proud for the 1990s. If we do not, we will lock a significant number of kids in the Northern Territory into a downward cycle of diminishing achievement. They will be alienated further and our society will be denied the contribution which they could make.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Northern Territory Work Health Authority

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, I would like to report to the Assembly on the first 9 months of operation of the Work Health Authority.

I believe that it is both timely and important that, as Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, I address this topic as there seems still to be some confusion, particularly in industry, about the nature and functions of the authority. After all, such an authority must have the full confidence of the private sector if it is to function properly. I would like to state from the outset that no right-minded person can argue against the concept of all workers being protected from the possibility of workplace injury or disease and, in the case of such an event taking place, just and adequate compensation being made available for the worker. But, it must also be added that workers' compensation payments should not come to be seen as a pot of gold for those malingerers who wish to take advantage of the system. Let us not forget that every member of society pays for workers' compensation through increased costs of goods and services and through our country becoming less competitive against those nations which do not offer such benefits to their citizens.

Following the administrative streamlining of the Northern Territory Public Service in March of this year, the Ministry of Labour and Administrative Services came into being as an effective and separate entity. Moves to establish this ministry reflect the Territory government's determination to put in place what could be described as a true Department of Labour. Previous administrative arrangements governing labour matters in the Territory had been fragmented and, therefore, lacked the level of cohesion necessary to develop a firm underpinning for the Territory's growing industrial base. This change is in line with the government's sophisticated approach to administration which is to meet the need of a maturing Northern Territory. An integral part of any Department of Labour in a modern progressive society is, of course, the development of a relevant, functional and just policy governing occupational health and safety.

Following the proclamation of the Work Health Act in January of this year, the Northern Territory Work Health Authority was established and charged with this responsibility. The act, which breathed life into the new authority, is arguably the most progressive piece of occupational health and safety legislation in existence in Australia. After only 9 months of operation, the Work Health Authority is already displaying all the vital signs one would hope to find in an efficient and effective organisation playing a pivotal role in such a demanding field.

The goal of the Territory Work Health Authority is to reduce the cost to industry and the community of workplace injury and disease. It is not there to act as some kind of industrial policeman. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Work Health Act provides a 3-pronged approach to ensure the minimisation of cost to both the community and industry from injuries and illness received at the workplace. That approach encompasses prevention of workplace injury and disease, fair compensation to all who may suffer as a result of workplace injury and disease and rehabilitation aimed at returning injured or ill workers to the work force as soon as possible. All indicators point to the authority succeeding in its role. I am confident in making this assertion because of the considerable achievement and development in work health since the establishment of the authority.

Undoubtedly, the trigger that sparked this chain of change was the announcement by the Chief Minister in March of the new administrative arrangements for the Northern Territory Public Service. As a result, legislation previously administered by the Industrial Safety Division of the Department of Mines and Energy became the responsibility of the Work Health Authority. Staff of the former Safety Division transferred to the authority.

A subsequent reorganisation of the authority has taken place with the result that the Work Health Authority now has a staff of 54, the majority of whom work in the prevention area.

The inspectorate has been reorganised into 2 main areas: general and specialist. The general inspectorate is charged with the task of inspectorial responsibility for all Territory workplaces as well as advising on the full range of occupational safety matters. The officers of the general inspectorate are supported by a unit specialising in those areas which put workers at potentially high levels of risk such as cranes, lifts, pressure vessels, gas explosives and hazardous chemicals.

There is much still happening on the legislative level of work health in the Territory. A review is under way aimed at streamlining the plethora of industrial safety legislation which mushroomed during the long period before the advent of the Work Health Authority. This safety legislation, formerly administered by the Department of Mines and Energy, will be integrated into the Work Health Act, thereby reducing the number of individual pieces of legislation governing occupational health and safety in the Territory.

This review will have a twofold effect in keeping with government philosophy. Firstly, it will reduce the extent of red tape in the area of occupational health and safety. Secondly, the review will lead to an even greater emphasis on self-regulation which is an essential component in the government's approach to industrial safety in the Territory. I stress the point that self-regulation does not mean deregulation. Industry must take a greater responsibility for occupational health and safety within its own organisation and the government is confident that this principle of self-regulation, guided by information from the authority, will provide the answers to reducing the level of workplace injury and disease.

The authority's Occupational Health and Safety Division ensures that a high degree of information is made available for employers to ensure that they are fully aware not only of the potential of occupational hazards that may exist in their particular industry but also of their responsibility for industrial safety as an employer. Employees too must be fully informed on their role in work safety. To this end, work safety awareness seminars are held for all parties involved in industrial safety matters. Employers, workers, unions and insurers are all kept informed on industrial safety matters.

The authority's workplace injury and disease statistical database is being upgraded continually to provide an even wider range of information for the planning of preventive strategies. For example, information obtained from compensation claims further assists the authority in the targeting of hot spots that require high priority safety attention. It seems reasonable to assume that an increased awareness of industrial safety matters, based on practical and accurate data, is the most effective way of working towards the prevention of workplace injury and disease.

The authority is using a database created on the government computer. This information is stored in line with the recommendation of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission's minimum data set. Prior to the establishment of the Work Health Authority, insurers retained only the information they were required to keep on workers' compensation. There was no uniformity of information and each insurer supplied only the bare minimum of data to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. But, with the formation of the Work Health Authority, statistics relating to the cost of Territory workers'

compensation are being kept. It will be at least 12 months before sufficient data is available for a meaningful statistical analysis of the industrial safety and workers' compensation in the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we do not live in a utopian society. Despite contemporary knowledge and experience, the facts of life dictate that industrial accidents will happen despite our precautions and regardless of our training measures. To deal with that undesirable inevitability, the Work Health Act has structured a system of compensation payments that ensures an injured worker is not materially disadvantaged by an industrial accident. Statistics show that, in the 9 months until September, a total of 1886 work-related accidents were reported to the authority. More than 1620 of these have been processed through the work health information system.

It is interesting to note that, at a time when a number of state workers' compensation systems around Australia are in disarray, the Northern Territory system shows every sign of being a glowing success. Like the Northern Territory government, the Victorian, New South Wales and Australian governments have recently revamped their workers' compensation systems. Like the Northern Territory, all 3 state governments embarked on the exercise with the intention of reducing the cost to employers of compensation pay-outs.

Unlike the Northern Territory, the Victorian government is already having difficulty with its system and early indications are that New South Wales and South Australia also could be heading towards testing times. After examining the morass in which systems such as Victoria's Workcare and New South Wales' Workcare find themselves, it becomes obvious that a key reason why they are currently wallowing in a financial bog is the question of compensation. Some estimates put the cost overrun incurred by the Victorian system, after only 2 years of operation, as high as \$250m.

Under Victoria's Workcare system, employees claiming an incapacity receive 85% of their weekly wage until retirement. This is clearly a factor in creating a disincentive for a person to return to work, thus adding to the overall compensation costs. The Victorian government has conducted a review of its workers' compensation system. That review revealed that the amount of money the government would collect from workers' compensation premiums had been seriously underestimated.

The Work Health Act has avoided this problem by opting for a multi-insurer system. The multi-insurer system allows market forces to dictate the level of premiums. The Victorian review also found that access to benefits was too easy and some people on low incomes could receive as much while on compensation as they earned prior to their injury. Under the Work Health Act, benefits and access to them places every incentive before a worker to return to work. This, of course, is augmented by the act's emphasis on early rehabilitation. Rehabilitation, which can take up to 4 months to commence in Victoria, begins as early as practicable in the Territory with a view to having the employee playing his or her role as an active and productive member of society as soon as is physiologically possible.

Injured Territory workers are eligible for full pay for the first 6 months of incapacitation and 70% thereafter. There are a number of key reasons which will allow the Territory system to succeed where others have failed. Ours is a multi-insurer system which means, rather than a government-controlled fund bearing the cost of workers' compensation payments, as is the case elsewhere, it is the insurance companies themselves, through marketplace competition, which set premium levels. Naturally, the level of workers' compensation

premiums is one way to accurately measure the success or otherwise of the system.

I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the TIO annual report. That report, in discussing workers' compensation, reflects the impact of the Work Health Authority on this area. It is certainly the case that competition amongst insurers for the workers' compensation policy dollar has been stimulated and this can only be good for the overall level of compensation costs. It is also worth noting that, in its annual report, the Northern Territory Master Builders' Association has acknowledged as 'heartening' the reduction in the level of workers' compensation premiums. The association went on to say that it regarded as 'unacceptably high' the previous regime of workers' compensation premium levels.

Another fundamental difference between our system and those in states such as Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia is access to common law. By doing away with the right of the employee to sue the employer at common law, the Territory Work Health Act took a massive step towards reducing the cost of workers' compensation to employers. We simultaneously removed a great disincentive to return to work. Not only have we replaced the previous litigation lottery with a fair and just system of compensation, but we have done away with the long period that workers embarking on common-law actions had to wait before receiving judgments on their claims. Under the previous system, the worker could have been forced to wait up to 5 years before his or her case was settled.

The Work Health Authority's charter makes it responsible for the full gamut of occupational health and safety matters in the Territory. The Territory's work health system is unique. It is unique because it is the only fully-integrated system in Australia. That is to say, it incorporates a trilogy of responsibilities: industrial safety, workers' compensation and rehabilitation. Since the proclamation of the act, 2 private rehabilitation clinics have been established in the Territory and a third is to be established as part of the Darwin private hospital development. There will be a continued emphasis on rehabilitation. Insurance companies are using these facilities and that is because they can see the future benefits of the Work Health Act in this area.

The handling of dangerous materials is an ideal example of the industrial safety impact the Work Health Authority has already made. The roll-over earlier this month of a truck carrying 17 t of sodium cyanide is a case in point. As a result of the roll-over of a truck carrying cyanide last year, it is now required that all bulk loads of cyanide are closed in sealed freight containers. The decision to introduce tighter controls governing the transport of cyanide was vindicated in the recent mishap. All cyanide packs remained in the containers, making the recovery task safer and also saving the transport company money in the recovery operation.

As honourable members can see, the Territory now has a system of occupational health, compensation and rehabilitation which has more than proved its worth in its short existence. Our Work Health Authority has already made considerable inroads towards achieving its primary target: the reduction of workers' compensation costs to the employer and the community. It is devising a system for occupational health and safety based on self-regulation. At the same time, it provides fair, just and adequate recompense to employees unfortunate enough to become victims of industrial accidents. It is endeavouring to ensure that every injured worker receives appropriate rehabilitation treatment designed to return the worker to the

workplace as soon as possible. It has the ability, expertise, and growing statistical data capable of protecting both workers and the community at large from potential industrial accidents and, unlike a number of other workers' compensation schemes in Australia, the Territory's welfare scheme has removed the disincentives which act as barriers to the return of workers to an active and productive role in society. Above all else, the Work Health Authority is achieving its goals without placing undue pressure on the Territory's public purse.

As I have mentioned, many state governments have not been so far-sighted. Territorians can be at once confident in and proud of our work-health system. It is very much a pacesetter amongst similar Australian schemes.

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

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Visit to Indonesia

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly on my official visit to Indonesia from 2 to 7 August 1987.

My visit arose from an invitation from the Minister of Home Affairs, His Excellency Soepardjo Roestam, to visit Indonesia as a guest of the Indonesian government. I believe the invitation reflects the continuing good relations between Indonesia and the Northern Territory and the growing importance of contact between us. The efforts of the Northern Territory government to develop closer ties and promote cooperation with Indonesia have been pursued over many years. Over this period, there have been several visits at ministerial and official level. Given that we are next-door neighbours, these efforts are fitting.

I am pleased to be able to confirm, from the discussions which I have now had with a range of government ministers in Jakarta, that the desire to work constructively together is mutual. The genuineness of the Northern Territory's interest in Indonesia is clearly established with the Indonesian government and that, no doubt, contributed to the excellent reception which we received. Indonesian ministers emphasised their willingness to work cooperatively with the Northern Territory and the commitment in this regard clearly surprised even Australia's ambassador to Indonesia. These efforts over the years are producing results which will benefit the people of the Northern Territory.

The initial focus of our work was on developing programs of assistance and cooperation, largely in the social areas. In education, we developed teacher and student exchange programs. These programs began in a very small way and have grown in scope and significance. We have also promoted cultural exchanges to develop a greater awareness of each other's unique historical and cultural traditions. These efforts have provided a solid basis of mutual understanding and respect and, importantly, have generated considerable interest in widening areas of contact.

Much is now being achieved in these wider areas. All Territorians will be aware of the growing importance of tourism links between Indonesia and the Northern Territory. The traditional link between Darwin and Bali has been supplemented by regular links with West Timor and growing interest in other areas such as Ambon. Plans are well developed for even further development of our tourism links.

Investment and trade links are also widening. Indonesian and Territory businessmen are looking for opportunities to do business with each other. There is support from key ministers and business organisations for the establishment of more formal joint business arrangements to promote trade opportunities. The government has initiated a number of trade and investment missions and the stage is now set. It will be up to the private sectors in Indonesia and the Territory to capitalise on the work that has been done.

Government to government contact will proceed. The Territory government is properly committed to programs of cooperation, particularly in health and education, and I will return to the details later in this statement. These programs are developing a sense of mutual understanding and respect which will make a major contribution to peace and stability in our region. The real benefit to the Territory, however, will lie in increasing commercial opportunities and the creation of a favourable environment for Territory businessmen to take advantage of openings in the Indonesian market. I am confident that the Territory's business community has the commitment and the competitive ability to take advantage of the openings which have been created by contacts at government level over the years.

I now turn to some of the details of my visit to Indonesia. On my arrival in Jakarta on 2 August, I was met by the Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs and by Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia, His Excellency Mr Bill Morrison. The Ambassador provided the delegation with a very frank and comprehensive briefing on the current situation in Indonesia and the prospects of the Northern Territory in developing closer ties and in extending the range of contacts, particularly in trade and in programs of cooperation in education and health. The Ambassador noted with considerable satisfaction the high degree of goodwill which existed between the Northern Territory and Indonesia and expressed his appreciation of the Northern Territory's efforts in maintaining close relations with Indonesia. The Ambassador accompanied me on various calls in Jakarta and I want to place on record my appreciation for his assistance and support. Bill Morrison is clearly well regarded by Indonesian ministers and by the President of the Republic and is clearly serving Australia well in Indonesia.

I attended a meeting with His Excellency Mr Soepardjo Roestam, Minister of Home Affairs. Minister Soepardjo was the Northern Territory's host for the visit. The minister received the whole delegation and provided a very comprehensive outline of Indonesia's structure of government, including the formal and informal relationships between the central government in Jakarta, the provinces and the villages. He outlined the history of Indonesia's 5-year plans for development, emphasising the principal features of the current 5-year plan which is the fourth such plan. In his presentation to us, the minister emphasised the very important archipelago principle which was the basis for the unity of Indonesia despite its diversity in history, geography, race, religion and level of development.

I outlined the important objectives of our visit to Indonesia, particularly the Northern Territory government's wish to develop programs of cooperation in the areas of education and health, the strengthening of tourism exchanges and to improve communications with East Timor to allow for family visitations for former residents of East Timor now living in the Northern Territory.

I also emphasised that the geographic location of Indonesia and the Northern Territory required us to maintain close and friendly links. I noted the programs of cooperation already in place, particularly the teacher and



student exchanges in education and I outlined the Northern Territory's progress in the teaching of the Indonesian language and our plans to extend that further. This was well received by the minister. I also noted our strong interest in focusing programs of cooperation on the eastern provinces and advised the minister that the promised gift of buffalo had arrived that day in Kupang and would be formally handed over to the governor of the province in a few days time. The minister welcomed discussion of these issues and our talks were extremely friendly and open. The minister particularly agreed that improved communications with East Timor was an important objective and he indicated that he was willing to work cooperatively to achieve progress in this area.

I also mentioned the growing significance of the Darwin to Ambon yacht race and the way it was contributing to building closer relations. I advised the minister of the Macassan prahu bicentennial event and its special significance in commemorating a part of Australia's history, which is much older than the first European settlement. I suggested that the minister might like to help launch the prahu at the appropriate time this year. I informed the minister that I would be renewing invitations to the governors of East and West Timor to visit the Northern Territory at an early time and the minister indicated that such visits would have his full support.

My next meeting was with His Excellency Dr Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Discussions with Dr Mochtar focused particularly on East Timor. Dr Mochtar has a special interest in East Timor which is his parliamentary constituency. I emphasised the Northern Territory government's wish to promote family visitation and open up the province to visits on a more normal basis. I emphasised that the current difficulties in visiting East Timor and in obtaining information about East Timor gave rise to opportunities in the Northern Territory and elsewhere to generate misinformation about conditions in the province. Dr Mochtar outlined the current situation in East Timor which he saw as very encouraging. He supported progress towards family visitation but noted that some former Timorese residents wanted to return to East Timor to live, which the Timorese people did not wish to occur.

The minister acknowledged and was appreciative of the close interest of the Northern Territory and Indonesia, particularly in the eastern provinces. I outlined areas where we saw opportunities for further programs of cooperation and emphasised again the health and education fields. This was also well received by Dr Mochtar. I also outlined growing opportunities for contacts with Ambon, including trade opportunities.

The minister also discussed a number of South-east Asian regional issues, particularly the prospects for a political settlement in Kampuchea. He had just returned from discussions on these Kampuchean problems with a number of leaders.

In the absence of His Excellency Mr Kachmat Salah, Minister of Trade, the delegation met with the Acting Minister, His Excellency Mr Bustanil Arifin. I outlined the Northern Territory's interest in developing trade and investment opportunities with Indonesia and I explained to the minister the areas of cooperation which already existed. In our discussions about trade opportunities, a number of areas of interest were suggested and will be followed up. These include timber imports from Molucca through Darwin rather than through Melbourne as at present, with Darwin becoming a focal point for the sale of timber to the rest of Australia. We also touched on exports of feeder beef cattle to Indonesia; the previous policy which would have precluded this trade appears to be relaxing. Sales of coffee to the Northern

Territory from East and West Timor were discussed together with quality seed exports from the Territory for such crops as soybean and maize. We also discussed the desirability of enhancing the current Merpati air services between Kupang and Darwin with a connection to Ambon. The minister noted the growing contact between Darwin and Ambon and agreed that he would raise this issue with the relevant people.

The minister expressed interest in sending an Indonesian trade mission to Darwin in 1988. I suggested that this should be timed to coincide with next year's Northern Territory Expo and the minister agreed that this was a worthwhile approach. I look forward to an interesting Indonesian exhibit at next year's Northern Territory Expo and I shall be encouraging this outcome in follow-up action. The minister also suggested that formal arrangements should be put in place to allow regular contacts between Indonesian and Territory businessmen. A joint consultative group would ensure that opportunities for trade and investment were not missed and would provide a forum for direct follow-up action. I supported this suggestion and indicated that I would ask the relevant minister to recommend a program for action.

In my meeting with His Excellency Mr Achmad Tahir, the Minister of Tourism, Post and Telecommunications, I reviewed with the minister the progress that has been achieved in joint marketing between the Northern Territory and Garuda in the tourism area. The Bali and Beyond program, which was suggested during 1986, has begun and has achieved some results. A major German tour wholesaler has taken up the program. I emphasised the growing number of flights between the west coast of the United States and Australia with connections to Alice Springs and Darwin. I pointed out that the add-on concept could work in reverse with add-ons of tours coming to northern Australia, particularly from USA, flying on to Indonesia. I emphasised that the existing capacity constraint between Darwin and Denpasar was a serious problem and would limit tourist opportunities for Indonesia. I indicated that the Northern Territory would continue to support Garuda's case for extra capacity on the Denpasar-Darwin route. We agreed with the minister that cooperative marketing of tourism between the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and Indonesia would be worth while and this would be pursued by officials.

The minister advised of current plans to introduce a new Garuda service linking Darwin and Japan through Ambon and Hong Kong. The minister noted that this would greatly enhance Darwin's attractiveness from a tourist point of view. Garuda aims to have the services operating in 2 to 3 years time. I indicated that such a service would have the full support of the Northern Territory. The delegation also raised the issue of tourism to Ambon and indicated that there would be a considerable market already in the Northern Territory if more convenient services to Ambon were available. The minister agreed that Indonesia's Director General of Tourism would visit the Northern Territory at an early date to follow up these matters.

My next meeting was with His Excellency Dr Faud Hasan, Minister of Education and Culture. The minister acknowledged the importance of the education links which have already been developed between the Northern Territory and Indonesia and expressed his full support for them. He indicated that he is anxious to expand these teacher and student exchange programs into more regions in the eastern part of Indonesia. He also expressed his view that the Territory could assist Indonesia in the areas of vocational training, particularly in agriculture and animal husbandry. I undertook to follow up these interests and particularly to consider whether there would be a role for the Katherine Rural Education College in offering assistance.

I emphasised the importance of Indonesian language in the Northern Territory and outlined the government's plans to further expand the teaching of Indonesian. I sought the cooperation of the minister in providing us with Indonesian language teaching materials, particularly to support our bid to develop an Indonesian language curriculum for use throughout Australia. The minister promised his full support and agreed that the Director-General of Education would visit the Territory to assist in the design and development of suitable programs and teaching materials.

The minister outlined his interest in promoting community-oriented curricula throughout Indonesia to ensure that regional characteristics and regional lifestyles could be preserved. He was particularly interested in the effectiveness of school-based curricula material in the Territory and the Director General will also study our experience in this area when he visits the Northern Territory. I also indicated to the minister that there were a number of areas in the TAFE field where the Territory could assist through trade training, block release courses etc. I pointed out our experience in training in the hospitality industry and suggested this could be of interest with the growth of tourism in Indonesia. Further contacts have already been made at officer level to follow up the matters which were raised.

My next meeting was with Mr J. Habibie, Director General, Sea Communications. I took the opportunity of a brief meeting with the Director General to confirm that the shipping problems for timber, which had been discussed at some length on the previous visit in 1986, had been satisfactorily resolved. I also suggested that there were significant opportunities to sell timber into Australia from Ambon and that Darwin would be the logical port for such shipments.

The Director General expressed considerable interest in joint venture fishing cooperation between Indonesia and Australia in Australia's northern waters.

I also explained that, at times, a number of possible trade developments appeared to be frustrated by Indonesian customs requirements which were time-consuming and costly and which therefore worked against the competitiveness of Indonesian products. The Director General said that more modern procedures were now in place and that there were no difficulties for any charter ship to take cargo from any Indonesian port to any Australian port. Customs clearances could be arranged for all such shipments.

My next meeting was with His Excellency President Suharto, the President of Indonesia. The meeting with the President was extremely cordial and wide-ranging. The President particularly emphasised the close relations which existed between the Northern Territory and Indonesia and expressed his satisfaction at the close relationship which existed. He also placed considerable emphasis on opportunities for greater trade between Indonesia and Australia, with Darwin being the focal point for that trade. I indicated that the Northern Territory would strongly support that concept.

The President was aware of the existing trade links with cattle and buffalo and has a strong personal interest in livestock. He was aware that the gift of buffalo had arrived in Indonesia and expressed his appreciation.

I might say, Mr Speaker, that the buffalo gift was a consequence of the honourable member for Barkly's visit in 1986 to honour an undertaking he had made to make such a gift to the Indonesian people. Many of the references to the 1986 visit were to the visit by the honourable member for Barkly in his capacity as Chief Minister at that time.

The President welcomed growing Australian tourism to Indonesia and also indicated his support for more Australian investment in Indonesia, particularly in goldmining. He indicated that Indonesia would be looking for technology transfer with Australian investment.

The President was very conscious of the state of seabed and boundary negotiations in the Timor Sea and expressed his hope that they would soon be concluded. At that time, he favoured joint ventures between Indonesia and Australia in the exploration and development of its resources of the region.

The President also referred to the delegation's visit to East Timor and expressed his hope that it would foster better understanding of Indonesia's objectives in the province and the progress that had been achieved.

I emphasised to the President the areas of cooperation which already existed between the Northern Territory and Indonesia and our focus on health and education for the development of new programs of cooperation. I also outlined the emphasis that the Northern Territory was placing on the teaching of the Indonesian language in Northern Territory schools. This was particularly well received by the president and he was greatly impressed by the progress that had been made in this area and the Northern Territory's commitment to Indonesian language teaching.

Following the meeting with the President, I held a press conference with Indonesian journalists and outlined the aims of the visit. The press conference was extensively reported in the Indonesian media.

The next meeting was with His Excellency Dr Suwardjono Surjaningrat, Minister of Health. In the meeting with the minister, I indicated that the Northern Territory saw considerable scope for cooperation in the health field, particularly in such areas as malaria control, leprosy and the training of nurses. The minister indicated that Indonesia had a real need to raise the quality of nursing but pointed out that language problems needed to be overcome if nurses were to benefit from training overseas. I suggested there was scope to develop a nursing exchange program between the Northern Territory and Indonesia and that this could be complemented by exchange of doctors, particularly focusing on the eastern provinces.

The minister said that Indonesia's major health concern at the present time was the high infant mortality rate. The rate was declining quite rapidly and the family health program was proving effective. However, more needed to be done and the Department of Health was endeavouring to develop its services to local health centres and to encourage community participation. However, there remained a need for more doctors.

I suggested that the Northern Territory could also assist in the areas of communicable diseases and this was well received by the minister. We agreed that the Director General of Communicable Diseases Control and the Director General in charge of health training should visit the Northern Territory to develop a specific program of activities and to look at health facilities here. The minister indicated his interest in gaining access to Northern Territory medical technology for the treatment of leprosy, which continues to be a problem in some of the eastern provinces.

I also had a meeting with KADIN, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The delegation met with the president and board members of Kadin and had the opportunity to address them. KADIN also hosted a lunch for the Northern Territory delegation. I was particularly pleased to have the

opportunity to speak with the board members of KADIN. KADIN is a major private sector organisation and there is extensive consultation between it and the Indonesian government in the preparation and implementation of Indonesia's economic and development objectives.

The members of KADIN expressed their concern about the continuing trade imbalance between Australia and Indonesia and the high level of tariffs imposed by Australia on Indonesian exports. I emphasised that the trade balance with the Northern Territory was in Indonesia's favour and that the Northern Territory's interest in expanding trade was just as much in buying a wider range of commodities from Indonesia as it was in selling to Indonesia. KADIN echoes the comments of President Suharto in expressing keen interest in Australian investment in Indonesia and KADIN members are clearly anxious to develop joint ventures with Australian investors.

Several KADIN members had an interest in the cattle and buffalo trade and there was support for a continuation of this trade. I conveyed to KADIN the comments of Minister Arifin on the joint business consultative arrangements and emphasised my support for such an initiative. KADIN members welcomed the suggestion and confirmed that they would support it.

In general discussion, I outlined the current economic prospects for the Northern Territory, including resurgence of interest in goldmining. I also pointed to growing tourism opportunities between the Northern Territory and Indonesia, particularly Bali.

I visited East Timor on 5 and 6 August. During that trip, the delegation had wide-ranging discussions with the Governor of East Timor, His Excellency, Mario Viegas Carrascalao. The governor outlined the current priorities in the development of the province. These priorities are agriculture, health, education, roads and government administration. The governor indicated some of the areas where significant progress has been achieved in East Timor over recent years.

There has been a very significant decline in the incidence of tuberculosis. In 1974, there were 12 km of sealed roads. Now there are 600 km. In 1975, the real per capita income in the province was \$US40 per annum. It is currently \$US165 per annum. Although the real per capita income in the province is still only one-third of the national average, it has increased very substantially over recent years. There is a campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the province. In 1975, 92% of the population were illiterate. At present, 60% are illiterate but the illiteracy rate will be reduced to 10% within 2 years. The province now has a university with 400 students and a further 600 will be enrolled next year. There are 1500 teachers in training in the province and primary teacher training needs will be completely satisfied from within the province within 2 years. There are 92 doctors in East Timor, which is a ratio of 1 per 7000 people, well above the Indonesian national average of 1 doctor per 12 000 people.

In agriculture, the province is now self-sufficient in maize production but still requires some imports of rice. Rice production has substantially increased since 1974. The province has made significant strides in overcoming local food shortages because of the improved road network. 90% of East Timorese still depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

In the health area, the governor emphasised that the major problem facing the province was malaria. He estimated that the productivity in the province was reduced by 20% because of the effects of malaria. Virtually every East

Timorese has malaria and he was concerned that cerebral malaria was now in the province.

The governor recognised that Indonesia was vulnerable to external criticism for not opening up the province. He explained that there was a serious employment problem and that it was difficult to provide jobs to match improving educational standards. The governor explained that the province was not only closed to the outside world; it was also closed to other Indonesians. Until East Timorese could compete more effectively for employment, it was not in their interests for the province to be opened up. The governor acknowledged that the cost of this policy was the loss of possible private investment in the province. This was of concern to the governor who recognised the need for private investment in the development of the province. He explained that the East Timorese had virtually no experience in trading. Before 1974, there were no East Timorese shopkeepers. There are now more than 1000 small shopkeepers but their managerial skills are very limited. The governor drew our attention to the existence of significant high-quality marble deposits in the province but noted that private investment has not been available to develop these deposits.

In the area of health, the governor said there was a shortage of paramedical staff. A priority was to double the number of nurses in training. I indicated to the governor that the Northern Territory had training materials for Aboriginal health workers and offered to provide literature, training materials and videos in the Indonesian language. The governor indicated that such assistance would be very welcome.

I outlined for the governor the substance of my discussions in Jakarta with Indonesian ministers. In the area of education, I explained our emphasis on Indonesian language teaching in Northern Territory schools and our offer to assist in technical and skills training. In the area of health, I advised the governor of our offer to assist in programs to attack malaria, assistance in the treatment of leprosy and exchanges of nurses and doctors. The governor welcomed the Northern Territory's efforts in relation to malaria and gave his full support to this program. If this program starts, it might be worth noting that it would be the first aid going into East Timor from outside Indonesia since the events of 1975.

I also reiterated the views I had put in relation to East Timor. I explained our emphasis on family visitation and continuing the process to normalise contacts between East Timor and the Northern Territory. I explained the importance of this process in dispelling misconceptions which arose from time to time about conditions in East Timor. I also reiterated the invitation to the governor to visit the Northern Territory and I am hopeful that this will be possible in the very near future.

The governor indicated that he would welcome an extension of the student exchange program to East Timor and looked forward to the time when this would be possible. He supported family visitation on a case by case, step by step basis. He emphasised the need to avoid any rekindling of past problems. The governor indicated that former residents of East Timor, who had relatives still in the province, should present a case for visitation through their relatives in East Timor. The governor advised that he has discretion to approve such visits and he had not refused any case put to him to date. People wishing to visit, who did not have relatives in the province, should present their case through Jakarta. He explained that the number of outsiders visiting East Timor was growing each year.

The governor indicated that his training priorities were in agriculture and the food industries, including small-scale processing of food products. He also considered there were opportunities for the export of Territory cattle to East Timor, particularly for use in the southern part of the province.

The governor expressed support for greater sporting contacts between the Territory and East Timor and said that, in his view, there were no obstacles to such contacts.

In relation to the activities of Fretilin, the governor said that Fretilin was not able to prevent access to any village in East Timor. There were regular bus services from Dili to every district centre. Sporadic incidents continued to occur in the very remote regions, mainly at night, but Fretilin generally commanded little support within the province.

The governor arranged an opportunity for the delegation to tour the town of Dili and nearby district centres. On the tour of Dili, I was able to observe the very obvious commitment of the Indonesian government to the development of the province. There were no signs of tension, and a good deal of evidence of relative prosperity in the range of goods on sale in the stores and markets, the levels of motor traffic in Dili and the level of building and construction activity. A major new Roman Catholic cathedral is under construction in the centre of the town.

At an official dinner hosted by the governor, the delegation noted that the distinct character of East Timor and its people is being maintained and fostered by the Indonesian government. Traditional dancing and music was performed for the delegation, including Portuguese folk dancing.

The visit to West Timor on 6 and 7 August 1987, was an opportunity to consolidate the contacts which have already been made with this province and to hand over the gift of buffalo officially to the Indonesian authorities. The delegation received a comprehensive briefing on the province from His Excellency the Governor, Dr Ben Mboi, and his wife. West Timor has an area of 47 000 km<sup>2</sup> and is subdivided into 12 districts and 97 sub-districts. The population is currently 3 million, with the heaviest density on the island of Flores. The governor outlined the major issues of the province. Infant mortality is higher than the national average and efforts are being directed to improve this area. The province is seeking to broaden its export base with new commodities including fish, cocoa, copra, cloves and seaweed. The governor noted that agriculture was very important in the province and contributed 75% to the domestic product of the province. 90% of the population depended on agriculture.

Local industry was dominated by the cement factory at Kupang which fully met local needs and which had some capacity for export. The cement factory also provided a base for downstream development possibilities. Considerable emphasis was being given to the development of forestry products, in particular, tamarind, sandalwood and certain species of palm for the development of non-glucose sugar.

The governor considered tourism to be a major development opportunity for the province and he noted, with considerable satisfaction, the success of the Mervati service between Kupang and Darwin. This service is carrying an average of 170 passengers per week and passenger numbers are growing. The provincial government has set a target of 56 000 tourists by 1995. The governor indicated that the principal tourist attractions of the province were the Komodo Dragons and the unique sea gardens which were found off the north coast of Flores.

The governor indicated that urbanisation was a growing social problem in the province. The population of Kupang had been growing at 6% per annum. There was a need to reverse this trend and strengthen development opportunities at the village level. There are currently 3400 primary schools in the province, an average of almost 2 per village. There is a post-primary junior secondary school in every village in the province and there are 4 universities, 3 of which are private, with a total of 10 000 students. The governor indicated that considerable emphasis was being placed on family planning.

I outlined to the governor the nature of cooperative programs between the Northern Territory and Indonesia already in place and our focus for future development of these programs. I provided him also with an outline of our discussions with ministers in Jakarta. I suggested there would be considerable benefit in sharing our experience and research in agriculture and in the cattle industry, that health and education provided opportunities for cooperation and that he might be particularly interested in training opportunities for tourism and hospitality which we could provide. I outlined our progress in promoting the teaching of the Indonesian language.

The delegation had the pleasure of visiting the Australian Aid Project near Kupang and observed the benefits that were being brought to the region through this integrated livestock project. The gift of buffalo from the Northern Territory to Indonesia was officially presented and was extremely well-received.

The delegation had the opportunity to visit the cement factory at Kupang and to discuss plans for expansion, including possible export plans, with its management team. I reiterated the invitation to the governor and his wife to visit the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, my visit to Indonesia was not in any sense path-breaking. It was a continuation of the solid work which ministers and officials have been undertaking ever since self-government. I am convinced that we are now beginning to see the fruits of that work, particularly with growing interest in trade links and a more significant role for Darwin as a focal point for trade between Indonesia and Australia. Indonesian ministers and officials accepted the Northern Territory's genuine commitment to work cooperatively in areas of mutual interest as a good neighbour. Our educational, cultural and sporting exchanges have been extremely effective in building close relations and are greatly appreciated. Our interest in expanding areas of cooperation is acknowledged and welcomed.

What my visit did achieve was to provide more focus to programs of cooperation which can be put in place, and to give some direction so that they can be implemented. The government is committed to continuing these efforts. I was able to give specific encouragement to greater commercial links between Indonesia and the Northern Territory. I expect frequent exchanges over the coming months, particularly between relevant officials, to begin to set out the detailed arrangements for even wider areas of cooperation. I know that these efforts will have the support of all members of the Assembly and I and my ministerial colleagues look forward to being able to make further reports to this Assembly as these initiatives progress.

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

Debate adjourned.



JURIES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 61)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to include the Ombudsman and his staff on the seventh schedule to the Juries Act as persons exempt from service as jurors pursuant to section 11 of the Juries Act. Section 11 of the Juries Act states that persons specified in the seventh schedule are exempt as jurors, and the name of any such person should not be included in the jury list. Examples of categories of persons who are exempted include the Administrator, members of the Legislative Assembly and a practising barrister or solicitor.

The reasons for exempting many of the groups listed as exempt apply equally to the Ombudsman and his officers. The reasons include that those employed in the Ombudsman's office are government officials, are informally involved in the legal process and are often concerned in many disputes that could lead to litigation. Further, the Ombudsman's office functions in many ways as an alternative dispute-settling mechanism to the court. Jury service could be seen as conflicting with this primary role. It is also unlikely that exempting the Ombudsman and his staff from the jury list will unduly deplete the jury pool.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

URANIUM MINING (ENVIRONMENT CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 66)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act has been operating successfully since its inception in 1979. The act was designed to provide effective protection for the natural environment from the potential dangers presented by the mining and milling of uranium. The success of the act was endorsed by the former Commonwealth Minister for the Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, in June 1986 and it was confirmed in the House of Representatives that the Commonwealth scientists of the Alligator Rivers Region Research Institute have not observed any detriment in Kakadu National Park attributable to pollution effects of uranium mining operations at the Ranger and Nabarlek sites. The act, as it stands, is particularly oriented towards ensuring that the mining companies operate in an environmentally responsible manner.

The wording of the act has the unintended effect of restricting the powers of the inspectors under the act. In addition to issuing directions to company management, inspectors may give directions to persons on the mine site concerning possible breaches of the act. They cannot, however, give enforceable directions to persons who may have infringed the act but have left the mine site. This amendment will remove this unintended restriction. It will also make breaches of the act, which relate to activities other than

mining, regulatory offences. This will ensure that, if such a breach occurs and prosecution is deemed appropriate, the case cannot be distracted by arguments concerning whether or not the offender intended to breach the act. Prosecutions will be less complex and the incentive to protect the environment will be even greater than that provided by the existing act.

The amendment will give inspectors under the act the necessary powers to ensure uranium mining and the Alligator Rivers region continues in a manner which protects the environment. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Legislative Assembly Members (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (Serial 62) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (Serial 62)

Continued from 17 September 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill will go down in the history as the 'Tuxworth Bill', and I must say in passing that I hope that it is the only time that the bill will have to be used to reimburse the member for Barkly, which it will do for the period from midnight on March 6 until his subsequent re-election as member for Barkly on 5 September.

The whole Barkly by-election business was most unfortunate from the point of view of practically everybody, I would suspect, ranging from the member for Barkly through to the Labor candidate in the 7 March election who, in good faith and for the second time, contested an election in the Northern Territory and on this occasion subsequently found himself declared ineligible, through to the long-suffering people of Barkly, and not least, the poor taxpayers of the Northern Territory who had to pay the cost ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about the ALP and the CLP?

Mr SMITH: ... and the political parties, including the ALP. The last thing anyone wanted was to have to fight the Barkly by-election. However, we have had to undertake that exercise and an unfortunate by-product of it was that the member for Barkly ...

Mr Ede: Is back.

Mr SMITH: Apart from the unfortunate fact that the member for Barkly is back, as my colleague said, the member for Barkly did find himself out-of-pocket for a considerable period of that time through no fault of his own. I certainly did not support the view of the member for Barkly, sometimes expressed in vituperative comments, that the Northern Territory government was out to get him and that it deprived him of his salary and his office for purely political reasons. That was not my view at the time. It was my view

that the Speaker, who is not present at the moment, acted legitimately in, first of all, calling for a legal opinion. I had no doubt that the legal opinion would provide the advice it provided, which clearly was that the honourable member ceased to be a member from 6 March, the date of the previous general election. Because the election for Barkly was declared null and void, he was not, in fact, the member from that date.

The Speaker had no choice but to declare that the member for Barkly was not the member and had no entitlement to a salary, no entitlement to a vehicle and no entitlement to an office. Of course, the honourable member was able to make very effective public use of that. I have a very vivid recollection of a photograph in the Tennant Creek Times showing him sitting in the middle of Tennant Creek's main street with a telephone with its cord going nowhere. I think he was getting a free suntan. Congratulations to him; it was great electioneering.

The whole business was forced on the Speaker and he acted commendably in handling the matter in the way that he did. The Labor Party has copped quite a bit of flak over the whole affair. I do not want to go over that ground but I want to stress for the record, as Justice Nader found, that the Labor Party and each candidate in the 7 March election acted in good faith. Certainly, there was no attempt by either the Labor Party or its candidates to deceive the people of Barkly and the Northern Territory, as Justice Nader found.

It was unfortunate that changes made to the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act slipped through without anybody in the Territory, I think it is fair to say, noticing. Perhaps that is another justification for statehood because those sorts of decisions should be made in the Northern Territory rather than by the federal government. Certainly, if the decision to disenfranchise British subjects had been made in the Northern Territory, and had been the subject of debate in this Assembly, we would not have found ourselves in the position that we did.

What was not lost in the whole exercise but was not really pursued was that, of course, it was not the first time that something like that had happened. We had the situation where 2 existing members of this House, the member for Ludmilla and the member for Wanguri, were themselves elected illegally to his Assembly. Of course, that was a matter of some great heat and moment before the last election. The member for Wanguri proceeded to renounce his ministerial title and then carried on exactly as he did before he renounced it. Again, that was good politics and I congratulate the member for Wanguri on his sense of theatre and politics.

I have one question that is relevant to this whole exercise. In the heat of that election campaign, the Chief Minister promised us a full inquiry or, at least, a legal opinion on the status of the members for Ludmilla and Wanguri. Subsequently, we have heard nothing. The Chief Minister might like to address himself to this debate. My question is: was a formal legal opinion sought on the status of the honourable members and, if so, what did that legal opinion say and, if no legal opinion was sought, why not?

Mr Hatton: Not in this debate. We are still on this particular issue.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that I congratulate the government on doing the sensible thing. I do not believe it had any choice in introducing this retrospective legislation to cover the situation that the member for Barkly found himself in. I hope that we do not have cause to use this legislation on any other occasion. I think there has been a valuable

lesson for everybody involved in politics in the Northern Territory to ensure that we get it right at the next election which, hopefully, will not be for almost 4 years so that we do not put taxpayers to the expense that they have been put in this recent election.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bill and I think it is appropriate that I declare my interest at this stage. I must say that I was rather surprised at the introduction of the bill and the fact that no reference was made to me about it at any stage. On a personal level, I find that the bill contains a measure of justice but I would like to raise some important issues that I believe are essential to the passage of this bill. I hope that I do not seem ungracious in raising them but I believe that they are very important and that they are issues that should not escape the members of this Assembly or, indeed, other members of the Northern Territory community.

Any political cynic could look at this legislation and classify it as a sop to the people or something designed to shut Tuxworth up. The way to put paid to that sort of cynicism would be for the government to foreshadow tonight or at some stage in the future that this bill will be accompanied by a raft of amendments to the Northern Territory Electoral Act which has been shown in the past 2 or 3 months to be appallingly deficient. I will deal with that issue as I proceed, but I believe that a raft of amendments is needed because of the deficiencies that became obvious during the course of the hearings conducted by the tribunal and as a result of the proceedings that took place after the decision of the tribunal.

The 3 major issues in this legislation are: firstly, the propriety and dignity of this House and its members; secondly, who decides who sits in this House; and, thirdly, who decides who does not sit in this House. So far as points 2 and 3 are concerned, the people of the Northern Territory believe that they decide who sits here and who does not. Whatever view we may hold or whatever the act may say, the results of the Barkly election confirm quite definitely that the people believe that it is their right to decide who sits in this Chamber. I think it is important to highlight that point because there are a number of king-makers in the Northern Territory - preselection committees, party executives and a whole range of others - who believe that it is their prerogative to decide who sits here. The Barkly election has shown, whatever such people may believe, that in the end the people will have their say. More importantly, if the people of the Territory perceive that anybody is interfering with their decision or their wish, they will come down quite firmly and let everybody know what they think.

I believe it is incumbent on us as members of the Assembly to ensure that, irrespective of a member's colour, creed or political persuasion, equal dignity and support is accorded to him by the parliament. People will not cop the view that some members are not as good as others and should not be granted the trappings of office. That came through loud and clear in the election, Mr Deputy Speaker, and you heard it during your campaigning along with everybody else. It is incumbent upon us all, whatever we may think, to uphold the dignity of this Assembly and its members at all times. If we have no dignity and self-esteem amongst ourselves, there is no way that anybody else in the community can be expected to have it. Why should they?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to canvass some of the issues that caused the supplementary election. I will firstly touch on the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition. If ever there was a reason why we should be pursuing statehood, it is the interference of the Commonwealth amendments to

the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act which caused the election in the first place. Those amendments stated that any candidate who stood for election had to be an Australian citizen. Surely that is a matter for this parliament. It is not a matter for another parliament to be passing legislation to determine what sort of candidate should stand in an election and who should be eligible to sit in this House.

In reference to individual performance, I raise the roles and responsibilities of certain people involved in the election. Questions can certainly be asked about how Mr Hallett's name ever got on the ballot paper and why there was not sufficient scrutiny to determine whether he was eligible or not. I say that without prejudice because both Mr Hallett and Mrs Hickey were known to be going through their process of naturalisation some days before nominations closed. In fact, both candidates had their photos in the paper as individuals who were becoming naturalised so that they could stand for office. Under the circumstances, I think it would have been reasonable for them to be asked to produce their naturalisation certificates. It is quite common these days for people to have to produce that certificate. I think there is also a responsibility on campaign managers and the candidates themselves to be absolutely sure of the legal status of candidates so that this sort of thing does not happen.

Mr Hatton: They could flash their ID cards, I suppose.

Mr TUXWORTH: Maybe it is an argument for the ID card. It is the first good one that I have heard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would now like to touch on the Northern Territory Electoral Act. I was in this Assembly when it was drafted in the heady days of early self-government. I guess the truth is that nobody who sat in the Assembly at that time believed that a dispute or a circumstance of this nature could ever arise. However, we can now see that the act is very deficient in terms of dealing with disputes of this nature. I guess we can put that down to youth, inexperience or naivety in believing that the things that happen in other places would never happen here. There are no provisions in our electoral legislation that cater for the extraordinary circumstances that occur from time to time. There are no provisions in our act for appeal, compensation or damages. While I accept that there was no attempt by the ALP or Mr Hallett to deceive the people, there may well be a case in future where somebody wilfully deceives and puts the electorate to great expense. There should be some provision in our electoral legislation to enable the Crown to recover some costs relating to the cost of the election. There is no provision for penalties in the act for people who deceive, whether wilfully or not.

There is no provision in the act to cover dereliction of duty not by public servants but by any officer, campaign manager or candidate who has been derelict in his duties and responsibilities under the act. I believe that there needs to be some provision in the act to cater for that. The act is certainly deficient in terms of definitions. A definition determining the difference between a by-election and a supplementary election would have been very handy in the consideration of this whole case. Regrettably, there was not one. There is no doubt that it would be helpful if the act was more definitive in setting out the procedures that should be followed once an election has been declared void.

Those may all seem small, irrelevant and unimportant matters, but I say to members that it is highly likely they will come into focus again if there is a

dispute in future. Each one of us should bear in mind the fact that any person in this room could be next for some unwitting reason, generally not a reason of his or her own making. I would say to honourable members that the image of our parliament has been badly tainted by this election, in the first place simply because there had to be a by-election or supplementary election. The general feeling in the community was that it was a farce and a joke and we do not need that perception of our Assembly in the community.

At that point, I believe that every effort should have been made by the members of the Assembly, the Chief Minister and the Speaker to ensure that the dignity of the parliament was maintained by calling an early election to ensure that the member was accommodated, that the constituents were represented and that justice was seen to be done. I do not say that for Tuxworth, the member for Barkly. I say that because it could apply to any member in this House.

If it should ever happen again, it is very important in terms of our image in the public eye that we ensure that the representative of the people is seen to be given dignity and decent office accommodation because that is what the constituents expect. If they expect it of us, we ought to do it because there is no doubt the people regard it as their right to decide who comes in here and when they cannot come in here. The Speaker or the Chief Minister could have foreshadowed, at any time, a range of initiatives to ensure that the dignity of the parliament and the continuity of the member was maintained. Simply foreshadowing this very legislation would have taken much heat out of the election. I think everybody realises that now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to touch on the contents of the bill. The bill grants continuing salary to the member - in this case myself - and provides for out-of-pocket expenses. There is no reference as to whether legal expenses are included in that. Certainly, there is continuity of superannuation, but only if the candidate wins. I believe those provisions should prevail for any member who finds himself in the position that I found myself in, even if he loses, because the people believe that the member is their member until they have voted him out. He should be accorded the rights and entitlement of that office until he is disposed of.

Mr Perron: You want them to be paid when they are not members?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will say it again for the benefit of the honourable minister. Whatever we may think, the people believe that their member is their member until they have voted him out.

Mr Perron: To hell with the law!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, we are amending the law and the very point that I am making is that we are amending the law because that is what the people believe and what they expect.

I would like to raise the issue of the legal expenses because they are very relevant. If we accept the principle that the member is the member of this Assembly until the eve of his election and the result of the election is known, it is also reasonable under the circumstances that any legal expenses that he or she has to incur in defending his or her position could reasonably be met by the government. In this particular case, Justice Nader handed down a decision yesterday that was quite reasonable and clear so far as I can see. In case there are future circumstances, I believe that the sitting member should be covered by the terms of the act.

The last point that I raise is on behalf of my secretary at the time. Her employment was summarily terminated as a result of the proceedings that occurred. When all of this blew up, my secretary had gone on leave and I engaged a temporary girl. She was with me but a week when the decision was made that the office was to be closed and her services were to be terminated. I felt that, under the circumstances, she got a pretty rough deal. She gave up her job to come and give me a hand. She got someone else to do her job. She did not have any particular attraction to the job she was doing for me; she was just giving me a hand. Within a week, she found herself out of a job and out of pocket and unable to go back to her regular routine. I would say that it would be reasonable under the circumstances for the wages of my secretary to be accommodated in this settlement. I thought it was a bit tough on somebody who was doing me, the Assembly and my constituents a favour, not because of any political support but simply because she wanted to help out.

The whole affair has been unfortunate but it has been a part of maintaining the democratic process in the eyes of the electorate and maintaining the integrity of the Assembly and its members in the eyes of the electorate. I accepted the battle for the seat for Barkly. I always enjoy elections because they are very stimulating. You can have one every year as far as I am concerned. I particularly enjoyed winning this one, and I thank honourable members for their help.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, first I would like to take up the last point regarding the honourable member's electorate secretary. I would hope that that can be taken up within the ambit of this legislation and the matter judged on its merit.

By-elections are always hard and I think it is fair to say that, when there is a supplementary election or whatever you want to call it for a seat where the member has been set aside by a tribunal, it tends to become vindictive. It was a very hard-fought election and one where I found that my own ability to stomach the rubbish and filth that was thrown, tested to its utter limit. It has been said that the member for Barkly threw the first stone regarding Mrs Hickey and I think that that story should be put to rest here. In fact, to his eternal shame, it was the Chief Minister who ...

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member's statements have nothing to do with the bill before the House.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the bill that we are discussing tonight clearly relates to the by-election and the provisions of the Electoral Act. It was caused by the situation that occurred in Barkly. As we have already discussed things like the Electoral Act and the rolls in that context, what I am saying is also part and parcel of the electoral process.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would ask the honourable member to confine his remarks to the bill before the House.

Mr Dale: You have a vested interest as a disgraced campaign manager.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as the campaign manager and the opposition spokesman on legal reform, it was very difficult for me to accept some of the actions that were perpetrated first by the Chief Minister in his statements about the ALP candidate and later by the then Mr Tuxworth, now again the member for Barkly. I felt that their statements in the press and the fact that we had to obtain a legal letter to order them to desist or else face the full wrath of defamation proceedings is something ...

Mr Hatton: Cease and desist what?

Mr EDE: It is very difficult for me to tell the Chief Minister if he is not going to control members of his backbench who obviously want to call points of order on me. However, for the Chief Minister's edification, if that is what he would like to know, I shall go through it chapter and verse. The first mention was in Overview in the Tennant and District Times. The Chief Minister said that Mrs Hickey seems to have been fairly loose with the truth. He then went on to talk about the notion that the incinerator would poison the earth, linking it back clearly to Mrs Hickey. He has never been able to produce a single iota of evidence for that. There were many months between the original election and the by-election. Surely, if he could find even 1 person who was prepared to back him, he should have had him ready to come forward. He was unable to do that.

It was unfortunate that the member for Barkly then added the business about Camooweal Aboriginals coming into the electorate. I have examined the additions roll which is available to federal members but which we can obtain only for our electorates. It was interesting to see where the new enrolments originated from, and I am not criticising any person who has worked hard to get people on the roll. If people have a right to be on the roll, they should be assisted to enrol so that they can exercise their democratic right to vote. It was quite amazing to find that, of the new enrolments, 112 were ringers and others from cattle stations, 86 were from Tennant Creek and 60 were from Aboriginal communities. I would like to know how those people who put about the stories that the ALP was running a horrendous campaign to build up the black vote explain that the largest number of new enrolments in the last few months came from cattle stations and Tennant Creek. Good luck to those people; I am glad they are on the roll. I fully applaud people for assisting other people to get on the roll. It is something we all have an obligation to do as members. However, it was extremely disappointing when people attributed some form of incorrect behaviour to the ALP in that regard.

The Chief Minister again jumped on the bandwagon and established an investigation. When the investigation was completed, he would not divulge the results. We had to work our proverbials off to finally get him to release the results. He wanted the issue to run and run because he thought that was the way he would damage us. It was quite incredible. He went on and on. In a front-page article in the NT News, he said:

We are particularly nervous about ALP candidate Mrs Maggie Hickey's electoral practices. During the post-mortem of the last election, we were getting feedback that some of Mrs Hickey's supporters were running around the Barkly electorate telling Aboriginal communities that, unless they voted for her, their babies would be born deformed.

Again, Mr Speaker, it was an absolute farrago of lies and it was proven to be such. When we slapped a writ on the Chief Minister telling him to put up or shut up, he could not put up because he was frightened of the defamation writs that we would have covered him with. It finally reached the stage where, even the NT News, which is no great supporter of the Labor party, stated in its editorial:

The Labor candidate, Mrs Maggie Hickey, is right to be angry at the allegations implicating her made by the Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, and National candidate, Mr Ian Tuxworth. Without doubt, the allegations were made for electoral advantage. They have now misfired badly.



Mr Speaker, the hardest thing that I found to stomach was that people would stoop to such low practices. The by-election, however, was lightened by the new air-conditioned office which the then Mr Ian Tuxworth, now the member for Barkly, moved into. It was probably one of the best electoral stunts for some time. He took his lump of wood with 'Member for Barkly' on it and hung it under a tree. There he was with his phone, sitting on his fence, holding his glasses and saying: 'Put Ian back into Barkly in his office'. Not very good English but, all the same, it was quite well done. I enjoyed that.

I did not enjoy as much, however, some of the statements that he made about his achievements. He claimed the sealing of the Ali Curung road as one of his achievements. Mr Speaker, I was told that, when you were the member for Stuart, you had a considerable amount to do with that. I found it strange that he laid claim to the trachoma health program which was something that I had a lot to do with in my former employment, and I can remember getting involved in quite vituperative arguments with the CLP at that time.

Mr Speaker, there are a number of things that we learned as a result of this election. Adopting the attitude that the Electoral Act should not be amended because particular situations just would not happen is something which this Assembly can no longer afford. Time and time again, when the opposition has proposed amendments, we have been told that they are not necessary because those situations will never arise. We should be looking at amendments on their merits. From what the member for Barkly has said tonight, I am sure he will support the amendment that I have on the General Business Paper because it is well justified.

That leads me to the one pat on the back that I will give the Chief Minister tonight. I refer to the fact that he did not close the rolls off in the minimum time. He allowed time for those people who were entitled to vote to get on the roll so that they were able to exercise their democratic right. That is something that I will praise him for and I hope that he will continue to do that in future elections.

Mr Hatton: How many elections do you want in order to get your people on the roll?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in response to the interjection, it is quite possible that people who arrived in the electorate too late to be eligible to be on the roll for the federal election but in time to be enrolled before the Barkly by-election. Simple mathematics is obviously beyond the member.

I want to take up a point which has been touched on by the member for Barkly. It relates to clause 2(c) of the bill which, I believe, is unnecessary and should be removed. Is it irrelevant whether or not a person is re-elected, in terms of his being remunerated. If a person has carried out the work of a member and, through no fault of his own, is found not to have legally been the member, he should not be penalised if he is not re-elected. Having done a member's work in good faith, having given up his time and his job, having made the necessary changes in his life and having been considered elected by the people and other members of this House, it is unfair to deny him the same rights as another person in the same situation just because one is elected and the other is not. That is rather a strange clause and I believe the government should remove it. If the bill had not been before us under urgency, we would have proposed the amendment ourselves but these things are often difficult to pick up when a bill comes before us under urgency. I hope the government will act on this.

It could be that the legal opinion sought by the Chief Minister will indicate that the members for Wanguri and Ludmilla were incorrectly elected to this House in 1983 or that they have committed such a heinous offence that they may not stand again. If they were able to stand again, they would be voted out in the by-election and I am sure they would agree with me that it would be rather unfair to require them to pay back all the money they had earned since 1983. I would have some sympathy with them. It is not often that I have sympathy with those 2 but, in this case, I would have some, not because it is them but because of the principle.

I believe that, even at this late hour or tomorrow morning, the Chief Minister should find some means of deleting clause 2(c) from the bill so that whether a person is elected again or not, he retains the moneys and entitlements he has earned whilst sitting in the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I congratulate the Chief Minister for introducing this legislation. People who are interested in the member for Barkly's position agree that the Chief Minister has done the decent thing and the only thing that could have been done under the circumstances.

For the interest of honourable members, I was quite surprised at the amount of public interest shown in the member for Barkly's situation. My contribution to this debate and my support of the member for Barkly's position before his re-election have not come about because I love him very much or because I hate him very much, but because I have a certain view of fair play. I believed at the time that he was not a recipient of fair play. Putting it more bluntly, many people believed that he was getting the rough end of the pineapple.

The member for Stuart denigrates my habit of listening to my constituents as my being controlled by mob rule. It is all water off a duck's back to this old girl. I listen to my constituents and he can say what he likes about that. My constituents were saying to me again - and I do not intend any disrespect to the member for Barkly here - that they were not particular friends of his but that he had been badly treated and somebody should right it. When he was subsequently re-elected, the same people dropped in or made phone calls to say that they were very pleased that he had been successful.

Perhaps I am going to disagree again with learned legal opinion, but again I state that I am entitled to my views and other people who disagree with expert legal opinion are also entitled to their views. If expert legal practitioners disagree with each other, as they often do, what chance do we have of agreeing with them anyway? The Electoral Act mentions elections and supplementary elections but, if my memory serves me correctly, by-elections are not mentioned. In my view, and in the view of other people to whom I gave the act to read, the election recently held in Barkly was a supplementary election. My dictionary defines 'supplementary' as an addition, an appendix, a postscript, a sequel, a continuation. All these words are related to a previous event which has occurred, in this case the March election. To my way of thinking, the election that was held at the beginning of September was a supplementary election relying on the March election as its main event. Perhaps my thinking is naive and simple but that is probably because I am a rather naive and simple person. However, along with many of my constituents, I believed that Mr Tuxworth's salary, office facilities and other entitlements should have continued up to the date of the supplementary election.

I will say again that I am pleased that the Chief Minister has introduced this legislation. I will also concede that it was probably a difficult

situation for you, Mr Speaker, in that you were required to make a decision in relation to it. I hope it is a situation that the government does not find itself in at some future time. I agree with the member for Stuart and the member for Barkly that the Electoral Act needs amendment. I believe that the legislation now before us is good as far as it goes but it must be considered in the light of possible future events. We do not want any more irregularities but we must anticipate possibilities and cover them.

The member for Stuart rehashed the pre-election stunts of the member for Barkly and the Chief Minister. That was stale news because, to my way of thinking, all is fair in love and war and elections. If you can get away with something, you do it. If you cannot, you do not. However, one aspect of the Chief Minister's behaviour was commented on by several people in my electorate and I thought it rather strange at the time myself. Being a person of country origins, I would liken the Chief Minister - with respect, of course - to a rooster in the chook yard. If another rooster came into my chook yard, I would give him a few rounds of the chook house before I let him go. While the Chief Minister was electioneering in Barkly, I believe the Prime Minister came up to the Territory. I consider that the Chief Minister should at that time, by means of public statements or appearances, have counteracted press statements and other information issued by the Prime Minister. He made some statements which were not exactly to the benefit of the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister should not have occupied himself totally with the secondary situation of fighting a supplementary election. He should have fulfilled his role as Chief Minister and countered the Prime Minister's remarks, thereby asserting himself on his own patch of dirt.

Mr Finch: Didn't you read the newspapers?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Nothing in them impressed itself on my mind.

In concluding my remarks, I again compliment the Chief Minister for introducing this legislation. I hope that he can give us a legal opinion on the position of the 2 other members mentioned by the member for Stuart who were previously members of local government councils. I would like to think that the Chief Minister, at some time in the future, would consider amendments to the Electoral Act so that situations like the one in the Barkly election do not happen again.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their compliments in recognising the intent of this legislation which was to correct a quite unfortunate anomaly that arose as a consequence of events that were quite outside the responsibility or control of the member for Barkly, both then and now, and also outside the control and responsibility of the Northern Territory government or, I might say, the Country Liberal Party. I am referring to an ALP candidate who, wittingly or otherwise, falsified a statutory declaration in filling in a nomination form for election. It was a subsequent challenge to that, by yet another person, which caused the events that unfolded over that last couple of months.

I would like to make a couple of points in response to comments from members opposite. Firstly, what the member for Barkly said with respect to the views of the people is quite correct. If they have elected somebody, they believe that person is their member and should be their member until they vote somebody else into that position. That is a thoroughly understandable position and I do not dispute it in any way. The member for Barkly may be interested to know that I was absolutely horrified to hear of the necessity to close his office. Quite apart from the obvious unfairness that I felt with

respect to that, I recognised equally the excellent political capital it would provide for the honourable member. I can assure the honourable member that it would not have been through any choice of mine that his office was closed. I congratulate him again for the excellent way in which he was able to use the situation.

However, sometimes we are faced with situations that are beyond our control, as a consequence of the law and the way the law has to operate. Mr Speaker, I respect the necessity of the actions that you had to take at that time. The time to correct that, of course, is now in the first sittings immediately following that period, where we have an opportunity in the appropriate forum, this Assembly, to pass the necessary legislation to overcome the problems that arose there.

Honourable members have referred to a number of issues associated with the Electoral Act. We have raised this a number of times since the March elections in this Assembly. I will repeat clearly now that it is our intention that there will be a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act during the course of these sittings. I must advise that that review has not yet commenced because the Electoral Office, unfortunately, has been exceptionally busy during 1987 in the conduct of elections.

Additional resources are to be provided to the Electoral Office this year, and it is proposed that work on the review of the Electoral Act will be commenced as soon as possible and, certainly, to have the act reviewed during the course of this parliament.

Mr Bell: Use a few of our amendments, eh?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, when certain amendments were brought forward in April by the opposition members, we said at that time that we would be seeking to defeat them at that time because we felt that the act should be reviewed comprehensively rather than in a piecemeal manner, and that that review would go ahead. Obviously, we are quite open to receiving submissions on areas of interest to honourable members.

With respect to this current bill, that item has no immediate effect. I would not support any amendments, not that there are any amendments before the House at the moment. This will not affect the current situation we are faced with and it is a matter that can be debated more fully when the Electoral Act comes before the Assembly for full debate on those issues.

The member for Barkly raised the issue of legal expenses. I believe legal expenses are a matter that should be determined by the courts. It is probably improper for me to refer to a decision. We accept the decision of His Honour in this particular case. It is our view that costs should be awarded appropriately by the courts. A situation could arise in the future where, for example, a sitting member committed some gross breach of the Electoral Act in the conduct of an election and that caused a supplementary election to be held. That person might have won the election and be facing a supplementary election as a consequence of his breach of the Electoral Act. In my view, it would not be appropriate that that member should automatically have the government pay his or her legal bills in respect of such matters. After all, these are private matters.

In this particular case, I would have thought it would have been a good opportunity for the offending party to have met the legal costs of all involved - that would have been real justice in this particular situation. Of

course, that is not to be the case. The Northern Territory government, which was not even a party to the action, finds itself paying the costs.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to raise those points in response to some of the issues and to confirm again that we do propose to undertake a complete review of the Electoral Act during this session. I support the views of the Leader of the Opposition and other members who recognised that this instance provides yet another example of why it is so important that the Northern Territory should move towards statehood so that these sorts of decisions - such as who can and who cannot stand for elections in the Northern Territory - are matters determined by Northern Territory people rather than decisions foisted on us by the federal government. It is yet another in a long list of arguments as to why we should be proceeding, as soon as possible, to achieve statehood for the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill (Serial 59) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### LEGAL PRACTITIONERS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 59)

Continued from 17 September 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, with exceptionally bad grace, I rise to speak to this particular bill before the Assembly. The cross-vesting of jurisdiction of courts ...

Mr Dale: You have got the wrong one.

Mr Hatton: Legal Practitioners. Try again.

Mr BELL: Oh, we are on Legal Practitioners. I apologise, Mr Speaker.

I will commence my contribution to this particular debate by reading into Hansard some comments from the 1985-86 Report of the Department of the Legislative Assembly. I quote:

Over the past few years, there has been a tendency for the Assembly to sit longer hours. This has imposed difficulties for the staff and especially for the staff of Hansard who attempt at all times to produce the daily Hansard for the use of members prior to the next day's sitting. Despite all efforts, the staff were not able to produce the total draft Hansard by the next day on at least 3 occasions.

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This does not refer to the bill before the House. If the honourable member has any problem with my moving to suspend standing orders to allow this to be debated through all stages, I am quite willing to withdraw or to move again that ...

Mr Ede: We did have an agreement.

Mr Bell: Not to debate it at 10.10 pm.

Mr MANZIE: I have had discussions with the member in regard to this particular bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, and ...

Mr Bell: You blokes wanted the whole afternoon to get your headline on the bleeding Australia Card. You do not expect me to sit here at 10.10 pm with good grace.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: My point of order is that the matter before the House is not what the honourable member was speaking on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable member please direct his remarks to the bill.

Mr BELL: I take the point of order. I am quite happy to abide by your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker. Suffice it to say that I do not do so with alacrity.

By and large, the opposition supports the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill and the requirement for urgency. We appreciate that, for the Law Society, the year commences on 1 October and it is necessary to get these things through. We therefore appreciate the necessity to amend the Legal Practitioners Act in these terms. We note that the provisions of the bill affect the classes of practising certificates, the grounds of suspension of practising certificates and the grounds for the cancellation of certificates. We note that it introduces a new class of practising certificates for in-house corporate solicitors. We note that it will also affect disciplinary procedures by the Law Society and the Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee. We also note the exclusion of some lawyers holding statutory positions from trust account obligations so that they can have unrestricted practising certificates. We also note that legal practitioners will be allowed to recover costs after delivering lump-sum statements although clients charged retain their right to demand an itemised account within a certain period.

I understand that the bill is the result of considerable negotiation between the government and the profession. As I mentioned to the Attorney-General in conversation prior to the bill being brought on, there is a concern about section 132 of the act. I became engrossed in the use of the word 'engross' in the current section 132 where the government has not accepted the amendment put forward by the Law Society. Because of the lateness of the hour, I will not dilate on this particular usage, but I draw the attention of students of the English language to this statement: 'It is not an offence against subsection (1) for a person to engross an instrument in the course of his employment'. The neatest correct entry explaining the use of the word 'engross' in section 132 will be suitably rewarded by myself.

The section deals with people who put themselves forward as lawyers and who carry out certain types of legal work such as the drafting of wills and accepting money for it. They are, of course, subject to a current penalty of \$2000. The Law Society was proposing that that be increased to \$5000. The thrust of the amendment that the Law Society proposed is that, instead of the onus being on the prosecution to prove that the person accepted payment, the person who has presumably created some difficulty that has been brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies has to prove that no payment was received. It is obviously not a point to go to the wall on but I understand the Law Society has particular instances where problems have been created as a result of this section. My consultations with the Law Society indicate that it is a little bemused that the government has not backed this amendment to the Legal Practitioners Act. With those few comments, I have no hesitation in indicating, albeit in a somewhat curmudgeonly fashion, the opposition's support for the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that the member for MacDonnell has realised which bill we are dealing with and has offered his support. I am glad that the honourable member did not dilate in the Assembly because we do not have very much room here and, if he had dilated too much, he might have crushed us all against the wall. I am very pleased, however, to see that he has supported the bill.

In relation to the proposed amendment to section 132 which the government decided not to include, the reason was that it more or less turned the offence into a regulatory offence. The onus of proof seemed to be on the offender. Wherever possible, we try to ensure that the onus of proof is always on the prosecution and not on the defence. It is important to realise that the provision also relates to the fact that unqualified people such as the member opposite or myself may be involved in assisting someone with the writing of his will or possibly assisting him in relation to the purchase of property. Those are the sorts of things that that section referred to. We should not be contemplating preventing a member of the family or a friend helping a person with his will.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

JURISDICTION OF COURTS (CROSS-VESTING) BILL  
(Serial 32)

Continued from 11 June 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for this bill. It is an important piece of legislation and I note that the government has circulated a schedule of amendments. I have read some of the material associated with it and discussed it with various people. I have a reasonable idea of the jurisdictional difficulties that the legislation is designed to improve. I note that it is state reciprocal legislation with the Commonwealth and the states. I do not think that there is a great deal of point in discussing the bill minutely. I merely indicate the opposition's support for it.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the bill this evening. In so doing, I would like to make the admission that I am not a lawyer or even a bush lawyer but, having read the bill, I certainly have some understanding of the need for a cross-vesting arrangement. Having done a little bit of research, I understand that there has been a considerable amount of work put into developing this arrangement by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. This consultation has been going on for quite some time now and reciprocal legislation has already been passed by the Commonwealth and by some of the states. This bill will bring the Northern Territory in line with that situation.

For some time past, there have been some problems in determining the responsibility of jurisdiction between the Commonwealth and the states in a number of matters. That has caused a considerable amount of confusion. This bill seeks to establish reciprocal legislation which will allow cross-vesting of jurisdiction between the Commonwealth and the states and the Territory in these various matters.

The matters that are particularly affected are matters that relate to trade practices and family law. Each of the states has its own legislation relating to trade practices and, in some cases, to family law, as does the Commonwealth. There has been quite a deal of overlapping and confusion in these areas which have caused considerable delays and additional cost. Litigants have had to locate the correct court before which to bring their matter of dispute. One has to take particular care to ensure that the matter is before the correct court because, after considerable expense and delay, one might find that one had brought the matter before the wrong court. In many cases, uncertainty has existed regarding the power of various courts to preside over such matters before them. Indeed, the courts themselves have been confused. There have been instances where various courts were considering matters which should have been brought before a single court.

The bill seeks to cross-vest jurisdiction and allows for transfers between courts to ensure that matters of dispute are heard by the appropriate court. Courts will play a major role in the success or otherwise of the scheme. They will have to assess the merits of matters before them and decide if they should be more appropriately heard by another court. The courts themselves will have quite a deal of responsibility in this area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the cross-vesting scheme will eliminate the need to decide whether matters should be heard by a state or federal court. The special role of the Federal Court has been recognised within the bill inasmuch as its jurisdiction in matters such as, for example, the Bankruptcy Act of 1966 and the Commonwealth Electoral Act of 1918, are attended to appropriately. Appeals lodged under these acts will remain the responsibility of the full Federal Court, and rightly so.

Finally, there is to be a trial period of 3 years after which time either party, that would be the states, the Territory or the Commonwealth, may withdraw from the arrangement. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support. I think this cross-vesting legislation is an example of the achievements of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. It is uniform legislation throughout the country. This ensures that the Federal Court has the power of the state courts and the state courts have the powers of the Federal Court and there will never be a problem about matters being tossed out because there are problems with jurisdiction. That is a pretty sensible thing



in this day and age, and I thank honourable members for the support that they indicated.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk on a subject which I think should be of considerable interest to members in this Assembly. It has been raised in the past. I have spoken of the possible further involvement of the Northern Territory in the nuclear fuel cycle. It is a responsibility that I believe Australia should take. I believe Australia is forgoing a considerable amount of foreign revenue as a result of the federal government's current attitude.

One of the biggest problems that we have with a rational debate on nuclear energy and the dangers involved in the nuclear cycle is people like the honourable member for MacDonnell who works on the politics of fear and ignorance. He preys on the ignorance of his electorate in the hope of conjuring himself up some votes. The member opposite, and those of his ilk, have done almost irreparable damage to the nuclear industry on a worldwide basis.

Mr Bell: Not as much as Chernobyl or Three Mile Island.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will come to that in a minute.

The major problems militating against the rational debate on the nuclear industry are wildly exaggerated fears of radiation, brought about by the rantings and ravings of the like of the honourable member opposite and the highly-distorted picture of the results of, or the likelihood of, reactor meltdown accidents. There is a failure to understand and to quantify the risks involved. The likes of the member opposite create unjustified fear in the community by preying on fear and ignorance, the flat-earth society syndrome, the latter-day inquisitors ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The Balmain basket weavers.

Mr PALMER: Yes, the Balmain basket weavers. I was born in Balmain, honourable member.

They imagine connections. Somehow they make a connection between the nuclear power industry and nuclear weapons, and they put abroad these romantic fantasies about the benefits or the possibilities of alternative energy sources.

I have talked about the dangers of nuclear energy. The usual quantitative measure used on the absorption of radiation is the millirem and that is a measure of the level of absorption. Average annual absorption from all natural sources is about 85 millirems. That may vary, depending on altitude and the background radiation from minerals in the ground. To put the argument

into perspective, quoting from the Slatyer Report, less than 1000 millirems of absorbed radioactivity has no observable effects. At 50 000 millirems, there are some chromosomal aberrations in the blood - 0.15 to 0.25 leukemia cases per 100 persons. 100 000 to 200 000 millirems, which was the dose expected in close proximity to the Hiroshima detonation, produces a total incidence of fatal cancers, including leukemia, of 1 per 100 persons. Ground zero - and the Slatyer Report says there is limited experience of it - induces vomiting within 3 hours. There is no experience for anything over about 600 000 millirems.

The US National Academy of Science Committee on Biological Effects of Ionising Radiation, and the United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiation quantify the cancer risk of the absorption of 1 millirem at 8 million to 1. Given a background dose of 85 millirem a year, the chance of dying of naturally-induced radiation cancers after 75 years of life is 1255 to 1.

There are other sources of radiation to which people are regularly subjected. One year of average television watching accounts for about 1 millirem. An airline flight from Darwin to Melbourne would account for about 1 millirem as would wearing an luminous watch. With a dental X-ray, you could expect to receive about 10 millirem of radioactivity, a pelvic X-ray about 90 millirem, an abdominal X-ray 150 millirem, a spinal X-ray 400 millirem and a barium enema 100 millirem. However, to have an even money chance of contacting a radiation-induced cancer, you would need a barium enema once a day each day for 27½ years.

Mr Dale: I told you I liked it.

Mr PALMER: The honourable member for Wanguri did enjoy his barium enema.

Mr Speaker, no one considers the risks involved in any of the foregoing procedures to be extraordinary. With the disaster at Three Mile Island, the average exposure to radiation in the near proximity was 1.2 millirem. That brought howls of protest from the ignoramuses, the like of which we have in the member for MacDonnell opposite.

Mr Bell: What about the people at Chernobyl? Do you reckon they were happy?

Mr PALMER: There was also the famous case of the leaching of radioactivity from the low-level burial site in Kentucky. That brought about an exposure at close proximity of 0.1 of a millirem.

Mr Speaker, I will take up his point on Chernobyl. The carcinogenic or genetic effects of the Chernobyl disaster outside a radius of some 3 km are so minuscule as to be immeasurable.

Mr Bell: Wait on, what about wind carrying it?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, the wind carried it. He refuses to understand that there were increased levels of radioactivity in places like England and Germany but it was less than 1 millirem. The annual background dose is 85 millirem. Radioactivity is also blamed and, in some cases probably justifiably, but there is no proven connection between radioactivity and genetic defect. In fact, in first generation descendants of the survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, there has not been any discernible increase in genetic mutations.

Notwithstanding that, the 2 committees I previously mentioned quantified the risk. From 1 millirem of absorbed radioactivity, the risk of genetic mutation is 40 million to 1. Caffeine and alcohol are known to cause genetic defects. 1 ounce of alcohol is equivalent in genetic terms to 140 millirems and 1 cup of coffee to 24 millirem.

The major proven cause for paternally-induced genetic mutations is through warming of sperm cells brought about by the wearing of pants. In these terms, 1 millirem of radioactivity equates to 5 hours of wearing pants. If the honourable member opposite were so concerned about genetic mutations in his constituents, he would show the way by forthwith ceasing to wear pants. He would show his true colours and put on a girl's blouse.

To put the dangers of power generation in perspective, if all of America's electricity were generated by nuclear plants, background radiation levels would increase by about 1%. That would increase the risk of radiation-induced cancers from 1255 to 1 after 75 years of life to 1245 to 1. The chances of fathering genetically mutant children would increase from 6275 to 1 to 6202 to 1. The increased risk in parenting genetically mutant children after 75 years of life, and there are other factors which would greatly contribute to the chances of fathering genetically mutant children, would increase from 6275 to 1 to 6202 to 1.

Mr Speaker, the likes of the member opposite have led the campaign of deliberate disinformation and fear of anything nuclear and have largely contributed to the almost insane fear that some people have about the dangers of radiation. I am not saying that radiation is not dangerous. What I am saying is that that danger must be kept in perspective.

The common measure of relative risk is often expressed in loss of life expectancy. I have a table which qualify some of the relative risks. This was established in the United States of America: being male rather than female - 2800 days loss of life expectancy; being unmarried - 2000 days; one packet of cigarettes a day - 1600 days; being 15 lb overweight - 450 days; living in south-eastern United States - 350 days; alcohol - 130 days; suicide - 95 days; dam failures - 1 day; and spending a lifetime living next door to a nuclear power plant - 0.4 of a day.

Mr Speaker, the flat earthers and their ilk also spread fear and consternation in the community about waste products. Typical quantities of waste per annum from a 1000 MW coal-fired electricity power plant are: about 7 000 000 t of CO<sub>2</sub>, about 24 000 t of SO<sub>2</sub>. The figures for oil are: 4 800 000 of CO<sub>2</sub> and about 21 000 of SO<sub>2</sub>. The figures for natural gas are: 3 300 000 of CO<sub>2</sub> and 720 of SO<sub>2</sub>.

Acid rain resulting from SO<sub>2</sub> emissions is the greatest environmental disaster facing this earth today. The coal-fired power stations in the United States currently emit more radioactive particles than would be emitted into the atmosphere if all of the United States' electricity was generated from nuclear power. That is the level of radioactivity coming from coal-fired power stations.

Mr Bell: As long as you think you and your kids are all right, you don't worry about anyone else. Get with it, Mick.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the ignorant member opposite refuses to listen or understand scientific facts. The idiots who perpetrate the nonsense about the dangers of nuclear energy are doing irreparable damage, not to this

country but to the starving millions in undeveloped countries who can benefit by a cheap, and largely unlimited, source of electrical energy. He would condemn thousands and thousands of people per annum to death from acid rain, from coal mining, from the inhalation of dust emissions from coal-fired power stations.

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

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will continue my remarks at a later date.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will draw the attention of honourable members to the 1985-86 annual report of the Department of the Legislative Assembly which I was reading into Hansard. I will just read the last couple of lines. I have 3 points to make and this is the first. The report says that it should be pointed out that: 'If the Legislative Assembly sits until 6 pm, the Hansard staff will have completed their work by midnight. If, however, the Assembly sits until 9.30 pm, the finishing time for the Hansard staff will be approximately 4 am and, in some circumstances, after 5 am the next day'. We need to have on the table at 10 am tomorrow the words of wisdom of some people and it is highly unlikely that that will be possible.

I am merely placing on record my concern at the extraordinary number of late hours that this Assembly is sitting these days, and the consequent lack of attention that we are able to give to business that comes before the Assembly at this hour of the night. I think it is absolutely outrageous and, as far as I am concerned, the government ought to be able to do something a little bit better than to organise business in a way which places an unreasonable demand on Hansard staff.

Mr second point refers to the Finniss River land sale, the imbroglio that this government is still in up to its neck. I have one simple point I want to make about it, and that is to respond to the accusations of abuse of privilege that I have been subjected to by the Chief Minister, the Leader of Government Business and the member for Casuarina. The fact of the matter is that I would not be doing my job if I did not raise these matters. The government has made a hell of a mess of the sale of these blocks on 2 occasions. Its actions have been completely at odds with any concept of administrative regularity in the disposal of or acquisition of land, and people outside this Assembly are absolutely dumbfounded.

I make no apology whatsoever for inquiring about the relationship between the member for Casuarina and the person he decided to employ, at the end of a telephone, to buy a block of land for the government. If any comments I have made in that respect cause him concern, or cause any members of the government or Mr Anictomatis any concern, and he wants me to repeat them outside this House, if he will write down on a piece of paper the particular statement which causes concern - because a lot of water has flowed under the bridge in this particular case - I will happily make that statement outside the House.

The trouble is that so much water is flowing under the bridge in this case, that it is a bit difficult to work out what is causing whom embarrassment. I appreciate that it has caused many members of the government embarrassment. Equally, if any comments I have made about the Treasurer, and the Old Pals Act that he invoked to get rid of this block of land in January, February and March, when he was acting minister, caused him some embarrassment or caused Mr Venturin some embarrassment, I am quite happy to repeat those comments outside the House.

I make no apology for asking the question I asked the Chief Minister this morning. I make no apology for inquiring of him whether any of his ministers has a financial interest in Block H at Finnis River because, by golly, that is all we are here for. I am interested in the extraordinary behaviour that this government has demonstrated as far as Block H at Finnis River is concerned, and there will be more of it, I am sorry to inform members. I make no apology for raising those matters. I am prepared to accept the statement the Chief Minister made this morning. In respect of his own interest, I accept his comment that he has no direct involvement and I am quite prepared to accept his categorical denial in that regard. He said: 'To my knowledge, none of my ministers has any interest in that block'. To that extent, I am prepared to accept his statement.

I would like to point out that I will be inquiring into the Register of Members' Interests and I shall be doing my job in that regard. As for his statement in question time this morning, that there is nothing improper in the dealings with the Finnis River block, the comments I have made in this Assembly over several days prove that that is a patent falsehood.

Mr Speaker, the third item I wanted to raise is the outrageous comments that I read in ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw the word 'falsehood' and the remark immediately preceding that.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw the term 'falsehood'. I simply draw to the attention of the Chief Minister that the comment he made in question time this morning that there is nothing improper in the dealings in respect of the Finnis River block strikes me as strange, to say the least. Not only does it strike me as strange, but also it strikes every real estate agent in this town who has a sense of decency and many people who are telephoning the opposition, as extraordinary. As far as they are concerned, there is a great deal that is improper in the government's dealings with respect to Block H at Finnis River.

Mr Hatton: What, specifically?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the Chief Minister's interjection. For a start, he might like to ask his little mate, the Treasurer, just why he did not bother to consult with the Minister for Lands and ask about these discussions he had had with other people who had made him the offers which he himself talked about in this House last night.

Mr Hatton: Who made offers? You have not named anyone who made an offer yet.

Mr BELL: I have not named anybody!

Mr Hatton: Importantly, the statutory declaration itself does not refer to an offer.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, you know when you have them, don't you? They ...

Mr Dale: I reckon you got somebody to sign that statutory declaration today, didn't you? You ran out at breakfast today and got it signed, didn't you?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I remind the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health and Community Services that at least I was prepared to table the statutory declaration. The former minister read one out, but did not give a name or anything like that. It is okay for him but it is not okay for me. The fact is that, whether or not it was an offer and whether or not it was signed by somebody who was prepared to give his name is irrelevant. As the former minister confessed in this Assembly last night, he had those discussions about \$650 000 for that block and the Treasurer decided to ignore it. I wonder what the relationship between him and Mr Venturin is, as does everybody out there. From the context of the letter he gave me yesterday, the Minister for Lands and Housing knows. To some extent, my heart goes out to the Minister for Lands and Housing because he has had to carry the can for this. I am not surprised that the Treasurer has been dumped as the Deputy Chief Minister when the poor beggar has that dumped in his lap. He finds that questions are being asked about this block of land.

Mr Dale: Show us the stat dec you had signed today.

Mr BELL: I do not have to provide names.

Mr Dale: Go on. Give us the stat dec, Neil.

Mr BELL: You have it. That is all I will say about it.

In the time remaining to me, Mr Speaker, I want to address the nonsense raised last night about Ayers Rock by the member for Araluen. Basically, I want to indicate my concern that the Northern Territory government does not have somebody on the Uluru Board of Management. I am a member of the Uluru Board of Management and I take a keen interest in what happens down there. Obviously, it is one of the areas of my electorate that is an object of attention for all sorts of reasons.

Members opposite complained that there was something incorrect about the statutory declaration I tabled last night because the person who signed it did not want to be identified. I put out a challenge for the member for Araluen to table a statutory declaration in this Assembly. I am being accused of fabricating 2 statutory declarations I produced yesterday. It was my name as a Commissioner for Oaths that was on the bottom of both of those statutory declarations.

Mr Dale: Your credibility there is at stake.

Mr BELL: Shut up, Don.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker. I don't expect to be told to shut up.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member can tolerate only so many interjections. I believe the minister has been provocative. The member for MacDonnell will be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: I merely say to the Minister for Health and Community Services or any other government member that, if he believes that I falsified those statutory declarations, he should stand up and say so.

What I say to the member for Araluen is that, if he is able to produce a statutory declaration signed by some Commissioner for Oaths to whom I can speak to verify the particular claim that \$1m was asked for as a location fee

at Ayers Rock, I will eat humble pie. I will crawl from here to the casino. I do not believe he will be able to do it. I do not believe he will be able to table a statutory declaration from anybody to verify that figure. It is a wild accusation which does him no credit and does the government no credit. I want to see that accusation either supported or denied by the government.

The second aspect of the member for Araluen's comments last night was the business about the climb up Ayers Rock being closed. If the government had taken the trouble to have somebody on the board, it would know that that is absolute nonsense. If the honourable member had been paying attention to newspaper articles he would know that, because of the increasing visitation rate at Uluru, which is an arid zone park, it may be necessary to introduce a ceiling for visitor numbers in the same way that it is necessary in parks in the United States. I bet the member for Araluen knows better than I that one must book 12 months ahead to see the Grand Canyon.

Mr Poole: How many people see the Grand Canyon?

Mr BELL: How big is the Grand Canyon in comparison with Ayers Rock? I am prepared to accept that the member for Araluen may have a better idea of that than myself. In fact, I said that he would not be a bad nominee for the Uluru Board of Management. If he were able to make contributions in this Assembly on the basis of his undoubted experience in the tourist industry, instead of these wild, baseless accusations founded on rumours that he has picked up in some bar from the thirty-second cousin of the bloke who was the second husband of the third wife of a casual acquaintance of the producer, we would probably get a lot further towards having informed debate in this Assembly.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I will be brief in addressing the few points raised by the member for MacDonnell. For his information, the government shares his concern for Hansard staff. I might point out to the honourable member for MacDonnell that at these sittings, we have extended a courtesy to the opposition by outlining in advance exactly what the legislative program would be over the 6 days. The member for MacDonnell approached me on several occasions during the year and asked me to reorganise the Notice Paper to allow him to have his nightly run, to allow him to have a TV interview, to allow him to appear on the 7.30 Report, and to attend various social functions.

The member for MacDonnell is being totally unreasonable in suggesting that the government is sitting here at 11.05 pm deliberately, and does not have the right to have in place a legislative program that it wishes to see carried out over a 6-day sittings. There is no doubt in my mind that, if the member for MacDonnell had paid a small amount of attention to the programs that were circulated to him, he would not have made the comments he made.

The only patently false thing about Finnis River, to paraphrase the member for MacDonnell, is simply that he has not prepared his case. He has not been able to prove a single fact. In regard to the statutory declaration that he sought to table in this Assembly, the government is by no means suggesting that it is fabricated. It questions the validity of the member for MacDonnell to stand before this Assembly, as the supposed opposition spokesman for matters relating to the Attorney-General, and table a statutory declaration that does not have a signature from the person supposedly making the declaration. It holds no substance at all.

In respect of his comments relating to the Uluru Board of Management, I will simply say that, on various occasions, he has suggested that various

members of the government put themselves forward to become members of that board. I had been accepted by the minister previously responsible for the Uluru Board of Management, Hon Barry Cohen, now just plain Barry Cohen. After 5 months, I am still waiting for confirmation and gazettal of my appointment to the Uluru Board of Management. Mr Speaker, I am as keen as anybody to attend a few of those board meetings with my advisers and a few people who can speak the language so that we too can find out what is happening.

Mr Speaker, I apologise profusely to honourable members this evening for rising to my feet and being recognised. It was an oversight. I should have been aware that, in my rising and being recognised, in fact I was closing the adjournment debate. I can only apologise humbly. After receiving your recognition, I could not sit down - such are the procedures in the standing orders - so I sought to continue. Once again, and for the third time, I apologise.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 20 October 1987 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during a debate last evening, the matter of amendments to or a review of the Electoral Act arose and I understand I referred to 'during the course of these sittings'. That is technically incorrect and I would like to correct that in case any honourable member drew the obviously false conclusion. What I was attempting to say and what I repeat for the benefit of honourable members is 'during the course of this parliament'.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this sitting day be granted to the Treasurer who is on business overseas. For the information of honourable members, I advise that all questions which would normally be directed to the Treasurer should be directed to the Minister for Industries and Development.

Motion agreed to.

#### TABLED PAPERS

##### Documents Relating to Statehood

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table a discussion paper 'A Proposed New State Constitution for the Northern Territory', and information paper No 1, 'Options for a Grant of Statehood' prepared by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. As Chairman of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, I table those 2 papers.

The committee was first established in August 1985 and held 3 meetings during its initial stage. It was reconstituted in June 1986 and again in April 1987 and has met at length on 5 occasions. In its later phase, the committee has given major emphasis to the preparation of core documents setting out its views of what might be included in the new state constitution. The documents initially consisted of 4 discussion papers dealing with the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and entrenched constitutional provisions. One information paper deals with the options for a grant of statehood. For ease of handling and distribution, the 4 discussion papers have been consolidated into 1 document. It is the intention of the committee that these 2 papers be distributed widely to the Territory community to form the basis for informed debate. Written submissions on the papers will be requested and the committee will convene meetings throughout the Territory to receive oral evidence. However, the precise details of future meetings and other activities of the committee have yet to be determined.

The committee is due to report to this Assembly by June 1988. In that report, the committee will take into account the comments received from the

public on the discussion paper and will make recommendations which will include a draft of a new state constitution. Although, as members will see, there are many aspects of the paper on which the committee has a unanimous view, there are divided opinions on some aspects. Where that occurs, options are included. The section on entrenched constitutional provisions has a somewhat different format from other sections in that, because of the subject matter, few firm attitudes have yet been taken by the committee. Rather, it sets out the types of provisions which might be specifically entrenched in the constitution and invites comment about their appropriateness.

In the information paper on options for a grant of statehood, the committee has unanimously endorsed the use of the section 121 method. That means that an act of the Commonwealth parliament would be used, rather than the national referendum method used under section 128. The paper also describes the various steps to be taken in the lead-up to statehood.

The committee's endorsement of the 3-stage process of adopting the constitution is also worth noting. The first stage is the preparation of a draft constitution by the select committee, the second is the ratification of a final draft constitution by a Northern Territory Constitutional Convention and the third is a referendum of Northern Territory electors to approve the constitution as ratified by the convention. This will ensure the fullest possible participation by the Territory community. The second step is currently being discussed by the committee, specifically in relation to the composition of the convention. When a decision or options are reached, the community's views will be included in its report to this Assembly.

I would like to congratulate all members of the select committee, past and present, for their participation and contributions. It has been a long and often laborious task to complete this essential preliminary phase of constitution-making. There is still a long way to go but I look forward to the same dedication and enthusiasm in the equally vigorous time that lies ahead. Finally, Mr Speaker, I commend the papers to the Assembly and urge all members to consider them carefully and to provide valuable input to the committee's later deliberations.

Mr Speaker, I move that the papers be printed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Annual Report of the University College of  
the Northern Territory

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table the annual report of the University College of the Northern Territory.

I want to make some remarks about matters arising from the report. Honourable members will note that this report is for the year ending 31 December 1986. As such, it is only a very early report on the establishment of the University College, prepared for its opening at the commencement of the 1987 academic year. However, I would ask honourable members to take note of the report because it represents a milestone in the history of the Northern Territory. That milestone, the establishment of our first university facility, is something this government is justly proud of. For the first time, Northern Territory students can attend the full range of education institutions without having to leave the Territory.

The University College was established in the face of continued opposition from the federal Labor government and members opposite. They continually argued that a free-standing university facility could not be justified in the Northern Territory. They said there was no demand. The fact that there were more than 250 enrolments in the first year of University College operation put the lie to that claim long ago and I can say without fear of contradiction, even from members opposite, that the place of the University College as an important and dynamic contributor to the Territory's future is assured. I must also point out that it is a university in the full sense. That is, it is engaged in teaching and research for the benefit of the community.

The research work undertaken at universities is not something that attracts a great deal of attention from the general public unless it results in some particularly spectacular development. This is unfortunate because one of the most important functions of a university is to carry out and train postgraduate students in research work in various fields. I am happy to say that the University College has attracted a considerable number of postgraduate students in its first year of operation. In fact, 22 students are now enrolled for Master of Arts degrees and 10 for Master of Science degrees while a further 5 postgraduate students are studying for their doctorates. I am sure honourable members will agree that this very significant achievement by the University College bodes well for the future.

At this early stage of its development, the University College offers the full range of degree courses. However, this government is committed to the introduction of other degrees as the number of students and demand increases. An example of this commitment is the Northern Territory government's decision to fund the second year of Law at the University College in response to an unexpectedly high level of enrolments in the first year.

Mr Speaker, in concluding these remarks I believe I should commend the members of the staff of the University College, particularly the Warden, for the outstanding job they have done in the successful launching of the institution. I believe honourable members will all agree that the Northern Territory now has an institution we can be proud of and which has a very bright future. I commend the report to honourable members and suggest that, if members of the opposition stopped talking amongst themselves and listened to what was going on in the House, they would remember a great deal more of what is said.

I move that the Assembly take note of this statement.

Motion agreed to.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Statehood for the Northern Territory

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I present a statement to the Assembly on statehood for the Northern Territory.

The activity of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, which I have referred to this morning, is but one element of the statehood program. Much more has been and is being accomplished. The tabling of the committee's papers presents me with an opportunity to acquaint members with a conspectus of past developments and future directions. It has been some time since I have comprehensively addressed the question of statehood in this House.

Many members may recall that, in August last year, I made a major statement on the subject which was subsequently published and widely distributed in the booklet, 'Towards Statehood'. That statement, which sets out both the cogent arguments for statehood and the broad objectives, remains the basis of government policy. On the first sitting day of this Assembly, the government's commitment to the statehood objective was reaffirmed in the Administrator's speech and in my Address-in-Reply. If anything, that commitment has been sharpened and deepened by recent events, particularly the financial treatment of the Territory by the Commonwealth.

While the statehood question has been widely publicised during 1987, under the direction of the Statehood Executive Group, the preparation of the Territory's substantive case for statehood is proceeding steadily. Two discussion papers, Land Options and Minerals and Energy Resources Options, have been tabled already. A third, National Parks Options, has been completed, and I now table that document. As with the earlier papers, it takes the basic position that a grant of statehood to the Territory should place the new state in a position of constitutional equality with existing states. Thus, ownership and control of the present Commonwealth-controlled national parks must be transferred to the Territory. The paper also discusses legislative options for control and management of those parks and the extent to which particular groups could have an input, as well as tenure arrangements in relation to parks leased from Aboriginal land trusts. Related matters such as mining, tourism and fishing are dealt with. Like its predecessors, it will be sent for comment to interested parties.

In due course, it is expected that a further 2 papers will be issued. One will be concerned with the vexed industrial relations power and will be based on a detailed analysis of the possible options prepared by Sir John Moore, the former President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. That will be finished by the end of the year and I am aiming to table it at the March 1988 sittings. The willingness of Sir John Moore to undertake this task, and his considered advice, will be of inestimable benefit to the Territory.

The remaining papers will deal with financial matters, obviously a crucial issue. I intend to make a major statement on the financial implications of statehood at a later sittings this year when I will canvass all the financial issues. Once the full set of papers is complete, hopefully by the end of this year, Territorians will be able to understand the overall consequences of statehood and, through community input, the Territory's position will be further refined and detailed. With the select committee papers, the documents will provide a solid framework for community participation and debate.

Reaction to the papers already available has not been extensive although, given their import and complexity, that was to be expected. A round of inter-governmental discussions on the land options paper took place last year in Canberra. I am advised that the initial response of Commonwealth officials is currently in preparation and should be forthcoming by the end of the year. Further interchanges among officials will occur on the subject matter of other papers. Inter-official talks have taken place by virtue of the express permission of the Prime Minister, which I was able to obtain during a meeting in October last year. However, the agreement was made on a no-prejudice basis. The Hawke government's public line is that it has no set view on statehood and that it will consider the Territory's bid only when it has received a comprehensive, formal submission. Judged by what the Prime Minister has recently said, the present federal government is not particularly supportive of statehood in the short term. Nevertheless, we should proceed to prepare that submission.

One particular response to the land options paper deserves comment. In January this year, the Northern Land Council issued a document entitled, 'Statehood: a New Threat to Land Rights', which made some general criticism about the government's alleged haste in pressing the statehood policy and its failure to discuss the question adequately with the Territory public. I shall return to those allegations later in this statement, but here I would like to address the more specific criticisms which the Northern Land Council makes of the intention to patriate the Land Rights Act to Territory control. My purpose in doing so is not so much to restate the government's position on land rights and statehood as to demonstrate one of the problems which I face in getting the case for statehood treated with accuracy and sensitivity.

In its paper, the Northern Land Council argues that the Land Rights Act should forever remain with the Commonwealth, that land rights should be written into the Australian Constitution and that a scheme of national land rights should be implemented. If the council had taken the care to read thoroughly either my August 1986 statement or the land options paper, it would have seen that the Territory government has no argument with the latter case. All I contend is that, when the Territory becomes a state, it must be treated in the same way as other states. Thus, in the absence of national land rights, the Territory will insist on patriation. What fundamentally irks me about the land council's paper is its inability, whether deliberate or otherwise, to deal with the government's position without distortion and calculated omission. What the land council paper does is to misinterpret or simply ignore the general principles and the options put forward in the land discussion document as well as to continue the council's usual jaundiced assault on the government's past performance on, and approach to, land rights.

Given the negativism of groups like the Northern Land Council, and the general confusion and misapprehension within the Territory community about the impact of statehood, there is an urgent need to devise and implement a comprehensive program of education and awareness of statehood issues. Over the past year, some attention has been given to the important task of promoting the statehood objective. Newspaper columns, brochures, talkback sessions and exhibits in the Territory show circuit have been used to distribute information. Much of the essential promotional material - a logo, stickers, a song and an associated video presentation - have been prepared. Moreover, I have travelled widely throughout the Territory, both in urban and rural areas, speaking to community meetings. Invariably, I have been accompanied by Australian Labor Party parliamentarians, a practice fully in accord with the bipartisan support for statehood. Without doubt, I would argue that statehood commands a higher profile as a matter of public interest than it did a year ago. That is not to say, however, that overt support for statehood is significantly higher. Nevertheless, such a heightened awareness constitutes a more receptive climate for later education and debate.

Promotion of the statehood objective varied during the year. During the latter part of 1986, it was most evident and concentrated. In that period, the Law Society conducted a very successful and stimulating conference, the proceedings of which are shortly to be published by the North Australian Research Unit. Two reasons contributed to the virtual cessation of the program earlier this year. The first was the March election. In my view, statehood, because of its overarching significance and its bipartisan support, was not an appropriate issue to immerse in a partisan electoral arena. Secondly, the Statehood Executive Group considered that the promotional aspects of the statehood program were running far ahead of both the development of the substantive case and the work of the select committee. Its opinion, with which I concurred, was that the full scope of the promotion and

the awareness program should not be resumed until the case was complete and until the select committee had produced its discussion papers.

One consequence of that decision was the termination of the contract of the public relations consultants in May. Although the work done on the government's behalf by Michels Warren was generally of a high standard, its services were not required in the necessary consolidation period. Whether similar services will be required in future has not yet been determined.

That is the state of play at present. What of the ensuing period? Let me here return to the Northern Land Council's claims of haste and inadequate discussion. I dispute both as they apply to the government's past attitude and to how future programs will be conducted. The government has no intention of forcing statehood on Territorians. We will not be precipitous in our actions and we are committed to the most extensive consultations and negotiations possible. That approach is not only in the wider interest of Territorians, but also of the government itself.

As a demonstration of how seriously the government is committed to community support, I have already accepted the need to have a referendum before proceeding irrevocably with our present statehood policy. That referendum on the sole issue of approval for the government's program will be in addition to one on the new state constitution. It will allow every Territory resident the opportunity to approve or otherwise the move towards statehood. Details of procedures and timing have yet to be fully developed. I am hopeful that the referendum can be held some time late in 1988 or in early 1989 but it will not be held until we are satisfied that all implications are fully understood throughout the community. I am confident that, once the major issues are explained and understood, Territorians will overwhelmingly support the statehood initiative. Such a referendum is important also in convincing federal and state politicians of the strength and worthiness of the Territory's case. Without it, they may find it convenient to dismiss the matter out of hand.

Between now and the referendum, there will be a concentrated period of public education and consultation. Precise details of the phasing and content of the awareness campaign are now being resolved. When Territorians come to cast their votes on statehood, I want to be certain that they understand precisely the impact of statehood on them, their government and the future political fabric of the Northern Territory. For most Territorians, consideration of statehood will be the most fundamental community project they will ever experience or be involved in. This government and today's Territorians owe it to future generations of Territorians to get the matter right. The final case we make for statehood must reflect what most Territorians want, now and for the future. The only way that can be achieved is by an ongoing and effective dialogue between the government and the people.

That will be the prime purpose of the intensive awareness and consultative process. In particular, the questions of financial implications and land tenure, being those of overriding public concern, will receive special emphasis. Any fears held on these accounts can, I am sure, be more than adequately resolved. At the same time, as I outlined earlier in my comments on the activities of the select committee, it will be pursuing its roles of obtaining community input on the shape of the new state constitution and of promoting awareness of the statehood issue. Its contribution to the educative process will be substantial.

Once the referendum has been successfully concluded, our statehood submission will be sent to the federal government. In the first instance, we will be asking it to make a commitment to Territory statehood, conditional only on the later ratification of the new state constitution by the Territory people. We will also ask for the necessary power to deal with constitutional development by an addition to the regulations conferring executive authority on the Territory government. Then will begin the serious and arduous process of convincing Canberra and the states to accept our case in its entirety and, at the same time, of finalising our new state constitution. I have no way of knowing how long the negotiations will take but I will certainly be looking for a resolution at the earliest practicable opportunity so that the Territory can become Australia's seventh state in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to comment in this statement upon the remarks upon statehood recently made by the Prime Minister and Minister Brown and reported in the local media. Both seemed to imply that a move to statehood would involve a deterioration in the Northern Territory's financial position. I trust that, on reflection, the Prime Minister and Minister Brown would not support their own statements. Their remarks contradict the principle of fiscal equalisation which underpins the financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and states and the Northern Territory and sit somewhat strangely with the federal Treasurer's statement at the 1987 Premiers Conference that the Territory would be funded for recurrent purposes on a state-type basis from 1 July 1988.

The principle of fiscal equalisation is explained in the current terms of reference for the Commonwealth Grants Commission relativities review, which state that: '... the respective basic general revenue grants to which the states and the Northern Territory are entitled should enable each state and the Northern Territory to provide, without having to impose taxes and charges at levels appreciably different from the levels imposed by other states, government services at standards not appreciably different from the standards provided by other states'.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission is an independent body established to supervise the operation of the fiscal equalisation principle. The Grants Commission recommends to the Commonwealth a specific distribution of Commonwealth funds between the states and the Northern Territory to correspond with their assessed level of needs. The needs of the Northern Territory have been assessed by the Grants Commission in relation to the standard states of New South Wales and Victoria since self-government. Under the fiscal equalisation principle, the relative financial position of the Northern Territory to the states should be exactly the same before and after the granting of statehood. If, as the Prime Minister suggests, the Northern Territory would carry increased responsibilities after statehood, the Grants Commission would assess increased needs and funds from the Commonwealth would rise commensurately. In so far as the Northern Territory has particular needs today which have relevance to the level of funds received from the Commonwealth, provided those funds continue to exist after statehood, the level of federal funding should not be affected by the mere act of statehood.

It is my expectation that, on statehood, the Commonwealth will lift various restraints on the Northern Territory's development, most notably those which inhibit the rational development of the local mining industry. In that event, the Territory's revenue base will be significantly widened and over time this will lessen our dependence on Commonwealth funding. A greater proportion of our budget revenue will be raised locally and proportionately less received from the Commonwealth. In a sane world, this development should be equally welcomed by the Commonwealth and ourselves.

These financial adjustments would occur over time rather than on the day of statehood. In terms of the Northern Territory government's budget, they would be more akin to the shifting of the ballast aboard a ship than a fundamental alteration of course. The important effect of lifting restraints on development would be the impact on the Territory's economy, not on the funds available to the Northern Territory government to provide services.

It may be that, for reasons associated with his own political agenda, the Prime Minister is not keen for the Northern Territory to achieve statehood at an early date. That is his prerogative. He should not attempt to influence the course of the debate by claiming that Territorians will have to pay some sort of financial premium for statehood. Such a claim cannot be substantiated. When the Prime Minister considers the matter carefully and objectively, I anticipate a rather different judgment will be formed. Whether that will be politically expedient for the Prime Minister is, of course, another decision. I do agree with the Prime Minister on one thing: that statehood is 'a matter first for Territorians and their government'. I have faith that most Territorians will soon share my vision of the constitutional future of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I move that this statement be noted.

Mr SMITH (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's disgraceful performance at the end of question time this morning really highlighted what is rapidly becoming the major concern about statehood for the Northern Territory: the competence and the ability of this present government to become managers of a new state.

What we heard from the Chief Minister this morning in question time was a disgraceful attempt, in spite of evidence indicating that there was no substance for his accusations, to wrongly criticise a significant group of people in the Northern Territory. I refer the Chief Minister to the front page of last night's NT News where there is an assurance from the publicist for the 'Evil Angels' movie that the \$1m alleged to be the fee for filming at Uluru is 'sheer speculation'. He went on to say that negotiations between the movie maker and the Uluru people were continuing amicably. The only basis for the Chief Minister's outburst was an allegation that a fee of over \$1m was being charged. That notion came from the fertile imagination of the member for Araluen, who was quite significantly rebutted by the publicist for the movie. The Chief Minister, however, used that as the basis for another attempt by this government to knock Aboriginal people, in this case the traditional owners of one of our major national assets. Now, 2 minutes later, he has given a statement which asks traditional owners at Uluru and other Aborigines in the Northern Territory, to trust him with their land and their interests.

The problem that the Northern Territory government has on the question of statehood at the moment is that every time ministers open their mouths on Aboriginal issues, they cannot resist sticking the boot in. In return, they expect to get the trust of Aboriginal people and their support for statehood. Without any prompting at all, people on this side of the Assembly reacted by saying that the Chief Minister's actions in question time today have significantly set back the case for statehood in the Northern Territory.

I want to tell the Chief Minister that we are putting on hold our bipartisan approach to statehood. We intend to go away and reassess it. What will be very important to us when determining whether we will resume our bipartisan approach, is some guarantee that Aboriginal people in the Northern



Territory will be treated with equity and fairness and that they will not be treated as outsiders to be held up for criticism, ridicule and attack at every possible opportunity for the political convenience of the members opposite. If we get that guarantee, we will come back and pursue the road towards statehood.

The approach of the government was exemplified in the Chief Minister's reference, in his statement, to the 'jaundiced assaults' made on the Northern Territory government by the Northern Land Council. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that it is hardly a one-way street. Almost every Aboriginal land claim has finished up before the High Court where the Northern Territory government has lost every one of them. That approach would tend to make anybody fairly jaundiced. Another example was the government's opposition to the traditional owners involved in the Jawoyn land claim, a group of people who had indicated that the Conservation Commission could continue to run the park if it became Aboriginal land. The Northern Territory government pooh-poohed that suggestion. In this Chamber we have heard members opposite vilify prominent Aboriginal people like Pat Dodson, for no reason. And, of course, this morning, we witnessed the latest example of this completely unnecessary and unwarranted vilification of 23% of the Northern Territory population.

The hardest job in selling statehood to the people of the Northern Territory is convincing them that the current government, if it were to govern after statehood, would govern in the interests of all Territorians. To date, I think we have heard some pretty convincing evidence that that will be very difficult for the present government to do.

Considerable work has been done on statehood so far, and the opposition has participated in it. The result of that, as you have seen, Mr Speaker, is the 5 discussion papers that have been presented. Those discussion papers are directed towards the mechanics of statehood. I think it is fair to say that the mechanics of statehood are not difficult. With the will and some resources, it is a fairly easy proposition to put in the necessary infrastructure, including a constitution, that would enable statehood for the Northern Territory. That is the simple part and that process is well advanced. The difficult part is convincing people that it is a good and desirable thing to do. That is difficult because the people of the Northern Territory are being asked to agree that a Northern Territory state government should have control of sensitive matters like land rights, national parks, industrial relations and uranium mining, to nominate the 4 key controversial issues.

I have consistently put the opposition view that, at some stage, the Northern Territory should expect to have constitutional equality with the rest of Australia. I have consistently said that we should be aiming for that goal. However, I say again that it is very difficult to advance that goal among the population of the Northern Territory when we have outbursts from the Chief Minister such as the one we have heard today. That is the major problem. This morning the Chief Minister talked about a referendum and a timetable and indicated that he wished the referendum to take place in late 1988 or early 1989. Even before his outburst this morning, that would have been difficult enough to achieve. It now becomes almost impossible.

The problem with the referendum is that people will not buy a pig in a poke. People will want evidence that the major issues are well on the way to being resolved. They will want to know, even at the initial referendum stage, what the financial implications are. They will want to know what arrangements

are to be put in place to protect the interests of Aboriginal land owners and what arrangements will be put in place to protect national parks. The answers will have to be substantially clear before even the first referendum. I believe that the Chief Minister's suggested timetable does not allow enough time for this to occur.

The Chief Minister has consistently said, in relation to statehood, that there are no problems with the financial arrangements. I have equally consistently said that it is too early to make that judgment. I have no disagreement with his analysis of the fiscal equalisation scheme but he has omitted a couple of important things. One is that the Grants Commission has been given a charter by the federal government to examine financial relationships between the states and the federal government and the Northern Territory and the federal government. Its report is not due until March 1988. Even at that general funding level, we will not have a definitive answer setting out future funding arrangements inside or outside statehood.

The other problem which has not been addressed is the financial arrangements that will accompany the handover of responsibilities for national parks, Aboriginal land and industrial relations. Like it or not, Mr Speaker, our national parks in particular are funded at quite generous levels, certainly at a higher level than occurs in the case of national parks under the control of existing states. Funding arrangements which would apply after statehood have not even been discussed yet. It is certainly very premature indeed to suggest that there are no financial implications for statehood, when the funding arrangements for the functions to be transferred have not even reached the negotiating table.

Another matter relating to finance is the suggestion made in some quarters that the Territory's revenue-raising is only marginally below Tasmania's. This year's budget indicates that we expect to raise 21.6% of our revenue from our own resources. Tasmania's figure for the financial year was 44%. In other words, Tasmania raises twice the amount of revenue that the Northern Territory does. I point that out because it is being argued in support of statehood that our internal revenue-raising is close to Tasmania's. That is far from true. The fact that we only raise 22% to 23% of our own revenue may well be a matter of some interest in the arrangements pertaining to statehood which will place additional pressures on us to endeavour to lift our internal revenue-raising effort in some way.

Mr Perron: How relevant do you see that being?

Mr SMITH: I make the point to set the argument straight. It is relevant in the sense that, in my own personal view, there will certainly be pressure on the state of the Northern Territory, whatever it is called, to increase the percentage of the revenue that it raises itself. I think it is unrealistic to expect that any federal or state government would be prepared to allow us to continue raising only 22% to 23% of our own revenue and to call ourselves a state. That is the point that I am making.

The other comment that is often made, and again not by the government, is that if only we had control of uranium royalties, our financial problems would be resolved. I will set out the facts about uranium royalties, Mr Speaker. Currently, the Commonwealth receives about \$18.7m in uranium royalties from the uranium industry in the Northern Territory. About \$4.4m to \$4.7m of that amount is returned to the Northern Territory as a royalty in lieu. The remaining \$14m goes into the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account and is distributed to Aboriginal organisations in the Northern Territory. Like it or

not, the fact is that the money that the federal government collects from uranium royalties at present is returned to the Northern Territory in one manner or another. It is not going into consolidated revenue in Canberra. The attainment of statehood will certainly not bring us a windfall in respect of uranium royalties.

A further point I want to make, one some members opposite will have trouble coming to grips with, is that one of the significant barriers the present Northern Territory government will face in persuading people in the south to give us statehood is its attitude towards the vexed question of mining in stage 2 of Kakadu National Park.

Mr Perron: There is no stage 2 any more, is there?

Mr SMITH: As far as I am aware, there is.

The wilder comments of the Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy last year about mining in stage 2 in Kakadu will not be forgotten in a hurry. Stage 2 of Kakadu and its World Heritage listing is an important Australian national issue. The environment movement was extremely significant in deciding the outcome of the recent federal election. It undertook a very effective and scientific campaign which targeted a number of marginal seats. The result was the election of at least 3 federal Labor candidates who otherwise would not have got up. The environment movement's assessment in the 11 marginal seats where it was directly involved, all of which returned a relatively higher Labor vote than those where the movement did not make such an effort, was that up to 15% of people who voted Labor voted the environment ticket rather than the Labor ticket in terms of preferences.

What I am trying to say is that I think everybody is starting to realise that the conservation movement in Australia is a vital and a growing force. There is no doubt in my mind that it will become an even more important force in the next few years. We can see it happening in decisions over rainforests in Queensland and, of course, the Franklin Dam. Hard-headed politicians like Senator Graham Richardson do not take up the environment message out of the goodness of their hearts. Graham Richardson does not have a heart; he has a counting machine where his heart should be. He has made the assessment that the environment movement will become stronger. In federal political terms, it may well hold the key to a large number of marginal seats in the next election. If the Northern Territory government is not prepared to modify its extreme stance on the question of mining, particularly in Kakadu stage 2, it will have an enormous problem convincing people in the south that we should have responsibility for statehood in the Northern Territory because it will mean mining great national parks like Kakadu. I think the government needs to take that message to heart because it will be one of the major factors which determines attitudes to statehood for the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the first steps in the statehood debate have been taken. They are significant steps. We now have 5 discussion papers before us. We also have 2 or 3 option papers for people in the Northern Territory and elsewhere to consider. The discussion papers have not been put together unanimously but there has certainly been broad agreement on most of the important provisions. That is obviously a positive step in the march towards statehood. What has to happen now, quite clearly, is some genuine community debate about the virtues and pitfalls of statehood. Hopefully that process will start. The easy job has been done. As I said, it is very easy to put together a series of discussion papers which basically spell out what should go in the constitution, how the judiciary and the executive should be set up and so

forth. The hard part is coming to grips with the emotional issues that surround the question of statehood. At times, they are very emotional issues. The 2 main ones are national parks and land rights and I have already made some comments on them.

Another important issue is industrial relations. Very little thought has been given to industrial relations and the industrial relations power but it is an issue that will be of vital importance. As a result of the recent public service debacle many people, particularly public servants, will take a greater interest in it than they otherwise would have. I welcome the government's appointment of Sir John Moore to investigate the industrial relations options. If the Territory is to achieve full statehood, it must take over industrial relations powers. In that context, I hope an arrangement can be arrived at which will allow the delegation of those powers back to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. That would be an eminently sensible approach to take to industrial relations but only time will tell whether it is feasible or not. It is one of the areas where additional work needs to be done before we can put the question of whether Territorians are in broad support of statehood to an early referendum. There is no point in going for an early referendum without having addressed this matter of the transfer of powers in some detail and provided some general answers.

Let me conclude by saying that it is most unfortunate that the Chief Minister's remarks in question time have coloured this debate today. It is important to keep one's eye on the main objective. No one disagrees with the main objective, which is equality under the Australian Constitution, but I point out to the Chief Minister and ministers opposite that every time they get stuck into segments of the Territory population without justification and without any basis for doing so, they make the job of selling statehood much harder.

They are making our job on this side of the House particularly difficult because members on this side represent the majority of Aboriginal constituents in the Northern Territory. It is we who have to sell, on a bipartisan basis, the benefits of statehood. If we are going to continue to do so, we must be convinced in our own minds that there are general benefits and that the whole exercise is not simply an excuse to get rid of some existing rights for groups within the community. We will not be convinced of that and will not be able to convince our constituents of that until we can see continuing evidence of the government acting in good faith and being prepared to act and govern on behalf of the interests of all Territorians instead of, from time to time, using one group against another to score cheap political points.

The government's major task in persuading people that statehood is a good and desirable thing is for it to convince them that it is a government which can administer the future state on behalf of all Territorians. That is the challenge. It will not get anything through a referendum. If statehood is to occur before the next election, the government must meet that challenge and convince people that it is fit to lead a new state.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's statesmanlike offering on statehood was in distinct contrast to his extraordinary behaviour in question time this morning. It is fortunate that I was able to enjoy a pleasant ham roll and a cool drink in the Mall, followed by a cup of black coffee. That ensures, Mr Speaker - and I am sure it will bring you considerable pleasure to hear it - that the steam is no longer pouring from my ears.

Suffice it to say that the Chief Minister cannot introduce into this Assembly a ministerial statement on statehood and pretend that the statesmanlike pronouncements it contains can be considered in isolation. I do not intend to dilate on the absurd behaviour that the government has indulged in over the last 36 hours about the prime tourist asset in the Northern Territory. Setting aside the associations of Uluru for my constituents, whose ancestors lived in the area for some 40 000 years, let us just look at it as an economic asset. The member for Araluen's comments were absolutely outrageous. I responded to them in last night's adjournment debate and I do not intend to say any more about them. However, when the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory suggests that our march towards statehood is entirely unimpeded by his lending himself to exactly the same smear campaign, he has to realise that people on this side of the House and people in my electorate consider that he seriously derogates from the statesmanlike attitude that he purports to adopt.

I will not say any more because I will become more angry. If the Chief Minister believes that the opposition will continue, ad infinitum, to cooperate in a bipartisan approach to statehood, he has another think coming. The fact is that the statehood scoreboard is not looking too flash at the moment. I made a few notes while the Chief Minister was speaking and I calculate the scoreboard at about 4 to 1 against and whether this is half-time or quarter-time I am not too sure. I intend to dilate - and I note that the Attorney-General has problems with that word - at some length on this current score, which may be even worse if all the factors are taken into account. Because of its approach to date, the score is running well and truly against the government.

Honourable members will recall that, earlier in these sittings, the opposition mounted a scathing attack on the government about its land dealings, which have been a scandal in the Northern Territory community. Members opposite can stand up here as often as they like and suggest that everything is above board but nobody outside the House agrees with them. I made exactly that point in the debate on a matter of public importance earlier this week when I said that, if the government expects people around this country to take the question of statehood seriously and to regard this legislature as responsible, this government's administration of the Northern Territory has to be perceived as above board. Putting political partisanship aside, when the government's own supporters in the business community start to accuse it of behaving in a way that transgresses every concept of fair trading, there is something wrong. Surely even this government has to realise that that constitutes a point against statehood. Statehood is 1 to 0 down.

I now want to mention one point in favour of statehood. It will be debated later so I will not discuss it at length now. I am referring, however, to the matter about which I was interviewed on ABC radio this morning: this legislature's handling of the Chamberlain case. I do not believe that I am breaching standing orders by raising this because it is apposite in this debate to mention that the amending bill before the House is landmark legislation. We are leading the way in a particular area of law reform. It will not apply to a great number of cases, but it is to the credit of this legislature and members opposite that they have taken steps, in respect of the Chamberlain case, of which everyone in this Assembly can be proud. We can all be proud that we have introduced landmark legislation. One's personal feelings about the case and its history are not relevant in terms of the impact of this legislation in relation to how the administration of justice in the Northern Territory is perceived around the country. It is certain that the administration of justice in the Northern Territory will be

seen in a positive light as a result of this legislation. That is a point for statehood and it makes the score 1 all.

Unfortunately, the Territory has lost many points in other areas. I have already referred to the Chief Minister's outrageous behaviour in allowing himself to become involved with the member for Araluen's effort to leap onto the frontbench on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations - which are incapable of being substantiated - about the administration of the Territory's premier tourist resort. The Chief Minister, great statesman that he is, has corroborated the allegations of the member for Araluen. He has been denigrated by the very people who are producing the movie.

I appreciate some of the other comments that the Chief Minister has made in that regard. I was standing in this very place in June and I congratulated the Chief Minister for his refusal to bring the issue of Aboriginal land rights into the March election. But, by golly, any brownie points he might have won there have gone down the drain as a result of performances like the one we saw today. The problem is that he cannot control the backwoodsmen on the backbench - or the frontbench for that matter. That leaves the score at 2 to 1 against statehood.

Let us now look at the government's obsession with the private sector and the consequent attack on the conditions of working people. There is a huge irony in this because the vast majority of the work force in the Northern Territory, including almost everybody in this building at the moment, are paid from the public purse. The majority of people on the government side have spent most of their working lives in public-sector organisations. The point I am trying to make is that, until this government ceases its attack on the conditions of working people and comes to a sensible understanding of the relationship between public and private-sector endeavour, the cause of statehood will be no further advanced. That puts the score at about 3 to 1 against.

Mr Speaker, the fourth point against the cause of statehood is not something for which the government is entirely responsible. I refer to the fourth estate, which is made up of the people who report what happens in public life in the Territory. I refer to the people who work for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, NTDS, 8DN, 8HA, the NT News, the Centralian Advocate and regional newspapers in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. Perhaps, for the benefit of the member for Koolpinyah, I should throw in the Litchfield Times. The fact of the matter is that the fourth estate in the Northern Territory is immature. It is in a state of growth.

I am not making allegations of bias. Let us take the example of the NT News, which is a newspaper serving the Northern Territory. It is a daily newspaper that we receive in Alice Springs the day after it is published. We cannot get it on the day it is printed. By the time we are able to read it, it is inevitably out of date. I think that is one of the problems with the NT News. Let us bear in mind that it is the chief organ for debating what happens in public life in the Northern Territory. It would be very easy for me to stand up here and say that its editorial line is this or its editorial line is that. Given the fact that the Australian Labor Party, which is a vigorous opposition in the Northern Territory, is continually discounted by the NT News, it is fairly difficult for me not to slam its editorial line.

A problem that we have in any move towards statehood is that there are still only 160 000 of us in the Territory. We have a newspaper that has to produce an edition 7 days a week, bar 1 or 2 public holidays, 365 days a year.

It is very difficult to dig up a 72-point headline 7 days a week from a population of 160 000. The inevitable result is that the NT News has to stick in the boot to make its content exciting, otherwise it would just become a parish-pump paper or a rehash of The Australian.

Mr Speaker, I trust the seriousness of my comments in this regard are being taken on board. It is not simply a matter of persuading the Liberal Party, the National Party and the federal Labor Party that statehood for the Territory is a worthwhile objective. It is not simply a matter of getting members opposite to adopt a mature attitude towards public debate. It is also a matter of looking critically at the type of information that is put to Territorians. I would suggest that there are real problems in that regard. I do not believe that we get a balanced public debate or that the 2 sides of the political fence are given a fair run and, in the statehood debate, the Chief Minister cannot ignore that.

Mr Speaker, just to corroborate my point, I will give you an example from the Barkly by-election. With the amount of money it spends on advertising in regional newspapers, the government is able to command extraordinary control over their content. The most recent example is the Tennant and District Times. If anybody suggests that my argument is fanciful and born of paranoia, I recommend that they just check out the edition of the Tennant and District Times that appeared before the Barkly by-election. For anybody who is interested in constitutional development and the development of a mature policy in the Northern Territory, it cannot be ignored. I suggest that that is just a more dramatic example of what happens elsewhere, so let us not forget the fourth estate.

Mr Speaker, as we stand here on 24 September 1987, the statehood scoreboard is not looking flash: it is 4 to 1 down. I am prepared to hear arguments to the contrary, but things are not looking too good as far as I am concerned.

It is a huge irony that, on the very day that the Chief Minister decides to introduce a statehood debate, we have an incident like the one which occurred this morning in question time. It beats me how he could stand up here and deliver his statement with a straight face after he had lent himself to such an extraordinary attack on the legitimate interests of Aboriginal people in my electorate as was made by the member for Araluen. I thought the honourable Chief Minister was, indeed, honourable and had better instincts than that. I honestly believed that he had a genuine interest in making sure that the Territory continued to be the various place that we know it to be and that self-government in the Northern Territory was about recognising the diverse aspirations of Territorians; that it recognised the diverse aspirations of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. It made me sick when I saw the Chief Minister get up and give us the sort of nonsense he gave us this morning. It took me back to the bad old Everingham days. In fact, I will make the score 5 to 0.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, as a consequence of statements I made this morning, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for MacDonnell have sought to accuse me of launching a racially-oriented attack on the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. I refute those allegations. In fact, the member for MacDonnell's later statements in relation to what he believed were my attitudes to the Northern Territory, reflected my true attitudes. However, it is also my view that when commercial

practices take place, no matter which groups are involved, I have the right to raise my concerns about them in this forum.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am assuming that the Chief Minister is speaking under standing order 54, in which case I draw his attention to the fact that no debatable matter may be included in his personal explanation. He is able to explain himself solely in regard to some material part of his speech which may have been misquoted or misunderstood. He is not able to introduce any new matter nor may he raise any debatable matter. The points that he is raising at the moment are highly debatable.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. It is obvious that the Chief Minister claims to have been misunderstood and, provided that he relates his comments to those he made in his speech, he may proceed.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, in answering a question this morning in respect of the level of charges for filming rights at Uluru, I commented that there was a problem if the allegations about those charges were true. I did not assert that the allegations were true. Further, in respect of Kakadu, I outlined an alternative approach concerning levels of costs and the consequences. I refute any suggestion that I had any intention of launching an attack on Aboriginal people other than to raise, with the groups involved, the potentially detrimental consequences of those actions to the Northern Territory and, in the longer term, to the groups themselves.

Mr Speaker, I refute any suggestion or allegation that my remarks were racially-oriented, and I refute suggestions made by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for MacDonnell that they were in any way designed to be a racially-oriented attack on the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. I would certainly oppose such an attack but, at the same time, I believe that any member of society can be open to receive or to give criticism providing it is based on fact. Mr Speaker, I do not believe that my answer in question time this morning can be construed as anything other than a statement of my concern about a particular commercial practice.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the last 40 minutes of this debate have been absolutely disgraceful. At the end of it ...

Mr Ede: Yes. Your boss was the most disgraceful.

Mr SETTER: I am excluding the last 5 minutes. I am talking about the contributions of the member for MacDonnell and the Leader of the Opposition, because they have failed miserably in their attempt to discredit the Chief Minister's statement on statehood. That is what they set out to do. They came in here with a game plan to do just that.

Mr Dondas: They decided on that at their annual conference.

Mr SETTER: Exactly. It had nothing to do with the merits of the document on statehood. The Leader of the Opposition made a half-hearted effort towards the end of his speech to make some comment on the content of the paper, but he spent the rest of his time trying to direct attention away from it and towards Aboriginal issues. The Leader of the Opposition has to realise that the Chief Minister's statement is addressed to all Territorians, not just 22.4% of our community. The Leader of the Opposition said that Aboriginals made up 25% of our community but I understand that the figure is more like 22.4%. Regardless of that, the paper on statehood is addressed to the whole of the community and he needs to understand that, as do his colleagues.



Earlier today, the Leader of the Opposition made the disgraceful statement that the Labor Party would reconsider its position with regard to a bipartisan approach on the issue of statehood. What a nonsense that was! The opposition had already made that decision because it had been told by the Labor Party hierarchy that things are moving a little bit too fast and should be slowed down. The hierarchy has told the opposition to introduce a few furbies to sidetrack the issues and to introduce the Aboriginal issue, which always gets such good media coverage. It is emotive and it makes people feel warm and cosy. It is very popular with 22.4% of the community. I can understand it as a political tactic but it will not work because over 75% of the community understands the trick that the opposition is trying to pull here today. The community will see right through it because the reality is that, at its last Northern Territory conference, the Labor Party adopted a policy which said that statehood should not be achieved before the year 2001.

When they see the evidence of progress contained in the document which has been tabled and when the Leader of the Opposition sees the steps being taken by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, members of the opposition start to take fright. They see that the ALP policy of slowing the process so that statehood is not achieved before 2001 will not work because, within the next year or 2, people will be crying out for statehood because they can see all the advantages.

Mr Ede: We will just show them you.

Mr SETTER: The member for Stuart is very smart and quick with his quips but we know that he not only has a very loud voice which we have heard many times in this House, but he is very like the member for MacDonnell in his habit of putting his foot in his mouth, a mouth behind which there is very little substance. In fact, I feel a bit sorry for the poor fellow. He keeps on looking over his shoulder because the fellow behind him has a knife poised and ready to plunge into his back at any minute. He is lucky to have escaped so far.

No statehood before the year 2001; that is the Labor Party policy. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition made that statement to someone yesterday.

Mr Smith: What statement was that?

Mr SETTER: You made the statement that the bipartisan approach to statehood was dead.

Mr Smith: To whom, may I ask?

Mr Hatton: Alistair Heatley.

Mr Smith: Rubbish!

Mr Hatton: He says different.

Mr SETTER: Dr Alistair Heatley. That is my information.

Mr Smith: If I do not get an apology from Heatley, everything is off. I will tell you now that I did not say that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr Hatton: That is what I was told.

Mr Smith: I am not going to sit here and be misrepresented by anyone.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister will cease their cross-Chamber interjections and address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is the information that I have.

Once again we have seen the Leader of the Opposition using Aboriginal issues to inflame the debate on statehood. The opposition does that in many other debates in this House and it is a very sad tactic. I hate to see Aboriginal people being used in this emotional way by the opposition. It does the opposition no credit at all because what it is trying to do is to divert attention from the real issues, which are the positive steps outlined in the documents. There are many positive issues and, as we go down the path towards statehood, they will evolve. If people take the trouble to read the 2 documents circulated today, as I am sure hundreds of Territorians will, they will be able to see those issues.

What the Leader of the Opposition implied today is that if we do not accept his views on the approach to statehood, the opposition will pull the same old trick we know so well. It will spit out its dummy and throw a tantrum as it has done so often, particularly during these sittings. The opposition will run off home and report to Big Daddy down in Canberra. We all know what members of the opposition think of him. They idolise Big Daddy, and they dance every time he pulls the puppet strings.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Jingili will refer to honourable members in another place by their correct titles.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I apologise.

Members of the opposition report to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Prime Minister on activities in the Northern Territory. They provide their version, of course, to misrepresent the true situation. Members opposite are very good at criticising. They do it all the time and they push to the limit, but when somebody turns the tables on them, they twist and squirm because they cannot take it. They are the types who cannot take it when it gets rough and tough. But I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that members on this side of the House can take it. As time goes by, they will find out more about that.

The Leader of the Opposition was also very sensitive about the criticism the Chief Minister levelled at the document produced by the Northern Land Council, which was entitled 'Statehood - A new Threat To Land Rights'. I had the misfortune to read that document late last year and I heard a tape that accompanied it. In fact, it was my information that that tape and document were posted to all Aboriginal people within the area of the Northern Land Council. I am not sure if that was the case in the Central Land Council area or not, but it certainly was in the area of the Northern Land Council. I read the document through a number of times and I heard the tape, and I was quite shocked by the comments they contained, which were extremely prejudiced against statehood. They did not want to give statehood a go or consider the various options. Statehood was simply bad for Aboriginal people, who should not have anything to do with it. The Northern Land Council was not prepared to take a fair and reasonable view and to put the options responsibly.

The Leader of the Opposition was also very concerned about past criticism of Mr Dodson who is well-known for his support for Mr Michael Mansell, the radical Aboriginal activist who has made such disgraceful statements. Mr Dodson has aligned himself with the supporters of Mr Mansell on quite a number of occasions. I might hasten to add that his actions have considerably embarrassed a number of Aboriginal people in the Top End who, I am told, do not want to be associated with them in any way.

The honourable member for the Northern Territory, Mr Snowdon, presented his maiden speech in the House of Representatives a week or so ago. I have a copy of it and the whole of that speech was spent addressing Aboriginal issues. He mentioned uranium mining in passing, but only as it relates to Aboriginal issues. I must point out again to Mr Snowdon that he is the representative of all Territorians, not just 22.4% of the population. Until he wakes up to that, his popularity - which was not high in the first place - will fall away very quickly. We all know that Mr Snowdon and Mr Mansell support the establishment of an Aboriginal state. Mansell went public on that last weekend so that clarifies where these people stand.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to talk about uranium mining royalties, and he quoted a figure of \$18.7m which, I assume, was last year's figure. He told us that, if the Northern Territory ever gained control of uranium mining and obtained those royalties, it would not do us any good because we already receive \$4m of the \$18.7m collected by the Commonwealth government. I do not know whether his figures are correct; I am simply quoting them as he gave them. He then pointed out that \$14m went into an Aboriginal trust. Perhaps one of the opposition speakers can clarify this a little later on: is that \$14m over and above the royalty arrangements that they have previously negotiated with the various mining companies? I understand that they receive about 4% or 5% of the net profit of the Ranger operation. I am not quite sure about this point and I would like it clarified: is the amount of money paid into the Aboriginal trust from royalties collected by the Commonwealth in addition to the other royalties? It is a very interesting question.

Should uranium mining come under the control of the Northern Territory government upon our achieving statehood, I am quite sure that all royalties would be directed to the Northern Territory government. I am equally sure that, in the main, those royalties would be spent in Aboriginal areas. However, they would be spent by the Northern Territory government to develop infrastructure for the benefit of all Aboriginals in the Northern Territory. I can see that, in times to come, that will be the situation.

The Leader of the Opposition then went on to put the fear of somebody into us when he spoke about the environment lobby. He said that the environment lobby was strongly opposed to mining in national parks and told us about the wrath that would befall us if we ever dared to support mining in national parks upon achieving statehood. In fact, Mr Speaker, he threatened this government that if we did not accede to the wishes of this particular group, we would be in for big trouble. It may well be that the Labor Party spends a lot of its time chasing the environment lobby and various other minority groups because it sees a few votes in it. That is what it is all about: catching a few votes. We saw how the Prime Minister went out of his way about 12 months ago to cater to the environment lobby because he could see that there were votes to be won. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition told us earlier how important the environment and conservation lobbies were and that they were instrumental in winning some seats for the Labor Party during the last federal election.

We know full well that this federal government uses the World Heritage legislation as a political weapon. It did it in the Franklin River area. It tried to do it in Kakadu last year, and I know that it will attempt to do the same thing again this year. It is trying to pull the same stunt in north Queensland, with the rainforest areas around Daintree. The federal government is using an international agreement which, I believe, we entered into during the time of the Fraser government.

Mr Hatton: No, the Hawke government.

Mr SETTER: The Hawke government led us into the World Heritage business.

Mr Hatton: Oh no, it was Fraser.

Mr SETTER: The Fraser government. Thank you, Mr Chief Minister.

It led us into that, feeling all warm and saying it would be great for Australia, not realising that the agreement could be used over and over again as a political weapon by an unscrupulous Labor Party. It was never designed for that, but these people have no scruples. They will use any means at their disposal to achieve their ends.

The member for MacDonnell also criticised the Chief Minister for his reply to a question relating to filming fees. The Chief Minister explained his position a moment ago: this government will go out of its way to oppose any unreasonable commercial practice and it does not matter where it is or what it is. If we see an unreasonable practice, we will oppose it. We certainly oppose the one that was quoted this morning: the \$200 000 fee for filming in Kakadu. We certainly think it will dissuade further film companies from coming here and using the Northern Territory for the production of their films. One has only to look at how the Territory has benefited as a result of 'Crocodile Dundee'. It has been absolutely unbelievable. It gave us tens of millions of dollars worth of tourism promotion in the United States and it did not cost us a brass razoo.

Mr Dondas: Yes it did. It cost us \$50 000.

Mr SETTER: I stand corrected. It cost \$50 000 but, regardless of that, it has been of enormous benefit in bringing tourists to the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The comments of the honourable member are not directed to this statement. In fact, he is cutting a very broad swathe through issues of commercial practice.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I have become so sidetracked in replying to the comments from the opposition during my 20 minutes that I have almost run out of time. I have hardly had a chance to get on to the positive issues raised in the statement. In the few minutes left to me I will try to address a few of these.

As the Chief Minister pointed out, the Constitutional Development Committee was reappointed at the commencement of this parliament and has held regular meetings in the interim. It has covered an awful lot of ground and it has achieved much. That is why members opposite are becoming concerned. We are progressing too fast for them. 'Slow down' is the message from the Labor Party hierarchy.

Statehood is certainly a very complex constitutional issue which will require considerable discussion and hard work. In fact, we are very appreciative of the fact that the previous Chief Minister established a ministry of constitutional development and much groundwork had already been done by the commencement of this parliament. I would like to compliment the people who have been involved in putting all that together and laying the solid foundation we have been able to build on during the last few months.

Things are really starting to roll along now. We have produced discussion papers which will be widely circulated throughout the Northern Territory community. As the Chief Minister indicated, the idea is that, at some time in the not-too-distant future, perhaps next year, we will call a conference to debate these various issues. Hopefully, it will be a bipartisan conference and it will produce a draft constitution. The conference will consider a whole range of matters including the judiciary, the administration, the legislature and so on.

Mr Speaker, it is very important that we give very careful consideration to the issue of statehood because we will have only one chance. We have to do it right the first time. Things are rolling along and, like a snowball running downhill, gathering speed and impetus. The idea of statehood is gaining support and I am quite sure that, by September next year, we will be very close to having a constitution ready for approval by the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in that typical contribution from the member for Jingili, he managed to get about 4 words right in the space of 20 minutes, which is actually a record for him. I have never before heard him say anything that made any sense whatsoever but he did say that we will get only one chance and we have to get it right. That should be the major aspect of our purview of statehood: we have only one chance.

I will be speaking in other debates at a later stage regarding my support for the inclusion of basic rights in the constitution. I hope that the 'Hear, hear' that I heard from the Chief Minister means that he will not use the argument that it is too hard or it will take too long. As the member for Jingili stated, we have only one chance and we have to get it right.

Mr Speaker, virtually everything else the member for Jingili said was complete drivel. It continues to amaze me that the free-marketeers opposite, those self-styled capitalists and champions of free enterprise, suddenly go to water whenever an Aboriginal looks like making some money. How many times has a white person known to members of the government made a windfall profit from being in the right place at the right time? When that happens, we do not hear members opposite saying: 'Shame, shame! The country will collapse. The whole industry will collapse because so and so has negotiated himself a good deal'. We never hear that because the mates of members opposite are involved, people who are part of the club. It is a different matter when Aborigines are involved, because they are mates of the socialists and everybody knows how nasty socialists are. They want people to have equality and equal access to resources and all those horrible things that are expressed in the snarl: 'They are socialists'. It sounds like something said to scare little children before they are sent off to bed.

Every group in society, if it is to be able to develop its economic base, must look to the use of its resources. For some people, those resources may be capital. The honourable member for Jingili used to be associated with a large orange-juice business. He would understand the use of capital

resources. Fair enough? People who do not have capital use the resource of their labour to obtain financial returns which they use to support themselves. Others seem to be able to use what might be called intellect, rather than capital or labour. They are people with inventive minds who are able to see a gap somewhere and who are capable of mustering labour and capital from others and using it to their own advantage.

People's resources have often been developed over a long period. They may have had to develop the capital or their ability to offer labour with a value, or they may have had to improve their power of intellect through education. However, the majority of traditional Aboriginal people in the areas that were handed over under Schedule 1 have not had the opportunity to obtain an education which would enable them to use the power of intellect in our economy. They have no opportunity to sell their labour because there are no jobs in the areas where they live and they have no ability to build up capital because they are poor and have no capital to invest. They have to rely on one other resource: their land. It is the only resource which will enable them to start the capital accumulation which will release them from the grip of the abject poverty that most Aboriginal people still live in today.

Every time Aboriginal people start to say that they want to use their land in some form of economic enterprise, somebody comes along and says that it is ruining the Territory. They say that they always had free access to that area and the old Territory lifestyle was such that they were able to go to those places without getting permits and without paying money. They consider it terrible that circumstances are changing. It struck me the other day, however, that they do not apply the same rationale to land controlled by white people. For example, there used to be a free experience here in Darwin involving the feeding of some large fish. A nasty capitalist came along and got control of the land where this activity took place and we now have Doctors Gully Fish Feeding. People still go there. They pay their money and everybody says: 'Good on him. He made a quid out of it'. Why should the actions of that person be approved of in Darwin while people in Arnhem Land who use their resource to make money are condemned? It is ridiculous.

It may be that \$200 000 is above what the market will stand, but the point of the free-market philosophy is that people will not seek the product or the service if the price is too high. There are many Aboriginal groups and many traditional owners out there. Somebody will see that \$200 000 is not acceptable and offer to do it for \$50 000 and the market will adjust itself. That is how the free-market principle, the one which so many government members profess to believe in, operates. I cannot see why they have run away from it so quickly. One might come to the conclusion that they are not total free-marketeers because they have had aberrations like buying and confiscating hotels and so forth. Maybe they do have some belief in government intervention.

The appropriate form of government intervention would be the film commission that we have been calling for for quite a substantial number of years. It would provide an opportunity to support the industry by providing film makers with information about where resources are and how they can best go about making films in the Northern Territory. I spoke about that the other night.

Mr Speaker, I would like now to return to the paper the Chief Minister tabled this morning. My first point will be to explain why, in terms of the content of the paper and the statehood debate, the Chief Minister's answer in question time was so fundamentally inappropriate and dangerous.

Page 39 of the paper, talking about Uluru National Park, states that: 'The entire area of the park is land held in fee simple by an Aboriginal land trust and leased to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service'. It continues: 'Upon statehood, this land should become land leased to the appropriate new state statutory authority, either on the same terms or renegotiated terms'. That is what the Chief Minister will try to achieve in his drive for statehood. In case there is any doubt, it states on page 27 that, 'Apart from the dominant geological features of Ayers Rock and the Olgas, the tourist experience is dependent on the Aboriginal culture'. The paper therefore acknowledges, in the context of the current ownership of Uluru and its control by traditional owners, that the tourist experience is dependent upon that Aboriginal culture. One would think that the paper's acknowledgement of the current situation would be enough to stop the Chief Minister from putting at risk the government's relationship with a group he will have to negotiate with.

A similar situation applies in respect of traditional owners in Kakadu, where there are 2 classes of land: land vested absolutely in the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and land held in fee simple by Aboriginal land trusts and leased to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Again, if the statehood option the Chief Minister has put forward were to go ahead, land owned by Aboriginal people would be leased to the appropriate new state statutory authority rather than the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, either on the same terms or re-negotiated terms. Pages 38 and 39 refer to the concept of patriation, a horrible word which is apparently current in American legal circles. I prefer the term 'devolution'. Either way, the paper refers on those pages to the passing of responsibility for the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976 to the new state.

Statements like that immediately send shivers of concern down the spines of many Aboriginal people because of the implied threat. The government is saying that it is going to have that land and that it will be vested in a state authority on the same terms or on re-negotiated terms. How will a re-negotiation be conducted? The paper says that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act will be under the control of the Northern Territory government and that is obviously the big stick. Either the re-negotiated terms will be accepted or the act will be amended to achieve the result desired by the government. That is the major concern which Aboriginal people have in relation to the moves towards statehood and I stress that they are only the major concerns.

Aborigines are not the only people who feel real concern about the movement towards statehood. Page 23 of the paper describes the situation in relation to mining. It says that: 'Upon vesting of national parks in the new state authority, the utilisation of all minerals in or on land comprising Commonwealth national parks would be determined by the new state'. The state would immediately have the power to decide on the utilisation of minerals in the national park. The assumption throughout the paper is that national parks must be compatible with the Northern Territory's existing policy of multiple land use. The government has been using that term for some years now in relation to its own legislation covering mining in parks. It is a nice phrase which simply means that mining can take place in parks. The document goes on to state that 'The existing administrative and legislative provisions for exploration and mining in Northern Territory parks and reserves would be the provisions which would apply to Kakadu and Uluru after statehood'. That will be a major concern to people in urban areas who are considering the statehood issue. The Minister for Mines and Energy has gone on record time and time again in this House, urging the wholesale exploration and mining not just of

stage 2 or 3, but even of stage 1 of Kakadu National Park. He has advocated what has come to be called the swiss-cheese policy.

The opposition has had to castigate the Minister for Mines and Energy repeatedly for his approach of total laissez-faire in Kakadu, in his determination to have mining proceed there. I recall the amendments to several acts in 1985. The Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Mining Act, the Petroleum Act and the Coal Act, were amended to change the balance of authority in relation to control over mining in parks. The veto power had previously resided with the Minister for Conservation but the amendments gave all effective power to the Minister for Mines and Energy. The amendments created the ridiculous situation where, while the Minister for Mines and Energy did not have to accept all the advice of the Minister for Conservation as to whether or not exploration or mining could take place in a national park, he had to consult with him. That was supposed to make everybody feel much better. Having decided to allow strip-mining in a national park, the Minister for Mines and Energy had to consult with the Minister for Conservation before giving effect to the decision.

Environmentalists will not be thrilled with the move towards statehood because they see controls over our Territory parks in relation to exploration and mining as inadequate. They will certainly fear what could happen if the Northern Territory controlled Kakadu and Uluru. The policy thrust contained in the document is not adequate. The government will have to make changes if it wants to get people onside. It will need to change policies and legislation and provide adequate guarantees for traditional owners. I look forward to seeing that happen.

My final point concerns money. I have noticed something strange that may have a very simple explanation. The 1986-87 budget listed an expenditure of \$305 000 for the statehood campaign. We heard in today's statement that, during that period, the government used the services of a high-powered public relations firm which, no doubt, cost a mint. That firm finished its work in May. The estimate for 1987-88, without any public relations firm being involved, is \$708 000. This leap in funding seems pretty incredible, particularly given that the public relations firm is not involved this year, and I hope that the Chief Minister can explain it. Until this morning, I thought the extra money might be for an expensive referendum but we now know that that is not the case. The referendum will be in the 1988-89 financial year. I hope that the Chief Minister can explain why he needs that extra \$403 000. I will not jump in and criticise him if it is a mistake. He has criticised the traditional owners of Kakadu for getting \$200 000, which is half the amount involved here. I would not criticise him for that, not even if he gave me half of my electorate.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Annual Report of Public Accounts Committee

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Annual Report for the Public Accounts Committee for the year ended 30 June 1987. I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.



MOTION  
Annual Report of Public Accounts Committee

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the Annual Report of the Public Accounts Committee.

It has taken some considerable time for the Public Accounts Committee to reach a stage where it could present a report to parliament. I am sure that honourable members who have served on the Public Accounts Committee will appreciate the vast amount of learning that had to occur in the early stages, just to understand how such committees should operate and how government accounts operate. I place on record my appreciation of the cooperative nature of the Public Accounts Committee, the bipartisan attitude that has been adopted by the members of the opposition and the support given to me by the members on this side of the House who have served on the committee.

I draw honourable members' attention to chapter 6 of the report, wherein the committee recommends that the government should look more closely at trends in other places towards a greater level of public accountability. That is not intended as a criticism of the Northern Territory Public Service or its employees. As the report states, the committee is of the opinion that they do a good job. What is intended is a criticism of the system of accounts keeping and reporting. It is a system that has grown up over the years and it is the opinion of the committee that it is time that the system evolved. It has been reviewed in other places, where the general trend is towards a greater level of accountability and towards the auditing of performance against specific criteria. With those few words, I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, many years ago when I was in the public service in Papua New Guinea, I recall that we were not particularly worried about auditors and auditors-general. There was always the view that if you knew your regulations well enough and could ensure that you did it right - it did not actually matter what you actually did - you could get around the auditor. I believe auditing practice has changed somewhat since then but that was the situation in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s. Nevertheless, there was one body that we were always worried about, and that was the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee would say: 'You have 6 field officers and none of them has been out bush for 6 months'. You would reply that you had no travel funds. The committee would not accept that. The salaries of those field officers were being wasted because there were no travel funds to enable them to do their jobs. You would cop it, and rightly so. It did not matter whether the book work was correct or not; the actual operation was wrong.

That is why I have always been a great proponent of public accounts committees. Given the way that our committee is developing, I think it will have a salutary effect on our public service. Not that I am saying that anything untoward is happening, Mr Speaker. If I knew that was the case, I would have said so in this House.

One of the good aspects of the committee is that members from both sides of the House have been able to work together. We have always seen that it is necessary to cooperate and to work in a bipartisan way. We have basic agreement on what we are trying to achieve in terms of accountability or what is called performance auditing. It goes by various names and it has existed in various forms for some 20 years since it first appeared in the American administration in the early 1960s. It has been refined over the years. Our committee is attempting to develop means by which we can apply those concepts

to our own situation and arrive at an accountable, efficient, lean and effective public service for the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the slimness of this report in no way reflects the amount of work that has been done by the committee. I appreciate that the Public Accounts Committee has been subject to a somewhat cynical media campaign. I accept that we have a long way to travel. I would ask all members to recognise that we are a very new committee, that we are on a learning curve, that we are getting there and that we have the very best interests of the Northern Territory at heart. My activities in this House may lead people to believe that I am a very partisan politician. However, I would ask all members to accept that, on the committee, all members have acted in a very bipartisan way.

Without wanting to be seen as a sycophant, I would like to congratulate the present chairman and the past chairman for the way they have conducted the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee. There has certainly been most productive and, I believe, constructive activity. I argued long and hard for the creation of a public accounts committee in the Northern Territory. There is nothing that has occurred to date which I would see as compromising anything that I hoped that a public accounts committee would achieve or aspire to.

We have not made any dramatic disclosures, as was feared by certain persons in this House. We have not become a political tool which could be used to disrupt the government. The Public Accounts Committee is clearly endeavouring to meet the expectations of this Assembly. We hope to achieve greater efficiency in the public sector. We hope to achieve a greater effectiveness within the public sector and time will tell how successful we are.

I have been on the committee since its inception and it has always pursued the best interests of the Northern Territory. A partisan attitude has not been taken in relation to the public finances of the Northern Territory. I hope that we can make constructive and positive proposals available to this parliament in the near future and I trust that this parliament will accept those proposals in the good faith with which they will be offered. It is in the interests of the Northern Territory that we achieve maximum possible efficiencies in public sector expenditure. It is not in the CLP's interests, the ALP's interests or the independents' interests; it is in the Northern Territory's interests. If that reflects favourably on the government, then so be it.

The participation of all members of the Public Accounts Committee to date is noteworthy because all committee members are persons of goodwill who wish the best for the Northern Territory and for the persons who ultimately serve this Assembly - the public servants of the Northern Territory. I do not doubt for a moment that every public servant in the Northern Territory seeks to serve the Northern Territory as efficiently and effectively as he can. We not only wish those people the best, but we will offer them the tools whereby they can most effectively carry out their task which is not to serve any political party or the government, but the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I recommend to all members of this House that they read this report. Its recommendations and its observations may be subtle. We have made observations about the activities and the implementation of policy within the Northern Territory and we have made some very subtle recommendations. I hope

that every member of this Assembly reads the report because it is my belief that, if the Northern Territory is to launch itself into the mainstream of public life in Australia, the adoption of the recommendations expressed within this report is necessary. Our recommendations are subtle because we have no wish to be disruptive. We do not want to threaten the existence of the committee. If our recommendations are adopted by this parliament - it has nothing to do with the government - they will lead to a far better Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES  
AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 65)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act so that the necessity to prescribe forms and certificates in the regulations is removed, and replaced with a power vested in the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and the minister.

One of the amendments made by the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriage Amendment Act 1986 to the principal act was the taking of the forms out of the act and allowing them to be placed in regulations. The 1986 amending act has not commenced operation, pending the preparation of such forms and accompanying regulatory provisions. In the process of preparing these forms, further consideration was given to the question of whether such forms needed to be prescribed in regulations. The answer was no.

Accordingly, in line with the general government policy of only enacting legislation which achieves some identifiable goal, this bill has been prepared for the purpose of removing the necessity to have regulations for the purpose of bringing office forms into existence. The main clause is clause 5(a), which provides a new definition of 'prescribed', relating it to forms and certificates prescribed by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, or the minister. The other major clause is 5(c), which sets out the mechanism for the making of the forms, which are to be available for public inspection.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Parole of Prisoners Amendment Bill (Serial 63) and the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Bill (Serial 64) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages, the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

THE PAROLE OF PRISONERS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 63)  
CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 64)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

This amending legislation is designed to address several issues. First, it will provide the courts with an extra sentencing option in the form of home detention orders which will allow for a form of house arrest for certain offenders who would otherwise be in prison, a matter I will deal with more fully in due course. Secondly, the bill seeks to correct some anomalies which occurred as a result of previous amendments. Again, I will refer to specific issues later. Finally, I have taken the opportunity to update the drafting style and terminology. This has long been in need of overhaul in the principal act.

Honourable members will be aware of the dilemma faced by most governments, not just in Australia but around the world, as a result of the rising rates of imprisonment and the enormous costs of building more prisons. As I have often said, today it would cost more than \$100 000 to build 1 extra cell at Darwin Prison. Of course, that is not the only cost we face. In our prison system, it costs more than \$90 per day to keep a single prisoner in custody. I am not arguing against the value of prisons as a necessary part of our society; they are definitely here to stay. They are places where people who can be held who, if allowed to roam at will, would present a threat to the rest of the community. They are a deterrent to intractable offenders. They are, and should be, the ultimate sanction.

We can, however, try to avoid imprisoning offenders who pose no apparent threat to the community, and we can try to find some alternative to incarceration for those offenders where there is a genuine hope that their behaviour will change for the better. If we do not, we will have failed to address one of society's most pernicious problems. We will be locked into an upward spiral of spending without ever having come to terms with the cause of the problem.

An analysis of the figures from our prisons during the period 1 July 1986 to 30 April 1987 shows that, during that time, the system held 1118 prisoners. Of these, 309 were sentenced to prison terms of up to 3 months, 193 between 3 months and 6 months and 185 between 6 months and 12 months. The statistics show that more than 60% of inmates served terms of 12 months or less. Of this group, 99 were convicted of what can be viewed as serious offences against a person. Of the rest, 220 were convicted of property or dishonesty offences such as breaking and entering, stealing, forging and uttering and so on; 53 breached court orders concerning parole, good behaviour bonds or community service order conditions; 182 were convicted of drink-driving offences like driving under the influence, exceeding 0.08% or refusing breath analysis; 117 were convicted of having driven whilst disqualified, whilst the remaining 16 were convicted of other sundry offences. Statistics for similar periods in other years indicate a fairly constant pattern of offences and penalties imposed.

Mr Speaker, not all of these people would be eligible to be detained under a home detention order. In fact, few of them would be deemed appropriate for

consideration, because of the nature of their offences. In general terms, offenders who might be considered would be those convicted of victimless crimes where no harm to another person or to property has resulted. For instance, a good proportion of the 182 offenders in the drink-driving category could almost certainly have been diverted from jail.

The judicious use of a program such as this entails social and economic benefits to the community, the offender and his family. In financial terms, the home detention scheme has a great deal going for it. The supervision envisaged for home detainees will cost about \$15 per day. This compares very favourably with more than \$90 per day for a prison inmate. Offenders on home detention orders can retain their jobs. This means their families will not need financial or other support from community agencies.

We must also consider the overcrowding that exists in our prison system at present. It hampers the development and implementation of treatment programs in the custodial area. In institutions like prisons, antisocial attitudes can be bred and consolidated. Released offenders often continue association with other ex-inmates, becoming members of the old boys club. Within such gatherings, pressures and temptations are generated to commit further transgressions. To a large extent, this sort of problem can be avoided by the availability of realistic alternatives to traditional forms of imprisonment for appropriate groups of offenders. This bill is designed to provide a program which is a realistic, enforceable alternative to imprisonment, and a form of punishment which is highly visible within the community where the offence occurs. It is not a soft option available to just any offender.

The bill does not abandon the principle that justice must be seen to be done as well as actually being done. The home detention scheme is faithful to that concept. Our community has the right to expect that those who break the law will be punished, but it is reasonable for our courts to expect government to provide options in punishment that comply with emerging social needs or community expectations. The legislation reflects community attitudes. It caters to the expectation that enforceable penalties will be exercised by the courts when dealing with offenders. The amendments provide clear expectations in relation to the behaviour of offenders, and the consequences of failure to comply with the strict requirements of a home detention order.

This legislation provides elements of punishment, deterrence, reparation, economic expediency, and the potential for positive attitude change in offenders. In many cases, this legislation will provide an alternative to imprisonment that makes sense to most people in our community. The public retains its right and expectation of protection, whilst a conditional release program is established as an integral part of the criminal justice system. It preserves the integrity of our sentencing authorities and will serve as a platform for a far better public understanding of our correctional programs.

Mr Speaker, the defined purpose of the home detention scheme is to provide selected suitable offenders, who would otherwise be imprisoned, with the opportunity to remain at restricted liberty in a stable environment, conditional upon their accepting and complying with random surveillance provisions, residential restrictions and, where appropriate, participation in educational rehabilitative programs suitable to remedial treatment of the causative factors of the offence. This means that an offender who accepts a home detention order, in addition to restrictions on his or her movements from home, might also be required to participate in alcohol rehabilitation programs, defensive driving courses or some other educational or training course designed to change personal factors which might have contributed to the

offence. Young offenders, for example, might be required to participate in work skills programs. Such initiatives will be an integral part of supervising home detention orders.

Supervision of home detainees will be strict and pervasive. Random checks at day or night, weekends or public holidays will be part of the home detainee's life for the duration of the order. Careful monitoring will include checks by telephone or in person by a surveillance officer. The effectiveness of the residential provisions will be enhanced by the fact that the offender will never be able to predict when the next check could occur.

I have considered as an adjunct to this program the use of electronic surveillance techniques which are already in use in other jurisdictions around the world. Officers with responsibility for supervision of the home detention scheme will continue to assess the cost-effectiveness of implements such as non-removable radio transmission location devices carried by offenders. Subject to final cost analysis, such techniques might be viable in the future. Operational guidelines have been formulated to ensure the greatest possible cooperation from offenders given an opportunity to participate in this scheme and to reduce to the barest minimum any possible risk to the community.

In addressing the bill itself, the first substantive amendment is clause 5. This expands the range of specific conditions a court can impose when placing an offender on a bond. It introduces residential conditions. In the past, some magistrates have expressed reluctance to impose such conditions because they were not explicitly available. This amendment has been incorporated to provide courts with expanded options and is intended to avoid a gap in sentencing where home detention is not a practical penalty. Because of the nature of home detention orders and specific requirements regarding assessment reports or surveillance, it might not be possible at the outset to extend this scheme to circuit courts dealing with offenders from remote localities. The alternative is to provide courts with formal power to include a strict residential condition under a bond. Courts could exercise this power, for example, to legitimately require an Aboriginal offender to stay at a specific place such as an outstation.

Clause 6 repeals the old section 18 and replaces this with a new section. It reflects the provisions of section 27 of the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Act 1986. The commencement of the Work Health Act made changes to this section necessary. They mirror changes to section 27 of the principal act passed in this House last November.

Clause 7 introduces a new part which provides the legislative base for the new home detention scheme. Proposed new section 19A provides for the making of home detention orders by courts and deals with terms and conditions which courts can apply. It specifically empowers a court to make an order for restitution or compensation and, in particular, retains the court's power to disqualify or suspend the licence, permit or authority held by the offender.

Proposed new section 19B details circumstances in which a home detention order can be made. It provides that the court can receive a report related to the offender and his intended place of residence. The court must be satisfied that making a home detention order would not put other people at risk. This section requires the offender to consent to an order. It also allows the court to take into account the views of other people who might be affected by an order. Further, it requires an offender to be advised in plain language of his rights and obligations under an order.

By virtue of proposed new section 19B(4), the court is empowered to stay the execution of a sentence of imprisonment in order to obtain a report related to the conditions referred to in 19B(1). The court also has power to remand an offender in prison or to grant bail. Proposed new section 19C makes it clear that, where one or more home detention orders are in force, the aggregate term of such orders shall not exceed 12 months.

Under the terms of proposed new section 19D, a court can review a home detention order. Several options can be adopted. A court can, at its discretion, discharge an order, confirm a prison sentence or quash the earlier sentence and impose an alternative penalty. A court can vary any conditions related to an order. An application for review of an order can be made by the Director of Correctional Services or the offender. Such applications would be made only as a result of circumstances revealed after an order was made and where justice could be served by a review. For example, an offender under an order might require admission to hospital as a result of an illness or accident. In these circumstances, he might not be able to apply with all the conditions of the order. A court has discretion to determine appropriate alternatives. The rest of this section sets out procedures to be followed when an application for review of an order is to be heard.

Proposed new section 19E deals with the duration of home detention orders and honourable members will find it self-explanatory. Section 19F defines those issues which will constitute breaches of a home detention order. It provides mechanisms to bring an offender before a court after a breach, either by summons or by warrant. In appropriate circumstances, a police officer can arrest an offender without a warrant, provided that he has reason to suspect that the offender has violated the terms of an order. The provision of arrest without warrant is deemed to be an essential component and is designed to enhance community safety. The bill provides, under this section, for an offender who is alleged to have breached an order, to be brought before a court to be dealt with. If the court is satisfied that the offender has breached conditions of an order, the court can revoke the order and commit the offender to a prison for the full term previously imposed. Regardless of how long the order might have been in force, the offender is to be in prison for a term equal to the sentence suspended when the order was originally made. Only in exceptional circumstances may the order be revoked. Breaches of a minor nature or involving special circumstances may not lead to the revocation of an order but could result in the order being varied to impose stronger conditions or a longer period of detention at home. If an offender does not comply with the conditions of an order which has given him an opportunity to remain at liberty, it is an immediate case of 'Do not pass go - do not collect \$200'. He goes directly to jail and remains there for the full term of the original sentence. This option would have a substantial deterrent effect on people tempted to renege on the obligations of their orders.

Furthermore, proposed new section 19F(7) requires that, where an offender breaches an order by virtue of committing an offence for which the penalty is imprisonment, the additional term of imprisonment will be added to that re-imposed as a result of breaching the order. Under the provisions of proposed new section 19G, the Director of Correctional Services is empowered to appoint surveillance officers. This section sets out the functions and powers of surveillance officers. The powers are broad, as they must be to ensure full compliance by offenders. It must be remembered that an offender is serving a term of imprisonment in his own home. Proposed new section 19H is self-explanatory and mirrors provisions of other legislation.

Clause 8 refers to community service orders. This relates to my earlier reference to rectifying anomalies. Section 21(A) of the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Act 1986 empowers the Director of Correctional Services to make a community service order, notwithstanding that a court has adjudged the payment of a fine or sum of money by conviction or order. This has raised some questions among magistrates. Their concern is that, under these circumstances, where an order is made for restitution or compensation, the offender might elect to do community service work instead of making payment. Clearly, in making an order for restitution or compensation, it would not be the court's intention that the offender could avoid payment in real money terms. This amendment is introduced to exclude restitution or compensation orders, or orders for estreatment of bail, from the provisions of that part of the act dealing with community service orders. This overcomes that anomaly and allows our courts the proper discretionary use of such orders without the spirit of the order being contravened.

Clause 9 provides power for the Administrator to make regulations in relation to home detention orders. Clause 10 deals with further amendments. It consists of a schedule of amendments to correct outdated terminology and to provide a consistently modern drafting style for this legislation. I am informed that such an overhaul is long-overdue.

I have been outlining amendments to the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act necessary to establish a home detention scheme. At the same time, minor amendments to the Parole of Prisoners Act are also needed. The bill, in this regard, is brief. Clause 3 amends section 4 of the principal act, so that a court is not required to fix a non-parole period in respect of a prison sentence imposed under section 19A of the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act. It might still do so, however, where a term or further term of imprisonment is imposed under proposed new section 19F.

This legislation provides for a departure from the traditional methods of dealing with offenders in our community. It takes the Northern Territory's correctional program well into the future. It addresses many issues of a social and economic nature. It represents massive potential savings to the taxpayer without increasing the risk of danger to the community. It provides a punitive, yet humane, disposition for our courts in dealing with offenders. These amendments certainly create better potential for rehabilitating offenders through compulsory training or education programs.

This legislation addresses the cause of problems in our society rather than dealing with just the results of problems. I am aware that similar schemes have been introduced in other jurisdictions in Australia. Some of them, I know, are little more than quasi early-release schemes allowing prisons to release inmates through the back door. Such soft options might be acceptable elsewhere but not in the Territory under this government. I believe that, in our community, the courts are the right and proper place to determine who shall or shall not go to prison and for what term. In that respect, this legislation puts the Territory at the forefront of reform in dealing with crime and punishment in Australia.

I take great pride in being the minister responsible for having introduced this legislation. I am confident that the courts will welcome this initiative and I am equally confident that the scheme will be administered in a competent manner to meet its objectives. To this end, there will be a review of the legislation and other aspects of the scheme after it has been in operation for 12 months. Changes can be made to overcome any shortcomings identified. This will ensure that the home detention program is always highly effective. This



is practical, progressive legislation with wide-ranging benefits and application within the Northern Territory. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 67)

Continued from 23 September 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as we stand here today, Alice Lynne Chamberlain stands convicted of murdering her daughter Azaria at Ayers Rock on 17 August 1980 and Michael Leigh Chamberlain stands convicted of being an accessory after the fact to that murder.

In June, the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Chamberlain Convictions by Hon Mr Justice Morling was tabled in this Assembly. His Honour's conclusion was:

It follows from what I have written that there are serious doubts and questions as to the Chamberlains' guilt and as to the evidence in the trial leading to their conviction. In my opinion, if the evidence before the commission had been given at the trial, the trial judge would have been obliged to direct the jury to acquit the Chamberlains on the ground that the evidence could not justify their conviction.

That was a very strong conclusion, as has already been remarked in the debate relating to the tabling of the report in June. During that debate, the Attorney-General and I canvassed various strategies for the quashing of the convictions that lay then and continue to lie against the Chamberlains. At the time, I tabled an opinion from Mr Michael Abbott QC of Adelaide and Mr Colin McDonald of the Northern Territory bar. That opinion included, inter alia, the strategy that has come to fruition with this particular bill. It is worth stressing the unanimity that exists between government and opposition in respect of this matter. The Hansard of 4 June recorded the minister as saying:

Since the tabling of the report of the Morling Inquiry and issuing of pardons to both Mr and Mrs Chamberlain, a number of statements and requests have been made relating to pardons and quashing of convictions. Some of these issues break new ground in both the Australian and British judicial systems. While not expressing any opinion one way or the other, obviously such issues must be approached with great caution and following careful research and advice. I shall adopt this approach in responding to any application made by the Chamberlains.

In an Assembly that is frequently riven with difference, I would like to pass on to the Attorney-General my appreciation of the purposeful fashion in which he has conducted not only the public debate but his personal inquiries into the strategies that have come to fruition with this particular bill. While I am in the process of handing out bouquets, it is appropriate that I also register my thanks to Mr Colin McDonald and Mr Michael Abbott for their work in the production of the opinion that I tabled in June.

In what looks like being the penultimate chapter in a long saga, it is also appropriate to pass a bouquet to Senator Bob Collins who, as Leader of

the Opposition and shadow Attorney-General, took so much interest and put so much effort into the issues which arose from time to time in relation to this case.

Mr Perron: He should have been ashamed of some of his role.

Mr BELL: The member for Fannie Bay really cannot help himself. He is curmudgeonly to the last. He is inevitably unable to see any good in any action by Senator Bob Collins. In the words of Shakespeare, it is 'ancient malice' which is not really apposite to this particular piece of legislation. I can remember sitting beside the member for Fannie Bay in the lounge when he was Attorney-General, watching news reports relating to the issue we are discussing. I consider that his approach to the issue was statesmanlike in most respects. As I said earlier today, I believe the result is a good one for the Northern Territory. It can only enhance the reputation of our system of justice.

I have no hesitation in joining the Attorney-General in his quite justifiable criticisms of some reports in the southern media. Quite justifiably, he singled out the outrageous cartoon that appeared in the Melbourne Age immediately after the Morling Inquiry was tabled. That woeful cartoon of a dingo ripping my lady justice to the ground will be forever etched in my mind. The dingo was labelled as the Northern Territory government. I have no hesitation in joining with the Attorney-General in roundly condemning that cartoon and the editorial line that the Age took in that particular case.

If I might digress for a minute, it is easy for us to adopt what I have referred to in this Assembly as a cultural cringe and say that we can do it as well as they can when, in fact, there are things that we can learn. However, in this particular case, I have no hesitation in being something of a Territory chauvinist and saying that we have done a pretty good job. The only possible blot in the performance of this legislature in relation to the matter occurred yesterday in the form of comments made by a member who shall remain nameless. I took some satisfaction in finding that she did not prosecute in the media the views that she expressed in this Chamber yesterday.

The question of whether members of this Assembly should express views about the guilt or innocence of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain arose yesterday. Obviously, I have private views about the matter as indeed do most human beings. Certainly, all Australians do. I have no intention of discussing my private views. Further, I believe that members of the Legislative Assembly have a unique responsibility. I think it is improper for members of the Legislative Assembly to use the forum of the Assembly to canvass private views. As far as I am concerned, that is a massive abuse of privilege. It is a massive abuse of the public forum that is available as well as of the privilege of this Assembly. Mr Speaker, I will say no more about that but I believe that, fundamentally, we have a responsibility to corroborate and not denigrate the due process of law.

Mr Perron: You should have censured Bob Collins.

Mr BELL: I will take up that interjection, which suggests that the former Leader of the Opposition, Senator Bob Collins, behaved inappropriately. I point out to honourable members that what he did was to objectively criticise due processes of law. He made objective criticisms, for example, of the Martin Inquiry. Since the then Solicitor General has been promoted to the bench, I do not propose to canvass criticisms further. It would be less than appropriate to do so.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr BELL: People who interject about the role of Senator Collins, in his former role as Leader of the Opposition, do themselves no credit. Since the member for Koolpinyah has decided that she wants to be named in this context, I will name her so that her contribution is immortalised. If there is anybody on the government benches who wants to comment in the same vein, to level inane criticisms outside the context of debate at the role of Bob Collins in this affair, they are most welcome either to interject or to make an intelligent contribution. As far as I am concerned, his contribution was at all times positive and thoughtful and in accord with our responsibility in respect of the due processes of law.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the bill itself, there are 2 matters that need to be discussed: the findings of the second inquest, and the question of compensation. As I said at the outset of my contribution on this particular bill, the convictions against Alice Lynne Chamberlain and Michael Leigh Chamberlain stand. Equally, the findings of the second inquest in relation to the death of Azaria Chamberlain still stand. The findings were that the death of Azaria Chamberlain was a homicide, that there was positive evidence linking Mrs Chamberlain to that homicide, and that there was a prima facie case of murder.

The second inquest found that the child had been buried whilst in its clothes; that an examination of the soil and botanical residue contained on the clothing was inconsistent with the child being carried by a dingo; that the evidence disclosed the palm print of a small adult hand on the clothing; that the evidence clearly established that the clothing had been cut by a person; that vegetation contamination was inconsistent with vegetation found at the scene and inconsistent with the likely contamination which would have occurred if the clothing, with a body in it, had been carried by an animal; that scissors were found in the Chamberlain's car which were stained on the cutting edge and on the hinge with human foetal blood, a finding which led to the inference that those scissors were used to cut the clothing of the deceased; that the evidence in relation to the deceased's clothing was consistent with an attempt to simulate a dingo attack on a child by a person or persons who recovered the buried body, removed the clothing, damaged it by cutting, rubbed it in vegetation and deposited the clothes for later recovery, such deposition being indicative of a knowledge that dingoes were in the area. So it continues, Mr Speaker.

Quite obviously, one of the implications of the Morling Inquiry is that the findings of that second inquest have to be set aside. As I said in my contribution to the debate on the statement which followed the tabling of the Morling Inquiry, it is quite clear that the Morling Inquiry implies that Alice Springs magistrate Denis Barritt got it right. I presume that there will be need to once again apply to the Supreme Court to have the finding of the second inquest set aside so that Azaria Chamberlain's death certificate will ultimately carry a finding similar to that which applied in the period between the first and second inquests. I do not know, off the top of my head, the exact details of the process which will achieve that but I presume the means are available.

Mr Speaker, the second issue that needs to be considered in the context of this particular bill, which I hope will prove to be the penultimate chapter in the saga of the death of Azaria Chamberlain, is the question of compensation for Michael and Lindy Chamberlain. I suggest that there are 2 areas where compensation will need to be considered by the Northern Territory government.

First, there is the question of the entitlement of the Chamberlains, or more particularly their instructing solicitors at the inquiry, to recover certain costs and expenses incurred in preparing themselves for the inquiry and putting relevant material to it. Secondly, there is the question of the entitlement of the Chamberlains to recover compensation for personal possessions and assets, such as their motor car, taken from them by police officers prior to the trial. Thirdly, there is the question of the general right of the Chamberlains to receive compensation for their wrongful convictions and the consequences of those convictions.

It seems to me that the first 2 questions will not be particularly contentious in the community. The question of their entitlement to recover legal expenses and to receive compensation for the loss of their motor vehicle, camera bag and so forth is unlikely to arouse controversy but the question of compensation for the consequences of wrongful conviction will be more contentious. I suppose the most appropriate path will be to consider the precedents in such cases in Australia and around the world in places where a similar justice system to our own prevails.

I now turn to the bill itself, in which I have taken a particular interest. Firstly, I believe it quite appropriate that we have not legislated the presumption of innocence for the Chamberlains. As the honourable Attorney-General mentioned in his second-reading speech, that is not the province of the legislature. It is appropriate that the courts carry out that role. I am pleased that an omnibus provision such as this has come before the Assembly on the basis of this motivation but, obviously, it is a general provision that would apply, as the honourable Attorney-General mentioned in his second-reading speech, for anybody else. Obviously the situation to which the legislation applies is an extremely rare one. It is not unprecedented in this country, but it is extremely rare for somebody to exhaust all the appeal mechanisms and for the subsequent availability of new evidence to require consideration of the appropriateness of exercising the prerogative of mercy and the need to quash convictions.

I appreciate the Attorney-General pointing out in his second-reading speech that this particular provision should not be seen as a further normal appeal process. I note that there are 2 provisions in the bill which will prevent its being used as such. There is the condition that the prerogative of mercy must have been exercised before this section of the Criminal Code can be triggered. Secondly, application to the court is at the discretion of the Attorney-General. Those 2 safeguards mean that it will not be possible for this section to be used as part of the normal appeal process.

The other important issue, from the point of view of the administration of justice and the saving of money and time, is the evidentiary provisions in the bill. Proposed new section 433A(5) will release the court from the normal rules of evidence. The Attorney-General mentioned that there was precedent for that in the Legal Practitioners Act. I do not know a great deal about the law of evidence but I know that courts like to consider evidence de novo. They do not like hearsay. Truth is never objective, however much we might sometimes like to tell ourselves that it is. How truth is established is a fascinating subject. Most importantly, new subsection (6) will permit the taking of evidence from another forum. In this case, it will allow the Morling Inquiry to be taken into consideration by the Court of Criminal Appeal.

I want to make one final point in passing and it relates to a simple administrative problem. I mention this for the benefit of the minister

responsible for police and I trust that he will pass it down the line. In addition to what could be mildly referred to as the dislocation of the Chamberlain family, one relatively small difficulty has been occasioned by the registration of the conviction lying against Michael Chamberlain, who was found guilty of being an accessory to murder after the fact. I am reliably informed by the Chamberlain's solicitor that the police computer reads that Michael Chamberlain stands convicted of being an accessory to murder rather than accessory to murder after the fact, which is a far lesser conviction. I understand that Michael Chamberlain applied in New South Wales for a licence for a rifle. Quite appropriately, the police consulted their computer and the application was denied. In that context, it is important not only that the convictions be quashed but, until they are, perhaps the police records ought to be updated. I mention that in passing.

In closing, let me again pass on my congratulations to the government and my appreciation for the bipartisan spirit in which this matter has been processed through the Assembly. I look forward to a conclusion of the matter, hopefully in the not-too-distant future.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for his comments in relation to the bipartisan approach that has been adopted. Most members would agree that, in matters of justice and law, a bipartisan approach should always be adopted because these are not matters in which politics should be involved.

The reference by the member for MacDonnell to opinions that were received by him from Mr Abbott QC and Mr Colin McDonald are pleasing. When we first had discussions outside this building, he was not too sure whether he could rely on my humble opinions - which happily have been reinforced - regarding the ability of the Assembly to carry out certain acts and the role of the parliament in terms of criminal justice. I am certainly pleased that we were able to adopt a bipartisan approach and I am very pleased that this legislation has been introduced into this House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88  
(Serial 53)

Continued from 22 September 1987.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill in respect of the allocation for education.

This year's education budget is \$196.8m. This allocation covers all expenditure on operations, repairs and maintenance, minor new works, administration and Technical and Further Education, including TAFE programs at the Darwin Institute of Technology. In our overall level of funding there is actually a slight increase on last year's allocation of \$195.3m. However, honourable members would be aware that in real terms this is a significant reduction in the education budget. The reduced funding for education is already well known, as is the reason it had to be made: the massive and disproportionate cut in Territory funding at this year's Premiers Conference.

However, I take considerable pride in the fact that, despite the cut we have suffered, we can still offer Territorians access to a very high-quality education system. That we can do that is a tribute to the high priority that the Northern Territory government has given to education since it took over responsibility for this area in 1979.

Since then, there has been a massive construction program, major curriculum development, considerable improvement in staff-student ratios and expansion of teacher training and professional development in the Territory. These developments are the result of a strong commitment to improving our education system, and landmark initiatives from this government. I said yesterday that education had passed through a renaissance period and that we were now entering a period of consolidation. A major part of this consolidation process will be the streamlining of our system to meet the demands of the future as efficiently as possible. Nevertheless, the Northern Territory government has still managed to maintain funding for almost all programs.

Indeed, we have even found room to increase funding where necessary. For example, the budget maintained strong support for teacher-training. Honourable members will be well aware that the Territory has suffered for many years as a result of the high turnover of teachers here. This has led not only to disruption and expense in terms of replacing teachers but it has severely affected students, who in many cases have suddenly found themselves with a new teacher in the middle of a school year and have sometimes had to deal with this situation more than once in the same year. This has resulted in a government commitment to expand teacher-training in the Territory until we become self-sufficient in the supply of teachers to our schools. As a result, the number of students enrolled in teacher-training courses has almost doubled in the years since 1983, from 212 to the current 413. This year, for the first time, there will be more than 100 graduates from teacher-training courses in the Territory.

A large part of that growth can be attributed to the Northern Territory Teaching Service scholarships and the Batchelor College bursaries offered by the government. In fact, we have increased funding for these 2 schemes by \$183 000 this financial year, bringing total funding in this budget to \$665 000. This allocation will provide funding for existing scholarship-holders as well as offering a further 49 teaching service scholarships and a further 7 Batchelor College bursaries at the start of the next academic year. The number of holders of teaching service scholarships will rise to 140 when the additional 49 are awarded next year, and the number of Aboriginal people studying full-time through the bursary scheme at Batchelor will reach 40. These programs are in addition to the general scholarships awarded annually by the Northern Territory government to the 10 top Year 12 students, and the postgraduate scholarships at the University College. These bring the total funding for scholarships to \$830 000 this financial year.

I would now like to turn to the area of professional development. Much of the responsibility for funding in-service courses was formerly born by the federal government, with support from the Northern Territory. However, the federal Labor government axed the professional development program in the 1986-87 federal budget. This meant that the Northern Territory government really had no option but to fully fund in-service courses for teachers. The alternative was to deny our teachers, and thus our students, the benefits of in-service training. The Northern Territory government has increased the allocation for professional development of teachers by \$110 000, and \$72 000

of this will be additional funding for in-service courses. The other \$38 000 will go towards reimbursing the \$250 tertiary administration fee for teachers who undertake part-time external studies to upgrade their teaching qualifications.

Unfortunately, we have had no option but to reduce the level of the per capita grants to schools this financial year.

Mr Ede: Shame!

Mr MANZIE: However, this will be offset by a 20% increase in the ...

Mr Ede: It won't be offset; it is just a redistribution.

Mr MANZIE: ... dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme for school councils, bringing the ceiling up to \$6000.

Mr Speaker, I hear some comments from the member for Stuart. Obviously, it is an option that the government does not like to take, but I think it is well worth recording here that this government's per capita grants to schools are far greater than those of any state government. Territory students still do not have to purchase their own books. All members who have experienced the pleasures and the frustrations of going to school in other parts of Australia will be fully aware that it is a normal requirement elsewhere that students buy their own books. The opposition should recognise that the per capita grants provided by this government are far in excess of those provided by any other government in this country. I think we should receive credit for that, instead of being derided in times of financial constraint which have been brought about by the actions of a government over which we have no control. We do the best we can to spread resources to all Territorians. We do so in such a manner that we still provide a better service, at a cheaper cost, than anywhere else. I think we should get some recognition for that and expect to hear the member for Stuart giving it when he has his chance to comment.

Mr Speaker, the increased dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme will give school councils the opportunity and the incentive to make up their funding losses, and even to improve their financial positions, through fund-raising activities. I would also like to make it clear that this scheme does not disadvantage Aboriginal schools, as has been claimed by various people. We even heard about that during the Barkly by-election. In fact, Department of Education records show quite clearly that Aboriginal schools have been amongst the most effective users of the dollar-for-dollar scheme since it was introduced in 1980.

There will be a reduction in funding for English as a Second Language programs for migrant children because, again, the federal government's drastic cut in 1986-87 removed 46% of our funding in this area. The Territory government has been able to carry the added burden until now. However, the further cuts in our funding mean that ESL can no longer be totally protected. While there will be some reduction in the availability of withdrawal classes for migrant children in some schools, these children will continue to receive extra support in their normal classes, as required. Again, we are continuing to provide a better service than is provided elsewhere, even though funding has been reduced and cut out.

Mr Ede: The federal government increased its funding in that area.

Mr MANZIE: Yes, it was increased this year but the federal government did not replace the funding that was withdrawn the year before. When that happens, we will be in a better position to be able to do something. Again, if the member for Stuart is fair dinkum about this, I would like him to recognise the fact that we have carried more than our fair share of the load and we do do more than the states. Such recognition would be appropriate. I do not know whether he could stretch himself to give it, Mr Speaker, because I think it hurts him to recognise us when we pick up where his federal colleagues have left off.

I think it is most important that people realise that intensive programs for newly-arrived children will be fully maintained, and it should also be noted that the provision of ESL programs will still be far more generous in the Territory than in the states. One of the points that the member for Stuart might like to pick up is the fact that there is absolutely no recognition of the needs of Aboriginal children in our ESL funding programs. We are all aware that a large number of Aboriginal children do not speak English as their first language. The sooner the Commonwealth recognises our shortfalls in this area and provides sufficient funding support, the better.

I am pleased to be able to say that the Northern Territory government has been successful in protecting the Department of Education's Special Student Services area. Again, although there has been a slight reduction in funding, only some office-based positions and 1 school home liaison officer position will be affected. The other 202 student services positions will be retained.

Substantial additional funds have been allocated for repairs and maintenance and minor new works for schools in this budget. The Department of Education's vote for repairs and maintenance has been increased by \$866 000 to nearly \$8m, while minor new works funding has been boosted by more than \$1m. Similarly, in the TAFE area, the allocation for repairs and maintenance has been increased from \$207 000 to \$309 000 while minor new works rises to \$210 000. This is in addition to the \$3m which the Northern Territory government will spend on various education capital works projects this financial year.

The Alice Springs College of TAFE will receive more than \$600 000, \$380 000 for work on stage 3 of the college and \$240 000 to expand facilities at the School of Tourism and Hospitality. A total of \$700 000 will be spent at the Darwin Institute of Technology, \$400 000 for 8 transportable buildings to meet the demands for TAFE courses and \$300 000 to complete construction of the DIT road system. This government will spend \$600 000 on teacher housing in 4 Aboriginal communities this financial year and a new community education centre is to be built at Willowra at a cost of \$400 000 as part of the implementation of FEPPi's 12-point plan.

The reduction to the education budget this financial year left the Department of Education with no option but to staff schools strictly in accordance with our staffing formula. This has mainly affected secondary schools, which have lost most of their over-entitlement staff. However, the smaller secondary schools, which require over-entitlement staff to maintain their teaching and course structures, have been protected as much as possible. I must also stress that the staff-student ratios throughout the school system will continue to equal or better those in the states. Our ancillary staffing levels will also continue to be the highest in the country.

In recent months, it has been the tactic of various groups to demand that cuts in education be made in administration rather than in schools. I would



be only too happy to comply with that suggestion if I had anything left in administration to cut. The fact is that the Department of Education has a policy of putting as many services into schools as possible. We have been implementing that policy and reducing administrative staff for a number of years now. Although some further reductions have been made in the department's administration this financial year, administration can no longer bear the brunt of the reductions. I should point out that one of the steps we are taking in administration is the restructuring of the department's executive area, with estimated savings of \$175 000 over the full year.

It has also been suggested by a group that is trying to make an industrial dispute out of an education debate, that the Northern Territory government does not spend enough on education. I am sure honourable members are aware of the basic dishonesty of that claim. As I pointed out yesterday, the Northern Territory government spends more on education on a per capita basis than any other government in Australia. The most recent year for which full figures are available is 1985-86. In that year the Territory's education spending, on a per capita basis, was double the national average: \$967 compared with \$436.

Although this budget does impose some constraints on education, I do not believe we should fall prey to the gloom and despair that members of the opposition seem to enjoy indulging in. The fact is that this government has provided Territorians with access to a high-quality education system, and will continue to do so. We have not only succeeded in maintaining a high-quality education system, but we have succeeded in maintaining our education system as one of the best in Australia.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Appropriation Bill. The bill has been described in various ways, both publicly and privately, but the bottom line is that Territorians have to pay more. Whether they are getting more for their money is something for each individual to decide, but these increased costs have come at a time when people cannot afford to pay any more because they are fully stretched. I make this point nearly every time I speak and I will continue to make it in the hope that members of this Assembly will realise that many people are really having a hard time.

What the budget really needed to do for Territorians was to give us that shot of confidence, that injection which would keep us going, stimulate business and encourage people to do more and be more entrepreneurial. Territorians generally understand that times have changed and that governments, like individuals, find funds harder to get and more expensive. The federal government has been extremely unreasonable to the Northern Territory and that has compounded the problems. The government cannot do the things that it used to do in the way that it used to do them. Under these circumstances, Territorians have to make do with less. They start to take more interest in what is going on around them and they start to measure their own level of forbearance and suffering against the experience of those around them. They start to make comparisons and they start to develop an idea of equity.

The community has now reached a point where it is deaf to the rhetoric, the promises, the platitudes, the suggestions that everything is under control, that things are worse elsewhere and that the government is doing its best and it is all somebody else's fault. It is now time for the government to give Territorians the injection of confidence that they need. People

waited very patiently for the budget because they were hit with the mini-budget in June. Those new costs really hurt a lot of people and they looked very carefully at the Treasurer's comments to get some reassurance that the Territory is being managed really well, to give them confidence to go out and invest. They wanted to hear that the future direction of the Territory was clear and in capable hands. Unfortunately, many people in the community did not get that shot of confidence from the budget. Investor confidence in the community generally comes from individuals. People base their confidence on whether everybody in the community is getting a fair go and on their general perceptions of the government's integrity. I would like to deal with the issues of how people have been treated and how they see themselves as being treated.

Earlier this year, we had the dispute with the public service. The reality is that, when times are tough and government has to do unpleasant things and implement important monetary policies, it really needs the support and loyalty of the public service. It is unfortunate that, since June, public service loyalty and commitment to the government have declined drastically. Mr Speaker, people who know what is happening in the community will tell you from their experience that public servants today do not work for the Northern Territory government the way they used to. They work for themselves, their department, the bureaucracy, individual members of the House or anyone else in the community who takes their fancy. Public servants believe they have been treated unfairly and disloyally and they are not giving the government the measure of support that the Westminster system requires.

That level of uncertainty trickles down through the rest of the community. Small business is starting to feel the pangs of the government's new charges and they are finding things as difficult now as they were before. In fact, Mr Speaker, many small businessmen will tell you that their capacity to keep their doors open is diminishing every day. Some sectors of the small business community feel that they have really had a hard time. Many people here will disagree with me, as is their right, but I believe that information is not flowing freely because people are not being frank with the government when they should be.

In the motel industry, many of the small operators will tell you that it is tough. They have had a bumper peak season, but things are very tough. They wish they could avoid having to pay the 2.5% bed tax and, if they are to survive and make a dollar, they may have to do that. What they find unfair, inequitable and jaundiced as they make decisions about whether or not to invest, is the amount of money that is being poured into the Sheratons and Yulara. It is pretty tough when the government tells the proprietor of a 20 to 50-room motel to cough up 2.5% of his gross receipts whilst it simultaneously pours its own funds into 5-star hotels in favoured positions. These arrangements may have been appropriate originally, when we could afford them, but we cannot afford them any more and the small operators are saying that they are not prepared to cop it.

While the big fellows like the Sheratons are being subsidised to the tune of \$10m this financial year, they are also offering 20% discounts to any Territorian who stays with them. If someone can show a driving licence or other identification which indicates that he is a Territorian, he gets a 20% discount on his accommodation and free breakfast delivered to his room. Meanwhile, the little motels down the street where Territorians have their life savings invested and their futures committed, cannot afford to offer those discounts. They cannot offer free breakfasts and they think it is pretty tough when they have to compete with 5-star hotels that can do so because they are receiving buckets of money from this government.

One other matter that should concern us all is that the fact that the Burgundy Royale operation is going into liquidation and is being hawked around the world as the receiver tries to attract business. The reality is, however, that any smart investor is unlikely to buy a place like the Burgundy Royale, a 5-star hotel of international standard, while the opposition down the street is getting a very nice hand-out from the government. An investor would only be putting his head in a noose. The Burgundy Royale will have to be sold at a ridiculously low price so that the investor is protected against the subsidy that the opposition is receiving. On top of that, the Burgundy Royale is being given considerable leeway by the government in respect of its water and electricity charges. That is understandable, but there are many small hotels which would appreciate a soft option like that to carry them through the wet season. There is considerable resentment in the community at the lack of equity in some of these arrangements. If they are not changed, I think it is likely that the people will make some changes themselves.

It is widely acknowledged that there is a downturn in the building industry. The demand is not there and houses are not being built. The little builders who have seen new starts by the government drop by 400 this year, are really struggling to stay alive. They find this very hard to stomach when they see other operators who can sell their projects to the government under a preferred buying scheme with the Housing Commission. An example of that was mentioned in this House just the other day. The small builder says: 'If the government has \$1m to spend through the Housing Commission to buy flats, that is terrific. Why don't we all have a crack at it and see whether we can all be in the action instead of having some special deal done on the side?' I am not saying that the deal that was done for the purchase of the flats on Gardens Hill was not a good-value deal for the government, but I am saying that there are a great many builders out there who would have liked to have had an opportunity to have a crack at the action, and they think it is unfair. Mr Speaker, you move around the community like the rest of us, and you know that some of them will tell you that it smells.

The Chief Minister and members of the government often speak of the need to develop small industries and manufacturing industry. I think we would all support that, but we do not want to develop those areas just for the sake of development. We want to develop them because they will make a contribution. There are many small businesses in this town which lack basic capital but, with a little assistance, would grow and become very strong and profitable businesses. Some of them would export goods to Asia, and that would be a help to us all. When those people see the TIO deal with Hungerford Refrigeration, they ask: 'What is so good about Hungerford? It is not even a local company. Maybe the Hungerford deal is a really good one, but we have a proposition that we think could have been taken up by the TIO or others and we cannot even get a look in'. In the early days, the NTDC might have helped people in this position, but that option is no longer there and maybe the TIO is a reasonable way to go.

If the TIO thinks it is appropriate to have a part of its portfolio set aside for investment in local business, I would say that is good. I would want to identify the amount of funds available and to go public by asking any local business which wants to expand its manufacturing capacity or to move into the Trade Development Zone to come forward and present its credentials to determine whether it is an appropriate investment for the TIO. The Hungerford deal - and I do not use the term disparagingly - might well turn out to be a very sound move in the course of time, but when people involved in small businesses in places like Winnellie and the rural area see that they cannot get a look in, they feel that something is wrong. My advice to the

government, if it feels that it is appropriate to use the TIO as a vehicle for investment in manufacturing industry, is to identify the amount of money available and open up the opportunity to everybody.

Local contractors throughout the Northern Territory are finding it very hard. That is understandable because there is less money around for period contracts, maintenance contracts and the other small jobs that have been around during the last few years. One particular concern which has reasonably been raised by local contractors is the difficulty they have in competing with Aboriginal organisations who tender for maintenance contracts. Their complaint is not that they have to compete with the Aboriginal organisations, but that Aboriginal organisations get a pretty fair subsidy from the government. Sometimes it is the Territory government and sometimes it is the Commonwealth government which contributes financially to the ability of these organisations to operate and keep people on their payrolls. The private sector does not get that sort of help. The small Territory contractor with a handful of employees puts in his price for a job and finds that he has missed out by 20% or 30%. He believes the difference is in the money that governments are providing so that these organisations can pay their overheads. That is a matter the government will need to look at if a significant number of small businesses involved in contracting and maintenance work are not to go under. I believe it should be looked at in terms of fairness. The people involved do not believe that it is fair and some of them are saying that it is not worth investing in equipment or premises and that it is time to cut their losses and get out.

Pastoralists also have concerns about the treatment they are receiving when they compare it with what they see the other bloke getting. When you think about it, Mr Speaker, their complaints are not too unreasonable. I can cite cases where station managements have become heavily involved in bushfire control. People have travelled all over the southern part of the Territory to hold meetings, to organise themselves into fire-fighting crews for the dry season and all the rest of it only to be told, when they put in a bid to the Bushfires Council for \$5000 for a trailer or for a few extra dollars for grading and preventive work, that they cannot have it this year because times are tough. In the next breath, they are told by people in the Conservation Commission that \$800 000 is being set aside in the budget to transfer the commission headquarters from the building where it is now located to one in Palmerston.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is \$300 000.

Mr TUXWORTH: I beg the honourable member's pardon; it is \$300 000. When people in the pastoral industry hear about things like that they ask what it is all about. They say: 'Here we are out in the sticks, trying to fight off natural disasters and asking for \$5000 for a trailer or a water tank. We are told that times are tough and we cannot be accommodated. On the other hand, the guys in head office can find that sort of money to shift premises'. They think that is pretty unfair, Mr Speaker. They do not like it and they do not want it to go on.

I can cite another case. Some pastoralists sought financial assistance to have the fencing along main roads adjacent to their properties secured so that, in the event of a truck containing diseased cattle rolling over, no animals would escape into the herd of a clean property. There are a couple of places along the Barkly Highway where the new road has been completed and no fencing has been installed, leaving pastoral properties exposed to the risk I have mentioned. The pastoralists see it as unfair that, having paid for the

fencing along the old road, they are now required to do so again along a new road that the government has constructed. I made some representations about this and was told that times were tough and there was no money.

Those same pastoralists will turn on their television sets at night or pick up their newspapers, and find that the government has just set a couple of hundred thousand dollars aside to buy an art collection and store it. They find it very hard to understand the priorities involved in that sort of decision-making and they ask where the equity is. They say: 'We have spent a fortune over 10 years getting our herds clean. The government has spent considerably more than us yet here we are, all exposed, and the government cannot find a few dollars to complete the fencing of the new road. Meanwhile, there is money around for those other things'.

A great deal has been said in the last few months about Aboriginal communities and outstations. The Treasurer foreshadowed that funding to outstations would be reduced and that outstations with less than 50 people would get funding only for water. The Minister for Health and Community Services has announced that health clinics will be closed in some areas or merged with other facilities. He also told the House recently of a new Healthworks program which will take the idea of total health to the people. Money has been set aside but the program stops at Berrimah.

The government needs to understand that the biggest savings in health expenditure will come from ensuring that the health facilities servicing the so-called 'holiday camps' are operating effectively. If they are not, the result will be a massive increase in hospital bed costs. If the government walks away from its responsibilities in relation to the health of those communities, we will find ourselves back here next February or April trying to find some extra dollars or making special appropriations to provide hospital places for people who are sick because of the environmental problems in those communities. We learnt that lesson in the mid-1970s. It is a backward step to take the view that outstations are holiday camps and should be provided only with minimum funding. None of the outstations in my electorate look like holiday camps, Mr Speaker. Perhaps they are in your electorate or somewhere else. The ones in my electorate are pretty basic. The people do not seek much and they do not get much. It is important that we fund the basic facilities which will improve their environment and ensure that their stay in our towns and our hospitals is minimal. A hospital bed must cost \$340 or \$350 per day now. These people do not come in for an overnight check. When they get into our hospital system, they are there for weeks.

Mr Speaker, public servants were recently asked to give up a whole range of their conditions of employment and that matter was ultimately settled. The beef of many public servants is simply that they are shifted around the town from building to building like cattle. Some of them have made as many as 4 moves in 6 months. When they arrive in their new locations, they are told to spread out and make the spaces look used. They believe this is wasteful and unfair and they get cranky about it.

Another area of concern is schools in remote areas. It has been foreshadowed that at least 5 and possibly 7 schools in my electorate could be closed because the number of students is insufficient. The people understand that something has to happen when numbers are down. They feel let down, however, when they are not told about any arrangements for the small numbers of children who are left without a school. If 5 schools are closed, each having had 5 children in attendance, are we saying that 25 children will not have an education? Is that the answer? We need to identify the arrangements

that will be made where schools are closed because of inadequate student numbers. It is not acceptable to tell Aboriginal people that their community school will be closed and their children will not receive an education. The Chief Minister spoke earlier of the need to move to statehood. Aboriginal people will not be kindly disposed to statehood if they receive that sort of treatment. They point out that the money spent on promoting statehood or the railway could keep the schools open for many years and it is pretty hard to argue with them about that.

I have a few minutes left and I will now deal with the integrity of the government, which is an important element in maintaining credibility and enthusiasm for investment in the community. There is a widespread perception in the community that things are not well. Episodes like the sale of Block H at Finnis River, the Centrepoint lease arrangements, Fysh House, the purchase of the flats on Gardens Hill, Annaburroo, Enterprise House and so forth, however valid the specific arrangements may have been, are not received well in the community. People do not believe that they have been good arrangements. Maybe that is a matter of poor promotion by the government or perhaps people have unreasonable and suspicious minds. Those issues, however, keep cropping up and they make the hardworking and struggling Territorian very cynical indeed.

It is also important for the government to keep its promises, whether they are election or budget promises. When it does not do so, people become uncertain about what the rules are and they become reluctant to invest. It is also very important that, at some stage in the next few months, the government comes to grips with the fact that it is time to get out of some of the tourist infrastructure that it is involved in. Whatever its merits, the political reality is that people in the community have had enough and they want out. They do not see why they should go without and suffer. I know there is a contrary view but I am putting the view that many people have had enough.

Mr Perron: You were the champion of it.

Mr TUXWORTH: I was the champion of it, Mr Speaker. Times have changed and you just do not go on doing what you were doing when things were not so tough. If the honourable member were to find tomorrow that the fish no longer came swimming in with the tide, he would get rid of a few people and cut his cloth to suit his new circumstances. The government should do likewise when it is necessary.

Mr Speaker, I have about 4 minutes left and I would like to touch on a couple of other things. The Treasurer announced earlier that he had taken \$15m out of the staff superannuation scheme to buy 300 Housing Commission homes. The announcement did not stir a lot of people and I thought that it had gone over the heads of public servants. It had not, Mr Speaker. Public servants took the view that they would not join the Territory scheme if all that was in it for them was a 13% return on Housing Commission homes. As the trustee, the Treasurer has a special responsibility to maximise the return on funds invested for the benefit of superannuants. It is very important that employees are confident that their superannuation fund is being managed well. When they are told that it is getting 13% or 14% return ...

Mr Perron: It is not their money. It is the employer's money.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay says that it is not their money and that it is the employer's money. It is the employee's money on the day he retires and that is what it is for. It is not for when the employer retires.

Mr Perron: Have a look at which trust fund it is in before you talk.

Mr TUXWORTH: Another issue is the uncertainty that is created over small things. When announcing the need to increase water and sewerage charges, the Treasurer and the Chief Minister said it would happen in October. Meanwhile, Treasury officials were saying it would be retrospective to 1 July. Obviously, the ministers took a political decision. That was fair enough, but it is obvious to the world and his wife that the Treasury officials were counting on an extra 3 months' revenue and, if it does not come from those charges, it has to come from somewhere else. People in the street are not stupid. They can see these things.

My final point is that some of the revenue figures are pretty optimistic. We will deal further with them in the committee stage but I will say now that inflated revenue figures are obvious to the world and do not give people encouragement and confidence. We need a period of solid, well-balanced government, a little bit of equity in the community and a little bit of fairness that will give people the opportunity to go forward with the confidence to invest and employ others. If it does not come forth pretty quickly, I can say to the government that things will get a whole lot worse than they are now. It has the capacity to stop that happening.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, obviously we have heard the financial policy of the new Nationals. I intended to spend my time dealing only with the budget appropriations pertaining to the Department of Transport and Works, but the incredible remarks of the member for Barkly should not go unchallenged, not that I want to spend too much time giving credibility to them.

It is quite obvious that the member for Barkly has neither read nor understood the budget papers nor even listened to the budget speech by the Treasurer. He has the hide to talk about integrity. For him to do so is an act of absolute hypocrisy. Sadly, the member for Barkly has been walking away from the basic philosophies of conservative politics that he readily supported only a short time ago. Recently, he has demonstrated that not only has he forgotten what conservative politics is all about, he has forgotten what integrity is about. He has also forgotten what the CLP government has done and is continuing to do for the Northern Territory community.

It is only a short time since the member for Barkly, as Treasurer, delivered the 1985-86 budget speech. The government's aim for long-term economic viability was the same then as it is now. Our commitment is to growth. That growth is proven and continues. Our commitment to job creation is proven and continues. Our commitment to constructive economic development is proven and continues. The only thing that has changed since 1985 is the Treasurer, and thank goodness for that! After being forced into some embarrassing admissions about immorality in his own imaginative form of bookkeeping, the member for Barkly has traded in his calculator and has become what some people call the Lone Ranger. Hidden behind the mask of the NT Nationals is the hypocrisy and arrogance which sealed his fate in May 1986.

Let me go through some of the member for Barkly's unfounded criticisms of the government today and in his recent performances. He spoke about taxes and charges. This budget is all about lowering the collection of revenue from the public, making it less than in his time as Chief Minister. Before I elaborate on some of the hypocritical utterances of the honourable member, let me just offer this little quote: 'A hypocrite combines a smooth appearance of virtue with the solid satisfaction of vice'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw the word 'hypocrite' wherever it has been said.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, you are quite right to ask me to withdraw and I do so unreservedly because it would be most inappropriate for me to describe the member for Barkly as hypocritical. What I meant to say is that he is saying today what he did not say yesterday or meant to say yesterday or did not mean to say today. I am not sure what he means to say at any time because his position changes from one day to the next. The Minister for Industries and Development suggested that the member for Barkly turned 180°. I would suggest that he is capable of turning 360° and he does it so often and so quickly that he must get light in the head.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me talk about taxes and charges and quote the member for Barkly. On 26 September 1985, speaking in Sydney, he said: 'And again it would be not unreasonable to expect an extra \$20m to be raised by imposing taxes and charges at levels above those of the states'. That was the previous Treasurer, the member for Barkly. He was talking about contingent liabilities then. On 17 April 1985, speaking about contingent liabilities again, he said in this House:

I would not have thought there was another political mile to be squeezed out of the casino issue. I would like to go on record as saying that, as far as I am concerned, the tabling of all the relevant documents at the last sittings and the debate that ensued, satisfied me and the electorate so far as the casino issue was concerned.

He has now flipped 180°.

On 28 August 1985, speaking on contingent liabilities and the role of the former Chief Minister, Hansard records him as saying: 'Paul Everingham took many bold decisions with a vision which was highly commendable'. What has happened to this vision? He went on to say:

The feasibility studies for Yulara and the Sheratons in Alice Springs and Darwin were conducted by well-regarded professional accounting firms. In each case it proved impossible to attract true risk capital and the projects would not have gone ahead without the level of government assistance that he had outlined.

On 15 April 1987, on 8DN, he was taking a different tack: 'The Chief Minister needs to come clean with the people, particularly the tourist industry, to explain to them why the Sheraton is getting such favourable treatment'. He went on to say: 'This is costing Territorians \$6m a year. It is time we got out'. He has said similar things tonight and it is hypocrisy - sorry, hyperbole - at its best.

On the subject of blame and responsibility, I quote the member for Barkly on 28 August 1985: 'Mr Speaker, let me tell you that I am not laying blame on anybody. I am not passing the buck. I have been in government since 1978 and I have been involved in the project'. Yet on talkback radio on 19 September 1986, only 13 months later, when a caller rang up implying that the member for Barkly was partly responsible for providing the underwriting and support for those major hotel and tourist developments, of which members on this side of the House and most Territorians are justifiably proud, he said: 'I just wanted to put on record that I stopped all of that when I became Chief Minister'.



On the topic of vision, the member for Barkly once said: 'Honourable members on both sides of this Assembly share a vision for the Territory's future. Do they not agree that this vision can be realised only by strong and unwavering commitment to decisions taken?' He has taken a 180° turn since then.

The member for Barkly referred in his speech to suspicion in the public service. That suspicion started about 2 years ago. If ever there was a member of the Assembly who was held in low regard by the public, particularly the public service, it was him. I heard all about it back in May last year. When I walk around the electorate, people tell me that things have certainly changed and changed for the better. When I walk around the department and hear the more positive attitudes of public servants, I am well and truly aware that things have changed for the better. Things have never been better since the Tuxworth era.

Like most people on this side of the House, I talk with people in small business. The member's suggestion that they have not been frank with the government is quite wrong. They do tell us where they think we are going wrong but, quite frankly, the great majority of them are convinced that this government is generally heading in the right direction. He talked about the bed tax and the Burgundy Royale. They are issues that should be addressed in a more appropriate forum. He talks about protection of the small business community. I am not sure what his free-enterprise philosophy is all about. Is it about protection or is it about encouragement? This CLP government offers encouragement to small business people, free-minded people standing on their own and building their own future, their own efficient businesses and getting on with the job. There is a vast difference. I am not sure if the member for Barkly is trying to introduce the Queensland form of free-enterprise, which is far from productive.

The honourable member gets up and beefs, as he did during his campaign, about how he is not able to participate on behalf of his electorate or his party, how he does not have time and how he is not allowed to ask questions. During the last election campaign, he said on Territory Extra: 'I cannot get a question in the House. I am on my feet as much as any other member but, if you look at the record, how often do you see me get a question? They do not want me asking questions'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we want to hear what the member for Barkly has to say on behalf of the Nationals. We want to hear what he has to say on behalf of this so-called conservative party but, in 12 months, he has not asked a single question. Members in this House know only too well that you can get 2 a day if you really have a go. I am pleased to say that he has lifted his game. I suppose this is because his constituents and his party have seen to it. He has asked 2 questions in 6 days. That is an improvement but, my goodness, the new Nationals must surely be asking themselves what on earth they have on their hands now. What does this so-called conservative, who represents them in this House, stand for?

I have wasted enough time talking about the negative attitudes of the member for Barkly and I do not want to reflect on the negative attitudes of members of the opposition. It is time that we talked about the positive aspects of this budget. This Appropriation Bill illustrates that, despite the current financial constraints which affect our budget, not only is the Northern Territory still resisting the slide in the national economy but it is actually turning the tide. It is time for us to be far more positive about things. Hindsight will show this year to be an extremely important and

incredible time. As the honourable Treasurer said, it will see a shift in our economy from one that is driven by public expenditure to one driven by private expenditure. There are people out there who are looking for leadership and are now receiving it. It will lead them away from the quagmire that the nation is currently heading towards. Australia is crying out for such leadership and the Territory is the answer.

What we need is positive-minded people, people with vision and, most importantly, people with the courage of their own convictions. These are the people who will produce real jobs and real wealth, not wealth based on a socialist welfare system or policies which create an artificial and protected economy, but wealth based on efficient and equitable utilisation of our many, and as yet untapped, natural resources. The framework provided by this year's Territory budget and the directions it offers will give us an opportunity to get on and make the break in terms of the Australian economy. Those who have the courage to grasp the outstanding opportunities will be appropriately rewarded. Times have changed. We can no longer afford the luxury of apathy and complacency. In a world marketplace that is becoming more and more aggressively competitive, we have to be confident and bold. Most importantly, we have to perform. That means that we need to get away from our entrenched industrial relations system and our inward-looking attitudes and get out there and make a go of it. On behalf of this nation we must achieve not only what is achievable but what is our right.

I will now turn to the budget for the Department of Transport and Works. The department's role is to continue to provide the basic infrastructural development which will enable the Territory to get the best value for dollars spent. The development of infrastructure is needed to provide a diverse economy and we are continually reviewing our own internal operations and our efficiency in providing that infrastructure. The department is the government's major construction agent. It deals with a diverse range of responsibilities which impact on all Territorians. I use the word 'unique' to describe the Territory's Department of Transport and Works, and I do not do so lightly, because no other single government department or authority at either state or federal level in Australia has responsibility for such a wide range of construction, transport and administrative activities.

Whilst I have been Minister for Transport and Works for a short time only, I have come to appreciate why the department is capable of successfully dealing with that very wide range of responsibilities. Contrary to comments by the member for Barkly, there is a sense of purpose, pride and commitment in each and every Territorian who works for the department. There are those in our community who would deride every aspect of the public service but their claims cannot be supported, particularly not in regard to the staff of the Department of Transport and Works. They are and have always been performers.

Despite the department's extensive range of activities, recent administrative changes to the Territory public service resulted in the department losing a number of functions and areas of responsibility. Naturally, that is reflected in this allocation. Structural changes have not been the only cause for changes in the level of appropriations for the department's various divisions. As the Treasurer explained in his June economic statement, the Territory cannot expect to avoid the impact of the economic downturn that has occurred in Australia, disproportionately as the burden has been distributed. Like the rest of the nation, we have to be prepared to shoulder our share of responsibility in helping Australia towards national economic recovery. Naturally, our efforts will manifest themselves in the form of responsible belt-tightening measures across all government

departments. The Department of Transport and Works recognises the need to play its part, and has done so for some years by responsibly managing its limited funds for the sake of the Territory and Australia. Put simply, it is not a matter of what you have, but how you use it.

As honourable members have learnt already from the budget papers, the Department of Transport and Works has been allocated \$172.59m for the financial year. Of this, \$122m will be injected directly into the Territory economy in the form of capital works and repairs and maintenance. The member for Barkly was quite incorrect in suggesting that small business would suffer because of reduced funding in this area. The amount spent will cover the purchase of capital items and payments to local authorities for their participation in roads and, of course, the operation of the Darwin Bus Service. Setting aside those payments to specific authorities, \$108.97 will be spent on capital works and repairs and maintenance, the virtual lifeblood of countless Territory contractors. I predict confidently that that will be nothing compared to the potential and, if I may say so, imminent participation of private-sector concerns, both small and large, in Territory projects.

Immediately after these sittings, I will be visiting Sydney and Adelaide to meet with my federal counterparts, Gareth Evans and Peter Duncan, to discuss the Darwin Airport and general transport infrastructure including the railway, roads, ports and airstrips within the Northern Territory. It is sufficient for me to say that I believe we are entering a new era of communication with the federal government. I am sure that it now appreciates that it is time to get on with the job of realising the full potential of the Northern Territory. That will lead to more private participation, more jobs for young people, small contractors and all Territory businesses. I make no promises about results from the trip. This government does not transact its business on the front page of local newspapers and if I make no promises, as I always say, I can tell no lies. However, I am extremely confident that we will have an opportunity to realise at least some of our full potential. This government is not about flying flags; it is about getting on with the job of delivering the goods.

The reduction in the allocation for capital works in this year's Department of Transport and Works budget needs to be seen in the total perspective of the government's contributions during the last 8 years. While the public-sector capital works program is slightly reduced this year, our general contribution towards providing proper infrastructure will result, as the Treasurer said in his speech, in a more solidly-based economy based on private-sector participation.

Capital works expenditure since 1978, on areas ranging from roads and health clinics to schools and libraries, has ensured that the Territory now has a substantial level of basic social and developmental infrastructure. The development of infrastructure, which will continue in the final years of the current decade, will provide a well-established platform to carry the Territory forward. The government recognises the need, both social and economic, for the continuation of a healthy flow of capital-works expenditure throughout the Territory. Even though we have pared back our level of expenditure in some areas, the government has ensured that there is an adequate allocation of funds for repairs and maintenance of infrastructure already in place. Our priority, particularly in relation to roads, is to maintain the asset in its current state and that is reflected in the level of funds appropriated. Having achieved that, we will direct the balance of achievable funds, in order of priority, into road works and other infrastructure that will contribute to economic development.

I would like to point out to honourable members that expenditure on capital works this year will amount to 46.45% of the total departmental expenditure. That is quite a significant proportion and, when compared to the capital works efforts of the states, it is clear that we are well and truly ahead. A total of \$44m, or 65% of expenditure by the Public Works Division, has been allocated to capital works. The division will also spend approximately \$6m on repairs and maintenance and approximately \$1m on replacement of capital items such as plant, vehicles and equipment. Specific details were outlined in the Treasurer's speech and are contained in the budget papers. If necessary, I will speak on them in detail later.

I reflected very briefly on roads earlier. Although roads expenditure was the hardest-hit by budgetary constraints, it still represents the largest single area of commitment in the Transport and Works budget for 1987-88. Of the total of \$78.25m for new and ongoing works, \$22.9m has been allocated to repairs and maintenance. As I mentioned earlier, that is similar to last year.

Some of the major projects will be: \$3.5m in the Tennant Creek region for the construction of 20 km of the Barkly Highway, which is very important in completing the national highway program and providing protection and ease of travel for tourists and Territorians alike; \$2.6m in the Alice Springs region for the construction of 2 sections of the highway, totalling 11 km; a further \$4.9m in the Alice Springs region for the construction of 25 km of the Stuart Highway north of the Plenty Highway turnoff; \$4.3m in the Tennant Creek region for the construction of 23 km on the highway north of McLaren Creek; \$1.12m in the Darwin region for works on Vanderlin Drive and for the extension of Tiger Brennan Drive, which are being carried out as a result of high traffic counts in those suburban areas; \$1.27m on the Kakadu Highway from the 160 km mark to Harriet Creek, work which is obviously oriented towards tourists who now want to cover the triangular leg between Pine Creek, Jabiru and Darwin; and \$1m for the Kings Canyon access road, again obviously oriented towards tourism and economic development. A total of \$1.39m has been allocated for Aboriginal essential services and for civil works including barge landings, roads and so forth.

It is clear from the magnitude of the spending I have just outlined that, despite budgetary constraints, this government recognises its responsibility both to upgrade and to maintain the road network of the Northern Territory. It goes without saying that transport will remain a major priority of the Territory government.

The department is responsible for the coordination of transport services and facilities for air, sea and land travel. A total of \$7.25m has been allocated in the area of transport. This represents an increase of about 12% on the allocation for the previous financial year. A total of \$6.075m has been allocated to the Darwin Bus Service. A further \$178 000 will be spent on additional bus services in Alice Springs for school children travelling from the new Larapinta Estate to the Anzac Hill High School and an additional school bus service which will be required at Tindal Air Base by the beginning of next year. All of those expenditures are clearly aimed at providing basic facilities and services for Territorians, as well as supporting economic development.

As honourable members have probably realised, the Darwin Bus Service has recently adopted a system of split shifts. This has allowed an extension of services to Palmerston without increasing the number of drivers. The Darwin Bus Service has also incorporated a number of other efficiency measures,

including a new computerised bus ticket system that will be introduced in the near future. This will provide better-quality and more economic service to patrons.

I would finally like to address the appropriation to the Port Authority. The authority received an allocation of \$9.31m this financial year. The reason for the reduction on last year's allocation is that the Frances Bay Mooring Basin is now virtually complete and only a small expenditure is required to finish it. Outlays on the mooring basin have already proved to be money well-spent, bringing industry and jobs to the Northern Territory. More and more efficiencies are being considered and implemented by the port and I acknowledge the work of the Darwin Port Efficiency Task Force which includes not only users of the port and the authority, but the unions as well. The port is correctly considered to be the key to our future trade and economic development. I have no doubt that, as long as we can re-build the reputation of the port, increase the quantities of freight being handled and provide a suitable establishment for the start of the railway, we will have all the infrastructure necessary to stabilise and diversify our economy and to underpin the leap forward which will realise our full potential.

Staff of the department, along with myself, are proud of its track record and look forward with confidence to the challenges ahead.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Ms Carolyn Hirsh MLA

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the presence in the gallery of Ms Carolyn Hirsh, a member of the Legislative Assembly in Victoria. On behalf of honourable members I wish to welcome her and I hope her stay in the Northern Territory is a pleasant one.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, after hearing the Treasurer's introduction to this debate on the Appropriation Bill, one could be filled with overwhelming enthusiasm for the future of the Northern Territory in the coming year. A sensible consideration of his contribution will tell us that there are a few snags. I view with scepticism his rose-tinted view of where we are all going. I suppose someone has to try to be optimistic because these days there is not too much to be optimistic about. I am not one to put on the poor-bugger-me act but with all the restrictions put on us by the federal ALP government, we do not have much to look forward to at present.

It is obvious that our economy is not as brilliant as it should be. We are told that the rate of population growth has fallen from about 5% in the heyday of self-government to about 2.4% or 2.5%. Prices in our supermarkets are increasing because of wage increases, extra transport charges and our isolated situation in the Northern Territory. We see there is not as much government money to pay for the types of projects that the government was previously involved in. We see that there are more empty shops and empty warehouses in town and in the suburbs than there were a few years ago. The Chief Minister has reintroduced the subject of statehood. Statehood needs to be addressed not only in the terms of the Chief Minister's remarks today but also in the light of the current situation as I have described it.

In the presentation of the budget, any Treasurer makes an ambit claim in relation to expected government achievement and it is up to the rest of us to

bring him down to earth a bit and instil reality into the situation. The first matter I would like to speak on is the continual toing and froing of personnel in certain sections of the public service which is still occurring. All that can be said in favour of it is that it encourages any peripatetic impulses public servants may have and ensures that they are not seriously incommoded by being stationed for too long in one location. The personnel of some departments - and I am taking the Department of Industries and Development as an example - seem to go round and round like socks in a washing machine in their quest for permanent office space. We have been told that they will all end up, some time this year or next, in the Fysh Building or the Milatos Building - whichever you like to call it - which is being built down by the wharf. It is hoped that the morale of personnel in that department will lift when their days of being wandering Jews in the desert of the public service are over.

The constant movement of public servants results in considerable costs for office partitioning. From my examination of the information presented to us, I find that it is costing more than \$1m. It could be more because some of the costs could be hidden under the miscellaneous items in the budget papers. Speaking on a cynical or realistic note, I wish that the removalists who are doing all the jobs for the public service were a public company. Together with many other people, I would be buying shares in the company. I reckon I would make a dollar or two.

With the continual consolidation of departments and the reduction in public service numbers, it is logical to expect that there will be vacant office space around Darwin and that is certainly the case. I cannot speak for other places in the Northern Territory but I believe the situation would be similar there. When the Territory Insurance Office builds its new office block on the site of the old police headquarters on the corner of Mitchell and Bennett Streets, that could contribute to further offices becoming vacant.

The budget allocation for the Power and Water Authority made interesting reading, especially the lower appropriation of \$83 244. Last year's expenditure was \$121 870 according to the figure appearing in the Summary of Special Appropriations. When we read the explanations to the Appropriation Bill, there is a different figure given for 1986-87: \$101 245. I am not a figures person, but I can read. I would ask the honourable minister to explain why there is a difference between those 2 figures. Perhaps it is something I have not seen. In checking the allocation, the previous expenditure and the proposed expenditure for other government departments and instrumentalities I was able to tally the figures but, in the case of the Power and Water Authority figures, I could not.

The allocation for the Department of Industries and Development has increased by \$786 000 in comparison with last year's amount. I do not have any objection to this but I fail to find any indication of how small business will be encouraged. The government pays attention to the small business sector up to a point but takes it no further. I do not know whether the reason for this is that people involved in small business are regarded as unimportant or because they do not generate a great deal of income. I would point out to government members that the people engaged in small business are our constituents. We look after our constituents by listening to their troubles and complaints. These people tell me that they are fed up and cannot stand too much more bureaucratic red tape. It is all very well for the Chief Minister to say that he has set the wheels in motion to remedy this situation but I believe that change will be a long time coming. In the meantime, many of these people will go to the wall. I would like to see the Department of

Industries and Development be true to its name and pay more attention to small business people.

After reading the explanation to the appropriation for the Department of Health and Community Services, I would like to express an interest in a couple of matters. The minister has never adequately answered the question I asked him about why the Howard Springs health clinic was closed in August while the Berrimah clinic still remains open. The Howard Springs clinic was more frequently used by all sections of the community and had a great number of staff. The Berrimah clinic had nowhere near the usage of the Howard Springs clinic and yet it remains open. The only explanation I have received is that the Berrimah clinic is near the industrial area and is therefore very useful. My view is that, if anybody had the misfortune to suffer an industrial accident, he would not be taken to a community health clinic but to the hospital.

One of the functions of the Department of Community Development relates to child protection. I had a very unfortunate case presented to me recently. I will not name anybody because I do not have permission to make this public. The particular lady to whom I refer had a child in her care as a foster parent. The mother of the child wished the child be placed in foster care because she had a new partner and feared for the interests of the child. It was suspected that the child had been subjected to some abuse and perhaps sexual abuse. I believe that a certain time is allotted for a child to be in foster care. That time elapsed and the foster parent was very concerned about the welfare of this child, a little girl.

Mr Dale: Who is this?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will tell you the particulars when I have the permission of the foster parent.

The foster parent protested to certain people but to no avail. The child was taken out of her care and given back into the mother's care because the law said that the time had elapsed for the child to be in foster care. My Deputy Speaker, I think that makes a complete mockery of child protection.

I would like to say a few words on the correctional services. I don't know why, but I believe its name has been changed to custodial services. Perhaps it is more descriptive but to me it seems a wee bit coy.

Mr Dale: What have we done?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You have changed the title to 'custodial services'.

Mr Dale: Have we?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is news to the minister.

Mr Manzie: It sounds a bit suspicious to me, Don, I can tell you.

Mr Dale: It certainly is.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am pleased that it sounds suspicious to the other honourable minister. I said it sounded coy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as the minister knows, ever since it was brought to my attention, I have shown an interest in a particularly successful Aboriginal

housing project employment program developed at the Alice Springs Prison. I asked him last year, again some time ago and once again today why this program could not be introduced into the Darwin Prison. In question time this morning he told me it was because of a shortage of space.

I believe that this project could be accommodated quite happily at the minimum-security prison farm at Beatrice Hill at Gunn Point. If this project could go ahead and these buildings could be constructed according to our cyclone-standard building code, they could be sold to Aboriginal communities in the Top End. I also believe that many of my constituents in the rural area would be interested in buying these small, simple, kit homes. I will continue, from time to time, to ask the minister about the space situation at the Darwin Prison and when he will be introducing this project. I think it is one of our prison system's success stories, and there are not many of them. It is something that has to be encouraged, and what better way of encouraging it than by making sure the products continue to come on the market? I have no hesitation in saying that I think they will sell like hot cakes when that happens.

I was also pleased at the commonsense approach and the lateral thinking demonstrated by the Custodial Services Division in seeking to put a minimum-security establishment in Litchfield Park, with the inmates of this institution to work in different areas in that park. I think it is an excellent idea which will benefit both the inmates of the facility and the general public who use that area.

I did not pay much attention to the details of the Work Health Authority's allocation although I have a matter to raise in relation to the TIO in which I have to disclose a personal interest. It has come to my attention that an extraordinary payment for workers' compensation has been demanded, which I believe exceeds the realms of common sense. I am personally querying it. I believe it has come about because of the inauguration of the Work Health Authority.

In reading through the explanations to the Appropriation Bill pertaining to the Department of Lands and Housing, under the activity of land management I noted that the department is responsible for the inspection of pastoral leases. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know, there is one very big pastoral lease on the eastern boundary of the rural area. I have no objection at all to people owning large areas of land but, where a lease situation applies, I like to see that the full covenants are maintained by the lessee. I receive complaints, from time to time, regarding observance or non-observance of the covenants on the lease in relation to bushfire control, feral animal control and other matters. I have drawn this matter to the attention of certain officers in the Lands Branch from time to time, but I think the time has come for some more definite action to be taken.

It is a pity the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority is not here today, because I want to give him notice that I intend to ask questions with regard to the authority's statement of revenue sources. I am particularly concerned with the figures for urban flood mitigation, shown on page 18 under the heading of Commonwealth Payments to the Northern Territory. I would like him to explain the figures for urban flood mitigation, irrigation and other water projects, and urban water supply and treatment.

In the explanations to the appropriation for the Conservation Commission - Darwin Region, mention is made of the management and operation of national parks and reserves. A multitude of parks will be opened. We know



about the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. The next one listed is the Cobourg district park. Although I must admit that I have not checked, I thought Cobourg was Aboriginal land and that it was controlled by a board of management. If that is the case, why is the Conservation Commission coming into it as a separate entity? The next item on the list refers to Kakadu/Jabiru district parks. Why is the Conservation Commission going to establish anything at Jabiru? The item may refer to staffing; I hope it does. I would also like to ask the minister, in his absence, what is occurring at Murguella? I thought the Conservation Commission pulled out of Murguella some time ago. The list goes on to refer to the Casuarina and Holmes Jungle district parks, the Howard and Adam Bay district parks and the Coastal Plains district park. That all sounds pretty good, until I consider and compare the proliferation of these parks against their actual maintenance and management.

For some time, the Conservation Commission managed the strip of land out at Gunn Point. In an area where people are expected to camp, fish, have barbecues and generally stay for a while, one of the prerequisites is the installation of toilet blocks. When the Conservation Commission looked after the toilet blocks at Gunn Point, they were kept in a reasonable state of repair and maintenance. I believe the management of these blocks was passed over to the Department of Lands when the Conservation Commission withdrew because of financial considerations. That is when the trouble started. The area is in my electorate and I have recently inspected the toilet blocks because I am often told that they are in a disgraceful state. We all know that the site is right next to the Gunn Point Prison Farm and I cannot understand why an arrangement cannot be made so that the Custodial Services Division has some sort of control.

Mr Dale: The concept is being looked at. The Minister for Lands and Housing sent the proposal to me some time ago.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the concept might be being looked at but I received a complaint just a couple of days ago that things were not as they should be. It is all very well to create these parks everywhere, but somebody has to maintain them, empty the litter bins and look after the toilet blocks. Is that to be the Conservation Commission, local groups or private contractors? I would like to ask the minister that.

I come next to the relocation to Palmerston of the Conservation Commission, at a cost of \$300 000. Most of the people in the rural area know why this happened. We know a great many things out our way; we keep our ears to the ground there and in Palmerston.

Mr Hatton: That is why you always have dirty ears.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Oh no, we do not have dirty ears. We know what is what. We do not sit on fences. We are definite in our views and we know everything that is going on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you can call this scuttlebutt if you like, but it seems to me that it was a political decision to move the Conservation Commission from Berrimah to Palmerston. As far as I can ascertain, nobody wanted to leave. The commission's activities will be split because they will not all be located at Palmerston. An empty office block has certainly been filled there, but I would like to ask the minister what will happen to the block vacated in Berrimah, because I have not heard that the Department of Industries and Development will occupy it.

Mr Hatton: It saves building extra buildings at Berrimah Farm.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You might say that today, but whether there was any real need for them is another matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of my interests is in conserving natural flora and fauna and I am very pleased to see that the Conservation Commission contributes to this through its Flora and Fauna Resources Unit. It is important not only to conserve natural flora and fauna, but to make certain that the flora is permanently exhibited, as in a herbarium, or managed so that there is a permanent record of the flora of the Northern Territory.

It is also important that the land-resource surveys continue. As more and more people occupy more and more land and subdivisions on former pastoral properties become smaller, land will be used more intensively for farming and for horticultural purposes. It is therefore very important that land resources are itemised, so that we know exactly what resources we have.

That completes my comments on the Appropriation Bill. I will leave any further comment until the debate on the third reading. Although it goes against the grain somewhat, I have to say that I still have some sneaking regard for conservative politics on the other side of the Assembly and I commend the Treasurer and the bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise tonight to pay tribute to a man who has made an enormous contribution to the Northern Territory, Creed Lovegrove. On his recent retirement in July, Creed left behind him a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years of service to the Northern Territory. Creed is one of those few who can boast of being a third-generation Territorian. He was born and bred in Alice Springs where his father was Inspector of Police, living in a lovely old home where the Law Courts now stand. After completing his schooling in Alice Springs and Darwin, Creed had a brief sojourn as a cadet surveyor with Lands. It was not long before he made a shift to Native Affairs, as it was known in those days, as a cadet patrol officer. Such was Creed's ability that, some 20 years later, he was appointed Director of the NT Division of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. That same period witnessed the transformation of what had been a fledgling area of government into a prominent Commonwealth department. The vastly expanded services it provided are attested to by the fact that its expenditure on Aboriginal affairs rose from \$843 000 in 1955-56 to more than \$8m in 1981-82.

During the 2 decades that Creed served as patrol officer, superintendent, and district welfare officer in far flung corners of the Territory, Aboriginal policy changed dramatically. Aborigines received full voting rights for both Commonwealth and Northern Territory elections in 1962. The Welfare Ordinance was replaced and the 1967 referendum allowed the Commonwealth government to legislate for Aborigines. Throughout this period, Creed worked alongside many notable Territorians including Harry Giese, Jim Gallagher, Vern O'Brien, Ted Evans and Les Purnell. Wherever he went, Creed left behind him an indelible impression. One tangible symbol of the esteem in which he was held can be seen at Warrabri, where Lovegrove Park was named in his honour.

As Director of the NT Division of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and later as a special advisor on Aboriginal matters to a former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, Creed's consummate ability to understand, empathise and communicate with these people undergoing such social upheaval was invaluable. In particular, his work was instrumental in assisting the NT government with the introduction of its complementary Aboriginal land legislation. From having travelled with Creed to various Aboriginal communities, I would say that a real measure of his contribution to Aboriginal people can be gauged by the way in which he is greeted as a friend wherever he goes.

In 1978, Creed was appointed as Deputy Director of the Department of the Chief Minister, playing an important part in the process which brought self-government to the Northern Territory. Later, after serving as Secretary to the Department of Mines and Energy, he was finally appointed as adviser to the Chief Minister on constitutional development. It is perhaps fitting that a third-generation Territorian, one who travelled and worked extensively throughout this vast area and who grew in stature as the Territory itself came of age, should have capped off his career as adviser on statehood. Apart from his distinguished career, Creed and his wife Jean found time during their travels to raise 5 fine young Territorians. Creed retired with the respect of his colleagues. He will be sorely missed and fondly remembered. Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Territory government I wish Creed and his wife Jean a very happy and well-deserved retirement.

Members: Hear, hear!

I wish to clarify 2 issues tonight. Firstly, during the course of debate this afternoon, some remarks of the Leader of the Opposition were raised by a member. These remarks, made outside the House yesterday, were to the effect that bipartisanship on the issue of statehood was finished. Members will remember the reaction of the Leader of the Opposition in the House. As a consequence, I have followed the matter up. I have had it confirmed that the Leader of the Opposition's remark was made in a jocular vein and it was accepted as such at the time. However, given the resolution of the Northern Territory ALP Annual Conference and the statements by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon, the person to whom the remark was made felt that perhaps he had misinterpreted the jocularity and referred the matter to myself. I accept the Leader of the Opposition's position that yesterday's remark was made in a jocular vein. The interpretation that was placed on it this afternoon was an honest one. However, we retract any imputation that his comment of yesterday was intended seriously.

The other matter that I wish to deal with refers to issues which were raised in question time this morning and which have led to considerable comment during the course of the day. I refer, of course, to statements that I made about excessive claims for payment for location fees in respect of filming in the Northern Territory. I wish to make my position perfectly clear, as I attempted to do this afternoon, so that nobody will be under any misapprehension. The whole purpose of my explanation in the Assembly this afternoon was to refer specifically to the extent of claims for location allowances, the detrimental effect that they may have on the fledgling film industry in the Northern Territory, and the detriment they may have in the long term for the people making them.

The film industry can travel anywhere in the world to make films. It is a competitive market and I do no more than urge people who are seeking location fees, to think carefully and not seek to take too much in case they kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. My government will be happy to work with

people throughout the Northern Territory to maximise the benefits that can flow from the film industry. However, I urge people to take a long-term view in relation to site allowances and other aspects of the industry. Let us work together to attract the industry here on a long-term basis rather than merely seeking short-term payments which may seem immediately attractive.

Another reason for raising the matter this morning was the concerns that have been expressed to my office by people in the film industry and the suggestion that, in future, films which could be made in the Territory will be made elsewhere because of the site-allowance factor. I reiterate that I will be happy to work with people in the community to encourage their involvement and to reap rewards from it, but I believe this should be done in a way that brings long-term benefits to the Territory rather than only short-term gains.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to comment on the Chief Minister's remarks and his reply to the question that was asked this morning by the member for Araluen.

I believe that Aboriginal people welcome some types of investment in the Northern Territory with open arms. Of course, if people want to make films on our land, we expect some sort of reward or compensation for its use. I am sure that the Chief Minister would expect the same if somebody wanted to make a film in his back garden in Nightcliff.

Many film makers come to the Northern Territory because of the attraction of the Aboriginal aspect of life here. The Chief Minister understands that himself and, wherever he goes in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal people are involved in some sort of industry that contributes in some way or another to the economy of the Northern Territory.

I am led to believe that the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory charges fees for the filming of crocodiles at the Crocodile Farm and I am also led to believe that a certain person who once tried to film crocodiles there was asked for so much money that he went away to film in the wild. I am concerned that ministers of the Northern Territory government pay no attention to matters like that until they happen on Aboriginal land, when they proceed to raise hell.

I am even more concerned when I read in the Sun-Herald of 20 September 1987, that the makers of 'Crocodile Dundee' were charged in excess of \$2000 per hour for the use of New York's Elegant Plaza Hotel. The owners of that hotel have the right to charge for its use. The country around Cannon Hill is part of a national park but there is a specific area which belongs to Bill Neidjie. He will not leave that area to go anywhere else in Arnhem Land. If he did, he would be intruding on someone else's land. Bill Neidjie and his family will always retain their cultural and traditional links to that specific area. They will always refer to that land as theirs. When people go to such a place to film, they are impinging on someone else's rights. Aboriginal communities sometimes do not want to be filmed and they are sometimes a bit reluctant to participate in filming activity..

I was amazed to hear the Chief Minister's allegation in respect of the fee being sought by the community at Mutitjulu. My information is that the Central Land Council is not involved in requesting a fee of \$1m from the producers of 'Evil Angels'.

I would also like to point out that the Sun-Herald refers to a fee of about \$60 000 happily being paid by the producers of 'Crocodile Dundee' to use

an abandoned Brooklyn subway station for the movie's superb final scene where Paul Hogan walks over the heads of the crowd to get to his lover at the other end of the subway. Given the amount of money made from that film, what is a mere \$200 000? An amount of \$200 000 will be invested in the Northern Territory for the long-term benefit of black Territorians, for their children and their children's children. This government shows it is not interested in those people when it cuts funding to remote communities and puts the money into its own pet projects all over the Northern Territory. The location fees from films will be used to fund education programs for Aboriginal children and things like that.

I have spoken in this Assembly about how Aboriginal people are willing to participate in economic development and exploitation of their land. In my response to the statement on recreational fishing by the Minister for Industries and Development, I expressed my willingness to talk with people in Arnhem Land coastal regions about setting up fishing enterprises and prawning farms. However, if the government lashes out at Aboriginal people who are just trying to improve their lives, people get hurt. Some people just want to live an Aboriginal lifestyle and all they want is to get on with their day-to-day lives. I honestly do not know how much further we can go in trying to persuade them to accept or participate in some of the ventures that the Northern Territory government is concerned about.

On the other side of the coin, I believe a major agreement for the mining of uranium just outside Oenpelli was signed this afternoon with Uranerz. That is a great achievement and a positive breakthrough. I believe that Bill Neidjie, who comes from Cannon Hill, is involved with that project along with some people from Nabarlek. I keep telling government members that they should mention these things now and then instead of making fools of themselves in here by attacking my people, who will retaliate during our discussions on statehood. I have spoken to many people today who are worried about the attitude of this government and it will be pretty hard for the opposition to convince them that they should accept the concept of statehood. There are already people down south who are trying to dictate what we should do in the Northern Territory, but that is another issue which I hope to address within the next month. I will be holding a conference with Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land to canvass their views on the bicentennial celebrations and on the treaty announced by the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, in the time left to me, I again call on the Chief Minister to investigate disturbing reports coming from Katherine. I have spoken to people who have expressed concern about an organisation called SPONGE which, I believe, stands for the Society for the Prevention of Niggers Getting Everything. People from as far away as Groote Eylandt have expressed grave concerns about this group. It worries me. I would be very worried if I lived in Katherine. I ask the member for Katherine to look into the matter for me and for the people of the Northern Territory. Such things do not contribute to the good of the Northern Territory, especially when you are trying to gain statehood on behalf of the whole population. I ask the Chief Minister to investigate the matter further and, if the group exists, to eradicate it along with any other group that may be seeking to take the law into its own hands. We have come to terms with the legal system in Australia and we are trying to work within it to claim our lands and so on.

Organisations like the one I mentioned are of concern to me. They consist of people who come up here from the southern states for short-term gains. Some of us live here and have always lived here. Some of us have investments in the Northern Territory whereas other people, like some ministers, have

their investments in Queensland. I will always have my investment in the Northern Territory. I will not move from the Northern Territory nor will my children. I would like the Chief Minister to investigate the matter for me.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I am pleased that the member for Arnhem spoke about the relationships between Aborigines, the Northern Territory population at large and this government, because that is what I would like to touch on also.

On Wednesday 16 September, the member for Arafura made a speech in the adjournment debate. While he was speaking, I felt - as perhaps other members also did - that somehow the government was making a dramatic error in the manner in which it was addressing Aboriginal problems. I would like to talk about that at some length.

I spoke to the honourable member personally and explained the way in which interjections occurred across the floor of the House and that there was no malice intended; that they were part of parliamentary debate. He told me that he did not understand at the time that that was what actually happened, that he felt a little bitter about the way in which the debate had gone and felt the need to make some statements about it. I respect that. To some extent it brought me back to earth with respect to Territorianism, if I may call it that: the desires we each have, regardless of political persuasion, for our own lifestyle and for our families and the people in the community we represent.

The honourable member spoke from the heart when he said he was a Territorian and he wished to work together with us for his people and for our people. I speak from the heart when I say that I also try to do the same things although sometimes perhaps I am misunderstood in the manner in which I go about trying to achieve those ends. If an apology is necessary, I give that apology quite freely to the honourable member.

Mr Speaker, the unfortunate part about the necessity for making a speech of this type in this House is that, over a considerable number of years - and certainly during my time in this House - discussions relating to Aboriginality have taken on a sharper edge, so much so that they often now seem to be occasions when members on both sides of the House, particularly those opposite, indulge in parliamentary point-scoring exercises. Whilst that is certainly part of political life and is the type of activity which is not uncommon in the House, many other people do not understand that. That came out quite clearly the other day when one of the opposition's own members felt very disappointed about the way in which a parliamentary debate was proceeding.

Members opposite have for too long accused this CLP government of being anti-Aboriginal. It simply is not true. When I look around I can see a large number of members on this side of the House that have been in the Northern Territory for a considerable period of time. In fact, several of them were born in the Northern Territory. They have a commitment to the Territory which is certainly the same as that of members opposite and no less than that of the Aboriginal elected members opposite. We have a desire to make a home for our families here for a long period of time. I certainly do.

My children were born in the Northern Territory and many members on this side of the House also have children who were born here. I am certain that their aspirations for their children mirror mine very closely. We do not wish to see the Northern Territory divided. We do not wish to see an apartheid

problem develop here. We certainly do not want to see any form of open hostility in the Northern Territory. We would like to work with the people opposite, particularly the Aboriginal people, with respect to things that they find difficult and significant to their way of life. I can understand that it may be hard, particularly for the recently-elected member for Arafura, to stand at regular intervals and tell us about the problems that exist in his electorate and how the government could meaningfully assist.

I can remember the first sittings of this Assembly that I participated in. I suspect I had rather more experience in the public arena than the member opposite, having been involved in the public arena for some 7 or 8 years. Nevertheless, however demanding the public arena may be outside this Assembly, it is totally different to what we experience here. This Assembly has an overpowering effect when one first enters parliament and is required to stand up at regular intervals and make speeches which detail the things one feels most for. The member opposite probably found the same thing. But I say to him that we would like him to address us regularly. We would like him and his colleague, the member for Arnhem, to speak regularly to us about matters of significance in their communities so that, at least, we have the opportunity to hear what their feelings are.

For too long we have been hearing from the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell particularly over what are, in my view, small issues. These matters may be significant to those particular members and their constituents, but the problem is that the members are usually in a such an antagonistic mood when they put these issues before the Assembly, that they do not receive a very good hearing. That has been demonstrated regularly. Perhaps they could adopt a slightly different stance and put forward views that would help the people in their electorates by identifying programs that might work better for them. They might occasionally applaud the government for the way in which some of its programs in Aboriginal communities work, because many of them do work.

We have a commitment, as we have always had, to supporting all Territorians and I remind the member for Arnhem that I said that quite clearly to him and to the other members of the Select Committee on Communications Technology when I was made its chairman. I said that one of the first things we had to do was to make sure that we went out into the Aboriginal areas, some of the most remote areas to be served under the scheme, and made sure we determined what the needs were. We did that. We visited all of the Aboriginal areas to get an overview and to find out about peoples' needs and aspirations in respect of their communication, education and health needs. We are working through most of the recommended programs now and, where money is available and we can put the programs in place, we are implementing them.

On a more personal note, I have had a longer contact with people in Aboriginal areas than perhaps many members on this side of the House have. In the 20-odd years that I have lived here, I have been involved in various activities which have involved supporting Aboriginal communities in one way or another. For some 19 years, I had what was probably the most prominent insurance agency in terms of handling insurance requirements for the community organisations which were the forerunners of local government bodies in the Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory, ranging from the far south right through the whole of Arnhem Land and across to the islands. I visited most of the settlements in the very early 1960s, and continued to visit them regularly through to the mid 1970's and later. At that time, I became involved with the YMCA. I became a member of its board of governors and helped the organisation to establish educational and outreach programs in communities, many of which I visited.

In consequence, I have a reasonable understanding of the problems which occur in Aboriginal communities and I can certainly see that some of those problems have yet to be solved. On this side of the House, however, we are working towards solving them. We have not necessarily reached all the solutions yet, but we have not stopped our efforts. In this context I again ask members opposite, particularly the members for Arafura and Arnhem, to take my suggestion on board and make an effort, at regular intervals in this House, to give us an update about what is happening in their communities and about the needs and aspirations of people who live there. Perhaps they might occasionally tell us of the successes, where we are getting it right, so that we can carry on doing some of the good things.

Let me now turn to the other matter I wish to address in tonight's adjournment debate, which relates to the people participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or the 'Duke's Mob' as they are known. I was rather horrified to notice the other day that, unfortunately, the Duke's Mob seems to have missed out on funding in the budget. I read the member for Barkly's letter to the editor of the NT News and I echo his sentiments and those of my colleague alongside me, the member for Port Darwin. I will not speak for either of those gentlemen; they may address the matter themselves.

I believe that the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has done incredible things in the Northern Territory for both the Aboriginal population and the white population. It is a scheme that I believe we need to support, and I am making representations to the Minister for Education about it. I will continue to make representations to the Minister for Education that he reconsider his allocation for funding to this scheme. I have been lucky enough to have been involved with the Duke's Mob on occasions and am a member of the Friends of the Duke organisation even though I cannot be involved at the face-to-face level. I have made myself available to help on those rare occasions when I have had the time. The requirements of the scheme, particularly on the pioneering side, are very onerous and unfortunately I no longer have the amount of time I would like to have to put into that organisation. The scheme turns out solid citizens for the Northern Territory. It helps to keep kids off the street and out of the suburban environment. It gets them out into the scrub. It helps keep the Aboriginal kids interested and involved in their side of the activities. I will be making further representations to the minister.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister has made reference in this debate to comments I allegedly made yesterday concerning ending bipartisanship on the question of statehood. I understand that he recognised that yesterday, in the midst of sorting out a problem that suddenly revealed itself with the tabling of the discussion papers today, I made the jocular remark that that was the end of bipartisanship on statehood. It was certainly a jocular comment made in front of a number of people and I thought that they all understood it as such.

What I find particularly disturbing is that the comment was taken up by a particular person, Dr Heatley, who has 2 roles. One of his roles is as the full-time professional adviser to the Chief Minister on the issue of statehood. His second role is as what I assumed was the independent adviser to the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. It was in that capacity that he was present in the grounds of the Assembly yesterday and it was in that capacity that I addressed my remark to him. I find it distressing, to put it mildly, that Dr Heatley subsequently switched hats, went across to the Chan Building and repeated my jocular remark in the entirely different context of his role as an adviser to the Chief Minister.



It has always been a matter of concern to me that Dr Heatley has been acting in 2 capacities, as a paid adviser to the Chief Minister on statehood and as a supposedly independent adviser to the select committee. I think that the time has now come when the select committee needs to thoroughly reassess whether one person can do those 2 jobs. My conclusion after this little fracas is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for that to happen and I certainly intend to take that matter up with the Chief Minister on the next occasion when the select committee meets. It is intolerable for a person who is given information in one role to then use that information in a completely different and political context. It is not good enough. It is a situation that I am not prepared to tolerate and, as I have said, I intend to pursue it to make sure that it does not happen again. If that means that the person cannot continue to act in those 2 roles, so be it.

The second thing I want to say concerns some strange remarks made by the Minister for Industries and Development during the course of these sittings. I describe them as strange remarks because I have said on a number of occasions in this House that, despite his manner from time to time, he is one of the more capable government ministers and it is very difficult to trip him up. However, on the question of the government's relationship with Telecom in respect of the establishment of a private government network, he not only has been forced to back down - as he did in a less than gracious manner this morning - but it is quite clear that he has not been on top of the whole business. There are a couple of very strange aspects to the way the government has handled this matter of setting up a government communications network.

Mr Deputy Speaker, either late last year or early this year, the government called for expressions of interest from the telecommunications industry to establish a government private communications network in the Northern Territory. All of us who are commercially literate know that there are vast differences between expressions of interest and tenders. That was understood by the companies involved, which put in expressions of interest. On 5 March, 2 days before the Territory election, for what can now be seen to be blatantly political reasons, the Chief Minister announced on the basis of the expression of interest put in by Telecom, that it was to be awarded a contract for the provision of a private communications network. All I can say is that the government is very lucky indeed that Telecom has a policy of not suing because it has a very good case for taking the Northern Territory government to court and taking it to the cleaners, just as Skywest did. The mind boggles at the incompetence and amateurism of this government.

To return to my story, 2 days before the election - no doubt to shore up the votes of the thousands of Telecom employees in the Northern Territory, many of whom live in my electorate - the Chief Minister made his announcement. What happened after the election? Nothing. Nothing happened for 6 months. Nothing happened until last week in this Assembly when the Minister for Industries and Development informed us that Telecom had not provided enough information. That is the story we are getting now. We are being told that, in the weeks following 5 March, after the contract had been let according to the Chief Minister, the government supposedly had to go back to Telecom to tease out more information, because Telecom had not provided enough information in its expression of interest.

I have 2 points to make. The first is that an expression of interest does not provide a great deal of information. It is simply a registration of interest. Anybody who is commercially literate knows that. Telecom is certainly commercially literate because it has dealt with organisations much

bigger than the Northern Territory government. The second point is that Telecom must have been amazed, first of all, when it was awarded the contract. It was not told, of course. It learned of the decision in the press, like everyone else who learns about government decisions, including the poor old pre-school parents.

Mr Perron: Telecom did not have a contract.

Mr SMITH: That is not what the Chief Minister said in his press release of 5 March 1987.

Mr Perron: Have you got his press release?

Mr SMITH: I have it here somewhere but I am not sure that I can find it in the time I have remaining. Having been awarded the contract, Telecom must have been very surprised indeed when the Northern Territory government said that it had not provided enough detail and it wanted to hold further talks about the matter.

I do not want to carry on because it is starting to get late on the last night of the sittings, but I must say that the Minister for Industries and Development - who at least has the courtesy to laugh - has really let himself down. He actually has quite a high reputation on this side of the House but unfortunately he has blotted his copybook rather severely.

A more important point is that the Northern Territory government has never managed to come to grips with telecommunication needs in the Northern Territory. It has seemingly never been able to attract competent people to its staff, people who can put together decent proposals and then negotiate to come up with something meaningful. Instead, we get constant streams of consultants. As I understand it, the government now has either its third or fourth set of consultants looking into its communication needs.

Mr Perron: It is a changing environment.

Mr SMITH: It is a changing environment, says the minister. That is true, but I put it to him that it has not changed all that dramatically. If he got some competent people into the area and gave them a set task and the resources that they needed he would get somewhere, instead of constantly toing and froing from one consultant to another. If the government is not happy with one consultant's report, it goes to a second set of consultants. The ironical thing now is that the consultants who are currently employed to assess the telecommunications needs of the Northern Territory government are all ex-Telecom engineers. It all seems to have become rather incestuous.

This area really needs some close attention. People with an interest in telecommunications in the Northern Territory have never been happy with the way that the government has handled these questions. I am really not sure what the problem is. It may be with the people involved or the lack in resources that the government provides. It is, however, starting to become an embarrassment. The minister would do himself, the government and the people of the Northern Territory a lot of good if he put a reasonably high priority on the matter and sorted it out. I know that he can do it.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I will commence with the point made by the Leader of the Opposition. My portfolio includes communications, which was certainly an area new to me when I accepted this particular responsibility. It has been a most interesting one and it is

certainly technically complex. Fortunately, ministers do not have to become experts in every field of their portfolio. Indeed, with some portfolios, a minister could spend a lifetime becoming an expert in all the various aspects. As I said to the Leader of the Opposition in my interjection, communications technology is constantly changing and it is changing surprisingly fast. There are many types of communications and many ways in which those types of communications can be delivered.

It is surprising how often a consultant or communications expert will indicate that breakthroughs are expected which will radically alter the cost and efficiency of a particular communications system and that we should therefore be wary about entering into contracts or agreements with respect to it. The future of other fields is far more clear and we can comfortably enter into 3 or 5-year agreements in them. In the field of communications, governments need to tread carefully and perhaps I could be accused of being a little cautious about putting to my Cabinet colleagues final proposals for the government's entry into significant contractual responsibilities.

All I will say about the public announcements in regard to Telecom is that there was no contract at the time. I do not recall the Chief Minister's exact words, but he certainly did not say that a contract had been entered into. Certainly, in our negotiations with Telecom, we gradually drifted apart rather than coming closer together after those announcements were made.

The Leader of the Opposition also said that it appeared we could not attract competent operators into the department. I think that is a bit unfair. We have one principal officer working in the communications area and I have found that his advice to me, by and large, has been very good. He is not a world expert on the matter; it is difficult for governments to obtain such people. Leading experts in communications are either working for organisations like Telecom, which can afford to pay them handsomely and offer research facilities and technical challenges, or else they are working in private practice as consultants. There is no reason why the government should not hire communications consultants - expensive though they be - from time to time as they are needed. I reject the Leader of the Opposition's criticism that we do not have competent people in communications in government.

Mr Speaker, the main reason I rise today is to touch on another subject which other members have mentioned. One has gained the impression during the last couple of days that there is some animosity in this House in relation to various people's attitudes on the question of relations between black and white Territorians.

It is disappointing that the subject has to rise again in relation to the question of statehood. I have said previously in this House, in similar circumstances, that we must be very mindful that we are not entering into an era in which one can criticise a white man but cannot criticise a black man. I ask honourable members to dwell on that. It seems to me that in politics no group or person has any immunity from accusations by politicians of all political persuasions. The accusations are not always well-founded and the allegations sometime falls apart when they are looked at closely. In many instances, they are twisted by people casting them back across the Chamber or by deliberate misrepresentation. Many people would say that all is fair in love, war and politics and that it is part of the cut and thrust of the game.

I do not think the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues were seriously suggesting that we should isolate any person who is Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal from critical public utterances in this Chamber or indeed

outside the Chamber. However, it does seem that the opposition has overreacted to some statements that have been made. Responding to recent criticisms of traditional owners allegedly demanding large location fees for filming in Kakadu and Uluru, the opposition stated that the criticisms were aimed at 25% of the Northern Territory's population. I do not think that a statement like that does anything to help relations between black and white. If there were criticism of a party who allegedly demanded a certain sum of money for filming in his traditional area, to construe that as a criticism of all Aborigines in the Northern Territory would clearly be nonsense. What possible connection would an Aboriginal at Docker River have with the traditional owners of Kakadu? Almost none. They are, one might say, worlds apart.

While I am on the subject of the alleged demands for payment, the member for Arnhem mentioned that, if indeed \$200 000 had been asked for, it was peanuts in relation to the size of a budget required to produce 'Crocodile Dundee II'. There is no question about that. It could be paid by the producers and written off on the expense list. That, however, is not really the point of the Chief Minister's criticism. I believe he was saying that that sum could probably be demanded and obtained this time. As the member for Arnhem said, it will almost certainly be spent within the boundaries of the Northern Territory. The point is, however, that the demand is likely to lessen the possibility of similar opportunities arising in the future. If the industry from whom this sum of money is being demanded assesses that it is too much for what it is getting, it has options. There are other wetland areas, magnificent escarpments, crocodiles, lagoons and lilies in other parts of Australia and people in those areas would go out of their way to welcome film makers, particularly those working on films of this stature, in order to obtain the flow-on benefits which come from being able to say to many millions of people around the world: 'Just look at this magnificent country'.

The Territory is presently receiving many benefits from the film industry and we hope that successive film crews come back again and again. Instead of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs with a demand that is too heavy, perhaps people could demand a bit less to ensure that it comes back over and over again. Perhaps it is primarily a matter of attitude. Maybe \$200 000 will not drive film makers away. Who knows? I certainly could not say. It is not the \$200 000 or the denial of the landowners' right to charge something that is at issue; it is whether the golden goose is really being killed.

My last point is also one that has been touched on during the course of these sittings: the bipartisan attitude that has applied so far in respect of statehood. I think we all agree that without a bipartisan approach, it is doubtful that the Territory will ever achieve statehood. It is almost a prerequisite to making real progress towards it.

It has been stated, in effect, that the attitude of some people on this side of the House towards Aborigines is reason enough for the ALP to reconsider its whole stance. I think that is taking a completely wrong attitude to the exercise. It appears that, unless the government does what the opposition thinks is appropriate, the bipartisan approach to statehood is not on. That is a very odd stance. The fact is that, in politics, the opposition quite often abuses members of this side of the House, rubbishes government programs, criticises our initiatives, moves censure motions in the Assembly, calls for resignations of individual ministers and so on. That will continue to happen, obviously, because we have philosophical and other disagreements over the whole range of issues. But to say that the bipartisan approach, which the opposition agrees is necessary if statehood is to

eventuate, is in jeopardy because of the government's attitude towards Aborigines, national parks, the federal government, the Prime Minister or whatever ...

Mr Smith: The ID card!

Mr PERRON: That is another one. The opposition could say: 'If you are going to be like that over ID cards, we will not support statehood'. I hope that that attitude does not gain any momentum and that we all sit down calmly between now and the next sittings, think again about where we are going, and get the statehood campaign back on the rails. It is something that the Territory will need in the future and that need will become increasingly obvious. It will be a shame if we start to drift apart at this stage, because we will have to spend valuable time getting back together and patching up wounds rather than getting on with the job. I honestly hope that it does not come to that.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I would like to say a couple of things in this adjournment. First, in regard to comments made by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, and the member for Ludmilla tonight, I will take some of their advice. People think that everything done in here is all nice and sweet, that we talk to each other and everything like that. But the community outside does not know what is going on in here and the members of the community are the people we are here to represent. We are not here by ourselves, and the media is not very helpful to us. Everything that the Aboriginal person wants to do in tourism or anything gets reported and rubbished; knock, knock, knock. I just cannot understand that, Mr Speaker.

My colleague the member for Arnhem replied to some of the comments which have been made about the Kakadu and Ayers Rock business. I find the criticisms of the traditional owners at those places hard to understand. What is the difference between the way the Americans charge for things and what the traditional owners of this land do? I have read some of the comments made and I find them hard to believe. Maybe they are true, maybe not, but I find them hard to believe.

We can discuss many things here and we can talk about anything. We can come to terms with policies or whatever. But once the media get hold of any little thing, such as the remarks made by Mansell, Dodson, or any of the activists, we get it thrown at us. Members opposite have the right to say what they want to say. Everybody has that right, but members of the media do not make it any good for us or for anybody else for that matter. They make it hard. Everybody reads newspapers. Among my constituents, people of my generation and the younger ones read them. But the older ones, my uncles and my aunties, they cannot read or write.

Mr Speaker, it is all very well for us to sit down here and talk. We can come to terms on anything, but the thing that I cannot come to grips with is the people. When I made those comments last week, that hurt my heart. I felt it. I did not say it, but maybe that had something to do with it. But what I said, I said from the heart, Mr Speaker. I did not say it just because I wanted to say it. We get rubbished all the time. For instance, about the \$200 000 fee. It is peanuts. Paul Hogan made a heap of money out of the film and the film crews make thousands of dollars. I can understand that we might not get that opportunity again. I can understand all that, but hasn't the traditional owner that right to ask for a fee? The NLC did not negotiate with the film crews. It was the traditional owner himself, and he does not get it for himself. There are over 200 people in his family and that \$200 000 would

go to all the family in that clan. There is only a small number of groups in the area of Kakadu. I am sure all honourable members know that area very well.

I take some of the points made by the honourable members opposite, and I agree with some of them. We are working towards some of the things they are talking about. We would like to be given the opportunity to be involved with the development of this place. We want statehood too, but the government is not giving us a chance to look at the whole thing properly. The way we deal is the way we have done it for thousands of years. We sit down and we talk, and we think about it. We do not just think about it, talk about it and make a decision overnight or within a year. The elders are not going to be with us for a long time, Mr Speaker. I have a lot of respect for the elders, not only in my own place, where I come from, but throughout Australia.

I am sure that Territorians as a whole would like the Territory to grow, develop and to run its own affairs. I am with it. I would like to see that, but the government is not giving us a chance to look at the whole issue and to sort ourselves out. All these things that have been put to us have been so rushed. It has been thrust down our throats and we have not been given the opportunity to really look at the situation and determine whether it is right or wrong.

We have ways to make decisions, Mr Speaker. We have done it for thousands of years. We have been here for 40 000 years and the way we negotiate is as the member for Arnhem said. He cannot come to my place; it is out of bounds for him in our Aboriginal way. It is out of bounds for any Aboriginal to go into another person's land, and that law still exists today. If the member for Arnhem wants to come over to my place, he has to get a permit. If I want to go to his place, I have to get a permit. That I am an Aboriginal just like him, means nothing. The permit system itself might be a new way of doing it, but everything is new and we are learning. We are accepting that. It has been hard, but we struggle. We are determined to achieve things. As I said, we have been here 40 000 years, and we are not going to let anybody put us down now. We have accepted the right of people like the members opposite to live in this place. Many of them, like the member for Ludmilla, have families. They have the right to live here and grow and they do not want to go anywhere else.

We then come to matters like the compact and the bicentennial celebration next year. I have been chosen as a member of the Board of Directors of the Bicentennial Authority. I am proud to be a member of that board and I intend to go there and express my feelings and the feelings of Territorians. We are going to celebrate in 1988. The reason we are going to celebrate is because we have been here 40 000 years and we have survived, and we are proud. We do not want apartheid. We do not want that. It is not the way we want to live. We know what goes on on the other side of the world. As I said, we are all human beings. Let's develop this place and understand each other instead of being misled by journalists or the media. We have to start acting together.

I take on board the comments made by honourable members opposite. I will do that, but I would like them to also consider our views in relation to land rights and other things. They should not just go off the rails with all sorts of comments because of the likes of Michael Mansell. He is an intelligent person and people like him have been to high schools. We have not. We have not reached that stage yet, but we are going to reach it one day. It will come for us and I am sure my colleague the member for Arnhem is also proud among his people. He wants this place to develop and he wants growth.

The last matter I want to talk about now relates to the announcement of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. In addressing this subject, I note the concerned comments which have come from various members opposite. I am proud to hear that the former Supreme Court judge, Mr Justice Muirhead, will be the commissioner. He has sat on the bench for more than 10 years and will bring to the appointment his concern for and knowledge of Aboriginal people.

It is estimated that as many as 90 Aboriginals have died in custody since 1980 and 14 deaths have occurred in the last 7 months. On Tuesday, the Chief Minister provided the House with information on how many Aboriginal people have died in custody in the Northern Territory. Since 1980, 3 Aborigines have died while being held in custody and 2 have died in prison. Given the number of Aboriginals taken into custody in the Northern Territory, this figure is low compared to Queensland and Western Australia, but it is 5 people too many. One death in custody is one too many. To say these numbers are extremely small, as the Chief Minister did on Tuesday, is just not good enough. Both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health and Community Services have expressed their opposition to the holding of a royal commission. The Chief Minister has described it as political grandstanding and the Minister for Health and Community Services described it as lairising and overkill.

Mr Speaker, there is a glaring need for policies which reduce the high rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal people and for the implementation of better ways of supervising Aboriginal people in custody. I am pleased to hear that the recent Australian Police Ministers' Council conducted a seminar on practices and procedures for Aboriginal detainees. There is still, however, the question of whether any of the deaths in custody could have been avoided if the police or prison regulations were changed, or even if existing regulations were enforced.

Many questions which arise from the issue of deaths in custody may not be able to be addressed adequately by a royal commission. There are aspects of a causal relationship between the community and social and economic conditions and deaths in custody which need to be addressed by all members of our society. However, it is a very welcome move. It has the potential to reduce the possibilities of cover-ups and may, to some extent, explain the deaths. The royal commission will give some recognition to the distress suffered by the families of those who have died in custody. I agree with the Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, that the royal commission gives some real hope that justice can be done for the young men who have died in police custody or in prison cells. I also welcome the Chief Minister's assurance that the Northern Territory government will participate fully in the royal commission, even though he cannot give it his personal endorsement.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, before I address my main subject tonight, I will just say that I was very pleased to hear the comments of both the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura. The member for Arafura said that he always says things from his heart. May I say to him that if he continues to do that, he cannot go wrong.

I now wish to raise the issue of location fees, which has been discussed by other members. I am very pleased to see in this adjournment debate that some reason has come back into the discussion. It was most disappointing today to see the issue of location fees raised in the inappropriate context of the statehood debate. It is a very big issue and it should have been discussed as a matter of public importance because of its great impact on the

Northern Territory's economy. I had intended to raise it as a matter of public importance but I was concerned that the opposition would see it as a move by the government to stifle debate, and I did not want that to occur. I am very happy that we have had the opportunity to air the issue tonight and to get it off our chests because there is a great deal to be said about it.

Perhaps we are all to blame for each other's reactions. I can understand the attitude of members opposite but, in many cases, they miss the point. The same happens on this side of the House when prominent people in the community - and I class members of this Assembly as prominent people in the community - make sweeping statements about fortunes being made. I am also concerned when prominent people outside this Assembly, like Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Bill Neidjie, say that traditional owners ought to be able to get as much as they want. Those sorts of comments create problems. I refer to an article in the NT News of 4 September:

The producers of 'Crocodile Dundee II' have agreed to a \$200 000 demand from traditional landowners to film in Kakadu National Park. The agreement was reached only last week after tense negotiations between the film makers, JP Productions, and Northern Land Council lawyers. The production company offered to pay \$31 000. The senior Kakadu traditional owner, Mr Bill Neidjie, demanded the \$200 000 and refused to negotiate. A senior NLC spokesman said today Mr Neidjie said that if JP Productions wanted to argue over the \$200 000, he would request \$300 000 and if they argued again they could roll up their swags.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know Big Bill well and I have been out there in his country. When I was Minister for Education he built a type of boarding school where the children would come in during the week and go home on weekends. I feel that this issue is so important that we need to talk to people like Bill to explain to them that the short-term gains could be detrimental to the long-term gains that he and his people will receive. We are talking about national parks, access to land and the promotion of the Territory. Those are issues that the opposition has supported. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition once issued a press release calling for Paul Hogan to receive honorary citizenship. He said that Hogan was responsible for an unprecedented level of interest in the Northern Territory as a result of 'Crocodile Dundee' and that the presentation ceremony would itself gain considerable national and international publicity and could only serve to increase the profile of Kakadu National Park as a prime tourist destination. He said that it was essential that the Northern Territory government promote Kakadu as a tourist resource rather than a hole in the ground.

Most of us would agree that we should be looking at attracting film producers to the Northern Territory to continue to give us positive publicity and I hope that the members of the opposition support that.

Mr Ede: We do.

Mr HARRIS: Where we tend to part company is in the response. It is very easy to say that the film makers are making a fortune and that traditional owners want to get something out of it. I might add that non-Aboriginal businessmen in urban communities also go for the jugular on many occasions. They have the attitude that they are in for the kill and will get what they want and to hell with tomorrow. I do not agree with that approach. It should be emphasised that it does not matter whether you are non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal; there comes a time when, if you continue to ask for the world, you



will come down in a big heap. I would hate the Northern Territory to be part of that situation. I believe that there is a danger of that happening if we continue to charge what I consider to be exorbitant fees. I must make it clear that no one on this side of the House argues that location fees should not be charged. No one is saying that. We agree that people charge fees for all sorts of things and there is no hassle about that. It is the level of the fee charged that can do the damage.

I refer now to an article in the NT News of 9 September, which was backed up by one in the Sunday Telegraph of 13 September. I quote: 'The producer director, Mr John Cornell said today the film would be the last made in the Territory for a long time because of the fee. Their comments follow last week's ...'

Mr Bell: What about a free market, Tom?

Mr Ede: He doesn't believe in free markets.

Mr Bell: And personal liberty, privacy, and a few of your other themes?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had a good adjournment debate tonight, until now. I can see now that 2 members have come back to the Chamber, members who are always aggressive and provocative and who, in fact, do a disservice to their constituents. I just wish that they would listen to the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura. They might get a bit of sense into their heads. To continue the quote:

Their comments follow last week's NLC disclosure that it had successfully negotiated a \$200 000 location fee with the film producers. 'The short-term gain of location fees is also short-sighted', Mr Cornell said. 'We will grin and bear it, other film producers won't'. He said the \$200 000 - \$10 000 a day - fee would cause the Territory great harm. 'Australian film makers simply will not come here to film. They cannot afford it'. Mr Cornell said there were no location fees in other states. 'We were offered state government help to film "Crocodile Dundee II" in Queensland and Western Australia' he said. 'So the NT will miss out on the greatest free ride a movie can provide, where hundreds of millions of people around the world are exposed to its charm'. Mr Cornell said his company, Kakadanda Pty Ltd, had been ready to announce a \$100 000 scholarship for the children of tribal owners on top of a \$30 000 location fee, when the NLC stepped in.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no harm in trying to negotiate a deal and I am not saying that traditional owners should not do so. What need to be put first, though, are the benefits which Aboriginal people and other Territorians can receive. There is no better promotion than that which we receive from these films and we should make sure that we protect that. I would like to suggest to people who have a responsible approach to this issue, and I believe that both the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura are in that category, that they should be talking to the traditional owners along these lines. I cannot overemphasise the importance of this matter.

As I said, no one is denying that location fees should be charged. The concern is simply with the amounts sought. I urge those who have close contact with Aboriginals to look at the long-term implications rather than the short-term gains. As I mentioned, some non-Aboriginal business people have the same attitude and want to make a quick financial gain, and that is

something that I do not agree with. It depends entirely on the circumstances, but in general I do not agree with it.

We need to put this issue into the correct context and I am very pleased that the adjournment debate has proceeded as it has tonight. We have heard some good words spoken by the member for Arafura and the member for Arnhem. All I can say to the member for Arnhem is that it is disappointing that his constituents perceive the government as not being interested in many areas of the Aboriginal situation. I would again say to him that that is not the case, and I think that he is starting to realise that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, another issue that I would like to talk about is the future of a very senior public servant in the Commonwealth government. The person that I refer to is Mr Charles Perkins, who is head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In recent times, he has acted in a most irresponsible manner. Some of his actions and comments have been those I would expect to come from the likes of Michael Mansell. I might say to the member for Arnhem that these are the sorts of people that we have problems with. In fact, Michael Mansell should be given a one-way ticket to Libya, and he should stop there. The same goes for some of the other well-known activists like Michael Foley.

Mr Ede: Who is Michael Foley?

Mr HARRIS: Gary Foley.

People like those really do the Aboriginal cause a disservice and I would not have expected a person in Charles Perkins' position to behave as he has. Even the Prime Minister has commented publicly on a TV program that Michael Mansell, as a senior public servant, does not have the right to enter political debate.

Mr Ede: Michael Mansell is not a public servant.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Charles Perkins. I believe the Prime Minister should sack Charles Perkins or, if Mr Perkins wants to be an activist, to march in the streets, to comment on government policy and generally behave like a politician, he should resign his position. It is important that people in those senior public service positions do not get involved in political activity and activism. If they want to do so, they should resign their positions. Many people are most concerned about the attitudes of Charles Perkins.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on 2 items tonight. The first one is the infestation of crocodiles in the McArthur River in the Borroloola area and the commitment of the government to keep this area free of crocodiles.

Last year, I had quite a bit to say about the presence of crocodiles in the McArthur River and the threat that they posed to my constituents. As I recall, the present Minister for Labour and Administrative Services took me to task for advocating that crocodiles over 3 m or 4 m should be disposed of. What I was really doing was echoing the views of my constituents. Reasonably enough, they have very strong views about their lives and personal safety being put at risk simply because somebody else in another part of the Northern Territory wants to run a crocodile farm. Since then, we have had a continuing debate in the McArthur River area and the Borroloola district about whether the crocodiles should be cleaned out, whether they should be left and whether

people should swim in the river. I would like to place on record tonight, my views, and the views of most of my constituents, about this matter.

The Borroloola people regard it as a normal convenience to be able to swim in the McArthur River. That is not unreasonable. They have been doing it for many years and they have been doing it without having to worry about crocodiles because they had a very simple method of making sure they did not get in the way: they shot them. That was the practice for a long time and it is only since the policies of the last 10 years have started to take effect, and the big fellows have moved into the area, that the problems have begun. A couple of lives have been lost and many people have been frightened away from the river.

I would just like to put to honourable members that it is not an unreasonable expectation that people be able to swim in the river. It is not an unreasonable expectation, during the wet season when the families on the east side of the river have to row their children to school, that they be able to row them to school without a 4 m crocodile following them over and back. If members of this House believe that people willingly put up with that and are happy to be kept out of their river because of the presence of crocodiles, they do not know what is going on in the world.

I will predict what will happen if the government does not live up to its promise to keep crocodiles out of the area. Nobody really cares how it is done, as long as they are kept out. If they are not kept out, the locals will take the matter into their own hands and eliminate the crocodile problem in their own quiet way. I do not have to tell you what they will do, Mr Deputy Speaker, because you have been around for a long time. That is not desirable from anybody's point of view and, in the long term, it will not be a big help to the crocodiles. I do not want crocodiles to be shot for the sake of it and I certainly would not want to put the crocodile export program at risk. On the other hand, my constituents - who have lived there for a long time - should not have their recreational and normal activities put at risk because these monsters have become so cheeky over the last few years.

The other point that I would like to raise this evening relates to the promise made by the Prime Minister during the course of the election campaign wherein he promoted the policy that, within 3 years, no Australian child would be living below the poverty line. My gut feeling is that the Prime Minister looked around Sydney and Melbourne and some of the southern suburbs and saw deserted wives with small children living in difficult circumstances and dreamed up a policy to take care of that situation. That is admirable. If throwing money at the problem is a means of solving it, that is a matter for the Prime Minister. I am not sure of the answer.

We still have some pockets of abject poverty in the Territory, where people live in very difficult circumstances in extremely poor environmental conditions. I believe that the Territory government should move quickly to put a proposition to the Prime Minister to provide funds to improve the circumstances of disadvantaged children in those situations.

Honourable members would recall that the Territory government compiled a document in 1980 or 1981 which outlined the environmental conditions of every community and indicated to the federal government how much money had to be spent in those communities to improve environmental conditions so that people could start to get off their knees. That document was excellent but much has occurred since and it needs to be upgraded. However, I believe it is time to present the revised version of that document to the Prime Minister and tell

him that we need funds to improve the lot of children who are victims of poverty and that the answer is not necessarily food vouchers or calls from the local welfare officer. In the areas that I am referring to, the answer is an expenditure of funds to lift the environmental standards in some communities so that the whole community, as well as the children, can benefit. A point that has been made to me is that, in many cases, the people are happy and they do not even know that they have a problem. That may be so in some places but there are many areas where they know that they have a problem and they would like to obtain better conditions for themselves and their kids. I put to the government the possibility that, under the policy announced by the Prime Minister, there is an opportunity to attract funds to the Territory for the improvement of environmental conditions, particularly in remote areas, for the sole purpose of trying to lift children out of poverty.

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, for the second time in 2 days, I rise to congratulate the member for Arafura on comments that he has made in the House.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is something that will have to stop, Terry.

Mr MCCARTHY: It will. Unfortunately, being the sort of person I am, I recognise sincerity. There is no doubt at all that the sincerity of the member for Arafura shines through and is recognised in this House. I might add that those qualities are often displayed by the member for Arnhem. I have said before that the sincerity of those 2 members shines through in this House. I believe that other members opposite could take note of my comments and perhaps reflect on their own past performance.

One thing I take issue with in the comments of the member for Arafura is that this government knocks Aboriginal initiatives. That is not true. Certainly, I am very keen to hear of and attempt to support the initiatives of Aboriginal people in my electorate and right around the Northern Territory. I am taking that approach in my present portfolio. I do not think that he was quite on the ball in that regard and perhaps he has been misled by some of the comments of his own side.

The Territory is currently emerging as a development area. It is absolutely essential that the prospect of development is attractive to investors and it is essential that all Territorians, black and white, see eye to eye on development. I recognise that developments we might like to promote are not always attractive to the Aboriginal people but we must sit down and talk about them. I think that black and white Territorians will be able to come to agreement on most things that each want to do.

Earlier in this debate, the member for Port Darwin mentioned the Aboriginal activist Michael Mansell, a man who is skating on very thin ice towards being a traitor to this country. I have heard him advocate an Aboriginal state just as, 20 years ago, I heard Kath Walker advocate on television the principle of an Aboriginal state in which all Aboriginals would live as brothers. We heard the member for Arafura say tonight that that would not be so and every member in this House knows that it would not be so. Aboriginal people are no more accepting of strangers than any of us. We do not want strangers in our own backyard. In fact, an Aboriginal state is something that no member of this House would want and the vast majority of Australians would not want it. In my view, Mansell and people who think like him have no place in this country. When they speak of a separate state and of bringing Libya in to fight their battles, they are being traitorous. Their statements should not be acceptable to anyone. I know it is not acceptable to

the honourable members opposite whom I mentioned earlier and I expect that it would not be condoned by other members of their party, although I am not so sure about that.

The member for Barkly raised the matter of crocodiles and my concerns last year about the removal of crocodiles from McArthur River. We had a bit of a verbal battle at that time and I would be happy to continue it because I do not believe that there is any advantage in the removal of crocodiles from the McArthur River. I do not care how many crocodiles are taken out of it, you will not get me to swim in it. I have seen very large crocodiles move up to 50 km or 60 km inland over a very short period. The moment you clear a crocodile out of any hole, river or any billabong, another big crocodile will move in to take his place. I do not care how often that is done, there will always be another one to take his place and, if you swim there, you are just as likely to be the next meal. I do not believe that any purpose can be served by removing them. You will make them a little more wary but, if they are hungry enough, jumping in the water will be a fairly dangerous activity.

The member for Barkly also commented earlier today on the integrity of the Northern Territory Public Service. I have raised this matter previously in this Assembly but, in the light of his comments, I think it is worth making the point again. I regard the comments of the member for Barkly as a slur on the Northern Territory Public Service. Public servants certainly would not appreciate him calling in question the integrity of the entire public service. He spoke of public servants' disaffection with the Northern Territory government.

The Northern Territory has 15 000-odd public servants whose political ideas range across the whole gamut. The vast majority of those people - like the vast majority of Australians - are faithful, if you like, to their employer. The member for Barkly's statement that our public servants are disaffected to the point that they are breaking the rules of integrity and the ethics of the public service relationship with government, was shocking. I do not believe that that is happening. In fact, I am quite certain it is not happening. I also get around the Northern Territory a good deal and I know there are some disaffected people out there, a very small minority, who occasionally will step outside the rules. The people who do that reflect only their own character. The vast majority - 99.9% I would venture to say - have too much integrity to break with the ethics of the public service that have developed over the years. I hope that the member for Barkly will withdraw his statements at some time.

As I said, I have stated before my complete confidence in the integrity of this public service. Sure, over the last few years - and it certainly goes back further than the last 12 or 18 months - there have been reasons for areas of the public service to feel disaffected but, despite all that, I believe public servants' integrity has remained sound.

The other item raised by the member for Barkly concerned the space allocated to the public service in properties throughout the Northern Territory. My own past experience and observations leave me in no doubt that some areas set aside for departments in the Northern Territory were too large for the numbers of people working in them. I have been working scrupulously over the last few months to weed out those areas and to ensure that no new buildings are occupied over the limit of space required by the DOLGAS Rules. I challenge the member for Barkly to give me examples of instances where the public service has, in recent times, moved into buildings and taken space allocations which are over the odds. I am quite convinced that it has not

happened. If he can show me where it is happening, I am happy to accept my responsibility in rectifying it. In fact, I would be quite happy for any member of this Assembly to raise with me any instances within my area of responsibility where they believe we can save money. I will certainly take those matters up and do what I can to fix any problems.

The Northern Territory government's commitment to the public service is rock-solid and, in my view, the service's commitment to this government is the same.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to comment on 2 matters this evening. I want first to comment on the reply given by the Minister for Transport and Works to a question I asked him yesterday and, secondly, I will make some frank comments about the CLP.

The gist of my question to the Minister for Transport and Works was: did he believe that certain aspects of road construction could contribute in some way to our increased road death toll? I believe from his answer that he may have misheard my question. I put that query in view of the increased death toll on our roads and considering that an increase in alcohol consumption is not to blame for these accidents. I was referring to recent fatal accidents in the rural area in which, I believe, alcohol had no place.

I believe the time has come for civil engineers in the Department of Transport and Works, people with the same qualification as the honourable minister, to take a long hard look at our road construction. I have spoken on this before and I am probably one of the few people that talk about it. That is because most people accept expert witnesses at face value. I do not. I am always reminded of the story of the emperor's new clothes, when it took one little boy's query to show that the emperor was walking down the road in the procession with no clothes on at all. Nobody else had commented because of what everybody would think of them. They were too proud to admit their ignorance and did not want to appear stupid, so they did not say anything.

I believe that we should query expert witnesses and we should query expert opinion. I am querying the expert opinion which determines the general standard of our roads. I am not saying that we should reinvent the wheel or that we should rip up all our roads and go back to corrugated potholed gravel tracks. I am saying that the wider we make our roads, the better and smoother we make the pavements, the more we encourage people to speed. I do not know what we can do about it because I am not a road engineer, but it seems to me logical that the better we make our roads, the more accidents we have on them. Coupled with this problem is the plethora of legal and government-sponsored signs next to roads, directing us to different places and telling us about nearby locations. I believe that the uniform presence of these signs is such that they come to be disregarded by the driving public and that that possibly causes road deaths.

The positioning of signs close to the edges of the road pavement could well be a direct cause of death. One of these signs was nearly the cause of death of one of my young constituents. The minister might like to take a note of this example. I have not spoken of it, but the father of the boy did. I have not spoken of it to the relevant officer in the Department of Transport and Works. I am referring to a sign that was on the side of the highway in the area of the disused Strauss Airstrip. The young lad was coming home one night and he saw a wallaby on the road in front of him. Not wanting to hit it, and checking that there was no traffic either in front of him or behind him, he swerved. In swerving to miss the wallaby, which he did, he ran into

an official Department of Transport and Works sign. He knocked one of the posts down. I believe that the post had a support which was 6 cm in diameter. It was replaced with one which was 10 cm in diameter, which I find completely insane. I will not go so far as to say it is criminally insane or morally insane but the mentality of people who put signs like that so close to the highway needs to be looked at. It is absurd to have steel signs of those dimensions so close to the road, considering that sometimes vehicles have to leave the road - as this young lad did at the time - to avoid accidents or for other reasons. Such signs are more dangerous than trees because at least trees give with impact. I do not think this 10 cm-diameter sign would do so.

I have received other complaints about official signs. One of these was at the site of another accident at the intersection of Girraween Road and the Stuart Highway. The complaint related to the level of the sign. The lady, who drives a 4-wheel drive vehicle, knew that the sign was there but from the position and height of her driving seat she found it impossible to see. I cannot understand how matters which are clear to ordinary people are not apparent to the experts who build our roads and put signs along the sides of the roads. Straighter and better roads are continually being constructed. I am not advocating that we go back to the horse-and-buggy days, but we encourage speeding by building these super-duper highways, we increase the hazards, we encourage disregard of signs because so many of them are positioned along the roadside and we construct them so that they are invisible. I wonder if the level of the signs is checked at all when they are put in.

The other matter I want to speak on this afternoon relates to the publicity generated by the member for Port Darwin's statements about where he thought the CLP was going, where it had been and what it was doing at the time. When I heard the member for Port Darwin I had a sense of déjà vu. I remembered my own similar exhortations to the membership of the Koolpinyah Branch of the Country Liberal Party. I remember all the rah-rah good-fellow stuff about how we should pull together and how the CLP was best for the Territory because it supposedly combined ideologies from the right and the left of the anti-socialist spectrum.

The member for Port Darwin is a man of integrity and a thinker and, in making public statements about the malaise in the CLP, I believe - whether he knows it or not - that he is putting out a call for help. His actions can be likened to those of a troubled adolescent who starts to become a problem at home. I know what certain members thought of the honourable member's statements, no matter what they said publicly. The walls have ears in certain government members' offices. I liken the honourable member to a troubled adolescent who starts to become a problem at home with contrary behaviour and continual argument with parents, showing the outward signs of being at odds with the family but really wanting reassurance about his position within it while he goes through the usual personal changes that beset adolescents. If the CLP cannot recognise the member's call for help and take appropriate action, it deserves to lose him, just as so many parents lose their children in similar circumstances.

I know the member for Port Darwin very well and I do not believe he wants to leave the CLP. I believe, however, that his views are not being listened to. His right-wing views are anathema to the trendy liberal-left of the CLP and at the moment it has the majority. As it is now, the CLP believes that conservative, morally old-fashioned values will not win votes. These values include the old work ethic of no-work no-pay, honesty in public dealings, not ripping off the system, helping little people who are trying to help

themselves and the old tried and true family ways. This CLP believes these values will not win votes, are old-hat, will not grab headlines to boost the government's miniscule performance and are dead and buried. These conservative values and the people who espouse them are considered passe.

Before the last election, 3 members who could be considered to be conservative middle-of-the-road people were told by the CLP that it had no further use for them. We put ourselves before the public and as a result the 3 of us were all re-elected. The 3 of us on the crossbenches are pretty middle-of-the-road people. We are not at all trendy, as the CLP would have liked us to have been.

I believe that if the CLP hopes to have any success at the next election, it will have to climb down from the ladder of disdain, from which it looks down upon ordinary people, and reacquaint itself with the realities of life. Most people want to work, make a dollar, have children who receive a standard of education that will prepare them to work when old enough, and go about their lives in reasonable privacy without being interfered with by the government.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of matters I would like to talk about very briefly tonight.

During yesterday's question time, the Minister for Mines and Energy was outlining the water conservation program that his department now has in place. The member for Koolpinyah interjected and criticised the Department of Transport and Works for what she alleges is wasted water. Just to put the record straight, I want to enlighten the honourable member and others about a matter which probably warrants some public input and public debate. It is that, since self-government, the Department of Transport and Works has placed a significant emphasis on landscaping and planting of median strips and verges on the roads it controls, which are the highways and main arterial routes. In line with the general government aim of attracting tourists to Darwin and the Top End and to promote this part of the country as a green destination, the department planted, along the main roads, palms and other exotic varieties which require quite heavy watering. Water was provided by a combination of sprinklers and drip systems.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You cannot afford to; there is not enough water.

Mr FINCH: Perhaps the honourable member would like to sit back and relax for a moment. I did listen to her quietly.

However, even the honourable member for Koolpinyah, with her extensive rural background, would realise that there has not yet been an automatic sprinkler system designed which will operate without throwing some water onto the road. Wastage can occur because of wind, and power irregularities which interrupt the automatic timing devices and, of course, the ongoing problem of vandalism. I would like to advise the Assembly that, in recent times, there has been a fundamental change in our attitude to the type of planting undertaken and, therefore, the watering needs of median strips and road verges. The reason for that change is that it cost the department \$76 000 for watering in Darwin alone in 1986-87. Of course there is an element of wastage in that figure. The department recognised the wastage and, in a responsible manner, undertook to investigate how it could be reduced.

With the limited funds that we have for road maintenance, we cannot afford to keep up that level of expenditure and, to minimise the cost, a number of



steps are being taken. The emphasis will be on native rather than exotic trees and shrubs. No new sprinkler systems will be installed. Drip systems will be used to establish trees, and then shut off. The stretch of the Stuart Highway between Berrimah and Palmerston, where existing sprinkler systems are being removed, are a good example of that. In the areas where sprinklers are to be retained, we will be watering only 2 nights per week for 1-hour periods, not for 7 days per week. No watering will take place after October, or earlier if the wet season arrives before then.

In arriving at this policy, the department took advice from a landscaping expert with experience in highway beautification. In driving around Darwin and its environs, you can already see that the policy has been put in place. The median strips and road verges are not as green as they used to be and that is the result of a deliberate move by the department. It is possible that this policy will create a public debate on whether we should or should not revert to heavy watering to create a green environment or live with the environment we are now starting to see, where there is no dry-season watering and the appearance is browner. I could outline some further changes which have been made as a result of the new policy, but I would certainly like to lend my support to the water conservation program being adopted by the Minister for Mines and Energy. I can assure all honourable members that my department is also being most diligent in its attitude towards water conservation.

The second matter relates to a question raised about the Groote Eylandt airstrip by the member for Arnhem. The position is that the strip is owned and operated by Gemco. It is responsible for the strip, not the Northern Territory government or the federal government. The strip is in quite good order. I have feedback from various interested parties and I can assure honourable members that, as far as I am aware, there are no plans for extension or improvements at this stage.

The member for Koolpinyah raised the matter of road safety and I do not want to treat that lightly at all. It is a very serious matter, as I have stressed a number of times in these sittings, and I will undertake to provide the House with a full statement on road safety at the next sittings. I take her point on board and will certainly investigate it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the final matter I would like to talk about is one on which I have mixed feelings. The electorate office of what was previously the electorate of Wagaman will be closing. I am sad because that area was where my political career began and I certainly have many fine memories of Wagaman and the people who live there. The support I received from them was most encouraging. Following the redistribution in March last year, 70% of my electorate is new to me. That means that, in order to service my new electorate more effectively, I should move into Hibiscus Shopping Centre. I would like to acknowledge all those people of the Wagaman area who assisted me during my initial term when I took over a portion of what had been Paul Everingham's electorate. The area has interesting points but I will not go into those now except to say that the involvement with school kids, the activities in parks, including tree-planting and the construction of cricket pitches, and the fact that people dropped into the office casually to say good day was personally rewarding enough for me to hold a very small wake last Monday evening. I would like to assure all honourable members and the general public that the area will be in good hands with the member for Wanguri, Don Dale, and the member for Jingili, Rick Setter.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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