

PART II

THE QUESTION PAPER

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II.  
Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.

Cancelled Visit to Berrimah Prison

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Will he advise the House why, when a bus load of prisoners came from Gunn Point to Berrimah Prison for visits last Sunday, the bus turned around and returned to Gunn Point without any of the visits eventuating?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am advised that, on 17 August, 22 prisoners were conveyed to Berrimah Prison from Gunn Point for the purpose of visits from family and friends. This is a routine exercise every Sunday, the average number of prisoners being 20. On 17 August, the Gunn Point bus arrived at Berrimah Prison at 1.45pm and, after entering the gaol, prisoners were instructed to leave the bus for a routine search prior to entering the main body of the gaol for contact visits. All prisoners refused to leave the bus and to submit to a search.

A further offer was made - and I think that was generous of our prison authorities - that, if any individual left the bus, he would be permitted to visit provided he was searched. Again, there was no response and the prisoners were returned to Gunn Point Prison Farm. No hostility was offered by the prisoners, the incident being more a passive refusal to obey a direction. All visitors were informed why the visit from Gunn Point Prison Farm was cancelled and all accepted the explanation in good humour. At this stage, it is assumed that the prisoners were concerned that, for the first time, electronic handheld searchers, called 'friskers', were in use at Darwin Prison.

Cafeteria in Chan Building

Mr HARRIS to CHIEF MINISTER

Has any decision been made as to the future use of the area previously used by the cafeteria known as 'Big Al's' in the Harry Chan building?

ANSWER

The area previously known as 'Big Al's', which was used as a cafeteria after the cyclone, has been refurbished. It still retains all the equipment which would enable it to be used as a cafeteria, restaurant or reception centre. Indeed, the government holds receptions for visiting dignitaries and the like in part of the area formerly used as a cafeteria. Part of the area has also been turned over for use as a library.

An approach was made to me last year for the remaining area to be used as a display centre; for instance, for Aboriginal art. At least 2 art exhibitions have been held by the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Art Gallery in the area that could be used as a cafeteria. There is one talking place at present. Apparently, the art gallery is satisfied with the results of its displays because it keeps coming back. Presumably, quite a considerable degree of custom arises.

It has been impossible for the government to obtain a satisfactory tender for the reintroduction of the cafeteria services which were maintained for a short period after the cyclone. I could not say whether further tenders have been called since the original tenders. I

do not think they have. I think the matter would have been mentioned to me by my departmental head had further tenders been called. On the previous occasion, no actual tender was received, only some vague proposition which did not eventuate.

Purchase of 28 Tasman Circuit

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Has the government arranged, through the Housing Commission, the purchase of the residence at 28 Tasman Circuit, Wagaman? If so, what price was paid for the property, who is occupying or who is intended to occupy the residence and what expenditure has been necessary to upgrade or improve the property since its purchase?

ANSWER

The question calls for quite a bit of detail, including the disclosure of names. I would ask that the question be placed on notice.

Fire Station at 19-Mile

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

When can we expect a definite date for the start of the building of the proposed fire station at the 19-mile?

ANSWER

The building is due for completion in May 1981.

Casuarina Hospital Casualty Clinic

Mrs D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for HEALTH

Is it the policy of the Department of Health to discourage attendance by the public at Casuarina Hospital's casualty clinic and, if not, upon whose authority are physicians who attend at that clinic informing patients that they should not attend that clinic but should seek the services of a private practitioner instead?

ANSWER

I have absolutely no knowledge of any practice by the department to discourage people from going to the outpatients or casualty clinic at Casuarina Hospital. As far as the rest of the question is concerned, I will take the matter up with the department and advise the honourable member in due course.

Dollar-for-Dollar Subsidies to NT Schools

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

When will the guidelines for the dollar-for-dollar subsidies to the Northern Territory schools be released?

ANSWER

The guidelines for the establishment of a dollar-for-dollar subsidy

scheme is one that I already have prepared. I would have had the system operating other than for a recent spate of publicity given to either the entire of the Council of Government Schools Organisations or merely one officer of that organisation. It seems as if the body which purports to represent parents does not want the money at all. I will now go back to the Northern Territory Council of Government Schools Organisations and talk to them about it. Certainly, it is not the intention of this government to provide substantial sums of the taxpayers' money in an area in which the parents' representatives believe it is not required. Therefore, I propose to discuss the matter generally with the Council of Government Schools Organisations at the earliest opportunity to see just what their objection to receiving money is.

Educational Services to Handicapped Children

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is it true, as allegedly stated recently by a departmental officer at a public meeting, that the Department of Education will no longer provide educational services for handicapped children who are below compulsory school age?

ANSWER

I am not fully aware of the source of the comment. The honourable member for Arnhem did give me the courtesy of warning me about this question this morning. It disturbs me quite a deal. The wording of the Education Act is specifically framed to allow the minister to make arrangements for the assistance of handicapped children below or above compulsory school age. It would be flying completely in the face of the intent of this legislature if that was changed by some administrative instruction. I have had the matter checked out and there is no truth in the story at all. The Department of Education will continue to assist such children at the request of parents and having regard to the resources available to the department to provide a satisfactory service to these children. I think the public has to bear in mind that not all pre-schools have the specialist facilities which are required to assist such children overcome their problems. Parents would be aware that there are special schools set up for the purpose both in Darwin and Alice Springs. I would hope to see such specialist facilities being made available in other centres. Quite clearly, there is a demand but it is a matter of finding the resources to meet that demand. Parents would also be aware that the Spastic Centre is a specialist facility for such activities. I know that many parents have a problem with the name 'Spastic Centre' and the unfortunate connotational label which they believe would detach from that establishment to their children. I understand that the local organisers of the Spastic Centre are talking with the national body with a view to trying to overcome this unfortunate labelling which detaches from the establishment to the children. Parents do have a range of options available to them in the education welfare of below compulsory school age children. Certainly, it is my intention and the intention of the senior officers of my department that, wherever possible, assistance will be made available to handicapped persons of any age who need educational help.

Elizabeth River Causeway

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can the minister assure me that the causeway and associated roadworks

at Elizabeth River will be completed before the next wet as the situation in this area is critical?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the design of the causeway and associated roadworks is apparently under way and the project will be completed before the end of this year.

Government Batteries at Tennant Creek and Mt Wells

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Can he inform the House of the future of the government batteries at Tennant Creek and Mt Wells?

ANSWER

The Department of Mines and Energy is currently carrying out a detailed investigation into the batteries at Mt Wells and Tennant Creek. As honourable members would be aware, the battery in Tennant Creek was first commissioned in the late 1930s and, over the years, there has been a series of 5 of them. The present one, which was constructed in the late 1950s or early 1960s, has been operating as an incentive to gougers since that time. Under the careful direction of the former Director of Mines, Mr Adams, another battery was built in that same period at Mt Wells to assist in the gold mining and the tin mining operations in that area and to encourage gougers to get back into the field and perhaps discover a find of the significance of the Nobles Nob which was found by gougers and which has been producing for nearly 30 years at a very satisfactory rate and has given employment to at least 70 people each year.

The department is reviewing the position of the batteries in light of several things. The first one is the financial considerations that are attached to the batteries. I do not know whether honourable members are aware that we currently charge the princely sum of \$2 for putting a ton of ore through the government batteries. This figure was derived in the 1930s. In those days, it was £1. I think it is relevant to point out that the price of gold in those days was £15 per ounce or \$30 in today's money. The price of £1 for crushing a ton of ore that may have had gold in it worth £15 an ounce was probably fairly realistic. Looking at today's gold prices of \$600-plus per ounce, the charge of \$2 per ton for crushing in the batteries is not what one would call realistic, even as an encouragement for people to put through ore that had some gold in it at least. In both batteries, we are spending about \$400,000 a year of government funds to produce minerals that have the princely value of \$80,000. There must be a serious reconsideration of whether this should be our priority. If it is the priority of the government to continue with this particular facet of mineral encouragement and development, then I think it is also reasonable that the price structure and the crushing procedures in the batteries be reviewed.

One of the things that I am particularly conscious of is that the batteries we have today, which crush a tonne an hour at best, were designed to cater for the needs of gougers that went out to mine with a pick and shovel, shovelled the ore onto a truck, drove it to the battery and shovelled it off at the battery. Based on the economy of

the 1930s and 1940s, the batteries served a very useful purpose. I might add that they were first designed in the 1880s and the 1890s and the first one that was established in Queensland in 1890 is still standing there as a relic. The difference today is that our gougers are very mechanised with their pneumatic drills and their new techniques. They remove the ore with explosives. The concept of transporting ore with big front-end loaders and 40 and 50-yard tip-trucks has made the batteries virtually a bottleneck in the whole system. Again, the government is conscious of the fact that, if we are to serve the gougers in any useful way, it is important that we make the batteries viable to the extent that a gouger can have his ore crushed in a satisfactory period of time that will give him a cash flow that will enable him to go back and carry out more work on his prospect. I would put it to the honourable member that the answers are not simple and they are a long way from being conclusive. When the departmental report becomes available, I will advise the House what action the government will take in this area.

Processing of Home Loans in Alice Springs

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Would he indicate what steps he has taken to ensure the time taken to process home loan applications in Alice Springs is reduced to at least the same time taken with Darwin applications?

ANSWER

The only way that problem can be solved is to arrange for regional autonomy, a matter which I have heard mentioned many times over the past couple of years. They will be working towards that in both the Housing Commission and the Department of Lands. My intention in respect to the Department of Lands is to establish, in the same manner as the government has successfully done with health and education, a regional directorate and my Cabinet colleagues have supported me in this. That will take place as soon as appropriate documentation can be implemented through the Executive Council and of course recruiting carried out. In respect of the Housing Commission, a proposal has gone through Cabinet anyway to rearrange the counter staff to a more senior level for Alice Springs. Hopefully, we will be able to work towards a position where virtually all documentation and decision-making takes place in that centre. Mr Speaker, the idea is not just to service Alice Springs with a regional office of that type but the entire region from Tennant Creek to the South Australian border.

Government Battery at Mt Wells

Mr ISAACS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Did he, during the recent Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election campaign, assure the people who use the Mt Wells Battery that it would be continued? Was this advice passed to those people by a departmental officer?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have had several meetings with the gougers at Mt Wells over the past 12 months, particularly over the future of the battery and the

the unsatisfactory manner in which it is handling the volume of work that the gougers expect of it. I went to the area prior to the campaign and discussed the issue again. I will say it again today for the benefit of honourable members because I have said it twice to the gougers and I think it is important. For the government to be able to provide the service that the gougers need at Mt Wells, given the capacity of the battery and the technology that gougers are using today, it is important that the gougers as a group let the government know what they expect of the battery, what they feel is the minimum requirement that they can live with and what they are prepared to pay for the services that they expect to get.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the situation at Mt Wells is one where we have too many people producing too much ore to put through a battery that is not designed to take it.

Already, Mr Speaker, we are receiving requests for assistance from very large prospectors in the area to get their own battery and keep their own ore. I do not object to this at all because the role of the battery is to enable men to develop their prospects and move on to bigger and better things. At the same time, some of the gougers are a little reluctant to accept that they can live without the battery once their tonnage gets above a certain level. They still expect to be able to get the same volume of material through as they have in the past, although they may want to quadruple their production. They still expect to get a priority and they still expect to get it for a minimum fee. As I said earlier, I spoke to the gougers at Mt Wells twice. I still have not heard from them about what they feel is reasonable for their battery to be able to provide for their community. When they decide what is satisfactory, I will be happy to go back and discuss it with them. In the meantime, we will still continue with our departmental investigation of what is reasonable from the government's point of view.

Underpriced Eggs from Adelaide to Central Australia

Mr VALE to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Can he advise if any action has been taken in recent days to stem the flow of underpriced eggs from Adelaide to the Central Australian market?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is a fairly topical question from the honourable member because of his interest in poultry. Certainly, it has been a matter of great concern to the department that eggs from Red Comb in South Australia and Johnsons in Port Pirie were being dumped in Alice Springs at something like 40% below the Adelaide wholesale price and thus trying to drive the new operator in Alice Springs out of business. This is a matter that we were not prepared to accept. We have sent officials to South Australia to discuss the problem. The industry itself, in recent days, through legal people in this city, have obtained a restraining order under the Trade Practices Act, restraining the South Australian Egg Board from marketing any eggs in Alice Springs at less than a fair wholesale price. The Territory is hoping to resolve the matter by arranging a written agreement on pricing between the parties.

Dust Problem on Virginia Road

Mr DOOLAN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What will be done by his department about the intolerable conditions presently being endured by residents of Virginia Road through the dust caused by articulated vehicles carrying soil along that road?

ANSWER

I have recently replied to some correspondence regarding the situation at Virginia Road. We are aware of the problem and the Police Department as well as the Mines Department and the Department of Transport and Works are overseeing the problem and will be monitoring it until such time as a decision can be made to seal that road.

McMinns Bore

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can the minister advise how many gallons per day will be taken from the McMinns bore field to add to the water supply for the people of Darwin and can he assure me unreservedly that this extraction will in no way affect the bores of the people in the McMinns area?

ANSWER

The amount of water which will be drawn from the McMinns bore field to supplement the Darwin water supply will not be known until exhaustive investigations are concluded. However, I can assure the honourable member that the department will only commission the McMinns bore field on the condition that there will be no adverse effects on residents of the McMinns area.

Education Advisory Council

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I would like to preface my question by saying that it is not occasioned by a press release in the NT News last night but by a report by a member of the Education Advisory Council. Is he aware that members of his Education Advisory Council have publicly stated their doubts as to the worth of their continuing activities on that council? Why has the minister been unable to meet with that council at any of the meetings it has held since its inception last year?

ANSWER

Let me say firstly that it is only very recently that the Education Advisory Council has found itself of a mind that it needs some ministerial guidance. Its functions are very clear under the act. If people refer back to my second-reading speech, they will see that the act allows the Education Advisory Council to carry out its own investigations in such manner and into such matters as it sees fit. Recently, however, the Education Advisory Council has indicated that it wants a meeting with me for the purpose of establishing guidelines and to talk about various things that it feels it wants to explore or to seek a reaction from me on the things that I would like it to explore. I find it rather surprising having regard to the nature of the act and, if the honourable

member is correct, that they find they cannot continue without my guiding hand. I would have thought the act placed a certain responsibility upon the council. Nonetheless, it was only quite recently that the Education Advisory Council asked to meet with me. I think honourable members would be aware that I have quite a bit on my plate and that the Education Advisory Council itself is comprised of members from all over the Territory who are busy people too. The plain fact is that it is extremely difficult to get all those people together on a date that suits me. Because of Cabinet commitments or other commitments associated with my public office, it is very difficult for me to guarantee that, because they can meet, I can meet with them. In other words, it has not been a problem of ill will or reluctance but one of pure logistics. My schedule of work has been such that I have been unable to meet them at times when they have been meeting and, on the dates that I have selected, they have been unable to get a quorum together. It is one of those problems arising out of the penalty of the vastness of this Territory and the very extensive commitments of ministers.

Electricity Commission Materials at Salonika Railway Yards

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Does the Northern Territory Electricity Commission intend using the old Salonika Railway yards for permanent storage of power poles, cables and materials belonging to the commission?

ANSWER

The short answer is yes but, in so far as the permanent storage of power poles is concerned, I think that most of the poles that are being stored there at the moment are ones that have been reclaimed from the cyclone. In the course of time, they will be used throughout the Territory for reticulation and it is not likely that they would become an eyesore in the area.

Alice Springs Recreational Lake Site

Mr ISAACS to CHIEF MINISTER

Has the site for the Alice Springs recreational lake been chosen? If so, does it conflict with a registered Aboriginal sacred site?

ANSWER

I am not certain whether a site has been chosen. I can certainly find that out speedily for the honourable Opposition Leader. Certainly there is a prime site and a model displaying the dam and the lake on that site has been set up in Alice Springs. I believe it was displayed in the government centre down there for some months. Comment from the public was invited in respect to that site. At the present time, I am unaware whether a final decision has been taken to confirm that site. I do know that negotiations have also taken place with the Central Land Council on behalf of any Aboriginal persons who have an interest in the area. I might mention that I understand the area is within the town municipal boundary of Alice Springs. I believe that a written consent to the use of the particular area - regarded as a prime area north of the present Telegraph Station National Park - was obtained but this consent was subsequently withdrawn. I am not aware that it is a registered sacred site. Indeed, I am not certain whether any sacred sites have in fact yet been registered by the Sacred Sites Authority. Again, that is really a matter which the Opposition Leader could ascertain as easily for himself as I could. I can certainly find it out but I am unable to give any definitive answer on those 2 points.

Private Hospital on Old Darwin Hospital Grounds

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for HEALTH

Has any interest been shown in the proposal to establish a private hospital incorporating sections of the old Darwin Hospital?

ANSWER

The government has set up a committee to dispose of all the property which is not required at the old Darwin Hospital for the purposes or use of a private hospital. No tender has actually been called to my knowledge although the tender documents are ready to go, that is, if they have not already gone. For the operation of parts of the old section of the hospital as a private hospital, I would expect that there would be interest. I have no knowledge of any proposals having been received at this stage by the department.

Free Travel for the Unemployed

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Is it still the intention of the government to allow free travel for the unemployed on public transport and, if so, when is this scheme to be introduced?

ANSWER

It is certainly the intention of government to provide concessions to the

unemployed for travel on buses in the Darwin area. If I recall rightly, the undertaking given prior to the recent election was that unemployed persons would have to pay 50% of the fare on public transport. The department has been investigating methods to administer such a scheme. It may be that such a scheme would be more workable if the travel was free. There has been a lot of work done on this and I have yet to approve of a system of operation of the scheme which is reasonable. We have looked at schemes which operate in some of the states. In some cases, it would appear more reasonable to make public bus services free to everyone rather than to administer a very complicated scheme which takes up considerable time by many people. This is the problem I have at the moment. On advice, I am establishing the best way to go about the administrative arrangements and I cannot at this stage give a time when such a scheme will be implemented.

Answer to Question

Alice Springs Recreational Lake Site

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I think I should bring to your attention some further information which has just been handed to me by the Minister for Transport and Works in relation to the answer that I just gave on the question of the recreation lake at Alice Springs. I should draw to your attention that Cabinet approved on 21 May the inclusion of the project on the design list. That certainly does not mean that it will ever be constructed on the particular site in question.

Gunn Point Prison Farm Bore

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Have the salinity problems of the bore at Gunn Point Prison Farm been overcome and, if not, what action is proposed?

ANSWER

The Department of Transport and Works compiled a preliminary report on Gunn Point water supply based on a ground water investigation which was conducted in 1973-74. That report indicated that salinity problems could be encountered at the Gunn Point Prison Farm if there was continued excessive use of water for agricultural purposes. For this reason, agricultural activities at Gunn Point have been restricted pending some further investigations. More recently, a quality reappraisal by the investigation branch of Water Resources has indicated that salinity has been reduced to acceptable levels as the result of this continuing restriction on the agricultural activities at the farm. The Water Resources Branch, in consultation with the Department of Transport and Works, are now working on proposals to drill deeper bores in the area with a view to overcoming the salinity problems without the need for continuing restrictions. It is a matter which bears on the future of the Gunn Point Prison Farm and the government is certainly anxious to ensure, if it is possible, the availability of better and less limited water supply on the present site so that the prison farm can stay there. The prisoners seem to have done a very good job with the limited amount of water that has been available to them in producing some very high quality crops. Perhaps we could all learn something from what they are doing there.

Antibiotics in Stockfeeds

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY

Has the Cabinet's submission on the control of use of antibiotics in stockfeeds been proceeded with and, if so, can he indicate when the legislation is likely to be introduced?

ANSWER

The Cabinet submission has been agreed to. The legislative drafting instructions are being analysed finally and should go back to the draftsman in due course. Any veterinary drugs used as an additive to stockfeeds will be controlled by this legislation. Use of other veterinary drugs is controlled by various acts administered by the Department of Health.

Special Purpose Blocks in Future Subdivisions

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Would he please give me an assurance that, in future subdivisions, the location of special purpose blocks, shops, schools etc will be carefully chosen and then well advertised so that people buying house blocks are fully aware of the purposes of the neighbouring blocks?

ANSWER

I am in full sympathy with the honourable member's sentiments. One of the greatest causes of delays in town planning matters arises when, for one reason or another, parties want to alter the purpose for which land is currently zoned. Of course, in expectation of quiet living in a lower-density area, people are then faced with the prospect of the entire thing being changed after they have made the greatest investment they are likely to make in their lifetime. Most certainly, that is my policy and my department's policy and it would certainly be the intention of the planning authorities throughout the Northern Territory. In respect of the private subdivisions, all matters were taken into account prior to the arrangements to proceed with the private developers. Certainly, precisely the same thing will occur in Alice Springs and any other centre where new subdivisions are proposed.

Consultation with Community Organisations in Nhulunbuy

Mr LEO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Was the decision to amalgamate the new high school and community library services in Nhulunbuy achieved after community consultation and, if so, with which community organisations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it has been long a concern of this government, as a result of community pressure - including pressure from the place that the honourable gentleman represents - to maximise and make available in a central location those facilities which are generally regarded as being of service to the public. If one looks at the representations coming from Howard Springs or Berry Springs, precisely the same sort of representations

are being made. That is, where the government builds a school, it is asked to also build adjacent to it an oval to be made available to the general community and to also provide such things as library services. I personally have discussed this proposal with many people in Nhulunbuy on my not infrequent visits. I do recognise Nhulunbuy as a part of the Northern Territory even though the honourable gentleman has some doubt as indicated in his maiden speech yesterday. Certainly, this issue was raised with as many people as possible.

I understand now that there is some opposition against the proposal to provide a very sophisticated library service for the school at the same time as for the community. Indeed, the plans and specifications for the new high school in Nhulunbuy were altered in midstream, and probably at some expense as a result of a community request. Certainly, his predecessor indicated to this place on a number of occasions the desirability of maximising community facilities within the very expensive structures that the government erects.

I really cannot understand the concern. Perhaps it comes from a professional jealousy or it may be on the operational side. There may be difficulties and conflicts between the various parties. If there is conflict between government agencies, then I find it somewhat disturbing that they would resist a very desirable arrangement. In addition to the library being altered and extended at the request of the community, the design of the hall was altered and extended so that it was suitable for the general community.

In answer to the question, the move was entirely supported by the community, albeit some little inconvenience may exist in having people travel further than they do from the existing library. I recognise that but, on balance, I think it is a very good move.

#### Removal of Coffee Bush

Mr HARRIS to CHIEF MINISTER

Will the government be continuing the program to remove coffee bush from our foreshore areas?

ANSWER

The simple answer is yes.

#### Services to Blocks on Katherine River

Mr VALE to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

I ask this on behalf of the honourable member for Elsey. Can the minister advise the reasons his government is refusing to provide power and water to the 53 five-acre blocks on the Katherine River's north bank?

ANSWER

The honourable member for Elsey always comes up with very difficult questions to answer. Mr Speaker, as you are probably aware, there is a little confrontation going on between myself and the Katherine Municipal Council at the moment over the particular proposed subdivision. The arrangement was originally to provide unserviced blocks. This was based

on our understanding of a desire for this type of land in the Katherine area. The arrangement, in the normal course of events, would be put to the Katherine town council. In letters going back to May of this year, the town council indicated its nervousness with this arrangement. Its exact words in a resolution were : 'For the benefit of potential purchasers, the council would like to see electricity and water supplied before blocks are sold'. Thus, we are faced with the position where the council of the town says it is not happy with the release on a basis of unserviced land. We must also bear in mind that very adequate bore water can be located there and there is the usual rural style of septic systems. We could also solve the electricity problem. What inevitably happens is that it does not matter how firmly you put in the agreement with people who purchase land that there is no undertaking by government to provide services, once they have settled there and put up with the inconvenience of unserviced land for a period of time, the pressure then starts to come.

Having regard to the fact that the council said it wanted the land serviced, we then do a very hasty exercise to see how much it will cost. Would you believe, Sir, that the provision of water alone to those blocks will cost \$15,000 per block. Total service costs come to around about \$37,000 to \$38,000 a block. I cannot see the public of Katherine paying that sort of money for services. Thus, we have this conflict with the council: we want to release the land one way and the council is insisting on releasing it another way at a time when the government was naturally determining its budget for the coming financial year.

I understand, although I have not received a copy of it, that the council apparently wrote to me on 4 July, which was after the beginning of the financial year, indicating that most of the problems as it saw them had been overcome, with the exception of a thing called differential rating. By that stage, the budget was being firmed up and the sort of millions we are talking about to turn off 50-odd blocks is something that involves very significant financial planning indeed. As a result, I wrote back to the council and indicated that, in view of their reluctance to go on with the government's proposal, it was no longer profitable to provide funds within this financial year. Certainly, discussions will continue with the town council and, hopefully, the matter will be resolved. I understand the council held a special meeting last night following the receipt of my letter yesterday and officers of the department indicated to me this morning that there may be a different attitude in the council and perhaps by some method or other we may get people settled on that land in the near future.

#### The Single Officer's Housing Review

Mr PERKINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Does the Education Department have a document entitled 'The Single Officer's Housing Review' and, if so, will the minister table this document in this House?

ANSWER

I have no knowledge of such a document therefore I cannot give any such undertaking.

Warrego School

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What is he doing to solve the gross overcrowding and lack of other facilities at the Warrego School near Tennant Creek?

ANSWER

I am surprised that I have not been battered around the ears by my colleague, the honourable Minister for Health, about this one. Certainly, during the course of a meeting I held with the newly-formed committee on the handicapped, the matter was raised by parents from that area. I have noted those concerns and, quite clearly, it does indicate a problem exists in Warrego. I want to get to Tennant Creek as soon as I can, perhaps in the company of my colleague who might conduct a personal investigation to see what action can be taken.

Sealing of Roads in Howard Springs

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

When will the actual sealing of Whitewood and Hillier Roads in Howard Springs start?

ANSWER

The contract to seal these roads is expected to be let this month and, hopefully, the job will be finished in early 1981.

Housing Commission Practice Regarding Single Parents

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

I preface my question by reminding the new minister that the Housing Commission had the practice of transferring single parents from flat complexes to town houses after they had served a period of approximately 12 months in those flat complexes. It then changed its policy and, in the process, broke a firm undertaking that had been given to a number of those parents. Will he direct the Housing Commission to keep its firm promises given to those parents to transfer them to town houses?

ANSWER

As a general rule, I would say that this government is very insistent that the undertakings of either its ministers or officers are carried out. Nonetheless, I have no personal knowledge of the matter raised by the honourable member for Fannie Bay. Again, as a result of that I cannot give any undertaking to give any instructions. I will certainly have the matter looked at and probably report to her by letter at a later time.

Rebates to Elderly People

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Would the minister please indicate who amongst elderly people are entitled to the 50% rebate on third-party motor vehicle insurance, water rates and electricity charges, with particular reference to those people receiving superannuation benefits?

ANSWER

The government has a widely-publicised policy of what is called pensioner concessions. Recent undertakings were given to upgrade those. The scheme was expanded under the former minister to include not only persons holding Commonwealth medical pensioner benefits cards but also those males in the Northern Territory over 65 and those females over 60. One area which is not completely clear at this stage - and the department is preparing some papers for me so that I can clear up the confusion in everyone's mind - is that of the superannuant who is either a male under 65 or a female under 60.

Superannuation is a fairly confusing area. It is not simply a matter of declaring that all retired superannuants are entitled to pensioner concessions because superannuants come from a whole range of areas. There are simply hundreds of different types of superannuation and there are various reasons why people have been superannuated out of their employment, voluntarily and non-voluntarily. Before the pensioner concession scheme can be simply blanket extended to this group of people, there needs to be some very clear guidelines to indicate who may go to the Department of Community Development and pick up a Northern Territory pensioner benefit card which will entitle him to a whole range of concessions. As soon as I have this matter clarified - and it is one I regard as a matter of priority - I will write to all members of the House and indeed make some press announcements on the subject.

Freight Component of Sales Tax

Mr ISAACS to TREASURER

When will the promised subsidy on the freight component of sales tax in the Northern Territory be introduced?

ANSWER

Announcements have been made in relation to the government's initiative of refunding to wholesalers the sales tax component on freight. The announcements indicated that the scheme would commence from 1 July. Whilst the scheme will take a little bit of time to bring into operation, the refunds to the various wholesalers will be backdated to 1 July this year. That has always been our undertaking. Indeed, if the honourable member can wait for a little while, there will be some reference to this matter in the budget.

Noxious Weeds on Commonwealth Land at Humpty Doo

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

What power does the Department of Primary Production have over noxious weeds on Commonwealth land used by the Navy at Humpty Doo?

ANSWER

Even though it is a defence reserve, the land in question is still subject to the provisions contained in the Noxious Weeds Act and the Plant Diseases Act.

Reconstruction of Nightcliff Primary School

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

He will probably be aware that stage 2 of the reconstruction of Nightcliff Primary School has presently ceased and services have been removed from areas which were being used for temporary facilities. Could he indicate why the work on the reconstruction stage 2 has ceased and when it will recommence?

ANSWER

I am aware of the problem raised by the honourable member because she approached me on this subject last night. The rest of what she has to say would pertain to a document which is to be tabled in this parliament later today. Therefore, I do not feel at liberty to canvass those issues now.

Heavitree Gap Causeway

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he advise what work his department is presently undertaking in Central Australia to upgrade the Heavitree Gap causeway south of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

The government has decided to widen the existing crossing which is 2 lanes and, at the same time, we will widen the intersection of the crossing at the Stuart Highway to reduce existing traffic hazards.

Education Act Regulations

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

When will the regulations to the Education Act be available?

ANSWER

I cannot give a firm date to the honourable member. I appreciate his concern because I too have been quite concerned about this. Nonetheless, the Education Act was deliberately worded to allow it to stand free without the necessity for bringing in regulations at an early date. In other words, it worked without having the necessity for having our own regulations. This was deliberately done in light of the fact that we could simply save the regulations of the Commonwealth and continue them. I and my department have been most anxious to ensure that, when the regulations are brought in, they will not need change other than for a philosophical or policy change by a different government or different minister. I prefer to see the thing done correctly the first time round rather than hurry it through. Mr Speaker, I give an undertaking to the House that I will do everything I can to have these regulations promulgated as soon as possible so that via the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee this parliament may review them.

Roads on Bathurst Island

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he give me an assurance that the construction of roads discussed between forestry officers and leaders of the Tiwi people on Bathurst Island will be going ahead as planned this year?

ANSWER

I cannot give any assurance that construction of roads will go ahead this year. I should perhaps bring to the honourable members' attention that the roads the honourable member adverts to are private roads on private land. Certainly, the honourable member for Tiwi and myself have a continuing interest in upgrading the roads on Bathurst and Melville Islands. Within the priorities that the Forestry Branch of the Conservation Commission has, as much work as possible will be done to continue to improve the road system on Bathurst and Melville Islands. However, there are other priorities on those islands which have to be taken into account as well as roads. The possibility of further road construction on the islands will be kept in mind as the financial year progresses.

Aerial Medical Contract

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

When will the long-delayed decision as to which airline will win the new aerial medical contract be announced?

ANSWER

I believe there was an announcement last night or this morning. I know that there has been a press release prepared to advise that Northern Airlines has won the tender for the operation of the Aerial Medical Division of the Department of Health.

Mindil Beach Casino

Mr HARRIS to TREASURER

Is he able to inform the House of the reasons for the delays in the construction of the Mindil Beach Casino? What does the minister intend doing to ensure that no further delays will be experienced?

ANSWER

This matter has been one of some concern to the government. I have recently had talks with the principals of Federal Hotels on the subject. We have never lost close contact with them at an officer level during the entire time since Federal Hotels entered into agreement to build casinos and hotel complexes in the Territory. The original proposal to build a casino at Mindil Beach was going to cost in the order of \$10m. By December 1979, the estimate at that stage had risen to \$12m for the building and about \$15m for the total development at Mindil. The company went to tender in February 1980 and the lowest tenderer was \$16.9m for the building alone and, with associated costs involved, the project would have been well over \$20m. This caused the company some difficulties in its plans for the project and they held negotiations with the tenderers as to ways in which they might be able to lower the

the price to some degree. It also caused them some difficulties because they had to reorganise the lines of finance for such a very large project. They have been doing that at the same time as building their casino and hotel at Alice Springs which is pretty well along the way. The government, in continually applying pressure to the company to get on with the job, has arranged with them that, whilst they undertake that a final contract for the construction of the building will be entered into within 10 days, it is necessary for them to enter into an interim contract virtually forthwith - it was to be this week - for \$1m to continue with work at Mindil Beach. I point out to honourable members that in excess of \$2m has been spent already including the price of the land itself. Of course, no company likes to see sums of money of that size left outstanding without providing any possible return. Of course, no possible return for that money can be obtained by the company until the project is completed.

However, because the government is concerned with the continuing delays in the matter, I have advised verbally the principals of the company that, unless a firm contract is entered into for the construction of the main facility at Mindil Beach by the end of September, I am going to review the licence that they have to operate an interim casino at the Don Hotel. They assured me that they will certainly be well and truly into a contract for construction by that time and I am sure that bit of incentive will help them along the way.

Lighthouse Reserves at Cape Hotham and Cape Don

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Has the federal Department of Administrative Services made any approach to his department for the takeover of any structures on lighthouse reserves at Cape Hotham and Cape Don?

ANSWER

I am unable to supply the member with the information. However, I will seek to provide it to her later in the sittings.

Baiting Dingoes with 1080

Mr VALE to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he advise whether a moratorium has been placed on the aerial baiting of dingoes with 1080 and, if so, have dingoes become a danger.

ANSWER

I understand an aerial baiting program with 1080 commenced on 23 July and, to date, the whole of the Barkly Tablelands and 5 properties in the Alice Springs region have been baited. From next Monday, I understand that the Conservation Commission will be doing the gulf country and the Robinson and McArthur Rivers area. It is intended that the program will conclude at about the end of September at which time the whole of the Territory will have been covered. The one exception is that the program people are going through the Territory, station by station, doing those stations which want baiting to be done and leaving those which do not want to participate in the program. I was informed by the Conservation Commission that, when the program is concluded at the end of September, an assessment can then be made as to its effectiveness.

Monitoring of Jenny Crabs

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY

He has assured the House on several times that the monitoring of jenny crabs was continually being carried out by officers of his Fisheries Department. Accordingly, I ask him if he can either table the report of their monitoring procedures or the conclusions that they have reached.

ANSWER

The last communication that I had with the honourable member for Night-cliff on that subject was by a letter dated 4 June. The letter quite clearly explains the government's position. I do not believe that the government will be doing very much more about jenny crabs, not in the immediate future anyway, because there are a lot of other priorities.

Blocks 4631 and 4632 in Eastside Subdivision

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Would he please inform me if blocks 4631 and 4632 in the new eastside subdivision have been accepted for a small shopping centre and, if so, when will they come up for auction?

ANSWER

I would indicate to the honourable member that, if he asks a question like that again, I will ask him to put it on notice. However, in view of the fact that this is his third day here, I will obtain the information and write to him later.

Dumping Sulphur near Bees Creek

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Is it intended to establish a dump for sulphur at the 22-mile old iron ore loading facility adjacent to Bees Creek and, if so, will that dump be protected from erosion into Bees Creek and from wind erosion?

ANSWER

I cannot answer the first part of his question off the top of my head. I would think that it would be absolutely essential practice that, if such a dump were established anywhere, it would need to have satisfactory protection around it.

Noxious Weeds in Kakadu National Park

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to CHIEF MINISTER

Would he, in his capacity as minister having responsibility for the Conservation Commission, draw to Dr Ovington's attention the disgraceful condition of the Kakadu National Park in relation to the abundance of noxious weeds?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think for once I have been able to pre-empt the suggestion

of the honourable member for Tiwi because I believe that the Director of Conservation has been in correspondence with the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service regarding the matter of noxious weeds in the Kakadu National Park.

Decision on Rezoning of Land near Fannie Bay Hotel

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

When will his decision on the recommendation of the Planning Authority in relation to the proposal to rezone land near the old Fannie Bay Hotel from O1 to O2 be announced and will he explain the reasons for the delay because the matter was considered by the Planning Authority in early April?

ANSWER

With all the hundreds of planning matters that are going on contemporaneously around the Territory, I have no hope of retaining them all in my head. Naturally, this is one of greater notoriety than most. We have all heard of it in the press and so on before. I undertake to inform the honourable member of the exact position as soon as I possibly can.

Freight Subsidies for Perishables for Teachers in Isolated Schools

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Will the government reintroduce, for the Northern Territory Teaching Service, the freight subsidies for perishables for teachers in isolated schools, which are currently being progressively removed by the CTS?

ANSWER

Before any examination by the government, the results of the applications before the Arbitration Commission should be awaited. I understand that this matter is still before that tribunal and, of course, it would be improper of me to say anything in this forum which would be seen to interfere with that organisation's proper functions under the Arbitration Act.

School Assessment Forum at Jingili School

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is he aware of the proposal for Jingili School to be closed for one school day in order that a school assessment forum may be carried out by staff? Why cannot such an assessment be carried out in the many weeks of fully paid stand-down time enjoyed by teachers rather than closing the school for one day?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for the question and the suggestion. I will follow it up.

New Northern Territory Government Directory

Mr HARRIS to CHIEF MINISTER

When will the new Northern Territory Government Directory be available to the public?

ANSWER

I understand that a new government directory will be prepared towards the end of the year and promulgated early in 1981. I am not certain of this but I do believe that it is a directory that is renewed annually.

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