

**PART II**

**THE QUESTION PAPER**

Questions are printed in numerical order

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II

FROM 31 MARCH 1976

822 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr TAMBLING -

When will the rehabilitation of Administration Block 3, Mitchell St., Darwin, be completed and when and by whom will it be occupied?

FROM 1 JUNE 1976

1120A Mr MANUELL to Mr RYAN -

1. Is the honourable member aware that the Australian National Railway will not offer new leases in the Alice Springs Rail reserve for commercial purposes pending their decision as to the location of the new railway reserve and associated commercial sidings; and is he further aware that when this decision has been made the site will be subject to an environmental impact study?
2. Does he concede that this whole project may take 10 years to complete and, if so, would he ask the Australian National Railway Commissioner to offer alternatives to the present negative attitude to permit some badly needed commercial growth in Alice Springs now and within the next 10 years?

1121 Mr MANUELL to Mr RYAN -

In view of the fact that the ABC is to be subject to cutbacks and within the NT this may be reflected by demands to rationalise radio programmes would he be prepared to recommend that the program "Col Chuck Chunder" be removed from broadcast programs?

1122 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr RYAN -

1. What was the cost 1974-75 and 1975-76 of the re-sleeping program for the North Australia Railways?
2. What was the cost of post-Cyclone Tracy benefits to employees of the North Australia Railways including R & R fares, R & R paid leave, hard living allowances, lost time whilst on railway pay, but in productive work for the North Australia Railways?
3. What is the cost to date of post-Cyclone Tracy repair work for the North Australia Railways?

809 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

1. Will he obtain from the Department of the Northern Territory a summary of all correspondence initiated by that department and any other department relating to the initial proposal to reserve and the actual reservation of the Prices Regulation Ordinance 1975 and the Crown Lands Ordinance (No. 4) 1975 indicating the designation of the officers concerned, their section and branch?
2. On how many occasions have the presentation copies of Ordinances been lost and when this has happened did the loss occur in the Darwin, Brisbane or Canberra offices of the department.

ANSWER

1. Recommendations for reservation pursuant to section 4V of the Northern Territory (Administration) Act of the Prices Regulation Ordinance, 1975 and the Crown Lands Ordinance (No. 4) 1975 have been made for the following reasons:
  - a) The Department of the Northern Territory considers a distinct probability exists that significant disadvantages concerning both administration and general policy will arise in relation to the procedure proposed to be established by the Prices Regulation Ordinance 1975. Time is required for an examination of the full implications of the legislation and for the consideration of alternatives.
  - b) Legal advice was provided to the Department to the effect that the Crown Lands Ordinance (No. 4) 1975 was required to be reserved pursuant to section 4W (a) of the Northern Territory (Administration) Act as it is an Ordinance "dealing with the granting or disposal of lands of the Crown or of the Commonwealth" within the meaning of that section.

The disclosure of the designation, section and branch of Departmental officers concerned in these matters would necessarily involve an identification of particular officers. The Department elects not to disclose that information.

2. This part of the answer refers only to the post-cyclone period. During this period, one presentation copy of an Ordinance has been lost, namely the Local Government (Extension of Services) Ordinance 1975, which was subsequently totally superseded and rendered nugatory by the Local Government (Post Cyclone Elections) Ordinance 1975. It is assumed that the presentation copy of this Ordinance was mislaid in the Darwin office of the Department.

810 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

Further to the answers supplied to question 758 -

- a) does the pollution of Melville Bay include a deposit on the sea bed of Magnesium Chloride and has this deposit killed off seabed marine life in its vicinity;
- b) if the killing of seabed marine life is not irreversible damage by what means, either natural or through measures to be applied by Nabalco, is the marine life to be reactivated and what reasonable measures can be applied;

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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- c) did the pollution of Melville Bay take place over a period of many months or years with both Nabalco and the Department of the Northern Territory knowing that it was taking place and, if so, how can the spillages be described as "accidental";
- d) how in fact is the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch involved in the area if it only acts "per medium" of the Mines Inspector; and
- e) do the Branches of the Department of the Northern Territory publish the results of their investigations or are they not available to the public at all?

ANSWER

- a) No. The deposit is magnesium hydroxide which is not poisonous. Seabed vegetation is killed due to lack of oxygen caused by the blanket effect;
- b) Seabed marine life will return as sea currents disperse the precipitate;
- c) Accidental spillages occur due to plant malfunction, pipeline breakage, etc. The frequency of accidental spillages has lessened considerably with experience gained in operating the plant;
- d) Through its specialist officers reporting results of monitoring and investigations to the Inspector of Mines who exercises his powers under the Mines Regulation Ordinance to require the Company to take any necessary action;
- e) Some reports are published and made available to the public, others are purely internal reports necessary for undertaking the normal administrative functions.

811 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

When will the protective works at Gove be finished to the point that no further pollution will be possible?

ANSWER

It is not possible for pollution to be eliminated entirely but when all the measures presently being undertaken are completed it will be reduced to a negligible amount.

812 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

Further to the answer to question 759 -

- a) under whose supervision is filling and restoration of mined sand areas behind Wallaby Beach being done; and
- b) who carries out the work?

ANSWER

- a) The resident Inspector of Mines; and
- b) Nabalco.

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813 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

1. What effects do the current travel and work restrictions placed on the Public Service have on the Department of the Northern Territory's ability to work at Gove?
2. Is the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch staffed to an adequate level to enable it to work effectively at Gove?

ANSWER

1. None.
2. Yes.

814 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

With further reference to Nabalco's operations at Gove -

- a) has any monitoring of pollution been conducted around the general area of Drimmie Arm and, if so, by whom and are the results available;
- b) has the release of effluent combined with the level of magnesium raised the alkalinity of the sea water around Drimmie Arm to a pH above 10;
- c) in view of the estimated seventy years of effective life of the Nabalco project, have any studies by the various branches been carried out on the changes in the mangrove vegetation fringing the Arm, or the beds of sea grass located in the Arm; and
- d) have the levels of chromium and lead taken from samples of red mud and of fish been abnormally high, and, if so, what action does the Department intend taking to reduce, or assisting Nabalco to reduce, the high levels?

ANSWER

- a) Yes, by the Department of the Northern Territory. Results are available;
- b) For seawaters of the world, pH ranges from 7.5 to 8.4. The maximum pH recorded at Drimmie Arm during monitoring has been 7.8;
- c) Studies by infra-red photography have been carried out of vegetation of the area;
- d) Samples of red mud analysed by the Department of the Northern Territory do not show high levels of the heavy metals. Fish samples have not been analysed by Department of the Northern Territory.

815 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

1. What role is the Department of the Northern Territory adopting in the negotiations presently underway with the Aboriginal communities of Arnhemland for further land to be used for Nabalco's operations?
2. Is the land in question envisaged for future use as a red mud pond or as a security pond?

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3. What areas, including mangroves, are envisaged for future use within the next seven years and what total area does this involve?

ANSWER

1. The Department of the Northern Territory's role in the negotiations between Nabalco and the Aborigines is to ensure that the interests of both parties are preserved as far as is consistent with the overall national interest.
2. A small portion of the land will be used for the security pond, but the principal use will be for the disposal of ferro silt.
3. In the next 7 years about 160 hectares will be used for disposal of ferro silt, none of which will be in the mangroves area.

816 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

1. On what occasions have caustic soda spillages occurred in Nabalco's operations, since February 1973?
2. What was the source and area and estimated volume of each spillage?
3. Where was the caustic soda deposited in each case?
4. Where deposition took place outside the operating plant, was any monitoring carried out before and/or after, who carried out the monitoring, if any, and are the results available?
5. Has the monitoring been carried out at varying distances from the discharge points in the open Bay?
6. What was the average daily discharge of caustic soda for the fiscal years 1974 and 1975 and the average daily discharge for the six months ended December 1975?
7. On what occasions have the security pond gates been opened to allow release of effluent and what was the estimated volume of each release?
8. Was any monitoring carried out before and/or after each release?
9. Has the Department of the Northern Territory advised Nabalco to strengthen the security pond walls and, if not, how are future conditions of possible breaching of the security pond walls to be met, or is it assumed that the recycling of the various solutions and/or mud will reduce the volume of effluent and therefore reduce the storage holding of the ponds during the wet?

ANSWER

1. & 2. There is insufficient documented record to answer this part of the question as the spillages have been accidental and occurred at irregular intervals. The volume varied from a few litres to hundreds of litres.
3. Near the outlet of the cooling water drain.
4. Monitoring is carried out by the Department of the Northern Terri-

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tory at 19 stations in Melville Bay at varying distances from the cooling water drain.

5. Yes.
6. Measurement of this is not feasible.
7. On the occasion of very heavy rain causing an increase in the volume of water in the ponds. Volumes of water were large.
8. Yes.
9. No. Releases from the security pond are made at the discretion and under the supervision of the Inspector of Mines. Recycling of liquor from the new ponds will commence shortly. The security pond will then only be used as a fail-safe system.

817 Mr WITHNALL to Mr TAMBLING -

Has the Darwin Reconstruction Commission furnished to the Australian Government any and, if so, what advice with respect to matters relating to the expenditure of public and private moneys in and in connection with development and construction in the Darwin area?

ANSWER

Yes. A programme budget was produced from the beginning of the Commission in May 1975 for a five year programme. This was unacceptable to the Minister and was reduced towards the end of 1975 to a three year budget with an annual expenditure basis. The present basis is an annual budget covering 1975/76 and 1976/77 and 1977/78. Programme budgeting is now part of the process towards implementation of construction.

In the preparation of Budget Estimates and from time to time the Australian Government through the Minister is kept advised of all activities pertaining to expenditure in both the Public and Private Sectors. The DRC maintains a co-ordinating role to ensure that resource utilisation is related to priority needs of development and reconstruction.

The Commission has co-ordinated the expenditure of Government instrumentalities in carrying out works in Health, Education and basic services and is reflected in the expenditure of individual Government Departments on their projects.

821 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr POLLOCK -

1. What funds have been allocated to the Family Planning Association by the Federal Government and how much was made available for expenditure in the Territory?
2. Do medical officers and nursing staff assisting the association receive payment for their services?

ANSWER

1. Family Planning Associations are jointly funded by Health Department and Social Security Department.

Social Security Department funds the clinical services of the Association, which is by far the largest component.

Health Department provides funds for administrative costs.

Health Department funds for State and Territory Associations totalled \$183,450 of which \$1,164 was for the Northern Territory Association. Expenditure so far this financial year totals \$970.

\$250,000 was allocated to the Australian Federation of Family Planning Associations. Of this amount \$10,950 was earmarked for the Northern Territory. The actual sum expended by the Australian Federation in the Northern Territory will not be available until audited accounts are received after the end of the financial year.

In addition to direct grants by Health Department, additional funds were made available in the form of Health Programme grants totalling \$885,913 for State and Territory Associations. The Northern Territory's allocation from this sum was \$12,680.

\$24,794 was made available for expenditure in the Northern Territory as per details above.

2. Medical and nursing staff are paid on a sessional basis when attending clinics.

824 Mr MANUELL to Dr LETTS -

- I refer to the consortium which proposes to take over the Alice Springs abattoirs and ask: what is their programme for the operation and development of the abattoirs and is it intended to process all grades of meat?

ANSWER

Although the Victorian interests which are currently involved in bidding for the purchase of a majority shareholding in Alice Springs Abattoirs P/L have discussed with the Department of the Northern Territory the possibility of upgrading the facilities of the abattoir to export standard, to providing for an increased throughput and the possibility of adding boning and canning facilities, there has yet been no specific proposal put forward for consideration by Territory authorities.

976 Mr ROBERTSON to Mr POLLOCK -

1. At what stage of construction is the sewerage scheme at Papunya?
2. When is it anticipated it will be completed?
3. What are the reasons for delay in completing the scheme?
4. Are some construction projects at present under construction at Papunya - for example, hospital and houses - designed to utilise the sewerage system before they can be put into use?

ANSWER

1. Work completed includes reticulation, pump station and lagoons. Still outstanding is pipe works at lagoons and commissioning of complete system.

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2. It is anticipated that work will be completed by July 1976.
3. Failure of a contractor resulted in cancelling of the contract and the need to make alternative arrangements.
4. It is expected the sewerage system will be operational prior to completion of the hospital.

977 Mr ROBERTSON to Mr POLLOCK -

1. At what stage of completion are the following houses being constructed at Papunya -
  - a) Atco type homes.
  - b) Brick homes similar to present Department of the Northern Territory design.
  - c) Dowsett contract.
2. When are the houses expected to be completed?
3. Are the houses designed with individual septic tanks, or for connection to the sewerage scheme at Papunya?

ANSWER

1. a) ATCO type homes for Department of Education are complete.
  - b) Brick Department of the Northern Territory design houses are 90% complete.
  - c) Dowsett Homes - Company has been placed under receivership. At the time of failure of the contractor 4 residences were 95% complete, 2 residences were 50% complete.
2. a) ATCO now complete
  - b) Estimate late April
  - c) Estimate 6 months to complete work from acceptance of tender.
3. The sewerage system is for the collection of septic tank effluent by a reticulation system. Therefore houses are designed with individual septic tanks which will be connected to sewerage system.

1042 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Mr RYAN -

When is it intended to complete the junction where the Shoal Bay road meets the new section of the Stuart Highway?

ANSWER

The construction of the junction is expected to be completed in July 1976.

1043 Mr VALE to Mr TAMBLING -

I refer to notice entitled "Notice of Intention to Determine Lease" being sent out from a delegate of the Administrator to Darwin town

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area leaseholders and ask -

- (a) was he or any other Executive Member consulted prior to a decision being made to send out the notices;
- (b) were the notice sent out at the direction of the Minister or as a result of a decision by a senior public servant;
- (c) is it the usual practice in the Territory for senior public servants to take this kind of action without consulting either the Minister or the Executive Member responsible in the Assembly for land administration matters;
- (d) will he ensure that in discussions on the transfer of executive powers the attention of the Minister is drawn to the need for the Executive of the Majority Party to play a part in decision making on land administration matters?

ANSWER

The answer to part (a) of this question is "No" and to part (d) is "Yes". I add the following further information supplied by the Department.

- (a) Notices issued by the Delegate of the Administrator on Darwin Town Area Leases since February 1976 follow the requirement in the Ordinance to administer leases in this manner. In the early post cyclone period Dr Patterson, the then Minister, suspended lease default action for obvious reasons. After an appraisal of the overall Darwin reconstruction program in February 1976, the Minister for the Northern Territory personally approved of the resumption of Darwin lease administration and as the press statement of 16 February indicated "authorised the Acting Administrator to announce arrangements for the granting of sufficient time for compliance with lease conditions". The Minister and Administrator merely took a decision to continue to exercise their powers under existing legislation.
- (b) The notices resulted from the Minister's decision to resume lease administration in Darwin and were despatched some time subsequent to the Minister's written approval to this action in early February 1976.
- (c) It is not the usual practice for senior public servants in the field of land administration to usurp the powers of the Administrator or the Minister. This particular decision was made by the Minister after he had been consulted on the matter and the Administrator, who holds these powers under the Ordinance and was authorised to proceed by the Minister.
- (d) The Minister's attention has been drawn to the timetable for the transfer of Executive powers to the Assembly at a recent Consultative Committee meeting including those involving land.

1044 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

Has any decision been taken yet on the Katherine meatworks, as to whether it will in fact open for killing this year?

ANSWER

The short answer to the honourable member's question is no, as far as I am aware; no decision has yet been taken. Negotiations are continuing constantly and continuously between the principal parties involved in reaching a decision on this matter; that is to say, the Northmeat company, the people interested in the Wyndham Meatworks, and the Government itself - they are the three principal interests. I understand and I hope that they are getting closer to a firm decision so that the people will know. To the best of my knowledge that decision may be expected within the next week or so.

1045 Mr DONDAS to Mr TUXWORTH -

Is it a fact that records needed for day to day operation of the Mines Branch are still located in the Department of the Northern Territory in Brisbane?

ANSWER

To the best of my knowledge, the registration and administration section of the branch which had been transferred to Brisbane has been progressively transferring back to Darwin in the last 6 months. The industry, the department, the Mines Branch and myself have made representations to the Minister asking that this be expedited because it is most important to the day to day operation of the industry that the filing and registration system of the branch be kept in a central point to it.

1046 Mr DONDAS to Dr LETTS -

At a previous meeting of the Assembly, the Majority Leader indicated that he had sought a meeting with representatives of the Department of the Environment to clarify the present Government's policy on national parks and wildlife, and to ascertain its reaction to the Territory parks and wildlife legislation. Has such a meeting been held and, if so, what was the outcome?

ANSWER

I can provide some information in answer to that question and, speaking generally, the news is good. Some 3 to 4 weeks ago I was able to have a discussion with the Minister for the Environment, Senator Greenwood, and the Minister for the Northern Territory, Mr Adermann. That discussion proved quite fruitful and indicated to me that it is clearly the Government's policy that they not only recognise a place for Northern Territory legislation, but also the administration of at least a great part of the wildlife and parks services being conducted within the Northern Territory. Regretfully, Senator Greenwood suffered a severe illness shortly after this meeting and I am sure that all members would join with me in expressing their concern over the unfortunate happening because Senator Greenwood is a man of great use to the Government and a man who had considerable sympathy for the Northern Territory. Since then, I have had two rounds of discussions with senior officers of his depart-

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ANSWER

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the concessionaire of the bar that the airport had made arrangements by which the concessionaire will repair the ceilings and fixtures of the bar and the department will repair the floor. I believe that these repairs are well under way and it is hoped that the bar will be open around May 1st." My question is, which May - 1976 or 1977?

ANSWER

The information that I was given, of course, was in good faith and I believe that the operation of restoring the bar is almost completed. Obviously their assessment of the job was out by some weeks, but I would assume that it will be finished shortly.

1061 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

Honourable members may recall that, with their old uniforms, the Northern Territory Police Force always displayed a distinctive badge on which there was a number. I have noticed that, with the new uniforms, this practice of wearing a number badge has been discontinued. Will badges be coming back with the new uniforms or not?

ANSWER

Following questions at the last sittings, I have had discussions with the Commissioner of Police on the subject of numbers. It is not intended that the wearing of numbers will be re-introduced. One of the main reasons is that the uniforms would have to be returned in order for buttonholes to be put in the shirts. But apart from that, one state has already dropped the wearing of numbers as a policy decision and the Commissioner has decided to do the same in the Northern Territory.

1062 Mr VALE to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise when and where the next Rural Roads Conference will be held? It should be noted that this is the third time I have asked him.

ANSWER

This could be the third time I answer him, but still without a definite venue or date. I did ask the department last week whether they had received any advice on the next Rural Roads Conference and to date there has been no decision made.

1063 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr PERRON -

How many complaints were lodged in 1975 with the Consumer Protection Council and how many of these complaints were considered by the Council to have some justification?

ANSWER

I do have some information on this matter. The figures that I have relate specifically to the financial year 1974/75. The total number of complaints received and acted upon during 1974/75 was 323. Two thirds of these complaints were represented by 3 specific classes of complaints: 28.5% related to the automotive industry, and motor cars, 19.8% related to building services and insurance and 18.3%

related to home appliances. As for justification of the complaints received, this is rather a difficult area and no specific statistics are kept on this matter. It is estimated that 90% of all complaints received are justified. A number of these are considered justified on moral grounds only where present legislation does not provide redress. Settlement of such cases is usually negotiated on the basis of good will and reputation. The existing Consumer Protection Council Ordinance gives the council an investigative function only to seek redress for aggrieved consumers. I point out that many complaints cannot readily be expressed in dollars and cents because they are settled on various other grounds such as warranty matters and goodwill. In quite a number of cases the complainant is advised to take legal action or to see Legal Aid and there is no specific follow through to see if the complainant actually did receive redress in the long run. The estimated amount of negotiated redress during the particular year was in the order of \$45,000.

1064 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr PERRON -

Is there likely to be any decision from the Darwin City Council or the Department of the Northern Territory regarding a refund or rebate of charges such as rates and sewerage due to the destruction of property by Cyclone Tracy and the fact that people have been unable to occupy premises for which they are paying service rates?

ANSWER

I am not completely sure that I have the question clear. The subject of cyclone damage since December 1974 has resulted in considerable investigation by the Department of the Northern Territory and figures are still being compiled and investigations being made. It is a very long and complicated job to assess some of the insurance claims to be negotiated with the Australian Government as a result of damage to all services - electricity, water and sewerage - and these matters are subject to investigation. As for specific rebates in these areas, honourable members will recall there was a moratorium on water at least after the cyclone. There was a period of months for which it is not intended to levy charges against the community at all. Electricity accounts have been delayed for a considerable period of time and some are only just beginning to come out now. The Department is sending out a note saying that accounts are late and sometimes people are getting up to three accounts in the one envelope. There is a notice included with these bills stating that they do not have to all be paid within the fourteen days or the electricity will be cut off. That situation relates to the very latest bill but people can claim an extended period of time to pay the backlog. If any members of the public feel that they have legitimate complaints that they were not on their premises for any particular period of time or there were squatters on their premises after the cyclone for a long period of time who may have been using electricity, I feel sure, that, if they go to the Department of the Northern Territory and file a claim, it will be sympathetically heard because the department appreciates that people were in a variety of situations and many of them were out of Darwin for a long period of time. If the honourable member wants any further answer than that, I will be happy to speak to her and obtain information.

1065 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

I ask this question of the honourable member in view of the sort of

nebulous relationship that he appears to have with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. We have heard recently - particularly on the national news of the ABC - of the large budgetary cuts that are proposed for the Commission, and I just wondered, as a sidelight on this, whether the Executive Member could advise me whether with the axing by the ABC of the evergreen serial "Blue Hills" the Fraser Government could now be regarded as a government of reform?

ANSWER

I think the answer to that question would be a matter for personal interpretation.

1066 Mr MANUELL to Mr PERRON -

I should perhaps address the question to the Executive Member for Finance and Community Development, but in his absence I hope that the honourable member can deal with it. I preface this question by saying that I have nothing against the departed. However, is the honourable member aware that the main South Road from Alice Springs, the only access from the south for all visitors and tourists, is now graced by the appendage of a large area of land immediately adjacent to the western side of this South Road and enclosed by an unsightly cyclone fence? Is the Executive Member aware that the land referred to is to be used as a cemetery, that the fence surrounding this land is man-proof, and that the contractors who have erected it have made the fence so that it will not stop people getting in but simply stop those who want to get out? Will the Executive Member undertake to explain to this House why the town planner in his wisdom had to choose a site alongside the main South Road on which to site a new and depressing patch for the departed when there are plenty of preferable alternatives out of sight, away from this main road?

ANSWER

The honourable member was right that the matter would normally be handled by the Executive Member for Finance and Community Development as it is obviously a matter of town planning. I will have a talk to our town planners and ask what the situation is regarding having a cemetery right alongside a main road. It could seem to be a bit unusual. I wonder if the area referred to is within the Alice Springs town plan. If it was, it would no doubt have been on display for some months and open to all sorts of objections by any individual. If it is not in the town plan, then admittedly it could be a decision made by a department without having to go on public display. I will endeavour to seek more information for the honourable member and supply it to the Executive Member for Finance and Community Development to answer him later these sittings.

1067 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

We heard on the news yesterday morning that the "Darwin Trader" may be taken off the run from the east coast. We saw in yesterday's paper that the Australian National Line's general manager denied this. I wonder whether the honourable Executive Member can tell us which of these stories is correct?

ANSWER

I hope the second story is correct, the one given by ANL. I have sent a telegram to the Minister for Transport, Mr Nixon, asking for information relating to the statement made on the ABC news yesterday morning. I hope possibly to have an answer today.

1068 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr POLLOCK -

Could he advise what holding security facilities will be available for children from the present day until 1978 other than Fannie Bay Gaol?

ANSWER

In relation to juvenile holding facilities between now and when the projected items on the works program are completed, hopefully by the end of this year or January next year at the latest facilities will be completed in Alice Springs. Palmerston House Darwin will be available; however, the security of that place is generally quite inadequate in that it is practically no more secure than a normal home. This leaves us with the situation whereby juveniles who are required to be held in security for the protection of the community as a whole must be sent to institutions such as Fannie Bay Gaol.

There has been some concern in recent weeks about juveniles being held at institutions such as Fannie Bay Gaol but they are being held because they have committed serious offences not trivial ones. Of the children at Alice Springs, two aged 14 years are charged with carnally knowing a female mentally defective person and there are further charges pending. Other prisoners under sentence at Alice Springs include one male aged 16 years who is there for a breaking and entering, stealing, illegal use of motor vehicles; he is serving 2 months on that. Another aged 15 years is there for stealing, illegal use of a motor vehicle and a further charge of stealing and a further charge of illegal use of a motor vehicle, a further charge of stealing and one of malicious damage. Nearly all of them are there for actual illegal use and assaults with an offensive weapon. Generally, the children who are being held in these institutions are being held there for serious offences.

1069 Mr VALE to Mr PERRON -

Can he advise how many nominations have been received for the Town Management Board elections in Katherine and Tennant Creek on 19 June this year and how many of those nominees are currently members of the Town Management Board?

ANSWER

The Town Management Boards in Katherine and Tennant Creek consist of 4 nominated members and 5 elected members at this stage. Nominations have actually closed for Katherine and there are 7 people nominated for the election. There are no current members of the Katherine Town Management Board standing for election again. In Tennant Creek, there have been 11 nominations received, 3 of those being members who are currently serving on the Town Management Board. I believe that by not standing for re-election members of the Katherine Town Management Board are protesting at the lack of progress made towards local government over the past 2 years. I hope that the Department of the Northern Territory takes note of that protest and increases attempts to negotiate an acceptable form of interim local government for Katherine and Tennant Creek.

1070 Mr STEELE to Mr POLLOCK -

Under the new arrangements that concern Medibank, is he able during

this session to make a statement in relation to alterations in charges and any other matters that might affect the health situation in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I have been pursuing this matter for the last few days but to get hold of the Minister for Health and have a good yarn to find out exactly what is going on has proven rather difficult. However, I understand that there will be an approach made, in line with all other states in Australia, to have medical charges for intermediate patients in the Territory doubled from \$20 to \$40. This will be a matter of course which will have to receive consideration when the approach is received.

1071 Mr MANUELL to Mr PERRON -

I ask this question on behalf of the honourable member for Eisey. Are bread prices fixed by the Price Controller on home delivery or shop delivery?

ANSWER

Bread prices are normally fixed by the Price Controller having regard to both home deliveries and shop deliveries. My recollection is that in Darwin at least the difference between one and the other is 1c per loaf of bread. So consideration is taken of both home deliveries and shop deliveries of bread by the Price Controller.

1072 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr POLLOCK -

Why is it that Medibank does not pay out air fares from Gove to Darwin return for surgery patients referred by Gove Hospital to Darwin private specialists, who in turn use the facilities at the Darwin Hospital on a sessional basis.

ANSWER

The Department of Health meets the cost of transferring patients from hospital to hospital. Outpatient costs, including referrals, are the responsibility of the patient. If a person is evacuated to a hospital on the authority of an aerial medical doctor, then the department meets the cost of the evacuation fare. The Department of Health specialists visit Gove and inland hospitals generally in accordance with the demand as related to the level of referral. Surgeons, however, make regular monthly visits to Nhulunbuy-Gove. If in an attending doctor's opinion an outpatient was in such a condition that immediate specialist attention was necessary, the patient would be admitted to a hospital technically and transferred on a hospital to a hospital basis. Departmental doctors would only refer patients to private specialists at the patient's request. In cases where the base hospital did not have a specialist in the discipline concerned and such a specialist was available in the private field, then the hospital would engage the specialist on sessional fees. For example, in Darwin, neurosurgery is one area where this is done extensively.

1073 Mr WITHNALL to Mr TAMBLING -

Can the honourable member take some action to ensure that some assistance is supplied to the Darwin City Council in cleaning up the beaches, which are now in a condition little short of disgraceful?

ANSWER

I will make representation on behalf of the honourable member for Port Darwin and advise him of what assistance is available to the Corporation of the City of Darwin.

1074 Mr KENTISH to Mr PERRON -

Is it a fact that only one meter reader for electricity meters is employed in the Darwin area, that a lot of folk are up to 6 months behind awaiting an electricity bill, including people with substantial consumption who should be read monthly, and that some folk have not received a bill for 12 months or more?

ANSWER

I would have to seek some advice from the department, particularly in relation to the number of meter readers currently in Darwin; I had understood that it was certainly more than one but I will check the information further for him this day. On the subject of accounts, it is a fact that many Darwin people have not received accounts since Cyclone Tracy in December 1974. These accounts are being processed by the department as fast as they can and are being sent out. Often they are in the form of 3 separate accounts when they do go out, and there is a note included which indicates that the 3 accounts do not have to be paid immediately. Only the most recent account is due for payment within the usual 14 days and the other accounts can be paid over a subsequent period of time. I will seek further information on the number of meter readers for the honourable member and let him know this day.

1075 Mr DONDAS to Mr POLLOCK -

Is he able to tell me why the Block 8 cafeteria was closed and can he also tell me when it will reopen?

ANSWER

The honourable member referred to this yesterday in the adjournment debate and I indicated that I had received a letter actually on Monday from the Department of the Northern Territory concerning the Block 8 cafeteria following approaches I had made. I am advised that the delay in repairing and reopening the cafeteria has been brought about because the original contract for the construction of the building has not been completed. The Department of Construction has been advised legally that it would be imprudent to commence repairs prior to the building being handed over from the builders. That department has prepared estimates for the repairs for submission to the Darwin Reconstruction Commission immediately the building contract is complete, and is currently looking at alternative types of finish for the floor area. The floors got wet during the cyclone and in many areas have buckled. It is now hoped that the cafeteria will be operational by the end of this calendar year. In the interim, the Darwin Reconstruction Commission is using the dining area for its building advisory service subject to the following conditions:

- (a) That maintenance and repair contractors have complete access to the area.
- (b) That the Darwin Reconstruction Commission occupancy will

cease automatically when the cafeteria is repaired and ready for reopening.

1076 Mr DONDAS to Mr POLLOCK -

He has not answered my question about the reason why it was closed in the first place.

ANSWER

I recall from previous correspondence that the area was closed because of unsafe working conditions.

1077 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Miss ANDREW -

Has the Garden Point Police Station been notified in the Government Gazette? If not, can she tell me why not?

ANSWER

The Garden Point Police Station does appear in the Police Gazette and there are two constables there, one in an acting senior capacity. I do not know whether or not it is necessary to note police stations in the Government Gazette. I will endeavour to obtain that information before the end of the day.

1078 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr RYAN -

Will he table in this Assembly precise details of the cuts to the Civil Works Program in the Territory's budget for the year 1975-76?

ANSWER

I am not aware that there is any particular document outlining the cuts in detail, however, I will make inquiries through my colleague, the Executive Member for Finance and Community Development, to see if the document is available.

1079 Mr KENTISH to Mr TAMBLING -

Can he inform me why there is such a great delay in making available an adequate area of land for recreation purposes for the people resident in Darwin rural leases?

ANSWER

Through my membership of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission, I am aware that there have been extensive discussions and consultations with a number of groups in the rural area associated with Darwin for the setting aside of a block of land for recreation purposes. I believe a commission decision has been made and I will find out why it has not yet been implemented.

1080 Mr DONDAS to Miss ANDREW -

Children from the Wagaman School are now being taken by bus to Tiwi School while the Wagaman School is being repaired. Is it true that vandals have been active in the Wagaman School, will the contracts be let for the repairing of the school and will the grounds be maintained?

ANSWER

Unfortunately, it is true that the Wagaman School building since it was vacated a fortnight ago has been extensively vandalised. Vandals broke a very heavy chain lock and distributed blue dye throughout the building, and other rubbish as well. Since then, there has been virtually no security in the school. I am advised by the department that the contract will be let within 3 weeks and that contrary to rumour the grounds will be maintained.

1081 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr PERRON -

Has he considered the abolition of water metering and the striking of a basic water rate? If he has, what is his policy on the matter for the Darwin area?

ANSWER

I wish that members of the executive had the authority to seriously determine policy on this aspect. I have given some thought, following representation from certain gardening groups in Darwin, to the possibility of eliminating water meters and charging a flat rate of water or a graduated scale of water charges for everyone. I have also had brief discussions with the relevant department on this matter. I have a paper on the subject which I would be pleased to let the honourable member for Nightcliff have. It indicates that the suggestion has been studied by various water authorities throughout Australia and that it is regarded as not being a very good proposition, the main reason being the fact that once people are not charged for any excess water the amount of water that is consumed increases astronomically. Unlike electricity, where the more you use the cheaper it gets, the more you water, the more expensive it gets. It is just a fact of operation and this is one of the reasons why my policy would be for not eliminating water meters in Darwin in lieu of the current system.

1082 Mr VALE to Mr TUXWORTH -

Can he advise when copies of Royal Commission's report on petroleum released last week in Federal Parliament will be made available to members of this Assembly? Also, can he advise what recommendations that report made concerning projects presently pending in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I am aware that the report was tabled in the Federal House last week and I have asked officers of the Mines Branch of the Department of the Northern Territory to try to procure for every member of this Assembly a copy of this report. I have no knowledge as to whether there is any specific reference to any proposed oil or gas developments in the Northern Territory in the report.

1083 Mr ROBERTSON to Dr LETTS -

I have a question on behalf of the member for Elsey. Is the Majority Leader aware of an article in the Northern Territory News of 6 May wherein the Minister for the Northern Territory is reported to have criticised pastoralists who, he said, were unwise enough to go deeply into debt? Does the Majority Leader share that view? If not, is the Minister receiving accurate advice from his department?

ANSWER

I am not aware of the article that the honourable member refers to and I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the allegation that the Minister used those words. I certainly would not share the view that in the main pastoralists went into debt unwisely, I believe that the debt situation in which the majority of them find themselves was due to circumstances beyond their control - international marketing forces, and forces throughout Australia in other primary industries, in wheat and in sheep, which resulted in a diversification and build up of cattle numbers in those areas. There was no forecast by the authorities such as the Australian Meat Board or the Bureau of Economics that a sudden depression would come about in the beef industry in 1975. I do not think that such a contention could be substantiated. In general, I find that the advice which I have knowledge of that goes to the Minister for the Northern Territory from this department is sound and well-researched. But there are human failings everywhere and that would not be the case in all matters.

1084 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he intending to table in this House details of the cuts in the Department of the Northern Territory program for 1975-76?

ANSWER

I do not have the specific cuts for the Department of the Northern Territory in a form which I could table in this House. However, I would refer the honourable member to the action of the Federal Treasurer in the House of Representatives on 28 April 1976 when he presented 2 bills and circulated a statement. The 2 bills were the Appropriation Bill No. 3 for 1975-76 which appropriated a sum out of consolidated revenue additional to sums appropriated in the Appropriation Act No. 1, also Appropriation Bill No. 4 1975-76 to appropriate a sum additional to the Appropriation Act No. 2. The statement circulated by the Treasurer on that date was a statement of savings expected in the annual appropriations made by both Appropriation Bill No. 1 and No. 2. In those documents there are details of all Treasury requirements for additional funds by headings and also the savings expected in each department by headings.

1085 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr SPEAKER -

I refer to the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the refurbishing of this Chamber which you tabled yesterday. I see that members will shortly be issued with identification passes. What motivated the issuing of identification passes and for what purpose are they to be used? Surely everyone knows who the members are?

ANSWER

As the report has been noted, the honourable member will have the opportunity to discuss this matter. However, if the member does wish to pursue the matter, the need for identification for honourable members who are away from the Territory has been brought up very often. All other parliamentarians have gold passes etc, and this is a poor man's gold pass. I hope that satisfies the honourable member.

1086 Mr KENTISH to Dr LETTS -

Can he advise me if the Northern Territory Stock Squad is presently equipped for action and service or is he presently still engaged as a receptionist behind the desk at the police station?

ANSWER

I am not aware that the position has changed since I last answered a question for the honourable member for Arnhem at the last sittings. I will check on the present position and advise him at a later hour.

1087 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr RYAN -

Can he tell me if the construction of the new road to Yirrkala from Melville Bay highway will commence this year? It was appropriated last year and should have commenced this year.

ANSWER

I do not have the answer to that question. However, I should be able to get it from the Department of Construction and supply the answer to the honourable member during these sittings.

1088 Mr VALE to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise when the lessees of Goondaloo station will get an access road or at least an open grade to their property? Can he advise where Goondaloo is?

ANSWER

The road was on the program to be completed, however, this was one of the roads affected by the recent deferrals. I have spoken to the department and they say that the job has gone back into the hat and will have to take its turn. I do not intend to let it rest here because I think the open grade should be done with all haste by the Department of Construction.

1089 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

Has there been consultation by the Federal Government with any Executive Member of this Assembly on the terms of the Aboriginal Land Bill?

ANSWER

I have had a number of consultations and discussions to formulate with the Minister for the Northern Territory a view on this matter. We also have had discussions with both the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Viner, and the Minister for the Northern Territory. There was a full day's discussion between them and the Executive Member for Finance and Community Development and myself. To that extent, the executive has been consulted in the formulation of the terms of the Aboriginal Land Bill.

1090 Mr DONDAS to Dr LETTS -

In light of a statement made by the ABC on the radio this morning, is it true that legislation for Aboriginal land rights has already been introduced into the House of Representatives?

ANSWER

To the best of my belief that statement made on the ABC National News this morning is untrue. As I heard the statement, it said that legislation has been introduced into the Federal House of Representatives. All inquiries that I have been able to make this morning and my general knowledge of the situation leaves me to believe that that is in fact untrue. I believe that what I say is correct and I still say that it is untrue. It shows a lack of responsibility on the part of the Australian Broadcasting Commission to use such an item in those terms as its lead item on this morning's national news. Any criticism I make to the ABC is no reflection on the local office of that organisation because I have found them very fair and cooperative in reporting. I should add that I had a telephone call from one of the reporters of AM at 7.00 o'clock this morning and his first question was whether I read this morning's Age and Australian. I can assure honourable members that the reporter, if he is a fair sample of what they have on their current affairs program, got in reply what I believe he deserved.

1091 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

As most honourable members would be aware, Rapid Creek School in my

electorate has not exactly been the most pampered of Darwin schools since the cyclone, or before, and I just wondered whether she could advise me whether any steps have been taken recently, or will be taken shortly, to get the school back into a civilised condition?

ANSWER

The Rapid Creek Primary School has been restored to a stage where all the school facilities are operational. Further restoration, largely of a cosmetic nature, will be effected shortly to bring the rooms back to the pre-cyclone condition. No structural upgrading will be carried out at this stage because major extensions and alterations are planned. Upgrading of the playing fields has not been programmed within the DRC works program so far, but because of extensive changes to upgrading of primary school buildings, some such work may be possible when the DRC program is finalised.

1092 Mr KENTISH to Dr LETTS -

Can the honourable member advise me how many of the members of the NACC inquiry committee are also members or officers of the NACC inquiring about themselves?

ANSWER

I cannot answer that question with any accuracy but I think perhaps he should have directed it to the Executive Member for Social Affairs. If the Executive Member for Social Affairs can add anything to that answer, I suggest that he be given the opportunity to do so.

Mr POLLOCK: My understanding at the moment is that 2 members of the 4 are members of the NACC. The committee of inquiry was here in Darwin on Tuesday for a short time. Only 3 members of that board of inquiry were present, including the chairman of the NACC as the delegate of the NACC on the board of inquiry. One other member of the board of inquiry, who was absent, I understand is also a member of the NACC.

1093 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

My question concerns that subject of great beauty, swill feeding to pigs. Could he tell me what the present position is in the Territory, whether the abolition of swill feeding is to be enforced, and has the Cattlemen's Association been approached?

ANSWER

This matter has been under discussion now seriously for well over a year, and the proposition was put to a meeting of the Cattle Producers Council in Alice Springs, I think, about a year ago. I was present and also the then Director of the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch was present. The views of various people were canvassed and I must say that my view was not entirely in conformity with that of Mr Hart. The Cattle Producers Council did not take a very firm line one way or the other; the matter was more or less left open. Since then, I have not had an official approach to introduce such legislation but I have heard that I will be receiving such an approach. Certain other states have already enacted such legislation and in certain states there is considerable opposition to the state government proceeding with it in the complete ban form which was proposed. I do not know what the outcome of those debates will be. I have not had an official approach from

the department yet with draft legislation to be introduced here.

1094 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Mr TAMBLING -

I understand that there is now in existence a town plan for the new Jabiru regional centre. Is it therefore appropriate that the town plan be displayed for the public scrutiny and comment?

ANSWER

My understanding is that the Jabiru planning is still at a workshop stage. I have seen documentation of proposed plans but I do not believe they have yet received the endorsement of the Town Planning Board and therefore are not at the stage where public scrutiny or display can be arranged. However, I will discuss the matter further with the Department of the Northern Territory to ascertain what their timetable is for displaying any such town plan.

1095 Mr MANUELL to Mr RYAN -

I would like to ask a question in relation to rolling stock purchased by the North Australia Railways for carrying iron ore from Frances Creek. How many railway hoppers are presently owned by the North Australia Railways and what is their value, and how many locomotives were purchased by the North Australia Railways to haul iron ore from Frances Creek to Darwin and what is their value?

ANSWER

Originally there were 157 rail hoppers purchased for the transportation of iron ore at a cost of \$15,000 each. There are only 152 suitable for operation at the moment and they are worth \$2,25m. Nine locomotives were originally purchased to haul these waggons and they cost \$0.25m each. I am not quite sure how many of these units are redundant as a result of cessation of work at Frances Creek and, if the Government goes ahead with its present decision, they will all be redundant.

1096 Mr VALE to Miss ANDREW -

Have the Northern Territory Police made a study similar to that done by the South Australian Police on the economics of using aircraft rather than road vehicles for bush trips and what new police station will be opened this year in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

A study was commenced in August 1974 for a 3 to 5 year period to collect data to enable an assessment of the economics of aircraft as against vehicles for the bush trips. Preliminary figures indicate that the savings are much in line with those in the South Australia survey. As to the second part of the question regarding the police stations, I believe that possibly 2 new stations will be opened this year, one at Hermannsburg and one at Port Keats.

1097 Mr BALLANTYNE to Miss ANDREW -

Is she aware of any active drug squad in Darwin and the Territory generally and, if so, has it had the effect of reducing the drug crimes in the Territory?

ANSWER

There is a drug squad operating in the Northern Territory. As far as their influence on drug trafficking is concerned, it would be very difficult to determine but I will endeavour to give him the details perhaps next week.

1098 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr TAMBLING -

Are any plans being made to relieve traffic congestion during peak hours on Bagot Road by provision of alternative access to and from the city to the northern suburbs?

ANSWER

I am aware that a number of things are being done. Short term phasing of the traffic lights to give them priority on inward moving in the morning and outward moving in the evening is currently being looked at and a number of investigations are being conducted by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission with regard to alternative access routes. The Frances Bay arterial link has been discussed on a number of occasions. I am aware that it is still subject to further investigation and I do not anticipate that it will come up in the next financial year's works program.

1099 Mr DONDAS to Miss ANDREW -

Is the Executive Member able to tell me what cuts in staff ceilings and expenditure the Darwin Community College is likely to have this coming year?

ANSWER

In the current expenditure there have been no significant cuts. The only reduction has resulted from the staff ceiling. I believe the ceiling is about 205 at the moment. The Chairman of the Community College and the Principal of the Community College are still in Canberra having discussions with the Minister for Education endeavouring to get a raise on these staff ceilings. In the capital works there has been no expenditure cuts at this stage and this morning workshop extensions to the order of \$225,000 were approved. At this stage, there is no deferral, it is just that the funds are very slow in coming through.

1100 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Mr POLLOCK -

Bamyili Aboriginal community is making great progress with the tourism sector. Is this an indication of benefits of close cooperation between Aborigines and Europeans?

ANSWER

Part of the general policies of the previous Liberal-Country Party government were to develop Aboriginal managed associations which would operate housing associations, commercial undertakings, stores, garages, market gardens, piggeries and so forth. Self-management was encouraged at a rate at which the Aboriginal people themselves wanted it. Although I have not been to Bamyili in recent times, and regrettably I was not invited to their function last week that the Minister attended, my understanding is that there is close cooperation between Europeans and Aboriginal people there. The

Aboriginals do realise that they can use the European people to assist in the development of their project and are progressing towards self-management and a healthy environment to live in.

1101 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he able to indicate when the Government will reintroduce the home sale scheme policy for government employees?

ANSWER

I am not able to so indicate. I have made a submission to the minister in an endeavour to establish ground rules at an early date to give public servants an indication of when the Government's home loan scheme will be reintroduced.

1102 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

My question relates to the amendments to the Motor Vehicle Ordinance which was passed early last year to provide indemnification through the nominal defendant for a person who held compulsory third party insurance with insurers who had gone broke. There was some mention of an alternative proposal on this legislation, as it has not yet been assented to, coming to us in a report from his Honour the Acting Administrator to yourself, Sir, earlier this year. I am not sure whether that report was entirely accurate in all respects but I wonder if the Executive Member could tell us whether anything has yet got as far as his desk on this now 18 month's old piece of legislation?

ANSWER

There have been discussions between myself and the department concerned. These were initiated some months ago and a paper was prepared in which the new proposals were outlined. I asked the department to send a copy of these proposals to the insurance companies. The proposals have been accepted in principle by the insurance companies but, as a certain amount of insurance company money will be held by the nominal defendant for the purpose of paying third party claims, we have gone back to the insurance companies and said, "You accept the proposals but we would like you to tell us how you feel it should be operated to give you access to this money, to put it on short call so that it can be effectively used but still kept in your hands." I am waiting for word from the insurance companies and, as soon as this is available, I am going to suggest that we have another meeting with the insurance companies involved and try to come up with lasting instructions.

1103 Mr VALE to Miss ANDREW -

My question concerns the new school of the air building in Alice Springs. Can she advise when tenders will be called and let for supply of radio equipment to that new building?

ANSWER

I believe that advertisements have been drafted at the moment and that tenders will be called before the end of the financial year.

1104 Mrs LAWRIE to Miss ANDREW -

Could she advise the Assembly whether she was consulted before the

Commissioner took his decision that police would not wear any form of identification?

ANSWER

I was not consulted before this decision was taken, however, I have discussed the matter with the Commissioner.

1105 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr RYAN -

Can he tell me what effect will Government economies have on the ABC in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I do not know what the actual effects will be. I know that a week or two ago there was an intention not to have a local filming unit. Pressure was put on from various directions and this decision was changed. I could make inquiries to see if I can find out what specific effect these cuts will have on the ABC and answer the honourable member next week.

1106 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

When was the Darwin jury roll last revised and when is it proposed to bring women onto jury panels?

ANSWER

The current roll was last revised in November 1973. Legislation was passed through this Assembly which included the right for women to be on the jury roll unless they specifically asked not to be or they had the same right of withdrawal as men do. Some 2 years later we have had no women appearing on juries in Darwin. The situation is little different in Alice Springs where, in the last Supreme Court sittings, for the first time women sat on the jury. The matter is the responsibility of the Sheriff and I am advised by the Attorney-General's Department that the reason it has not been updated was because of the cyclone and the lack of staff. However, I have made strong representation to the Attorney-General asking for his assistance and the immediate updating of this roll so that women can be included.

1107 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he able to tell me how long it takes for the Home Finance Trustee to process an application for the home loan to approval stage?

ANSWER

For non-complicated applications where all conditions are met within a few days of lodgement of the original application, the current time for approval is 6 to 7 weeks. The Home Finance Trustee has now approved in excess of 500 loans and the staff of that office is currently 21 persons. Delay is largely caused by the sheer volume of work that has to be handled by the staff of the Home Finance Trustee because not only are they now processing applications but they must attend to the necessary administration of the 500-odd loans that have currently been approved and are naturally in the course of administration.

1108 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he aware that, following approval, the time lag for awaiting first progress payment is approximately 5 weeks? This has the effect of having many builders teetering on the brink. If he is aware of this, has he made approaches for an increase in the staff?

ANSWER

A number of particular instances of delay in the processing of progress payments have been brought to my attention. On each occasion I have approached the Secretary of the Department of the Northern Territory to see what can be done. It is often found that a number of the claims being processed are not clear and straightforward because of the building supervisory assessments are in conflict with the actual progress payment requested. Therefore, the staff initially has to resolve that problem and it is further complicated because the Finance Branch is located in Brisbane. The Secretary is attempting to solve the problem but I do not know when the member is going to be given any joy.

1109 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr POLLOCK -

Is it a fact that a child with a long history of tonsillitis and under a private surgeon requiring an operation by that surgeon for the removal of tonsils cannot at the present time have this operation at the Darwin Hospital in the foreseeable future?

ANSWER

I am unaware of the specific case to which the honourable member refers. The general situation in answer to his question is no. In fact, some 16 tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies have been performed so far this month. However, I would wish to define 2 groups of surgical patients. Firstly, there are those who are clinically urgent and who are admitted without delay for their surgical procedures. Secondly, patients who are not clinically urgent are listed for surgery when beds are available. This is the largest group. Availability of beds depends on adequate numbers of trained sisters to staff the wards.

1110 Mr VALE to Mr TUXWORTH -

Can he advise what protection pastoralists in the Northern Territory have received this year against bushfires?

ANSWER

To the best of my knowledge the Bush Fires Control Board will be making every endeavour to extend to the people of the Northern Territory, particularly the pastoral community the same level of bushfire control that they have extended in the past. In relation to the financial side of it, I was advised by officers of the Department of the Northern Territory at the time the budget was presented that the sum of \$30,000 which had been shown in the Bush Fires Control Board's vote to emergency bushfire control was nominal and that in fact Treasury would provide funds from an open-ended vote to ensure adequate bushfire control, also that so long as officers of the Bush Fires Control Board had the physical capacity to control fires they would not be inhibited by the lack of funds.

1111 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr TUXWORTH -

Recently on a TV show a well known Australian mining magnate made a statement claiming that nuclear energy was safe and clean. Is this so?

ANSWER

I did not see the program to which the honourable member refers and I have no knowledge of which aspects of the use of uranium to which he refers. In any case I would not want to say anything that will preempt the findings of Mr Justice Fox's inquiry, and I would ask that the question be placed on notice.

1112 Mr DONDAS to Mr PERRON -

Is he able to tell me how long it takes for an electricity connection to take place?

ANSWER

I will assume that the question is directed to the situation in Darwin and I am pleased to report that there are currently 11 inspectors working with the Electricity Supply Department at the moment. In the case of an electrician's completion notice and a consumer's application for electricity being lodged together, and if it is found that the job has in actual fact been completed, electricity would be connected in around about 8 days at the present time. Occasionally, it appears that there are some electricians who claim that the department is holding them up when in actual fact they have not lodged the completion form that the electrician has to lodge. This tends to throw a bad light on the department as far as the consumer is concerned, when in actual fact an electrician might be buying time for himself. In some other cases delays are caused when it is found that the job is not a new connection but a change-over from the existing temporary service that was installed after the cyclone. In these cases a different crew is required as the job involves more men, including an inspector, and often the consumer's electrician as well. In those cases there has to be a certain amount of electrical equipment dismantled as well as installed again.

1112A ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr PERRON: On the question of electricity I would just like to supply a little bit more information in answer to a question put to me on Tuesday by the member for Arnhem. I advise that there are currently 4 meter readers working in Darwin at the present time. One of them is only temporary and is assisting in the backlog of work and the normal crew will be 3 meter readers.

1113 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

Honourable members may be aware that to register the cheapest sort of private company costs at least \$61 and the fees on occasions run into many hundreds of dollars. In order to register these companies - and it takes about 3 months for the worthy officials to process the registration - one is required to use forms prescribed under the Companies Regulations. I ask the Executive Member when adequate supplies of these forms will be made available, as they are not at present adequate?

ANSWER

The Companies Office is under no legislative responsibility to provide these forms. However, in supplying a service to their clients they have done so in the past. At the moment, with economy cuts, no money is available for the printing of these forms. In the foreseeable future they will not be supplied by that office.

1114 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr TAMBLING -

Can the honourable member advise when the Home Finance Trustee will be permitted to set up and operate his own bank account in Darwin to relieve the hardship that this is causing in many cases?

ANSWER

The issue raised by the honourable member is such that at the moment, under legislation, the Home Finance Trustee is required to operate from a trust fund established by the Treasurer, and therefore it would require legislative amendment to set up a local bank account for the Home Finance Trustee. I will be happy to discuss the matter raised by the honourable member further with him, and investigate all aspects of this and report at a later stage.

1115 Mr STEELE to Dr LETTS -

Has he received representation from citizens of the Northern Territory and Western Australia concerning an incident which occurred on Billiluna Station in Western Australia? What action does he propose to take?

ANSWER

I have received a telegram. I have not got it with me at the moment, but it was I think from over 30 people who represent centres and stations, both in the Kimberleys and the Victoria River District, about an incident which occurred in Western Australia at Billiluna Station. The telegram suggested that there was some inequity in the application of the law and brought this to my attention. I believe that the matter the incident referred to may be still under or be still before the court or going to come before the court again and therefore I do not intend to comment any further on it. But as it is in Western Australia it is outside Northern Territory's legal jurisdiction and I will bring the representation to the notice of the Western Australian Attorney-General.

1116 Mr MANUELL to Mr RYAN -

If in fact there are cut-backs to apply to the ABC next year and it may mean rationalisation of ABC programs in the Northern Territory, would the Executive Member be prepared to recommend to the ABC the removal of the program, "Colonel Chuck Chunder" from the Northern Territory service?

ANSWER

I would prefer the question to be put on notice.

1117 Mr BALLANTYNE to Miss ANDREW -

Can she tell me if there has been a review of school isolation allow-

ances for the year 1977? If so, what changes have been made to that formula?

ANSWER

To the best of my knowledge, there has not been a review of children-in-isolation allowances this year. A new Senate committee on education, science and the arts is, I think, currently touring Australia accepting submissions and investigating the problems of children who live in isolation as regards education. I am hoping that they will return to the Territory and that as a result of their findings, which I believe must be tabled before the end of this year, a considerable increase in the allowances for children in isolation will be brought forward.

1118 ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr TAMBLING (by leave): The honourable member for Alice Springs asked a question about town planning issues relating to the cemetery being built near the main road in Alice Springs. I am informed by the Department of the Northern Territory that intensive investigations were made for suitable land near Alice Springs. Competing land use needs had to be taken into consideration and also the soil had to be right. If chemicals in the soil are not right, decay takes place either too quickly or too slowly. There was a joint decision by the Department of the Northern Territory, the Town Planning Board and the Alice Springs Corporation. Aboriginal people and the funeral parlour people were consulted; the Aboriginals were consulted through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the decision was made approximately 3 years ago. The cemetery was an amendment to the Alice Springs Town Plan and was on display for 3 months in the Lands Branch Office and a copy was also held by the Alice Springs Corporation.

1119 ANSWER TO QUESTION

Dr LETTS (by leave): The honourable member for Arnhem asked whether the NT Stock Squad was actively engaged in duties or still at the reception desk at police headquarters. The information I have obtained was that 1 member of the stock squad was performing duties at the CIB inquiry counter at the police headquarters building because of a temporary physical incapacity. He was now returned to the stock squad.

1120 ANSWER TO QUESTION

Miss ANDREW (by leave): I wish to inform the member for Tiwi that as I assured him yesterday, concerning the police station at Garden Point, notice has been placed in the Police Gazette. There is no requirement for notification in any other gazette. If his question was intended to relate to the gazette of the premises as a police prison, the answer is no.

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