

PART II

THE QUESTION PAPER

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II.

Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.

An asterisk preceding an entry in the index indicates that an answer has not yet been received.

NOTICE GIVEN ON DATE SHOWN

From 15 March 1983

Karguru Bush Camp - Lease

- 795 Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM
1. Will he grant a special purposes lease to the Karguru bush camp, Tennant Creek, to enable the provision of adequate ablution facilities?
 2. Was an application for a special purposes lease for the Karguru bush camp lodged with his department in January 1982 and rejected by him in October 1982?
 3. On what date did he inform the applicants of his decision to reject the application?

Specialist Medical Services

- 799 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING
- Is it a function of Darwin and Alice Springs Hospitals to be a pool for specialist services such as pathology and radiology and, if so, is this function being performed satisfactorily?

Apprentices

- 800 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for EDUCATION
1. Is he aware that only 5 panelbeating firms in Darwin employ apprentices?
 2. Do the Territory Insurance Office and other government authorities give preference to firms employing apprentices?
 3. Are corporations such as Telecom encouraged to employ and apprentice local youths in their Northern Territory operations?

Aboriginal Land Claims

- 810 Mr MacFARLANE to CHIEF MINISTER
- Is it a fact that under the *Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Act* (a) water is a mineral, and (b) river beds can be claimed?

Timber Creek - Land Claim

- 811 Mr MacFARLANE to CHIEF MINISTER
1. Is it a fact that the township of Timber Creek is under land claim?
 2. If the claim is successful, will the houses and improvements become the property of Aboriginals?

Northern Land Council - Legal Advisers

- 813 Mr MacFARLANE to CHIEF MINISTER
- Is he able to say how many legal advisers are employed by the Northern Land Council?

Kalano Association - Department of Health

816 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

How are the financial arrangements with the Kalano Association and the Department of Health proceeding?

Railway Electrification

817 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

In view of his predecessor's statement late 1982 about reticulating power from a gas-fired power station in Darwin to Daly Waters, and in view of the proposed gas-operated power station in Alice Springs, will consideration be given to electrifying the Darwin to Alice Springs railway?

Aerial Medical Services

818 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

1. What are the comparative costs of providing aerial medical services, including routine medical and aerial evacuations, at Katherine, Gove and Darwin?
2. In view of cost benefits will Katherine be considered as the regional centre for Top End aerial medical services?

Tindal - Education

819 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What is being done to anticipate the educational needs of the proposed RAAF base at Tindal?

Electricity - Outback Communities

820 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Accepting that consumers of electricity in major NT centres, including Aboriginal communities, are heavily subsidised, will the NT government consider extending this scheme to outback communities on cattle stations, tourist ventures and mining operations so that town rates are charged for power consumed, with a subsidy to cover the actual cost of power generation and maintenance?

From 22 March 1983

Lot 384, Katherine

822 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM

1. Is he aware of the neglected condition of lot 384, Katherine Terrace, Katherine?
2. If so, when will this lot be brought into keeping with the Territory's tidiest town?

Noxious Weeds - Eradication

823 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION and CONSERVATION

Are all property owners in the Daly River basin cooperating with the Department of Primary Production in eradicating noxious weeds such as noogoora burr?

Specialist Medical Officers

824 Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

What is the (1) number, and (2) description of specialist medical officers (a) employed by his department in the year ended 31 December 1982 who have gone into private practice and have entered into sessional or similar arrangements with the department, (b) employed by his department at 1 January 1983 who are expected to enter private practice prior to 31 December 1983 and are negotiating sessional or similar arrangements with the department, (c) positions existed in the department at 1 January 1983, (d) positions vacant at 1 January 1983, and (e) does the department plan to be employing at 31 December 1983?

Kirton and Whiting Report - Cost

825 Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

What were (a) consultants' fees, and (b) other costs incurred by his department in the production of the Kirton and Whiting Report on urban-based community health centres?

Community Health Medical Officers

826 Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

How many community health medical officer positions (a) existed, and (b) were vacant at 1 March 1983?

Stuart Highway - Realignment

827 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is he aware of plans to realign the Stuart Highway and by-pass the township of Larrimah?

Police Administration Act

828 Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Since its inception in 1979, in regard to Division 4 of Part VII of the *Police Administration Act*, on a yearly basis -

1. how many persons have been apprehended;
2. how many of those apprehended were (a) Aboriginal, and (b) non-Aboriginal;
3. how many of the persons apprehended were subject to subsequent apprehension;
4. what is the average period of apprehension;
5. how many persons were released under the provisions of section 131(1); and
6. how many persons were dealt with under section 132?

Education Budget 1982-83

829 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In regard to the 1982-83 Education budget -

1. what are the specific budget allocations for each primary and secondary school in the Northern Territory;

2. what is the overall allocation for remedial teachers in the Northern Territory education system;
3. what is the budget allocation for teacher recruitment;
4. what is the budget allocation set aside to establish and implement testing procedures and tests themselves;
5. in the sections of the Education budget where both Territory and Commonwealth money is spent, what is the actual allocation of each; and
6. what capital works items are budgeted for and what is the breakdown of their allocations?

2 km Drinking Law - Advertising

830 Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

What was (a) the cost of preparation and distribution, including postage, of the 2 leaflets, (b) the cost of the recent TV advertisements, and (c) the cost of recent newspaper advertisements regarding the 2 km drinking law?

Newcastle Waters. - Power Supply

831 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. When was Newcastle Waters (a) provided with a public power supply, and (b) what was the cost of the provision of that power supply?
2. What is (a) the capacity of the Newcastle power station, (b) how many consumers are using the power, and (c) how many people from Newcastle Waters township signed a petition seeking the provision of a public power supply in October 1980?

Crushing Mill - Darwin Power Station

832 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. Will a crushing mill for converting lump coal into powder for use in the proposed coal-fired power station be constructed in Darwin?
2. If so, (a) where will it be constructed, and (b) what is the anticipated cost?

Mt Wells Battery

833 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM

1. Is the area of the Mt Wells battery still part of the Ban Ban pastoral lease?
2. If so, is this the reason for the delay in full payment by Jingellic Minerals to the government for the Mt Wells battery and associated leases?
3. If so, when will this be resolved?

'Boozers are Losers' Campaign

834 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

1. How much is being spent on the 'Boozers are Losers' campaign?
2. For what reason was the contract awarded to a southern firm?
3. Has any contact been made with the liquor industry with a view to controlling the nature of liquor advertising?

Pathology Laboratory - Darwin Hospital

835 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

1. Can he inform me as to the fate of the pathology laboratory at the Darwin Hospital?
2. Has he considered the future of the laboratory in the light of a lack of such scientific facilities in the Department of Primary Production?

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - LAPSED ON PROROGATION 1 DECEMBER 1982

Questions Nos.: 44, 133, 195, 210, 224, 379, 500, 512, 513, 517, 564, 611, 618, 640, 645, 649, 657, 663, 670, 675, 697, 707, 719, 723, 728, 731, 735, 736, 753, 758, 760, 761, 763, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793.

Karguru Bush Camp - Ablution Facilities

794 Mr BELL to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Has he received advice from his department that improved ablution facilities are urgently required at the Karguru bush camp in Tennant Creek?

ANSWER

On 6 October 1982 the then Acting Minister for Community Development, Hon. Marshall Perron, wrote to you concerning this same question.

The situation has not changed because the matter of a lease of a suitable site has not yet been resolved.

In an endeavour to stimulate consideration of the whole question a series of proposals was put to the town council earlier this month and a response is expected shortly.

Karguru Bush Camp - Children's Hospitalisation

796 Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and HOUSING

1. How many times were infants and children under the age of 12 years, who are resident at the Karguru bush camp in Tennant Creek, hospitalised during (a) the previous 12 months, and (b) the previous wet season?
2. How many infants and children under the age of 12 years, who are resident at the Karguru bush camp in Tennant Creek, were hospitalised during (a) the previous 12 months, and (b) the previous wet season?
3. In general, what was the most prevalent cause of hospitalisation?

ANSWER

The permanent population of Karguru bush camp is 9 adults and 5 children. Sixteen others visit the camp.

1. (a) There were 9 admissions to hospital during the previous 12 months (1 child was admitted 4 times). Two of those admitted were not permanent residents.
(b) There were 5 admissions to hospital during the previous wet season. Three of those admitted were not permanent residents.
2. (a) There were 5 children hospitalised during the previous 12 months, 2 of whom were not permanent residents.
(b) There were 5 children hospitalised during the previous wet season, 3 of whom were not permanent residents.
3. Diarrhoea.

Power Station Costs

797 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What is the cost of operating power stations at (a) Bamyili, (b) Beswick Station, (c) Duck Creek (Djembe), (d) Maranboy Police Station, and Roper Settlement (Ngukurr)?

ANSWER

The cost of operating the following power stations during 1981-82 was as follows: Bamyili \$291 313; Beswick \$135 000; Duck Creek \$30 000; Ngukurr \$252 000; and Maranboy police station \$13 000.

A small proportion of the above costs would be applicable to the provision of other essential services, e.g., water and sewerage, on the 4 Aboriginal communities.

The operating costs for the Maranboy police station power plant is for fuel only with daily maintenance handled by the policeman on duty.

Electricity Reticulation

798 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

At the November 1982 sittings the minister then in charge of NTEC spoke of supplying towns such as Daly Waters with electricity from a Darwin-based coal-fired power station. What preparations are being made to reticulate electricity when the station comes on line?

ANSWER

NTEC maintains ongoing review of the economics of supply of electricity from Channel Island power station to towns remote from Darwin. Formal proposals are anticipated in the near future.

Economic studies already completed examine cost benefits resulting from the connection of both Pine Creek and Mataranka to Katherine by 1984, i.e. prior to coal-fired generation in Darwin.

Further studies examine cost benefits of connecting Darwin to Katherine by 1988, to coincide with the commissioning of Channel Island power station.

It would seem that connection of other minor centres, such as Daly Waters, would not be shown to be economically justified at this stage.

Studies will be continued.

St Vidgeon Station - Caretaker

801 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM

Has the government employed a caretaker to protect its recently purchased St Vidgeon Station or is it satisfied that its cattle, improvements and tourist attractions are safe?

ANSWER

No action has been taken to appoint a caretaker for St Vidgeon Station.

As very few cattle remain on the property, and all improvements are in an extremely poor state of repair, the appointment of a caretaker is not contemplated.

The government is reviewing long term land use in the area.

Clearing of Blocks - Katherine

802 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Is he aware that there is no law or by-law whereby owners of vacant blocks of land in Katherine can be forced to keep their blocks clear of rubbish, vermin and long grass?

ANSWER

On 4 March 1983 the notification of Katherine Town Council By-laws was gazetted, and the by-laws came into effect. Members of this Assembly, as always, have an opportunity to consider these by-laws and move a motion to disallow all or part, during the 2 sitting days following notification.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS RECEIVED

By-law 6.13(1) states: 'Where there is upon any land or premises any material or accumulation of materials which is likely to cause a public nuisance, to give rise to a condition dangerous to public health, or to attract vermin to that land or premises or to form a harbourage form vermin the Council may cause a notice in writing to be given to the occupier of the land or premises requiring him -

- (a) to place such material in a vermin-proof receptacle or receptacles of a kind specified in the notice within the time specified therein; or
- (b) to remove, dispose of, destroy or otherwise deal with such material within the time specified in the notice."

Other by-laws give the Council the authority to rectify the situation if the occupier does not comply, and recover the expenses.

Fitzroy Pastoral Lease - Land Claim

803 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM

1. Is he aware that the viability of the Fitzroy pastoral lease will be threatened by an Aboriginal land claim on the permanent water called the 12-mile waterhole?
2. Has the government, as landlord, agreed to this action?

ANSWER

The Northern Territory government has no record of an Aboriginal land claim over the 12-mile waterhole on Fitzroy Station.

Pedestrian Crossings - Katherine

804 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

1. Is he aware that recently 4 pedestrian crossings were eliminated in Katherine because they were not 'up to standard'?
2. Was the Road Safety Council and or any organisation consulted or was the decision to alter what had been a satisfactory circumstance an arbitrary one disregarding local knowledge?

ANSWER

1. Yes. During a recent visit to Katherine I inspected the areas where these crossings had been removed and discussed the issue with the Mayor of Katherine.
2. The crossings in Katherine had usage levels far below nationally accepted standards and constituted a potential hazard to pedestrians.

National experience has demonstrated that pedestrian crossings which do not attract sufficient usage represent a greater hazard than crossing the road where no road markings are provided at all.

The Road Safety Council is in agreement with this proposal and prior to removal of the crossings in Katherine advertisements were placed in the local newspaper which attracted no response.

Aboriginal Interpreter Service

805 Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Can he advise whether the federal government has given any commitment in relation to the necessary funds sought to establish an interpreter service as recommended by the working party?

2. If the federal government has not been prepared to provide such funding for an Aboriginal interpreter service, will the Northern Territory government make a firm and unequivocal commitment to establish, as soon as possible, an interpreter service, whether or not the Commonwealth government is prepared to partly fund the project?

ANSWER

1. To date the Commonwealth government has not committed funding to establish a separate Aboriginal interpreter service as recommended in the 'Report on the Need for Aboriginal Interpreting in the Northern Territory'. Representations have been made to both the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs seeking comment on the report as this is a Commonwealth responsibility elsewhere.

The former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs indicated that the matter was being considered jointly with his ministerial colleague responsible for ethnic affairs. In the interim the language services section of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs is now providing interpreting services in Aboriginal languages. Similarly, the NT Interpreting-Translating Service maintains a list of Aboriginal interpreters who are called upon by government departments.

It is anticipated that discussions will be undertaken with the Commonwealth in March-April 1983 to consider the NT government submission to provide improved interpreting-translating services particularly for Aboriginal languages.

2. The NT government cannot pre-empt these discussions by unilaterally implementing the working party report recommendations. The government is, however, firm in its commitment to provide multilingual services and information including Aboriginal languages.

Mineral Leases - CRA

812 Mr MacFARLANE to CHIEF MINISTER

Is it a fact that CRA has negotiated mineral leases with Aboriginals but cannot get access?

ANSWER

I assume that the honourable member's question relates only to CRA interests in his electorate. The company is of course negotiating on mining matters elsewhere as well.

In the Katherine area CRA is a party to a joint venture agreement over the Mt Todd mineral leases which are within the area claimed as the Katherine Aboriginal Land Claim. At the moment, there is nothing to prevent access to these leases. The company intends to make submissions to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner during the hearing of this land claim, in order to protect access to the leases (which were issued before the claim was lodged).

Fitzroy Station - Occupation

815 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for LANDS, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM

1. What are the details of the occupation of the Fitzroy Station pastoral lease by Aboriginals?
2. If the lease is occupied by squatting, is it with the consent of the owners of the lease?

ANSWER

1. A group of up to about 30 Aborigines has been occupying an area of land adjoining the 12-mile waterhole on Fitzroy Station for about 2 years.
2. These people are squatting on the area, apparently without the consent of the owners.

Air Service - Darwin/Alice Springs

821 Mr MacFARLANE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Will the 'milk run' service between Darwin and Alice Springs be made a regional airline by forbidding competition against it by TAA and Ansett as competition against Qantas by TAA and Ansett is forbidden on intra-state services?

ANSWER

The 'milk-run' (Darwin-Katherine-Tennant Creek-Alice Springs-return) is very definitely a part of the regional air service provided by Airlines of Northern Australia.

The service is protected through the exclusivity provisions of ANA's RPT licence, which forbids commercial activity along the route without the express permission of the licensee.

Direct Darwin-Alice Springs-Darwin services provided by TAA and Ansett will continue as part of the national trunk network.

Use of Firearms by Security Guards

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In view of the serious deficiencies in training security guards in the use of firearms disclosed in the case of R v Giuseppe Truglio, is the government revising its present policy in relation to tightening the regulations on the use of firearms by security guards?

ANSWER

During the last session, I had an exchange of questions and answers with the honourable Leader of the Opposition on this subject. The Registrar of Firearms, who is also the Commissioner of Police, is an expert in the use of firearms. It has been his attitude that the existing requirements for anyone, let alone security guards, to obtain a firearms licence have been more than sufficient to ensure that no one who would not use a firearm responsibly would ever receive a licence. A noticeable amount of the correspondence that passes over my desk is from persons who have been unsuccessful in obtaining a firearms licence. On the face of it, some of these applicants seem to have good and sufficient reason to obtain a licence. Nonetheless, I must say that, in all cases, I have upheld the registrar's decision.

Mr Speaker, the registrar is still of the opinion that his standards are sufficient. However, having received what amounts to a representation from the Leader of the Opposition, I will take the matter up with him again. I think I advised the Leader of the Opposition last year of the various requirements laid down by the registrar. Nonetheless, I will look at the matter again and see if the registrar has had any change of viewpoint.

Barramundi Fishery

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Comments have been made that the poor wet season could have an effect on the Northern Territory barramundi fishery. What is the current state of the industry, and is the barramundi fishery threatened as a result of the poor wet season?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the impact of the lateness of the Wet on the barramundi fishery was a matter of concern to the government. Cabinet was briefed by one of the department's fisheries experts on the impact it was likely to have on the fishery. Barramundi fishermen seem to be taking a reasonable catch at this stage of the season. It has been suggested that this level of catch might be short-lived. It might peak and then drop off very quickly, and the rest of the season may not be as good. It has also been put to us by the fisheries expert that, if there is any adverse impact on the fishery as a result of the late Wet and a possibility of fishermen catching fish with roe at this early stage of the season, the impact on the fishery would be seen in 3 to 4 years' time rather than later this year or in the next season.

Mr Speaker, this matter is of great concern to the government because the barramundi fishery is a unique asset of the Northern Territory. We will watch it very closely and follow the advice of the fisheries experts.

Hospital Bed Charges

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

In view of the federal government's commitment to a system of free public hospital in-patient treatment for all Australians, can he give an undertaking that he will not increase hospital bed charges prior to the introduction of that scheme?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask that the question be placed on notice.

Stuart Highway at Alice Springs

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he advise when work will actually start on the realignment and reconstruction of the Stuart Highway through the town of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I was able to obtain agreement from the previous Minister for Transport that the Commonwealth would fund 75% of this project - a total amount of approximately \$3m. Tenders are expected to be called on 21 March and it is anticipated that a contract will be let in late May. Work on the project should be completed by June 1984.

Wildman River Station

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for LANDS

For what public purpose was the Wildman River Station acquired or bought by the government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not want to make an exhaustive statement on the reasons for which Wildman River Station was purchased. The honourable member for Nightcliff would know the location and virtues of that property which, unfortunately, has not been run very successfully since it was first released to the public. My recollection is that Wildman River was first leased to Mr E.J. Connellan of Alice Springs, who either turned in the lease or forfeited it. It appears that no greater success has been achieved by subsequent owners because the government tendered to purchase Wildman River Station at either a receiver's or liquidator's sale. From memory, that occurred late last year. A very detailed examination of the property is being undertaken now by a working party. Wildman River has been used as a safari camp by Wimray Safaris over the last several years and therefore it has tourist potential. As Minister for Lands, I have in hand an application from Wimray Safaris for a lease for safari purposes over a portion of the station. I have directed the Secretary of the Department of Lands to issue a lease upon reasonable terms to Wimray Safaris so that it can establish a base safari camp at a location on Wildman River. It has also applied for what amounts to a game reserve on another part of Wildman River and that application is being held in abeyance pending the complete examination of the assets of the property.

I am informed that, on the agricultural and horticultural side, there is land there suitable for growing horticultural products quite extensively. I

might indicate, Mr Speaker, that very serious approaches have been made by persons who wish to engage in agriculture and horticulture on a large scale. It may be possible to accommodate these people from the land that will become available on Wildman River.

Basically, I think that you could say that there are a number of reasons for the purchase of the area; for example, tourism and conservation. There are areas on Wildman River which we want to dedicate for conservation purposes, and also for agricultural and horticultural purposes. Of course, any remnant of the property would still be available for buffalo domestication projects should it be decided to extend those there. The owners of Point Stuart Station have shown interest in purchasing part of Wildman River.

There are a number of reasons for the government purchasing a property such as Wildman River Station. This sort of move will not be uncommon in the future as the government attempts to rationalise land holdings in the Territory and to obtain maximum utilisation of land in the community interest.

Sunday Air Service for Nhulunbuy

Mr LEO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he say when a replacement air service into and out of Nhulunbuy on Sundays will commence?

ANSWER

Unfortunately, Nhulunbuy is not serviced by any other means of transport. The road is closed during the wet season. It is a hopeless situation. The people there rightly feel very isolated when there is a disruption to the air services provided. In recent weeks there have been changes to the air services to the disadvantage of the community there. The Chief Minister and I went to Nhulunbuy to talk to various people, particularly the Confederation of Industry. Airline representatives went there at my request and talked to a number of townspeople affected by changes in the air services. I understand that Airlines of Northern Australia has committed itself to review schedules so that a Tuesday service can be returned to Nhulunbuy. I understand from Mr Jack Cue, the TAA South Australian manager, that he has undertaken to review Sunday services. The government is not in a position to impose a strict schedule on services that emanate from other states. We can only try to cooperate with the airlines so that they will provide the best service that they can to the people of Nhulunbuy.

Schwartz Crescent Crossing

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Has he had any response to his letter to Alice Springs Town Council urging it to use money provided in the 1982-83 budget to build the Schwartz Crescent crossing?

ANSWER

I have not seen any such letter but that does not mean that there is not one in my office. I will advise the honourable member later.

Community Health Programs

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

The Australian Labor Party platform in the recent federal election committed an injection of \$20m into community health programs. Can he undertake not to reduce Northern Territory community health centres staff or services any further until details of these programs are negotiated?

ANSWER

It will take time for us to assess the impact of the Labor health policy on the Northern Territory. Until such time as a proper assessment is made, I am unable to answer the honourable member.

Brandt Road

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

After repeated requests to Department of Transport and Works officers for repairs to be done at Brandt Road in Berrimah, will he give consideration to such repairs?

ANSWER

The road in question is outside the municipal boundary and is regularly maintained by the Department of Transport and Works. During the current financial year, some major repairs have been made to one section by raising the road level and installing a relief culvert. The estimated cost of this work is \$10 000. Like much of Knuckey's Lagoon area, there are severe drainage problems on Brandt Road. The road was not constructed to a high standard and a need has been identified for upgrading. That project is included on a list of roads in the rural area for upgrading to seal standard in 1984-85. Apparently, some local residents have suggested that the proposed Knuckey arterial road should follow Brandt Road rather than the Secrett Road line. This will be discussed by local residents at a public meeting at Berrimah on 9 April and one of my officers will attend that meeting.

Meadowfresh Products

Mr VALE to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Could he indicate if a milk-type product known as Meadowfresh is currently being sold in the Northern Territory and if approval has been given for its sale? Can he indicate why the Queensland government banned that particular product in that state?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member has given me notice of this question. A company known as Meadowfresh Farms of Australia is marketing a dairy-based food drink in some areas of Australia of which, it is claimed, 75% is derived from cow's milk plus vegetable fats, sweeteners, butters, stabilisers, emulsifiers, vitamins and flavouring. Queensland has just prohibited the sale of the product in that state on the ground that it does not comply with the provisions of Queensland's Field Milk Act. Previously, Western Australia and Victoria banned sales. Whilst sales have not been prohibited formally in South Australia and New South Wales, both states have not approved sales of the product as current labelling does not conform to the requirements of the Pure

Foods Act and health authorities are querying the vitamin and mineral supplement of the product. I am advised that, provided these matters are resolved, there will be no trade restrictions on sales of the product in South Australia and New South Wales.

Mr Speaker, unlike Queensland, the Northern Territory has no field milk legislation and there is no impediment to the sale of the product in the Northern Territory from the agricultural point of view. However, I understand that the Northern Territory Food Standards Act, administered by the Department of Health, contains a provision that a food cannot be sold in the Territory unless it is approved for sale in the states of Australia. The Minister for Health has asked his department to ascertain the details of the market requirements for the product in the states and the ACT and it is not appropriate for me to comment further at this stage. I am not able to say why Queensland refused the right of sale of that product recently other than that I believe Queensland has a very strong dairy lobby which may have had some influence in the matter.

Statement by Women's Adviser

Ms D'ROZARIO to CHIEF MINISTER

Are the views expressed by his Women's Adviser, Mrs Lynn Ryan, at a public meeting to mark International Women's Day on 8 March last the views of his government and, if not, what steps has he taken to assure the public that the views expressed by Mrs Ryan on that occasion are not the views of his government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, my recollection is that my Women's Adviser spoke to a meeting a week ago on the occasion of International Women's Day. She brought to the attention of a wide audience in the Territory the provisions of the international convention relating to discrimination against women. It is surprising to me that the honourable member for Sanderson would even raise the subject by way of a question because it has been debated in this Assembly before today. The honourable member for Sanderson was in the Assembly at the time and needs only to refresh her memory by reference to Hansard to see that the Northern Territory, together with all other Australian governments including the federal government, was at that time examining the convention. I think it had been signed at that stage by the federal government and was subject to a federal clause. This, of course, entailed ratification. The convention was being examined clause by clause and, in due course, that process was finalised. The convention is supported by all Australian governments. I think that the Women's Adviser, Mrs Lynn Ryan, performed a useful service in bringing this convention, which is virtually unknown outside a select circle, to the notice of the community generally. Based on the response to my office, the community certainly is concerned with some provisions of the convention. The fact is that this document is not just a Northern Territory document nor an Australian document, but a world document. In some places that document is the only thing that women have as legal support in circumstances that are much more adverse to women than they are in Australia.

I feel that the airing given the subject by my Women's Adviser has been well worth while in that it has brought the matter to attention. I notice that none of the honourable members opposite really did anything about bringing to public attention the provision of the document before that was done by my appointee.

Members interjecting.

Mr EVERINGHAM: The honourable squawky members opposite have been very silent on the subject out in the electorate. The various provisions of this convention will now become much more familiar to women in the Territory because many of them who had never heard of it, despite the fact that we have 4 women members in this Assembly, will now make further inquiries.

Mr Speaker, although the support of my government for the convention is well known, the speech made by the Women's Adviser has been extremely useful and has indicated to Territory women the existence of this convention, which certainly has now been agreed to by all of us in this Assembly.

Statement by Women's Adviser

Ms D'ROZARIO to CHIEF MINISTER

Is he aware that, at a public rally held on 8 March to mark the occasion of the International Women's Day, his Women's Adviser, Mrs Lynn Ryan, called for the rejection of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women? In view of the fact that he now thinks Mrs Lynn Ryan performed a commendable service to the women of the Northern Territory, does the statement that she made on that occasion signal retraction of the support of government members expressed in this Assembly?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I wonder where the honourable member for Sanderson was on the day of the rally. As I understand it, she was not present to point out the positive sides, as she sees them, of this particular document. It is a shame that my appointee was the only representative of government there. I was in Alice Springs at the time and, as far as I know, there were no honourable members of this Assembly present at the rally, which is a matter of considerable shame. As far as the government is concerned, its policy is settled. We do not run an organisation in which no other views are tolerated. I would have thought that criticism would have been forthcoming if my Women's Adviser did exactly as I told her to do on all occasions. She is entitled to her own views and, whilst those views do not necessarily represent the government's view, I think that what she has done has been very useful.

Corporal Punishment in Schools

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he assure me that common sense will prevail when regulations currently being considered pertaining to the use of corporal punishment in schools are decided upon?

ANSWER

Whether the view expressed is common sense or not will depend on one's own outlook. The policy statement on education which I will be tabling during the course of the sittings has a section on discipline and in that section the subject of corporal punishment is mentioned. Although it has yet to be tabled, I will quote from the document a short passage on the subject of corporal punishment. There has been a lot of interest in this subject. I am not sure if honourable members receive the sort of mail I receive on the subject of corporal punishment but many people in this country are concerned about it. I quote from the document:

If, in the extreme cases, corporal punishment is considered necessary, it should be carried out. It will, however, be kept to a minimum, not administered in the presence of other students and administered only by the head teacher or a person authorised by the head teacher.

Mr Speaker, we believe that that is a sensible and reasonable approach to the subject. Obviously, it will not be one that will meet universal acclaim. However, we believe that, taking views generally in the community, it will be supported.

Medical Over-servicing and Fraud

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

Medical over-servicing and fraud have been alleged to be a major cost to the Australian taxpayer. In view of the proposed return to a free hospital system, can he indicate what measures have been adopted in the Northern Territory to control this problem since it was given wide publicity some months ago?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, to my knowledge, no medical fraud has been carried out in the Northern Territory but I could be wrong. The system has been implemented by the department so that the hospital charges are very varied. In their dealings with the medical societies or health funds, to my knowledge the doctors in the Northern Territory have acted very correctly. Of course, we are always looking for any loopholes that may eventuate. The honourable member's question is quite unfounded.

Corporal Punishment in Schools

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

My question is supplementary to one asked by the honourable member for Tiwi. I too have a vital interest in this area. What will be the legal position under the new policy and the regulations to be promulgated if parents or guardians of a child advise the principal of a school, in writing, that they do not wish their child to be subjected to corporal punishment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member asks for a legal interpretation which I certainly could not provide to her off the cuff. I will take the question on board with a view to giving some sort of response during the course of the sittings.

Government Printing Contracts

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Does the government have an expectation that, when the Government Printing Office lets printing contracts to private printing firms, the work will be done within Australia?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not aware that printing had been undertaken outside of Australia on behalf of the Government Printing Office although, on occasion,

there could be a need for some printing to be undertaken in support of exhibitions and trade missions conducted by the government overseas. If the honourable member has any instances that need examination, I will be pleased to accept his representations on the matter.

Old Darwin Hospital Site

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for LANDS

Expressions of interest have been called for the future use of the old Darwin hospital site. Is he able to inform me what responses have been received to date?

ANSWER

The government has been receiving expressions of interest regarding the whole of, and various parts of, the old Darwin Hospital site and proposals for its usage. I considered that the frequency of these applications warranted the government taking action to determine what purpose the site could be put to and what degree of interest there was in using it for those purposes. Last year I requested the Secretary of the Department of Lands to examine the best purposes to which the site might be put. Mr Speaker, I would remind you and honourable members that the site consists of several hectares. It is a unique site. It is what a real estate agent might describe as the 'never to be repeated offer'. It is adjacent to Darwin Harbour and is a very large area of land contiguous to the central business district. It even has a small beach adjacent to it.

It seems to me that, in putting this site to use, the government must ensure that it selects the best possible proposal. After taking advice, it became clear that, to break the site up and farm it out in small parcels willy-nilly or piecemeal, would not be the best way to deal with it. In my opinion, it would be a bad way of dealing with that site. By arrangement with the secretary of the department, the proposed usage was determined and advertisements were prepared and have appeared throughout Australia. They appeared in the Territory and even worldwide in various publications. I recall seeing a copy of the advertisement in the Economist, the English weekly news journal, only a couple of weeks ago. No doubt, honourable members will have seen the advertisement in Australian publications recently.

Mr Speaker, I have had no comment at all from anyone on the proposed uses for this site as outlined in the advertisements. I have not kept track of any applications or proposals that may have come into the Department of Lands at this stage. I believe the closing date for applications is still many weeks away. By intention, we set quite a long period for response because one wants to give people at a distance from the Territory the chance to put in very detailed proposals. They may well need to travel to the Territory and engage local consultants in order to put a detailed proposal to government.

When the applications close, I expect a report from the Department of Lands telling me how many responses have been received with a brief description of each application. Even then, the matter will be far from over. There will need to be a detailed evaluation of the proposals by ourselves and by the government's own specialists. It may be necessary to engage some outside specialists to help on that. When this evaluation is completed, Cabinet will need to examine the whole thing and satisfy itself that the best proposal is to be accepted and then, obviously, an approach will have to be made to that applicant to seal an agreement in watertight terms. I would say the whole process will take several months yet. Personally, I would not expect it to be

completed by the end of June.

While I am on my feet, Mr Speaker, I might just speak about the site adjacent to the Casuarina Square which has been subject to a similar process. Although I have not seen any of the applications, I understand that we have 3 proposals: 2 by southern concerns and another involving at least some local people perhaps with some southern backing. That is all I know about them because the process of evaluation is being carried out by officers in the Department of Lands. When they have formed an evaluation, no doubt they will come to me with their recommendations. At that time, I will have a look at the whole thing myself and then put it before Cabinet. We will proceed to deal with the proponent who is offering the best deal for the Territory and for the people who live in that area.

Maintenance for Aerial Medical Aircraft

Mr LEO to MINISTER for HEALTH

What new maintenance procedures have been adopted for the Aerial Medical Service Nomad aircraft, which are to be returned to Nhulunbuy, to correct the appalling maintenance record described 8 months ago by the previous Minister for Health?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we have 6 Nomads and one of them operated out of Nhulunbuy last year. As outlined by the former Minister for Health, it was a terrible aircraft. One wheel had fallen off after take-off. Hub-caps fell off. The door fell off. The engine caught fire. Those incidents did not give the nursing federation members in that area any confidence. Consequently, a request was put to the former minister to make alternative arrangements for air evacuation services out of Nhulunbuy.

After examining the situation, and after discussions with nursing federation members in that area, they agreed to the Nomads returning to Nhulunbuy provided certain requests were met. The first was that we had to give them a guarantee that the aircraft would be maintained at a level that they would accept. We accept as adequate the level of maintenance that is being carried out on Nomads in the Broken Hill Royal Flying Doctor Service. The second request was that the Nomads be air-conditioned. Air-conditioning kits are available from the manufacturer free of charge to the government. We will have them installed. The third request was for sound-proofing for passenger and patient comfort. The fourth request was for a communication mode between the rear of the cabin and the pilot. Those measures will be undertaken. The Nomads will be upgraded. Two will be based in Darwin and 2 will be based in Gove. As well we will employ an extra maintenance operator in Gove to ensure that the aircraft in that area receive proper maintenance. When those aircraft are used to evacuate people to Darwin, they will be checked in Darwin. Therefore, we feel that we have the maintenance side covered.

Mr Speaker, if we were to replace those 4 aircraft with another 2, which might not be sufficient, it would require an outlay of some \$5m. By spending \$110 000, we feel that the service can be provided to the people of Nhulunbuy and the east and the west regions of the Arnhem area. We are even investigating the possibility of using those aircraft as far down as Borroloola. Charter operators will be used in the event that the 4 Nomad aircraft are all in use at any one time. We have a procedure which will enable doctors in those regions to organise the charter of aircraft from one of our local operators at very short notice. I am happy to say, Mr Speaker, that the Royal Australian Nursing

Federation is happy with those arrangements. I would like to get that service into operation as soon as possible. It will take several weeks to update and improve the condition of the aircraft because of the type of work that will be carried out on them. That work will be evaluated in about 12 months time. The consensus is that, provided the aircraft that was stationed originally in Gove is no longer in the area, they are quite happy to accept the Nomads. Consequently, I have instructed the department to dispose of that particular aircraft and also another one because we feel that 4 should do the job.

Valuer-General in Alice Springs

Mr VALE to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he advise if there is a proposal to open an office of the Valuer-General in Alice Springs and, if so, when this might occur?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Valuer-General of the Northern Territory is a Commonwealth official. Nonetheless, he is appointed by the Northern Territory government under the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act. He is based in Adelaide but he has a substantial number of valuers in Darwin - 14 from memory. This agency operation, where the Territory uses Commonwealth valuers as its agents, is quite satisfactory. It has worked well in the past. I can see no reason why it will not continue to work well in the future. In fact, it is a similar arrangement to the one that we had with the Auditor-General. You will recall that that arrangement, which was working satisfactorily, was terminated and the Territory had to secure the services of private firms of accountants to audit government departments' accounts and accounts of statutory authorities and other government agencies under the general supervision of the Territory Auditor-General and a small office staffed by 7 or 8 people.

It has been a matter of concern to me that no valuer has been based in Alice Springs. With the expansion of that town, delays were experienced, although one could not really complain about the service. I spoke to the Valuer-General on his last visit to Darwin and mentioned to him the problems that we were experiencing in Alice Springs. He agreed to consider the appointment of a valuer to be based in Alice Springs to look after valuation in central Australia. I am confident that this step will be taken. It requires approval by the Commonwealth government as well as the Territory government and its processes are much slower than ours even though ours sometimes work slowly enough. It will probably have to obtain approval from the Public Service Board in Canberra. I would expect that, within the year, a valuer should be based in Alice Springs to operate an office on behalf of the Valuer-General. I think this reflects the continuing growth of Alice Springs and central Australia, and the needs of that community.

Toy Library at Batchelor School

Mr DOOLAN to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is it the intention of the Department of Education to increase funds to their previous level in order to finance activities for the toy library at Batchelor School as the school council believes that the toy library provides a most valuable service to the general public?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have before me details of the specific activities of

the toy library at Batchelor School. If the member is referring to the Northern Territory Toy Library Association, the government has recently agreed to assist with funds after the association was informed a few weeks ago that federal funds would not be forthcoming. The reason the Northern Territory has agreed to support the organisation is that the Department of Education, in particular, uses extensively the facilities that the Toy Library Association provides as do some other government agencies such as the Department of Community Development and the Department of Health. Subsequent to the Territory government's decision to assist with the funding, the Commonwealth agreed to fund the organisation again. Previously, the association was wholly funded by the Commonwealth. We are now waiting to see what funds will be provided by the Commonwealth with a view to assessing what funds will need to be provided by the Territory to continue these services. Certainly, we see value in the work that is being done and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is continued.

Local Government in the Rural Area

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Can he outline the criteria upon which people were selected as members of the advisory council to look at the question of local government in the rural area?

ANSWER

There were no specific criteria under which people could apply to become members of the advisory board. In fact, that was done quite deliberately. Often, when applications are called for, people take up position as of right under certain criteria. They become carved in stone and regard it as their divine right to be there forever.

The government sought applications from people who had an active interest in the rural area and in the concept of local government for that area. I was quite open-minded, Mr Speaker, about anybody who was prepared to apply. I noted with interest that members of the Darwin City Council felt it was their right to be on the new committee. I noted other people saying that nobody from Humpty Doo is included. In fact, 2 people from Humpty Doo are on the committee. Someone else has complained that a representative of small businesses should have been included. The list could go on forever. I am of the view that the committee is very well-balanced and is broadly representative of the rural community. I would be quite happy to discuss the matter with anybody who has some dissatisfaction with the selection. I believe that all the members are very capable. They will play a very positive role in discussion of the concept of local government for the rural area and I intend to work very closely with them. I do not have a deadline for the committee to complete its work. I was involved in a similar exercise over many years with the Town Management Board in Tennant Creek. Discussions and consultations with the government and the community went on for nearly 7 years. That was rather a long time. It could have been cut shorter if various parties had so wished. If the people in the rural community wish to take 3 or 5 years to arrive at a conclusion about local government for their area, I do not have a problem with that.

Half-yearly Water Bills

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is it still the government's intention to introduce half-yearly water billing?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the question of water billing is under review and it may be that further flexibility is desirable. At present, I am not able to say that we will introduce half-yearly billing.

Liquor Act

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

As a result of an amendment to the Liquor Act passed last year by the government, a person who was innocent of any offences had his property forfeited under the act. Will the government amend the act urgently so that property of innocent persons is not at risk?

ANSWER

I am aware of the concerns of the honourable member for Fannie Bay relating to the strict legal interpretation of section 101 of the Liquor Act. Because of this, I have sought a legal opinion and I will advise the Assembly of this opinion at a later date. Section 96(1) of the act says: 'A thing seized under this part is, by the force of this section, on the conviction of a person for an offence in connection with which it was seized, forfeited to the Territory'. Section 101 states: 'All things forfeited under this part may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of in such manner as the chairman thinks fit'.

I did some more research and looked at the original debates regarding this legislation. Of course, the member quite rightly said that the opposition had an amendment which was defeated in the Assembly. I had a good look at what the former Minister for Health said and, in some respects, the intention in the debates tended to favour an owner of a vehicle which had been forfeited to the court. I give the honourable member an undertaking that we will have a good look at it. As I said earlier, I have asked for a legal opinion and I will be in a position to provide the member with that information at a later date. However, the information I have to hand is that the Acting Liquor Commissioner has acted within the law and has not done anything wrong. I believe it is for us as legislators to try to work out what the method should be.

Sand Mining in Alice Springs Area

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Has a decision been made regarding the future of sand mining in the Alice Springs area, particularly in relation to the Todd River and allied areas?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am well aware that the honourable member has raised this issue with me before. There is little doubt that the amount of sand required in the Alice Springs area for construction work and so on greatly exceeds that which would be available in the Todd River bed and probably in all riverbeds adjacent to Alice Springs. A final policy has not been determined because clearly we have not arrived at a position of grave crisis yet. As I have indicated, in the longer term, the resources available for that purpose within the riverbeds around Alice Springs will not be adequate. This means that further survey work has to be done on different types of deposits for the purposes of sand extraction. Recently, I wrote to the honourable member pointing this out. A study is being undertaken by the Department of Mines and Energy on likely sand resources for future needs.

Velodrome in Alice Springs

Mr VALE to MINISTER for YOUTH, SPORT and RECREATION

Is he aware of a near fatal accident which involved 4 young cyclists in Alice Springs early in March and can he advise when and what funding will be made available to the Alice Springs Amateur Cycling Club for the construction of a velodrome in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

I am aware of the near fatal accident that those young cyclists had. The only information that I can give the honourable member is that discussions have taken place between the Amateur Cycling Club in Alice Springs, an officer of the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation and myself. In the 1982-83 allocation, some \$19 000 was made available to the Alice Springs Amateur Cycling Club for the development of a velodrome in that area. Unfortunately, the advice that I have is that the club does not want to proceed at this stage because it feels that \$19 000 might not be sufficient to carry out the type of construction that will be most suitable in the long term. Discussions are continuing. Hopefully, within the next financial year, we will be able to come up with a sensible development arrangement.

Floods in Alice Springs

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Could he advise the Assembly of the situation in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

The problems in Alice Springs became rather more intense last night than they have been since it commenced raining there several days ago. I understand that torrential rain commenced in Alice Springs at about 5 pm yesterday and that some 120 mm of rain, which I think is somewhat over 6 inches, fell by 9 pm. As a consequence, there was a great rise in the level of the Todd River and considerable flooding of low-lying areas of Alice Springs. I was called to a meeting at police headquarters last evening. The Police Commissioner convened a meeting consisting of himself, the Acting Secretary of the Department of Transport and Works, the Chairman of NTEC, the Director of Emergency Services and various senior police officers including the Deputy Commissioner. The purpose of that meeting was to assess the situation in Alice Springs and decide what measures, if any, needed to be taken to lend assistance to the town and to ensure that normal services were brought back into operation as quickly as possible. I was fortunate in that, before the meeting, I had been contacted by a number of people whom I know in Alice Springs and they apprised me of their personal circumstances. Almost everyone who spoke to me was in pretty good humour. In fact, the mood of the people who spoke to me was that they were almost enjoying what one might call the crisis situation. It seems that human beings respond well in an emergency.

The main problem was that the Alice Springs power-station had had to close down because of seepage due to the very heavy rainfall. Honourable members may not be familiar with the location of the Alice Springs powerhouse. It is located in a valley behind the Alice Springs golf course. I have requested the Minister for Mines and Energy, the minister responsible for NTEC, to institute an in-house inquiry to ascertain precisely the reasons for the shut-down of the power-station. I cannot say this with any certainty at this stage, but I imagine that the 120 mm of rain within a 4-hour period caused a

considerable run-off into the valley.

Apparently, the powerhouse was not flooded directly but there was seepage of water into a pit or basement underneath the generators or turbines. The pit is there to enable maintenance to take place. This problem would have been easy to rectify if it had been possible to bring pumps from the other side of the Todd River. The pumps were dispatched and were transported over the town bridge which I understand at no stage was submerged. Unfortunately, there is a 400 m stretch of road which is not bituminised. It is referred to as the back way to the power-station. That 400 m of road has not been bituminised because of a dispute between persons desirous of registering a sacred site and the government. The fire engine which was taking the pumps to the power-station bogged on that stretch of road and the pumps were not used. That occurred some 1.5 km from the power-station and a sizeable hill lay between. For that reason, those pumps did not reach the power-station. Therefore we decided in Darwin that, if need be, we would dispatch pumps from here to the power-station. In any event, other pumps were located and I believe that they are now operating at the power-station to extract the water from the pit. Infra-red drying machines were dispatched from Darwin at midnight last night after a meeting I attended where a decision was taken to charter an aircraft to take them down. They will be needed to help dry the equipment. I might say that the equipment itself was not submerged but, apparently, there was flashing because of the presence of water in the pits. If that had continued, it might well have destroyed the equipment which, for that reason, had to be shut down.

Mr Speaker, in summary, the main consequence was that the people of Alice Springs had to have a candlelight supper last night. That is not necessarily a laughing matter or one that I take lightly. We are doing all we can to have power restored as quickly as possible. I hope that will occur very soon. To the best of the knowledge of the people who are advising me, there has been no loss of life as a result of these floods. However, a report is being investigated which could result in a finding that there has been one drowning. This is a very vague report.

Undoubtedly, there are some pretty wet households around Alice Springs at the moment, but the local office of the Department of Transport and Works has advised that it considers that it can handle the situation in the town without needing to call on resources from outside. I would say that it looks as though the damage to private and government property is relatively minimal. Almost certainly there will be erosion of causeways. There were reports on the radio that the causeway to the casino had been washed away. I understand that that report is incorrect. That causeway was submerged but not washed away.

All in all, Sir, I think we will have gained some valuable experience from this exercise. It has been a flash flood. One of the problems that we had to face last night was that we knew we could get the plane into the Alice Springs airport but did not know whether we could get the equipment from Alice Springs airport to the powerhouse. There were helicopters at the Alice Springs airport but the pilots were at home in town. The problem was to get from the airport to the town in spite of the water surging through Heavitree Gap. There is really no way of getting through the gap when water is surging through with the terrific force generated by these torrential downpours.

I understand that the weather is easing now. I might say that there are beneficial aspects to this rain. Certainly, it has alleviated the situation of pastoralists in central Australia. I believe it should do a great deal to take them well into the season and, in that way, there is a silver lining to the

cloud. We hope that the clouds over Alice Springs disperse soon because the town is anticipating the arrival of His Royal Highness Prince Charles and Her Royal Highness Princess Diana, Prince and Princess of Wales, on Sunday.

Mr B. Collins: I want an answer, not a travel guide.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr EVERINGHAM: I am sorry, Sir, that the members opposite seem so disrespectful of my comment in relation to the members of the Royal Family who are shortly to visit Alice Springs. I was asked what the situation is in Alice Springs and I think it fairly relevant to let the public of Alice Springs know whether the Leader of the Opposition was sincere in his question or just trying to grab a few headlines. The people of Alice Springs are interested in this visit. The Leader of the Opposition may not be. Their Royal Highnesses should experience no problems in pursuing their visit to central Australia provided that the weather abates. After all this rain, I would expect that the town would be able to put on a much better face than if the season had been dry.

I believe that Emergency Services in Alice Springs have learnt several valuable lessons from this experience, as has NTEC. I can assure you, Sir, that pumps will be based and maintained at the Alice Springs power-station in the future.

Transient Camps at Kulaluk

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

He has been engaged in correspondence and discussion with Gwalwa Daraniki, the people who have the lease of Kulaluk, with a view to establishing transient camps. Could he advise at what stage those discussions are at present and, if the transient camps are to be established, what assistance will be given to Gwalwa Daraniki to control behaviour in the area?

ANSWER

I am sure that the honourable member for Nightcliff will be pleased to know that I cannot stretch my answer out for 18 minutes. If I could, I would. In fairness to the honourable member, I would like to report that both my predecessors had discussions with the Gwalwa Daraniki people concerning the establishment of camps at Kulaluk. Until recently, I was of the view that those discussions had reached a certain degree of finality and that things were getting into place. The government has committed itself to assist with the establishment of these camps if that is possible.

In recent days, I have had correspondence from Mr Day who says he believes the course that we are embarked upon is not satisfactory so far as the people are concerned and he would like to have more discussions and perhaps review the whole proposition concerning the establishment of the camps on the Kulaluk area. I do not have any strong commitment other than to try to help the people to a reasonable solution of the problem. At this stage, the matter is in abeyance and I will try to talk to the people as soon as possible. I will be happy to keep the honourable member informed of the results and content of relevant discussions because I appreciate that the area is very close to her electorate and many of the people involved are her constituents.

Humpty Doo High School Farm

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What is the situation at present with regard to the establishment of a farm at the new Humpty Doo High School?

ANSWER

The stage 2 proposals will incorporate an agricultural facility at the high school designed to accommodate a number of agricultural science courses. It is intended to make agricultural science a compulsory subject for years 8 to 10 and a full-time study option for years 11 and 12. The school farm which will form the focus of these courses will contain facilities to teach farm mechanics, livestock management, plant propagation and cultural practices. Stage 2 of the high school is currently undergoing design development and is an item on the 1982-83 design list. Current planning is for the work to be completed by June 1984.

Northern Territory Development Corporation

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Could he advise on progress of the investigation into the Northern Territory Development Corporation?

ANSWER

As Minister for Lands, Industrial Development and Tourism, it has been interesting to become involved with the operations of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Might I say at the outset that there has been no investigation of the NTDC. There has been a review of the NTDC's administration and procedures. This review was commissioned last year when Mr Ted Simpson was Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and the present Minister for Transport and Works was the minister responsible for the corporation. It has been a fairly lengthy and all-encompassing review. The NTDC had seconded to it from the Commonwealth Development Bank a fairly senior officer who is normally based in Sydney. He has been given the task of reviewing the administrative procedures of the NTDC, its forms, its securities, the way it deals with its applicants and the way it handles the administration of loans, the collection of moneys outstanding and the taking of security for loans. This review has been proceeding steadily. I understand that the NTDC has already implemented certain changes.

At this stage, there has been no final report from the consultant. To the best of my knowledge, I have not had any report from the consultant although the chairman has reported to me from time to time on the various steps that the consultant has taken. I cannot recall all those various steps but I could provide this information to the Leader of the Opposition by way of briefing. I would be happy for him to have a briefing by the Chairman of the NTDC. As I indicated in this Assembly yesterday, there is a bill relating to the NTDC brought before this Assembly by the opposition. I understand from my colleague, the Leader of the House, that there will probably be a general business day next week if the circumstances of the sittings so allow. I anticipate making a very full reply to the second-reading speech of the honourable member for Sanderson, the sponsor of the bill. I would prefer to wait until then to give any further particular details on this matter. However, I am ready to arrange a briefing of the Leader of the Opposition on the subject of the review of NTDC's operations by the consultant at any time convenient to him and the

chairman of the corporation. I believe the new chairman has taken up office efficiently and it seems to me that a certain reinvigoration of the board has already taken place.

Various changes that have been made over a period are now beginning to gel and I think that credit for some of these changes should be given to the former Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation, Ted Simpson. We now have on the corporation a merchant banker and so have that tremendous expertise available in considering the day-to-day business of the NTDC. We have on the board a chartered accountant, Mr Ellis of Adelaide. There is no reason, in theory, why a local chartered accountant should not have been appointed to the board of the NTDC. There are many reputable local accountants well able to handle the task. The only problem is that a local chap would probably have many conflicts of interest because usually accountants handle applications to the NTDC. Those are 2 reforms instituted by Mr Ted Simpson.

Unfortunately, when in the business of lending money, there are always people who have to be turned down, people on whom the screws have to be tightened when they do not meet the terms that they have agreed to. There are people to whom money is lent who spend more than they should and come asking for more. All these people tend to become dissatisfied if the answer they receive is negative or not quite what they want. I think one must take all that into account when construing criticism of previous Chairmen of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Any person in that job is under tremendous pressure and always open to a great deal of criticism from dissatisfied applicants. Personally, I believe that Mr Simpson, in his tenure of the office, did as good a job as anyone could. You have only to look at the record.

There was only one default - the Buntine case - in a time when the NTDC had lent well over \$20m and given a number of guarantees. Certainly, the NTDC has a number of bad debts, or what I prefer to call doubtful debts at this stage, but we are moving to restructure these. We are moving to come to arrangements and compositions with the people involved. Many of these doubtful debts are in the fishing industry. Under the direction of the government, the NTDC was there to take a punt on things like the fishing industry. The punt has not worked out in some cases but this government will not back off because it believes that the Territory economy needs the injection of venture finance through the NTDC. I will report at much greater length to the Assembly in the course of debate next week but I am more than happy for the Leader of the Opposition to have briefings from the chairman on any subject concerning the NTDC at any time.

Future of Northern Territory Aerial Work

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he advise on the future of the company, Northern Territory Aerial Work, if the Grumman Trackers are returned for surveillance work in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

The company, Northern Territory Aerial Work, is engaged in 4 distinct activities: maritime surveillance, coastal surveillance, aerial medical and aircraft maintenance. The company is a separately-registered member company of the Ansett group. The fortunes of NTAW have been of interest to government because they have been linked with the general viability of ANA. This is no longer a valid concept since the company faces a number of challenges to its

future which, in all probability, will result in a significant reduction in its overall level of activity. One is the cancellation of maritime surveillance, carried out on behalf of the Commonwealth, using 2 specially-equipped L-series Nomad aircraft. This ceases at the end of March 1983 because the Commonwealth no longer perceives the flights to be necessary. Northern Territory Aerial Work is currently tendering to use one of these aircraft for surveillance on the Barrier Reef. It has also approached the Commonwealth for relief for some of the capital costs of \$4m entailed in purchasing a special aircraft for what ultimately proved to be only 2 years work.

The littoral surveillance task utilising 3 Nomad aircraft is currently guaranteed only to mid-year. The Commonwealth government has stated it intends to reintroduce Navy tracker aircraft for this task. It is therefore probable that this source of work will also dry up. Loss of the coastal surveillance contract by Northern Territory Aerial Work could have a direct impact on up to 36 jobs. The contract supports 9 pilots and 12 observers. These jobs would definitely be lost. In addition, 15 ground staff, which includes engineers and clerical people, are employed by the company. At the moment, Northern Territory Aerial Work is trying to obtain more maintenance work to protect those 15 jobs.

Mr Speaker, representations are being made to the new Minister for Aviation in respect of this crisis. We hope to put those facts before the new minister so that some sympathetic consideration can be given in respect of NTAW.

Issuing of Bookmakers' Licences

Mr LEO to TREASURER

Will the Racing and Gaming Commission continue to issue bookmakers' licences to applicants from outside the Territory, despite submissions from numerous local applicants?

ANSWER

To my knowledge, the Racing and Gaming Commission, which calls applications for every bookmaker's licence available in the Northern Territory, has never issued a licence to a person outside the Northern Territory. The policy on which the commission operates, with the government's complete concurrence, is that the most suitable applicant will be the successful applicant for a bookmaker's licence. There are no other criteria that we should adopt in an area as sensitive as gaming and gambling. It is something on which we keep a fairly close eye in this industry and one for which we want the very best people that we can possibly find. Every bookmaker's licence which becomes available is advertised. Applicants are scrutinised and screened. The licence goes to the best person available. The question of who has been in the Northern Territory longest is not a criterion in these circumstances.

Unsold Reserves from Nabarlek and Ranger

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Approximately what percentage of reserves from Nabarlek mine are currently unsold? Approximately what percentage of reserves from the Ranger mine are currently unsold?

ANSWER

I am surprised that the honourable Leader of the Opposition would ask a

question seeking such detailed information. I can seek the information from the respective companies. I guess the purpose of the honourable member's question was to seek information to cast further doubt upon the marketing ability of the uranium mines which have yet to get off the ground.

As the Chief Minister indicated, it is for those companies to indicate to the present federal minister their prospects for sales. My information is that there is a very significant market for new products from the uranium province.

It is not just a matter of looking at the spot price in isolation. The utilities are anxious to diversify their sources of supply. This diversification motive on the part of utilities and users of uranium oxide will ensure the future of the industry. The principals of the 2 firms proposing to establish uranium mines in the province are quite confident the markets are there. With the greatest respect to the new federal minister, I found it rather extraordinary that he should ask where the contracts were when no one would sign a firm contract without having an export licence. The difficulty is that neither of those 2 companies has been able to get into the position to get an export licence.

The other nonsensical thing, which has been brought out in the press mainly through the auspices of the honourable Senator Walsh and the honourable Leader of the Opposition, is the statement by Queensland Mines in relation to the world market. I think Queensland Mines would be very foolish indeed if it went about actively encouraging competition to its own business. It is a standard practice in times of a perceived tight market for one to do everything one can to protect the market. I am not saying that the directors of Queensland Mines have, in any way, told anything to any minister or the Leader of the Opposition that is untrue. However, I must say that that particular company is not going to say anything which would encourage the establishment of competition. It is also very curious that, if the position Queensland Mines put forward is the world position in uranium mining and the availability of markets, that very same company plans to expand its operations and continue exploration. It would not throw its money down the drain if it thought there was no market.

Jabiru Area School

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In view of the urgency of the situation of the Jabiru Area School with regard to establishment of a science laboratory facility, can he inform me when this will be built?

ANSWER

The story behind the establishment of a science laboratory facility at Jabiru Area School is a very good example of why the Northern Territory government has always believed that the control of uranium mining should belong to the states as should control of such things as activities in national parks. At this stage, I cannot provide the honourable member with an answer as to when an adequate science facility will be provided at the Jabiru Area School. It was proposed last year to convert a couple of classrooms at the school to a science laboratory and some funds were allocated for that. However, as demographic figures were taken and reanalysed, it was quite clear that was not the course to take and that an additional facility should be provided at the school for the science laboratory. It seems that the most economic way to go about the project would be to provide a transportable science classroom which

would cost an estimated \$120 000.

The project to provide a transportable classroom is subject to funding being provided by the Commonwealth government through the Jabiru Special Purpose Grant Agreement. Honourable members will know that funding for infrastructure at Jabiru, as part of the uranium province and being within a national park, is provided by the Commonwealth government specific purpose payment to the Territory for these purposes. This arrangement is designed to keep the Territory happy while it does not have control of matters such as the levying of uranium royalties. However, a submission was made to the Commonwealth government to provide additional funds for an extra classroom at the Jabiru school. The Commonwealth came to us recently seeking more details. Since that time, we have not been able to get any further answers from it. This situation is quite unsatisfactory and I will be making immediate representations to the relevant ministers in Canberra to see if funds can be provided urgently for this project.

Obviously, the area school should have these facilities. Hopefully, Jabiru will eventually grow to be the third largest town in the Northern Territory, and we should have all the infrastructure there that those people require. To have a situation persist whereby we have to go to the Commonwealth to get essential infrastructure is simply an outrage to people in the Northern Territory and demonstrates the reasons why these affairs should be totally under the control of the Northern Territory government. We will continue to argue that point as well.

Floods in Alice Springs

Mr VALE to CHIEF MINISTER

In view of the flooding experienced last week, can he advise the current situation in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I reported to the Assembly last week in relation to the flooding that was experienced in Alice Springs. Together with most other people, I thought that the worst was over by Thursday afternoon. Unfortunately, when I got home at about 8.30 that evening, a call was waiting for me from the Commissioner of Police requesting that I accompany him to Alice Springs on a special charter flight because the Alice Springs powerhouse had been flooded again. Indeed, things were at a fairly critical stage and it was thought that the alternators would be inundated. The powerhouse had then been out of commission for quite some time. During the time that we were flying to Alice Springs, NTEC and the Department of Transport and Works staff managed to get a couple of large pumps into the powerhouse and controlled the flooding. A bund wall was built as an emergency measure. Steps are now being taken to ensure that work is carried out to bleed the water from the pits and alter the drainage arrangements around the power-station so that such an incident cannot recur.

The main damage caused by the floods was to roads and to the causeways that cross the river. I understand, from estimates prepared by the Department of Transport and Works, that the cost of reinstating roads and causeways will run in the order of \$1m. It may be possible for the NT government to recoup some of these funds from the federal government under special programs it has for such things as flood damage relief. The situation with the Alice Springs Town Council is not clear to me yet. I understand that the damage caused to council roads, causeways and property may be in addition to the \$1m estimate that the government has to hand.

Private damage amounted principally to water flooding into houses and causing damage to floor coverings and the like. There were incidents of roofs leaking and damage to goods in shops. In one case, a man in Gregory Terrace who runs a small computer business had about \$40 000 worth of equipment damaged when his roof leaked. The damage was so bad that his equipment was a write-off. I extend the sympathy of the government to people who suffered loss and damage as a result of the floods.

As well as that, some lives were lost. We are not sure how many. Two fatalities have been confirmed. One was an old gentleman who lived in a caravan in the middle of the Todd River. I am told that, whenever he heard that the Todd was coming down, he would have his caravan towed out of the river bed. He lived somewhere behind the Old Timer's Home, past Heavitree Gap. This time he was not warned and was swept away with his caravan. His body was recovered the next day or the day after.

A young fellow from New Zealand, who had been working in Alice Springs for a time, somehow or other became stranded on the Heavitree Gap causeway. He strapped himself to a post with his trouser belt. A semi-trailer went in to rescue him but, in trying to get on to the semi-trailer, he missed his hold and away he went down the river. They found his body yesterday. There are other reports as well. The police are trying to verify these as quickly as they can, realising the inconvenience, apprehension and anxiety that it must be causing to the people concerned.

Mr Speaker, basically, that is the situation as I learnt it whilst in the Alice. The town rallied magnificently. At the same time, the weather came good in a big way. One minute the rain was pouring down, the river was running a banker and then all of a sudden, next morning, there were blue skies, the river was down and we are able to get on with the task of restoring facilities. Frankly, I did not expect that things could be righted as quickly as they were.

Everyone involved should be thanked by the government: the Emergency Services personnel, police, community development people, transport and works, the Alice Springs council employees, NTEC, volunteers and relief agencies. Generally speaking, it was a crisis but matters turned out well. It could have been a lot worse. We have learnt some things and we will try to make sure, as far as is humanly possible, that such a situation does not arise at the Alice Springs power-station again.

Free Trade Zone for Darwin

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Is the submission regarding a free trade zone for Darwin, which he announced would be submitted to the new Labor government, the same submission that was under preparation last year for submission to the Liberal Country Party government and, if so, can he advise whether that submission was ever submitted to Canberra?

ANSWER

I advise the Leader of the Opposition that no detailed submission has ever been put forward by the Northern Territory government to the federal government in respect of a free trade zone for Darwin. We were convinced that we should get the decision on the railway line and the timing of its construction right first. Having achieved those objectives, we proceeded with the detailed submission on a free trade zone. This will go to the new federal government during the course of this year. I might say that there is nothing terribly unique about free trade zones. They exist in the United Kingdom. Certainly, there are many in the United States, some in quite small places. I understand that later in the year some personal inspection may be made of one of the most successful of the United States free trade zones near Miami in Florida. We will put a detailed submission together as quickly as possible and pass it on to the federal government. I do not expect that it will go to the federal government before the second half of this year.

Marrara Sporting Complex

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for YOUTH, SPORT and RECREATION

Has he called for plans for the distribution of land at the Marrara Sporting Complex and can he give details?

ANSWER

The land in question at Marrara has been allocated by the Darwin City Council to various sporting organisations. I think the honourable member's question may stem from a desire to know what is to happen as far as the Northern Territory Football League is concerned. Recently, the Treasurer and I, with officers of the Darwin City Council, members of the Northern Territory Football League and staff of the Department of Community Development, had discussions regarding the future of Gardens Oval. As the population of Darwin increases, Gardens Oval No 1 could become too small for the Northern Territory

Football League. A proposal has been put to the Northern Territory Football League and the council that perhaps we should discuss, and hopefully decide, the future of the Northern Territory Football League by allocating some land at Marrara to it with the hope at some stage in the very near future of building a Northern Territory Football League headquarters at Marrara. Discussions are taking place between football league officials, the council and government and should result in the submission of a proposal in mid-April.

An announcement has been made on the new indoor basketball stadium at Marrara. A stadium of national standard is under construction and will be completed by November this year. A decision is under consideration by government at the moment to proceed with the basketball stadium which is stage 2. Land has been allocated to the South Darwin Sports Club and its playing field has been established and hopefully will be in use this year. The Northern Territory Rugby Union's headquarters has been established and I understand competition fixtures of the Northern Territory Rugby Union will be played at Marrara. It is anticipated that the juniors will commence playing there within 3 or 4 months.

Land has been allocated to Darwin Gun Club. I understand the Darwin Gun Club facility at Marrara is considered to be one of the most attractive in Australia. Land has recently been allocated to Jingili BMX. It is getting its act together. Hopefully, competition will start very shortly. The Darwin Bow Hunters are there. Of course, there is not very much land. I have a plan of the area. If the honourable member wishes to see it, I am only too pleased to give it to her.

TIO Insurance against Flooding in Cyclone Surge Zones

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Does the TIO provide insurance against flooding in cyclone surge zones and, if it does, is the insurance available both for buildings and contents?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Territory Insurance Office does not normally cover insurance against flood. I indicated that to the Assembly before. However, there is an option in most policies to take out flood insurance and the TIO would be prepared to consider applications for insurance against storm surge. I am informed that each situation would have to be examined individually to determine the exact degree of risk. As honourable members would be aware, insurance companies operate on the probability of an event occurring and obviously must structure their premiums to make an overall profit. At the same time, they must give a degree of protection and assurance to persons who take out policies with them.

The TIO would look at individual applications from persons living in surge areas in the Territory and would compute a special premium. It would apply to the contents of a house if required, as well as to the house itself. The premium would be computed on a percentage of the value of the items to be insured.

Wildman River Station

Mrs LAWRIE to CHIEF MINISTER

This follows the exhaustive and welcome reply he gave to my previous question regarding Wildman River Station. Would he undertake to table in the

Assembly, or otherwise make public, a map of the area with hatching showing areas already alienated and those it is proposed to alienate prior to any further lease in the area being granted?

ANSWER

No.

Sealing of Road to Alice Springs Power-station

Mr D.W. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

What plans has the government to seal the remaining section of road to the back entrance of the Alice Springs power-station and why has it not been sealed before?

ANSWER

The road into the back entrance of the Alice Springs power-station will enable that facility to be serviced from the other side of the Todd River during times similar to those we have just experienced. It will also enable servicing of the new golf course subdivision, the Alice Springs Country Club Casino and the other establishments down the east bank of the Todd River. There are a number of houses in what used to be called the old inner farm area. I think that that valley, the Mount John valley, will gradually become more and more residential. Obviously, the golf course subdivision is the first manifestation of that though it is perhaps a little bit more exclusive than the sort of subdivisions I am thinking of.

Together with other improvements, the road was scheduled as part of the Sadadeen East Industrial Subdivision, but there were disputes regarding sacred sites and the whole thing was deferred for a considerable period. However, I am informed that, in the last few weeks, the road itself has been cleared in relation to sacred sites. Funds have been committed and the roadworks will proceed now without any further unnecessary delay. I shall propose to my Cabinet colleagues that the road be constructed and alterations made to the powerhouse premises to ensure that the road will service the golf course subdivision and the Alice Springs Casino and its environs during times of flooding and wet weather. In fact, no one in his right mind would bother to use the road other than at those times because, in normal circumstances, there is much more direct and convenient access.

Contract to Reprographics Holdings (NT) Pty Ltd

Ms D'ROZARIO to the TREASURER

Can he explain how a contract for aerial survey was let under the General Tender Board's local preference policy to a company named Reprographics Holdings (NT) Pty Ltd in April 1982 when that company was not incorporated until 25 May in that year?

ANSWER

If I recall correctly, I answered some questions on the letting of this contract at the November sittings. The matter was somewhat complex but I addressed the subject of the incorporation of the company. I think I made the point that the registration of a company in the Northern Territory was not, in itself, a requirement for a company to receive local preference. Indeed, quite a number of companies have operated for many years in the Territory, have

substantial holdings and create employment in the Northern Territory, but are not necessarily registered locally. I can seek further details for the honourable member, but certainly this company fitted within the guidelines of the letting of the contract. Analysis of the tenders indicated that the successful tenderer would have been successful even without the award of local preference percentage. That fact overruled all other considerations. That company was indeed the lowest tenderer.

Sale of Housing Commission Houses in Nhulunbuy

Mr LEO to MINISTER for HOUSING

Can he say, with any degree of certainty, when Housing Commission houses in Nhulunbuy will be available for sale to interested tenants?

ANSWER

I am unable to give the honourable member for Nhulunbuy any clear and precise idea of when the Housing Commission will be able to sell its properties in Nhulunbuy. Recently, at a meeting in Nhulunbuy of the general business community, I understand the Chief Minister castigated the joint venturers, Nabalco, for its lack of attention in trying to come to grips with the land question in Nhulunbuy. Apparently, the Sydney-based manager was at that particular meeting. He has returned to Sydney and I believe that the wheels are now turning towards an opportunity for the government to be able to negotiate finally lease arrangements on land in Nhulunbuy. The only information I can give the honourable member is that, on 17 March, a meeting was held between interested parties. At this stage, discussions are still taking place.

Power Reticulation to Acacia Hills Area

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What plans does NTEC have to reticulate power to the Acacia Hills area?

ANSWER

As the honourable member is no doubt well aware, NTEC has a policy on rural reticulation. Basically, that involves a maximum subsidy of \$2000 paid by NTEC to the potential consumer.

The position in Acacia Hills is that, of 48 blocks in the subdivision, the owners of 15 have indicated a wish to have electricity connected. The cost is in the order of \$220 000 to reticulate electricity to the subdivision. Simple arithmetic would indicate that the amount payable by those 15 would be in the order of \$12 000. Of course, if more of the people who hold blocks were to come into the scheme, then the cost for each block would be less.

Mr Speaker, the danger from the point of view of the owners of those 15 blocks is that they will pay their \$12 000 and receive only \$2000 in subsidy while the rest of their friends wait around to benefit from the reticulation of electricity. The rules of the game are quite clear. Any person who wished to come into the scheme after the electricity is connected - largely at the expense of those block holders in the area who previously indicated their desire to have electricity - would have to pay full tote odds. In other words, the NTEC subsidy of \$2000 would not be made available to them.

It is a lot of money to pay to have electricity connected to their blocks. Nonetheless, NTEC must act, as far as possible, as a commercial

undertaking. That situation is created statutorily through the commission's own act and, more importantly, because of the arrangements we have with the federal government for a 50% subsidy from the taxpayers of this country for the provision of electricity to Northern Territory consumers.

NTEC is of the view, and I cannot dispute it at this stage, that the offer of \$2000 subsidy per block is about as good as the commission can possibly be expected to offer in all the circumstances.

I know, Mr Speaker, that you have raised on behalf of your constituents areas of concern in relation to people who are not normally defined as Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine or Tennant Creek rural. Of course, Sir, you have raised the question of subsidies and assistance to such people as pastoralists. Sir, I note the point made by you as the member for Elsey that, where a 50% subsidy is made available to people who choose to live in urban areas, then it would be reasonable for people in rural areas to expect that a 50% subsidy be made available to them as well. I am talking about tourist operators, pastoralists etc. The request would involve many additional millions of dollars. The matter will be kept under review. I have quite a bit of sympathy for the situation as, no doubt, you have, Sir, having raised the matter.

Nonetheless, the position of NTEC at the moment is that it incurs a loss of some \$50m a year. That loss is subsidised by the taxpayers of this country and I dare say there is a limit to how far those taxpayers will go in the provision of further subsidies, particularly if they were almost to double as a result of such a proposal. As I say, I have sympathy for the position of your constituents and those of the honourable member for Tiwi. These matters will be kept subject to review. If resources become available in future years, those needs will be taken into account by the government.

Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act

Mr B. COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Is he aware of the comments made by Mr Justice Nader in a recent judgment regarding the case Roberts v The Board of the TIO when his Honour referred to various sections of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act by saying, among other things, 'Unfortunately, it can be seen that the drafting of these provisions would not have won prizes for clear expressions of thought. The obscurity of some of these passages is the main reason for this costly litigation.'? Can the Attorney-General indicate whether this legislation is to be reviewed?

ANSWER

Firstly, I would like to point out to the honourable Leader of the Opposition that any proposal to amend the Territory Insurance Office Act would be brought forward to Cabinet by my colleague, the Treasurer. He is the minister responsible for that legislation. I have read the comments of his Honour. At the risk of giving an opinion which Standing Orders prohibit and which I am not qualified to give anyway, the facts are that, having had the law settled in relation to those provisions - and I have read the judgment and forwarded a copy of it to my colleague, the Treasurer - any further cost of litigation in respect of those sections is now most unlikely. If we start to tamper with those same provisions, then any meaning which counsel representing claimants or the TIO itself may wish to impose on them would have to be assessed again. The law has now been settled and it would seem illogical to tamper with it.

Facilities for Psychiatric Patients

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

In view of continued concern expressed in courts and elsewhere about the lack of appropriate accommodation in the Northern Territory for psychiatric patients, what action is he taking to provide such a facility?

ANSWER

I advise the honourable member that, during the course of this sittings, I will be making a full statement on that matter.

Carinya Flats

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for HOUSING

Carinya flats is a very old block of Housing Commission flats situated in the inner city area. Is he aware of the problems associated with the hot water system in those flats and can he indicate what is being done to upgrade the existing inadequate service?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of some of the problems at Carinya flats. I asked the Housing Commission for a full briefing before this sittings. Unfortunately, I have not followed it through. However, I will obtain the information for the honourable member during the course of this sittings.

Literature Production Supervisor at Maningrida

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In view of the Territory government's stated commitment to the further development of bilingual education, can he say when the position of Literature Production Supervisor at Maningrida school will be made a permanent one?

ANSWER

I cannot give the honourable member an undertaking. The position he refers to at Maningrida is under no threat at present. The bilingual program is continuing. There appears to be an enormous amount of concern about years beyond the present one and, beyond doubt, the matter must be settled. I will address it when I can.

Dual Carriageways

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

With regard to the problem of drivers keeping their vehicles abreast of each other on dual carriageways, has he given thought to amending the legislation to stop this sometimes dangerous practice?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the practice is very annoying. The matter has been discussed in national forums. There is no Territory proposal to change the legislation. Indeed, it would be difficult to effect legislation to satisfy the honourable member's requirement. However, there is a need to come to grips with this

particular problem. I believe that the Road Safety Council of the Northern Territory should look again at the matter and the department should try to resolve the problem by signposting along the relevant highways.

Land at Bynoe Harbour

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for LANDS

His predecessor in that capacity announced that an auction of land at Bynoe Harbour would be held, including land presently occupied illegally. Could he indicate if that auction will proceed and, if so, give a likely time?

ANSWER

It will proceed soon.

Remote Area Power Supply Investigation

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What is the current status of the remote area power supply investigation announced by the government some 3 years ago and, if this investigation is still active, will he undertake to report progress to date?

ANSWER

Certainly, I will have the matter investigated. There are a number of investigatory projects under way, including that into the provision of power to all the smaller communities between here and Katherine. Quite obviously, energy resources which will be made available through the connection of piped gas to Alice Springs are also under examination to determine what use can be made of them. There are investigations into the use of small solar plants to be made available to small communities throughout the Northern Territory. These range from the type of proposal which came from the McDonald Douglas Corporation to solar ponds to small solar units such as those used by Telecom. Extensive investigations are continuing. The success or otherwise of investigations of this kind takes time simply because of the nature of the evolution of technology in these areas. There is little point in coming to a firm conclusion as to the provision of power to small communities in remote areas when the technology is in its infancy. We could embark upon a program using existing technology which, in 2 years time, could become obsolete. I know that that can be seen as a good excuse for never doing anything because technology will always improve. Nonetheless, in the area of straight conversion of solar energy into electricity via reflectors into heat exchangers or in the technology of solar ponds, great advances are being made now. I think it would be wise to leave it for a little while at least - perhaps a couple of years - to allow these projects to be proven up. They are very exciting indeed. Recently, I wrote to all members and invited them to inspect the projects we have under way, particularly with solar air-conditioning. The solar pond experiments in Alice Springs are fascinating. I commend a visit to all honourable members to obtain an understanding of just what good work is being done in this area. Technical problems still exist in every one of these areas but we are quite confident that, within a couple of years, a technology will be made available to the Northern Territory for use in the very communities referred to by the honourable member for Sanderson.

Management of East Point Reserve

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for LANDS

Now that it seems probable that the Darwin City Council will refuse to accept responsibility for East Point Reserve, what arrangements is the government considering for the future management of this important area of land?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, frankly, I am amazed at the attitude displayed by the Darwin City Council over the East Point Reserve. For years we have been the subject of complaint by the city council for taking our time in disposing of the trust established at present to maintain the reserve. Now that action can and will be taken to dispose of the matter without further delay, we find that the council wants \$4m or \$5m from the government to upgrade East Point Reserve before it is handed over. As I explained to the Lord Mayor, the Northern Territory government accepts considerable responsibility for urban beautification in Darwin and in towns throughout the Northern Territory. However, we feel that our responsibility should relate principally to areas not just of interest to a particular municipality but to those that would be of interest and significance right through the Territory and perhaps even nationally. Of course, we feel a commitment to beautify those areas that open up, such as the new northern suburbs - Karama, Leanyer and the like. Work on urban beautification will proceed apace there this year. That work will be carried out almost entirely by the Conservation Commission on behalf of the Northern Territory government. When the roadsides and parks have been brought into shipshape order, they will be handed over to the council for maintenance, although we find more and more that the council is reluctant to accept that responsibility.

Mr Speaker, the Territory government is prepared to pay in the order of \$1m over the next couple of years in a 2 or 3-stage program to improve and upgrade the Botanical Gardens. In fact, that program was created on our initiative. It was not even at the council's initiative. We instigated it. We said to the council: we will help you because we want the Darwin Botanical Gardens to become not just another gardens but a national showplace if possible, just as they were regarded before the cyclone. The Conservation Commission and the Darwin City Council have been working well together in the gardens. I must pay some tribute to George Brown. I might not agree on everything with George Brown but we agree on many things, particularly in the area of making this city, as far as possible, an example to the rest of the country. I think that he and I would both like to see it as green as Singapore. That will happen. It might be when he and I are pushing up daisies and being used as human fertiliser but it will happen.

I just cannot see how, as the person responsible for the overall management of this government, I can hand \$5m of Territory and Australian taxpayers' money to the Darwin City Council so that it can do up, to its satisfaction apparently, the East Point Reserve. East Point Reserve is virtually a passive recreation area for the people of Darwin. We could give the council an initial establishment grant by transferring the funds we allocate to the trust every year to maintain the reserve - some hundreds of thousands of dollars. If he, as representative of the people of Darwin, wants to upgrade East Point Reserve - and I think many people would like to see it remain much the way it is now - he and his aldermen should not come cap in hand with their rice bowl to the government, asking for more and saying: 'Give me, give me'. He must go out and ask Darwin people - as mayors in other states do - if they want this project. If the people want it, then they must accept another 20¢ or whatever

on their rate notices. That is what happens in Queensland. It happens in Cairns. That is the way local government must operate in this Territory, and not keep coming to the government and saying: 'Give us some more'. It must start operating as local governments operate elsewhere in Australia and make the people within the municipalities recognise where the money comes from. It must win from those people the support for projects that they want.

Shortly, the Northern Territory government will vest the East Point Reserve in the Conservation Commission. We are sure it will manage it well until the city council comes to its senses and decides that it does in fact want to control parks within its boundaries. As far as I am concerned - and I have to talk to my Cabinet colleagues about this - I would like to see the existing organisations which use the East Point Reserve continue to use the area. I do not think we would give exclusive tenancy to anyone. We want to see the fliers of model aeroplanes, the Equestrian Club etc continue to use the area. Also, we want to protect the interests of Mr Dave West, the curator of the East Point Reserve, who lives at Peewee Camp. We will see that he gets some sort of security of tenure over his place there and will not be thrown out on the street after all the years of good work that he has done.

High Schools

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Has the Department of Education grossly underestimated the demographic trends in the northern suburbs of Darwin? Is it true that a decision not to build Sanderson High School will cause both Casuarina and Dripstone High Schools to take in an additional 300 students each within the next 2 years?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will obtain some details for the honourable member. Unfortunately, I cannot carry around in my head the results of demographic studies of the Department of Education, which are quite extensive. However, it appears on the surface that there has been some miscalculation. Student numbers did not accord with projections. The matter is under review and I am taking a personal interest in the subject of school facilities. Decisions will be taken in due course on exactly which way the government should approach the subject. The government is prepared at all times to look at the most appropriate way to go about the provision of educational facilities in the Northern Territory and I will do exactly that. If the honourable member wants specific details of the demographic projections and the numbers of students turning up at schools, I will be happy to provide them to him.

Resource Teachers in Primary Schools

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What is the government's current policy with respect to the provision of resource teachers in primary schools?

ANSWER

The situation in regard to resource teachers in primary schools has not changed, to my knowledge, for some time. Her question seems to imply that there have been some recent changes to the formulae provided to schools by the department.

Aboriginal Teachers

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Could he advise of his government's current policy on the replacement of Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal schools who go to ATEC at Batchelor?

ANSWER

I think that honourable members opposite had better get used either to placing such questions on notice or giving me some advance warning of them. If honourable members expect me to carry in my head the whole range of education policies, they are very much mistaken. I give them forewarning now that I will not be able to answer questions off the cuff.

Mr B. Collins: You had better liven up your departmental briefing procedures.

Mr PERRON: The honourable Leader of the Opposition is obviously getting a bit flappy over there in his corner. He does not like the idea. He can try a little bit harder and have a bit more influence in the Northern Territory to do the things that he really thinks should be done.

Yipirinya School

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Could he advise the current state of legal action in respect of the funding of Yipirinya School?

ANSWER

The carriage of the legal action related to Yipirinya School is in the hands of the Attorney-General.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr PERRON (Education) (by leave): The honourable member for Nightcliff asked if parents had the right to prevent corporal punishment being administered to their children in schools in the Northern Territory. I am advised that parents, in fact, can remove a principal's authority to administer corporal punishment in a school either by an oral or written request and principals must comply with that request. However, if parents take this action and a principal deems that a particular child is obviously quite troublesome in a particular school, he has the right to request the parents to take some appropriate disciplinary action themselves.

Core Curricula for Northern Territory High Schools

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

How far advanced is the program of developing core curricula for Northern Territory High Schools?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is pretty difficult to put a finger on the degree of advancement. If the honourable member wishes specific information, I will be happy to provide it to him. I do not know whether it happens to be 26% or 36%.

Unfortunately, I do not have the figures with me.

Rural Roads Conference

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can he advise where and when the next Rural Roads Conference will be held?

ANSWER

The annual Rural Roads Conference will be held in Alice Springs on 11 April. This will provide a forum for pastoralists, road users, tourist operators and so on to state their problems to government and provide some input for the budget to be brought down in August of this year.

Sand Mining at Howard Springs

Mr DOOLAN to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

I ask him this question on behalf of a well-known Territory prospector, Mr Fabian. It relates to an application to mine sand at Howard Springs. Why is the registrar the sole objector to his application? Did Howard River Sand Supplies knowingly overpeg with the department's approval? Why was the permit which was to have been issued to the company subject only to readvertising and withdrawal from private land? Why has the application been readvertised under the same number, EPN18, when, after inspection by the Department of Mines and Energy and Mr Fabian, no such data existed as that readvertised?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in answer to the speech just made by the honourable member for Victoria River, I would suggest that he obtain a copy of a letter which I have written to the gentleman setting out the matters in detail. It is a pretty complex matter. It is not the only one of this nature so I hope that I have the right one. I have written in detail to the gentleman concerned explaining the position. That gentleman, if it is the same one, has written back to me apologising for the confusion and saying that he did not understand the rules.

Relief Teachers' Salaries

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is it government policy to pay relief teachers as if they were not qualified until such time as they produce documentary evidence of their qualifications? Is it government policy to back pay teachers at the appropriate rate once evidence of their qualifications has been produced?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I suggest that the honourable member place the question on notice.

Security at Katherine Rural College

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

He will be aware that there have been security problems at the Katherine Rural College with students at times being harassed by inebriated persons,

presumably from the environs and township of Katherine. Could he indicate what steps have been taken to overcome these problems?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Katherine Rural College went through a period of some turmoil, particularly over the Christmas period. The matter has been addressed in some detail. Officers of the Department of Education have investigated the matter. I would rather not give a lot of detail on that. The college now has a new principal who is a man in whom everyone has placed a great deal of faith. From my brief chat with that gentleman when I went to meet him in Katherine, he seems to be a very upstanding sort of man who could pull the Katherine Rural College together. Some of the difficulty there stems from the fact that we have people working there with 2 distinct backgrounds. There are lecturers, educationists, professionals and also farm workers who are there to do the more manual and practical tasks of instruction on tractors and farm work etc. In the past, a degree of jealousy has built up between them and I think that is unfortunate. I can see that being dissipated by sensible discussion. Altogether, only about 9 people are involved. If it is not possible for them to sort a few problems out round a table, we will have to look at the question again.

However, I can assure the honourable member that the matter is very much under the eye of the Department of Education. I have given specific directions about the chain of command to the principal of the Katherine Rural College so that he will not have to go through a number of people to get urgent decisions if he needs them. We have to bear in mind that it is a residential college. It is not an institution that opens its doors at 8 or 9 in the morning and shuts down at 5 o'clock. I hope that the bubble that we have had over the past 3 months has now burst. I would be interested to hear if there is any recurrence of the problem.

Northern Territory University

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

If the government's current submission is approved by the TEC in June, what is the timeframe for the establishment of a Northern Territory university?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the submission indicates that the Northern Territory government is seeking funding in the 1985 to 1988 triennium. If the Tertiary Education Commission accepts the submission, and certainly we hope it will, particularly now that the full weight of the new federal government is behind the establishment of a full university in the Northern Territory, we will be watching very anxiously for evidence of that government's support. As the honourable member will be aware, the submission argues for the progressive establishment of a university. We do not propose it would be built in one capital works program and then filled with a couple of hundred lecturers and a couple of thousand students. It is a matter of developing full university facilities in the Northern Territory.

I think the honourable member has asked a fairly facetious question. If he reads the submission, he can see quite clearly the section which relates to the timing of the establishment facilities.

Fire Control in Darwin Rural Area

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to CHIEF MINISTER

In view of the fact that he has responsibility for the Police Force which has responsibility for the Fire Brigade which has responsibility for fire control in the Darwin rural area, has consideration been given to forming a fire management committee to look into fire control in the rural area and, if so, will there be representatives from the rural area on this committee?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have had discussions recently with the Commissioner of Police and senior representatives of the fire service as well as representatives of the Conservation Commission and the Bushfires Council in relation to currently foreseen fire control problems in the rural area. The fire authorities informed me that they foresee no greater fire danger for this year than in any previous Territory dry season. In relation to burning off, the fire control authorities believe that slow, early burn-off should take place rather than at a later time when it could get out of control or occur accidentally.

At this stage, the matter is more under the control of the Minister for Conservation, although I formulated the policy in relation to the rural areas. At this stage, I am not entirely familiar with progress. I know that the matter is progressing. I believe that it may be at a stage where consultants have been engaged to provide a further report to Cabinet subsequent upon various public meetings held last year to gain views from people. I cannot say at this stage whether a fire management committee will be formed. Therefore, I cannot give any undertaking in respect of representation on it by people from the rural area. I will bring the question to the attention of the Minister for Conservation when he returns to Darwin. I am sure that he will be able to write to the honourable member and give her a detailed response.

Northern Territory Air Charter

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Could he advise the present situation regarding Northern Territory Air Charter Pty Ltd?

ANSWER

There has been some media coverage of events concerning Northern Territory Air Charter Pty Ltd. I have a copy of a telex sent to the Managing Director of Northern Territory Air Charter Pty Ltd by the Department of Aviation, South Australia-Northern Territory region, concerning that company:

It has been brought to my attention that there are serious doubts regarding the safety of your commercial flying operation. These doubts have been raised following direct communications from your approved Chief Pilot, Mr S. Mailer, that he has withdrawn his services and no longer oversees your operations. Operational competency of your flight crew has been highlighted through 2 incident reports involving Piper PA 31 aircraft VH WJK: an unscheduled diversion during a flight Darwin/Goulburn Island/Croker Island due to fuel shortage or management problems on 21 March 1983 and a forced landing today on the beach near Charles Point due to engine failure. Other allegations which require investigation are related to pilot qualifications, route checking, recent experience, flight time limitations, aircraft serviceability.

In consideration of the matters before me, I consider sufficient doubt exists regarding the safety of your operations to suspend your operating licence. In accordance with my delegated powers under Air Navigation Regulation 200A, I herewith suspend your charter and aerial work licence No SANTA69 and your supplementary airline licence No SANT3 for the purpose of investigating these matters. The suspension of your licences is effective forthwith. Letter following providing more details.

The Northern Territory government has written to the managing director of the company and asked him to show cause under section 14 of Northern Territory legislation. Air North has been asked to provide the services for the time being.

Palm Leaf Beetle

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

A number of parasites have been introduced into the environment to control the palm leaf beetle. Is he able to inform me whether the spread of the parasites is going according to plan?

ANSWER

The palm leaf beetle parasite has been released in the Darwin city, Stuart Park, Kahlín, Parap and Fannie Bay areas. Releases in the northern suburbs are about to commence. Before the end of March, the first surveys will be made to see how successful the establishment has been. Members of the public are advised not to expect improvements to their coconut palms overnight as it will be some months before any effect of the parasite may be seen, even after the insect has become well established.

Medical Fraud and Over-servicing Recommendation

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

One of the recommendations of the medical fraud and over-servicing progress report of the Commonwealth Joint Committee on Public Accounts was: 'State and Commonwealth governments, in consultation, could introduce uniform medical registration legislation to provide for national registration of medical practitioners'. Does the Northern Territory government support this recommendation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unable to provide the honourable member with the information she requires. However, I undertake to provide it during this sittings.

Insurance against Flood Damage

Mr VALE to TREASURER

Has he directed the Territory Insurance Office to advise people that they are not covered under normal household policies for flood damage?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the short answer is yes. I would like to elaborate a little. Yesterday morning, I addressed a conference of state government insurance managers, which is being held in Darwin. I took the opportunity to suggest to them all that they revamp some of their forms of application for insurance for householders to make it absolutely clear exactly what is covered when insurance is taken with a particular company. There are, of course, quite a number of what one might call ordinary exclusions from a householder's policy. Most of them can be picked up for a small extra premium. Certainly, the question in the Territory at present relates to flood insurance rather than any other type. But there are such things as: high water resulting in inundation from the sea, including storm surge; erosion or earth movement which, in some areas in the Territory, could be a significant factor; storm damage to gates, fences and retaining walls; and another normal exclusion under a householder policy is plate glass unless a specific request is made for it to be included. There are other general limits and exclusions. There are limits to the amount that an insurance company will pay on the loss of valuable items such as furs, jewellery, curios, works of art etc. They are normally covered but there is a fairly low limit set on the amount that the insurance company will pay without specific provision being made at the time of taking out the policy. Some items are not covered at all unless specified; for example, deeds, securities and coin and stamp collections. No doubt, that will be of interest to a number of Territorians who have those things. Accidental damage and breakage is covered only in limited circumstances. That refers to things like plate glass. In some insurance policies, damage by tenants is not covered unless specifically asked for.

I have asked the Territory Insurance Office to revise completely its application form for householders insurance to make it absolutely clear that, when a person takes out a policy, he has to specifically indicate what he wants cover for. The policy will show what extras are available so people will know without any shadow of doubt exactly what they are covered for in the event of disaster. Unfortunately, insurance is one of those things we all take a little for granted. People hope that their house will not be damaged in a

storm, fire or flood. It is very easy to just pay the basic minimum premium and say: 'Well, I am covered'. Of course, once the damage is done, people feel sorry afterwards that they were not adequately insured.

I will ensure that the Territory Insurance Office heeds my request and improves its system of advising at least policy holders and potential customers exactly what the position is. I am talking about the TIO because it is one of my portfolio responsibilities. There are, however, many other insurance companies in the Northern Territory which hopefully will heed similar warnings. I will be writing to most of those companies requesting that they take similar action.

Insurance Cover for Storm Surge Areas

Mr B. COLLINS to TREASURER

This relates to the answer just given. In the list of the exclusions which can be covered by the payment of an extra premium, he mentioned storm surge as damage due to cyclone. Can he confirm that the Territory Insurance Office will not cover that area of insurance at any premium? In fact, it is my understanding that no private insurance company in the Northern Territory will either.

ANSWER

Advice given to me over the last few days is that an applicant who wishes to insure against storm surge will have his application assessed. There may be situations where the Territory Insurance Office may not give storm surge coverage at all. I believe that there are areas where it will give it. There are a number of surge zones in Darwin. The possibility of cyclone surge can be determined statistically. Provided that an insurance company is very careful about how it calculates its premiums, there would seem to be no particular reason why coverage should not be offered in this field. I must admit that such coverage could be fairly expensive.

Cost of Royal Visit

Mr D.W. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

What has been the cost to the Northern Territory government of the visit of their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales?

ANSWER

The matter of cost of the royal visit was raised yesterday or the day before during the course of some ravings by a political activist, Gary Foley. He was in Alice Springs purporting to launch a book about Aboriginal health that was published in 1981 and which is already out of date if it ever was factually correct, for the most part anyway.

It is not possible at this moment to give a precise estimate of the cost to the Northern Territory of the royal visit. However, I must say that I believe that the royal visit was of untold benefit to central Australia and to the Northern Territory generally from the point of view of the enormous amount of national and international media coverage which just could not have been bought. Frankly, if \$100m had been budgeted, it would not have bought the sort of publicity resulting from the juxtaposition of the royal visit and the flooding at Alice Springs. I express my sympathy

for the people who have suffered as a result of the floods but, if you look at the silver lining in the cloud, those 2 or 3 days of crisis in Alice Springs rivetted the attention of the world on the centre of Australia. The arrival of the Prince and Princess of Wales and Prince William maintained that interest for another 2 or 3 days. The royal couple visited Ayers Rock and highlighted that remarkable tourist attraction in central Australia. Judging from the number of calls that I received from international media organisations, such as the NBC network in the United States and the BBC in Great Britain, I am sure that the coverage of the whole event was extraordinary. Photographs of establishments such as the Alice Springs Hotel Casino and the Gap Hotel Motel featured on the front pages of papers overseas. Thus those people have benefited tremendously from the visit.

Everyone associated with the visit worked very hard. I would like to pay a tribute to the people in the Northern Territory protocol area, the Northern Territory police and 11 other organisations concerned with the visit. Everything went pretty smoothly considering that we had to deal with 150 media people, many of whom were hard to please and all of whom had spent a lot of money to get here and wanted the best photographs or the closest closeup. Aside from 1 relatively small incident at Ayers Rock, everything went pretty smoothly although there have been complaints by the public in Alice Springs that the media, to some extent, prevented the ordinary people of Alice Springs getting to see as much of their Royal Highnesses as they would have liked. I am sure that we all appreciate that the extreme popularity and newsworthiness of the royal couple means that they will always be surrounded by a large group of people.

Mr Speaker, the town of Alice Springs must settle down now after the excitement and clean up the flood damage. The government will be helping the town council to meet its expenses. Our own expenses to repair damage will run in the order of \$1m. I think the people of Alice Springs behaved pretty well in all the circumstances, responding as they did to the royal visit. I think the visit was a morale booster to the people.

Our preliminary estimate of costs of the visit is \$50 000. I can provide more detailed information later. It was the bargain of the century for the Northern Territory taxpayer because normally we spend \$5m or so a year in tourist promotion. This was just beyond price.

Ro-Ro Facility

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is it a fact that seawater was used as ballast in the Ro-Ro facility on its journey from Singapore to Darwin? Is it a fact that the internal section of the Ro-Ro has not been painted and, as a result, extensive corrosion has occurred?

ANSWER

I am not aware whether seawater was used as ballast in the Ro-Ro or not. I know that there are continuing differences between the contractor and the subcontractor and those matters are yet to be resolved.

Reprographics Holdings (NT) Pty Ltd

Ms D'ROZARIO to TREASURER

This relates again to the letting of a contract to a particular firm.

Will he confirm his previous advice to this Assembly that a tender for aerial photography was let to Reprographics Holdings (NT) Pty Ltd on 30 April 1982 and not to the Queensland company Reprographics Pty Ltd to which his answer of yesterday related? If so, will he advise the Assembly how it was possible to let a tender on 30 April 1982 to a company which was not incorporated until 26 May 1982?

ANSWER

I will seek the information the honourable member has asked for. I referred yesterday to answers I gave in a previous sittings on the subject when this tender was first let and caused some concern. Now she has created some confusion in my mind on the companies by mentioning Queensland and so on. The word 'reprographics' rang a bell with me of course. Whether she referred yesterday to Reprographics Northern Territory or Reprographics Queensland, I am not quite sure. In the light of this, I had better have a look at the subject and provide a written reply. It is a sensitive matter, of course, once one goes into the letting of past contracts. However, from time to time we examine complaints on this subject. This one has been looked at thoroughly by the Tender Board at least twice to my knowledge. Both times, it confirmed completely the course that was taken and I am sure that any future review will do the same. However, I will endeavour to provide a written statement to the honourable member on this subject.

Repair of Flood Damaged Property in Alice Springs

Mr VALE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Would he be prepared to meet, at an early date, with the Acting Mayor of Alice Springs and the aldermen to discuss repairs to the many facilities under the control of the Alice Springs Town Council, which were damaged by recent floods?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, during my visit to Alice Springs this week, the acting mayor expressed his concern at some of the liabilities the council might incur as a result of flood damage in the town. He indicated that he would be very keen to meet with the government, and myself in particular, as soon as the council has made an assessment of its position. I accept that so much effort was put in during the 2 or 3 days before the visit of their Royal Highnesses that there was little opportunity for the council to make a comprehensive assessment of its position. As soon as the council has done that, I will be only too pleased to meet with it and discuss any problems created by the flood damage.

Inmates at Gunn Point Prison Farm and Darwin Prison

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I ask, on behalf of the member for Tiwi, if it is correct that numbers of inmates at the Gunn Point Prison Farm and Darwin Prison are down and whether he can suggest reasons for this?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, numbers are down in all the Northern Territory prisons. In fact, at this stage, we have more warders than we have prisoners. This is a phenomenon that has not occurred very often in the past and it has raised some

questions within the department as to where we are going. Preliminary investigations have started as to why the prison numbers may be dropping at their present rate and where they will level out. At this stage, no definite information is available to suggest why jail numbers are continuing at a low level. If any solid information becomes available to explain the trend, I will be only too pleased to bring it to the attention of the honourable member.

Class Sizes in NT Primary Schools

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Given that a working party was appointed some time ago to look into the issue of class sizes in Northern Territory primary schools and that that group made recommendations to the department in September last year, can he indicate when he intends to make those recommendations available to the Assembly and what action he will take on them?

ANSWER

I cannot advise the honourable member when I will make those recommendations available to the Assembly or indeed if I will. The subject that he refers to is covered to some degree in a document I will be tabling in the Assembly this morning. If I recall correctly, class sizes for primary schools will also be considered by the Northern Territory government in the near future in the budgetary context. Until that time, I am reluctant to give out any further information on the subject.

Former Federal Member for the NT

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Has the former federal member for the Northern Territory been interviewed for a job in the Northern Territory Public Service or any of the Northern Territory statutory organisations?

ANSWER

I cannot say that I envy the honourable member for Nhulunbuy his mind which must lurk somewhere in the dimmer recesses of the sewer. The former federal member for the Northern Territory - whose friendship I value and who served the Northern Territory well in the term for which he was elected to represent this Territory - has only just become officially aware that he has lost the seat. As far as I know, he has not been interviewed by any public or governmental body for a position. However, I cannot give any categorical assurance in relation to that because I do not know to what area the innuendoes of the so-called honourable member for Nhulunbuy refer. I can say that the services of the former member for the Northern Territory, Mr Grant Tambling, would be an asset to any government. I notice that, down in Victoria, the Cain government is hiring Labor Party hacks as fast as it can. In New South Wales, we have the example that the former Leader of the Opposition for the Northern Territory, Mr Jon Isaacs, is second in charge of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which obviously has not helped Aboriginal affairs in New South Wales. I understand that Mr Wran is in really hot water with land rights in New South Wales. Aborigines in New South Wales want the same land rights as apply in the Northern Territory. Mr Isaacs, Mr Wran and Mr Walker are just not prepared to give that to them.

Mr Speaker, if I receive an application from the former member for the

Northern Territory for any position in the government, I will treat that application on its merits. Mr Tambling is a person of some considerable merit.

Katherine Hospital Facilities

Mr VALE to MINISTER for HEALTH

Is he aware of the strain placed on the operation of Katherine Hospital by the lack of facilities for the care of geriatric and convalescent patients who should not be hospitalised?

ANSWER

I am aware of the problem in Katherine. I would like to advise the honourable member that in June 1981 the Department of Health funded a study to the tune of \$6000 for a steering committee to look at that precise problem. I understand that that steering committee has made a recommendation to the Department of Health and the Commonwealth government. Once the results of those discussions are known, I will provide the honourable member with the relevant information.

Provident Fund for NTEC Employees

Mrs LAWRIE to CHIEF MINISTER

I am aware that he has had discussions with union delegates regarding the establishment of a provident fund for some categories of NTEC employees. Can he advise if it is his intention to establish such a fund and, if not, what alternative arrangements will be made?

ANSWER

I am sorry that the honourable member for Nightcliff was absent from the Assembly yesterday when I made my statement on superannuation. If the member had heard that statement made yesterday morning in relation to the Superannuation Bill, she would know that arrangements have been made for industrial category employees of NTEC with their union, that these arrangements are apparently satisfactory to all the parties and that they will be implemented under the provisions of the Superannuation Bill when it becomes an act.

Research Activities of Department of Primary Production

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Can he give details of investigations being carried out by his department into rationalisation of its research activities?

ANSWER

I can assure the honourable member that the new Secretary of the Department of Primary Production is very keen to review all activities within the department at the moment. He has expressed concern about some of them and has asked me to take an interest in 1 project in particular which I had the opportunity to visit last week. I refer to Tortilla Flats. The new secretary has indicated his concern that it will be extremely difficult to sell rice at a viable price in the years to come and that the Tortilla Flats project should be reviewed in that light.

As I understand it, Tortilla Flats has operated in the Northern Territory

as a rice support investigation project for about 20 years and it has had various degrees of activity during that time. At the moment, about 10 people work on the Tortilla Flats rice project and we spend \$230 000 to \$240 000 a year in that area. The work is very interesting and fairly comprehensive. At this stage, the rice agronomists are concentrating their efforts on establishing rice varieties which might do particularly well in that environment. The agronomists have shown that they can hope to harvest about 5 t of rice per hectare from a wet season crop. It is unlikely that anybody will make any money from a harvest of 5 t of rice per hectare on a wet season crop. Additional attention has now been turned to the possibility of cultivating a dry season crop as well which, ultimately, would give the rice farmers viability.

Even if wet season and dry season crops can be established and proven economic for a farmer, there remains the difficulty of having a single-crop farm. Most agriculturalists like to produce a variety of crops so that they can benefit from the highs and lows of markets that develop during the course of time. If we were to look for farmers to come to this area and suggest to them that they grow only a single crop, that would not be in the best interest of the farmers or ourselves.

It has been put to me that Australian rice production at the moment is about 700 000 t a year. 85% of this product is exported and the 15% that we consume locally is sold at very high prices when compared to the export price. From the Northern Territory's point of view, we would have to produce very high quality rice to benefit from the high domestic price or, alternatively, accept that our rice would all have to be export quality. That would present more problems for the fledgling rice industry that we would have to establish. There has been a complete upheaval in the international rice market in the last 2 to 5 years as a result of several factors, Mr Speaker. The first is that former rice importing countries in the world have made a very concentrated effort to become self-sufficient in rice. Secondly, the former exporters of rice, such as Japan and Indonesia, have now reached the stage of production where there is a glut of rice in their own countries and they are unable to sell it.

Against this background, cultivation and marketing of rice by the Northern Territory would seem a pretty precarious proposition. Another aspect of the development of rice production in the Northern Territory is the contribution that someone would have to make to infrastructure. The level of infrastructure necessary would be almost unbelievable. If we look at production of dry season crop, we are talking about irrigation for that crop that would require the construction of a dam, particularly in the upper Adelaide River area. That dam would cost in the order of \$40m in 1979-80 dollars. We would also have to take into consideration the cost of drainage to alleviate the possibility of flooding for 3 farms at a cost of about \$500 000. On-farm development costs in that area would be particularly expensive because access roads to the rice fields would not be cheap to build. Further to that, the cost of infrastructure relating to the milling, storing and handling requirements for a rice facility in the Northern Territory would be in the vicinity of \$10m. The initial capital necessary for a concentrated rice effort is pretty considerable.

Because of the doubts that have arisen in the secretary's mind and the obvious arguments that confront us, I have asked him to obtain for me some papers from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the New South Wales Ricegrowers Cooperative that would give an indication as to where the rice market is heading, because we are really looking at a long-term project. As

I said last week, I had the opportunity to talk to the staff involved in the Tortilla Flats rice project, and they expressed to me concern that the programs they are conducting currently could take between 5 and 20 years of intensive agricultural investigation and, at the end of that period, we could find that rice is not a viable proposition in the Northern Territory.

Against that background, it is important for us to consider our options. There is an urgent need for us to evaluate the agricultural and horticultural priorities and opportunities that are available to us. There are areas close to Darwin for instance, that would accommodate the establishment of 10 to 15 horticultural farms, each of about 100 ha. The obvious advantage of such farms would be that, in the short term, we would know without much doubt whether they would be viable. I think that, within a very short period, the ADMA experience has given us a great deal of hope and encouragement that agriculture in that area will be viable if we persevere with it. We need to develop some horticultural farms around Darwin to see whether we can make them viable. If so, then we can grow locally the food that we can consume ourselves and stop spending our hard-earned money on importing all our food.

In the Katherine district, Mr Speaker, which you know particularly well, private investment in recent years has established that there are some exciting market prospects for horticultural projects. As a result of that horticultural investment, it is not unreasonable for the department to offer a great deal more support to the horticulturalists in that area to have more people involved in growing things, particularly with a view to exporting products to the southern markets.

Further south, it is possible to establish a table grape industry in the Ti Tree basin. Honourable members might recall that I referred to this briefly the other day during debate on the address in reply. This is a great opportunity for horticulture in the southern part of the Territory. The table grape industry developing there will operate without any competition at all. Their table grapes come on the market 2 to 3 weeks before grapes are available from other parts of Australia. There is nothing like being first into the market with any product and I am sure, Mr Speaker, that, as a pastoralist, you appreciate the value of that.

The other day the Chief Minister indicated that there is a need for us to centre our investigative efforts in agriculture and horticulture in the Northern Territory into a concentrated area rather than spreading them too thinly. Mr Speaker, I was very encouraged to hear the Leader of the Opposition say: 'If we are to have an industry of any scale here, we must be able to produce crops that are competitive in an international commodity market'. That is pretty sound thinking on which agriculture and horticulture in the Northern Territory should go forward.

That is the background against which the secretary of my department is looking at the priorities in the agricultural and horticultural areas within the department. There is no big secret about anything that is going on. If members have a particular interest in any project, I will be happy to open up the files to them and let them be a part of the investigations and considerations that are proceeding. If any member has a point to make in relation to this particular matter or other assessments that the department will be making in the course of time, I will be only too pleased to listen to what he has to say.

Australia Day Date

Mr HARRIS to CHIEF MINISTER

What has been the reaction from industry, unions and community groups to the Chief Minister's proposal to celebrate Australia Day on 26 January?

ANSWER

As I mentioned when introducing the bill to amend the Public Holidays Act last week, I had indicated the government's intention on Australia Day itself. Since then, I have sent telexes to all the state premiers, to the Prime Minister, to Australia Day Councils throughout the various states and I have written to all the various industrial groups in the Northern Territory. When I say industrial, I mean organisations such as Master Builders, Chamber of Industries, Trades and Labour Council and the like.

To date, the response has been somewhat disappointing. Although there has been quite massive support from within the community for the change in relation to the celebration of Australia Day on the day itself, and indeed surveys show that quite an overwhelming majority of the community wants that, nonetheless the response from the 2 state governments from whom I have since heard has disappointed me. Both Victoria and Queensland came back with a negative response. They have indicated that the present situation suits them. It seems to me that I have a job in front of me to convince those 2 states to change that attitude.

One of the brighter lights on the horizon, of course, is the support of New South Wales and, hopefully, the continued support of the Commonwealth government. The former Prime Minister was of this mind and I hope that the new Prime Minister is also. Within the Northern Territory there has been a great deal of support and it is sad to say that the only opposition has come from the Trades and Labour Council which has written back to me and said that it can see absolutely no point in changing the date for the celebration of Australia Day. Therefore, it appears that the government will not have the support of the unions at the time that it makes any meaningful application to an industrial tribunal in relation to the changing of various federal awards which also run in the Northern Territory.

This is a great pity because I believe that we will never get Australia Day off the ground as a day for national consideration of what this country is all about rather than just a day of national celebration, although I celebrate the fact that I am an Australian. I think all of us have cause to celebrate the fact that we are Australians, no matter what colour and what race we may be. It does seem a pity that the Trades and Labour Council seems to be putting other considerations in front of those which should, in these circumstances, motivate it.

Archives Building in Alice Springs

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I preface my question by advising that on 5 February the honourable minister announced that, because of climatic conditions, he intends to establish an archives building in Alice Springs. The honourable minister will be well aware that that is a lot of rot because any archives building is humidity and temperature controlled. Has he sought or received advice on the disadvantage of establishing the archives in Alice Springs over 1000 miles from the major research institutions in the Northern Territory, particularly the

hoped for university?

ANSWER

The decision to place the archives in Alice Springs was taken for very good reasons. Firstly, there is a difference in cost of establishing such a facility in an arid zone rather than in a humid area like Darwin. I can also advise the honourable member that, since that statement was made and the position was reiterated, I have received a great deal of correspondence on the matter from people who are particularly interested in the archives establishment and its activities.

As well, I visited both the Queensland and Western Australian archival operations to inspect the way in which things are done there and what problems they have. The government intends to review the location of the establishment of the archives in the foreseeable future. When the consideration has taken place, I will be happy to give the honourable member advice on the final outcome.

Dundas House

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

Does the Department of Health intend to take over the premises known as Dundas House in my electorate from the Department of Community Development and, if so, to what use does the Department of Health intend to put this property?

ANSWER

At the moment, the rehabilitation centre is operating out of the old Darwin Hospital in association with the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Northern Territory Department of Health. The Secretary of the Department of Health has examined the Dundas House operation with a view to the possible transfer of that operation from the Darwin site to the Dundas House site in Parap. At the moment, it is only a proposal. Until such time as the secretary of the department has a chance to make a proper assessment, I am unable to provide the honourable member with any further information.

Education for Children at Larrimah

Mr VALE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he advise when the 12 children of school age at Larrimah will have a school room and a teacher?

ANSWER

I am advised that officers of the Department of Education have been to Larrimah twice - in February and about a week ago - to assess the situation there. Eleven children there have been identified as being of school age. A report has been written on the subject for the Secretary of the Department of Education recommending facilities that could be provided at Larrimah so that these children can attend school. I understand that some of the children are doing correspondence work but a number of them probably are not receiving any schooling at all. I will ensure that the department makes an early decision on this subject and that it is communicated to the honourable member and the people of Larrimah.

Activities of Conservation Commission

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

I refer him to the Auditor-General's comments on the Conservation Commission's Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 June 1980 which was only tabled in this Assembly on 24 November last year. Will he give an undertaking to provide full details of the substantial amounts of money expended on certain forestry, soil conservation and environmental activities which were performed outside of the commission's terms of reference?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable member to put the question on notice.

Employment Strategy for School Leavers

Ms D'ROZARIO to CHIEF MINISTER

What was the outcome of government strategy as outlined in the last sittings to employ people who left school at the end of the 1982 school year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, whilst I cannot give the honourable member full and precise details of the outcome of the government's strategy in that regard, I welcome this question because it highlights the steps the government has taken since December last year to put in train various moves to open job opportunities, particularly for young people in the Northern Territory.

It is always the government's concern to maintain a high level of employment in the Northern Territory. Whilst the national economy is straining at present, I think we have done fairly well to keep the level of job creation in the Northern Territory rising. During the last 12 months or so, there has been an increase in the number of jobs available in the Northern Territory by about 1000. I would hope that job opportunities in the Northern Territory during the course of this year are considerably enhanced by the commencement of construction of at least one of the large uranium mining facilities in Arnhem Land, either Jabiluka or Koongarra. From the point of view of jobs, one would have to prefer Jabiluka because it will create about 1500 to 2000 jobs in the construction phase and several hundred permanent jobs once construction is complete.

I have outlined the opportunities that will be available in relation to the railway. There is also the new civil terminal for Darwin airport, the works associated with the basing here of the squadron of Mirage Fighters from Butterworth and the major work associated with the upgrading of Tindal and the construction in Katherine of many more houses to accommodate defence personnel. One of the side effects of the commencement of Jabiluka will be the fact that Jabiru will almost double in size. The present federal government has said many times that it believes the expenditure of money on housing is one of the best ways to prime the pump.

Mr Speaker, we hope all those projects will proceed this year. As His Honour the Administrator said in his speech last week: 'Prosperity is the best antidote to welfare'. Where there is prosperity, where there are jobs, there are many less disadvantaged people. There will be fewer disadvantaged people when more people have the opportunity for employment.

There were 100 jobs made available at base-grade level in the public service and set aside for school leavers. I believe that almost all those positions have now been filled. In many ways it was almost a struggle to fill them despite the suggestion that there were no jobs available for school leavers. Apparently, many school leavers prefer to wait until they get the sort of job they want. I believe they ought to obtain work experience in any job at all so that they will know something about the employment market and receive an income. In any event, almost all those jobs made available at base-grades have now been filled. Also, apprenticeship positions were created in various departments and authorities and I understand that they have been filled.

The Conservation Commission had certain positions made available to it which effectively amounted to hard work in the hot sun. We found some difficulty in filling all those positions. We had no trouble at all in filling 4 positions of computer technician in training for which we received 100 applications. Unfortunately, not everyone can be a computer technician. Let us hope that that area does not have the same experience as the teaching profession and, indeed, professions such as medicine, law, engineering and geology, which have passed through such phases of over-popularity at different times. They all seem to have their vogue. When I started in law, there were 60 students in the whole state of Queensland. Then Perry Mason started on television and, in the first year alone, there were something like 600.

Mr Speaker, in one way or another, I will publicise the precise details of the government's program. Honourable members would have heard last week of the job-creation program whereby federal funds are to be made available to the Northern Territory pursuant to savings made as a result of the wages pause. We were able to hand the first cheque, by way of instalment, to the Fred's Pass trustees last week. They are employing a number of people for quite a long period at Fred's Pass to put in some rather good facilities for the people of the rural area.

Every municipal council in the Territory has been successful in gaining some of those funds. I understand that further details are being sought from them and from other applicants to that we can acquit these funds to the federal Treasury or Department of Finance or whoever we get them from in the federal organisation. As soon as all these details are in hand, the funds will be disbursed. We would like to disburse them as quickly as we can.

We saved some money for Nhulunbuy because there was not even one application for funding of job-creation projects in the Nhulunbuy area. If the honourable member for Nhulunbuy is living in such an idyllic place that there is absolutely no room whatsoever for job-creation projects of any sort, where there is no unemployment and everything is fine, then I would be pleased if he would let us know during the adjournment debate or otherwise. If he can tell us what the story is, we can dispose of those funds down the track or in the bush or here in Darwin. In the meantime, until we hear something one way or the other, we are keeping quite a swag of money for Nhulunbuy.

Southern Section of Department of Primary Production

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Has he any plans to give a degree of autonomy to the southern section of the Department of Primary Production?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no plans for the devolution of autonomy to the southern area of the Northern Territory but I understand the secretary of the department is looking at this as a matter of urgency. It would seem that, with the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication program and some of the horticultural activities that are going on in central Australia at the moment, there is a need for a fair degree of autonomy and responsibility in that region so that the people who are working on the ground can be directly responsible for the decisions they have to make every day. As an example, last year in the Northern Territory we spent a total of \$6m on the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication program. This year, that amount of money is likely to quadruple and I say that in anticipation that the Commonwealth government will support the program that was ratified at the Agricultural Council ministers' meeting recently.

So far as I can see, and I know that the secretary of the department holds the same view, it is pretty unreasonable to quadruple the amount of activity and expenditure in an area such as the southern part of the Territory, which is heavily involved in this program, and at the same time try to administer it from Darwin. I think that it is reasonable that there should be a devolution of responsibility and autonomy in that direction. When it is likely to take place and how it is likely to be done, I do not know. As I receive information, I will make it available to the honourable member.

Dick Ward Drive and Ross Smith Avenue Intersection

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I understand that a consultant to the Darwin City Council recommended that action should be taken to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety at the intersection of Dick Ward Drive and Ross Smith Avenue. Does the government intend to provide funds to the council to enable it to overcome problems with this intersection which have resulted from the government's decision to build the connector road?

ANSWER

We have conflicting advice as to the best way to improve the intersection of Ross Smith Avenue and Dick Ward Drive to lessen the impact that those thoroughfare have on the Fannie Bay shopping centre and the people who live in Kurringal flats. Recently, I had a meeting with the Lord Mayor of Darwin and we agreed that changes would be made to the thoroughfare to improve the flow of traffic with minimum disruption to those people who live in the area. One of the difficulties that we are experiencing is the bussing of people from Kurringal flats to Darwin. We are looking at alternative sites for that bus stop and rerouting of the bus. Decisions on those possibilities have not been finalised. As soon as that is done, I will write to the honourable member for Fannie Bay with the relevant information.

Water Supply for Napperby Station

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Following investigations by the Department of Transport and Works into ways of providing a reliable water supply to the Aboriginal people on Napperby Station, a number of recommendations have gone to the minister. When does he expect to make a decision so that this ongoing difficult problem may be resolved?

ANSWER

Immediate action is taking place concerning the establishment of a tank and the cartage of water in the short term so that the Aboriginal people of Napperby can move to the special purposes lease that has been made available to them. Since I became Minister for Community Development, the member for Stuart has been with me on several occasions at meetings with the Aboriginal people at Napperby to try to resolve the water problem. It is not as simple as it may appear.

I will outline for the honourable member some of the difficulties. We have 200 people at Napperby who are keen to move on to their lease and one thing that is preventing that is the lack of an adequate water supply. One option is to pump the water from a bore about 17 km away. That possibility has a price tag of well over \$1m. However, the government has not ruled it out. Another option is to put a spear system into the reservoir near the creek and take water from there. Again, there are problems with that in that the quality and quantity of the water cannot be guaranteed. Another option is to cart water by truck from the bore. The bore is 17 km away and, in economic terms, that is quite a realistic proposition. Another proposition that is not totally outside the realms of possibility and is being examined at the moment by the Water Division of the Department of Transport and Works is the establishment of a dam on the creek to hold enough water to provide a regular water supply.

The immediate job is for us to have a tank established on the lease for the Aboriginal people so that they can move down and set up their camp. I might add that the Aboriginal people already have a health clinic there. It does not have services to it but they are able to work from it. Once the tank is in position, in the short term we will be able to cart water until the Water Division has further assessed the options available to us and a decision can be made.

I would emphasise for the benefit of the honourable member and also the member for Stuart, who has a very sincere interest in this matter, that we are determined to provide a reliable water supply for the people of Napperby. The government is working hard on it and the matter will be resolved as soon as possible.

Children's Ward at Katherine Hospital

Mr VALE to MINISTER for HEALTH

I ask this question on behalf of the member for Elsey. Can he advise when the children's ward at the Katherine Hospital will be replaced?

ANSWER

The Department of Health is examining development proposals for the

Katherine Hospital in the light of the extension of the RAAF base at Tindal. At the moment, the Katherine Hospital Board, in conjunction with the Department of Health, is examining proposals to redevelop the whole of the Katherine site. Originally, there was a proposal simply to rebuild the children's ward but the Katherine population has expanded in the last few years and the trend is expected to continue. In that light, I have asked that it be put on the 1983-84 design list. If it is successful in a budgetary context, construction should start between 1984 and 1985.

Pensioner Concession Scheme

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I understand that he received a submission from his department regarding anomalies in the present pensioner concession scheme. Could he outline if he intends to extend that scheme to include widows, invalid pensioners and particularly those on repatriation benefits?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can advise the honourable member that we will review the scheme in the next few months. As soon as there is news, the honourable member will be the first to hear about it.

Betting Shop at Casino

Mr HARRIS to TREASURER

Is he aware of a proposal, reported in the NT News yesterday, to establish a betting shop at the casino and is such a proposal permissible under the act?

ANSWER

The Racing and Gaming Commission and I were as surprised as anyone to see the article in the Northern Territory News about a proposal to open a betting shop at the new Mindil Beach Hotel Casino. Certainly, no approach has been made to the Racing and Gaming Commission on the subject by either Federal Hotels, the owners of the casino, or any other concern. Such an application, in fact, would be contrary to a provision in the Racing and Betting Act which provides that a bookmaker's shop shall not be in the vicinity of premises where liquor is sold and consumed. If such an application were entertained, it would probably require an amendment to the act.

Also, it is current policy that the Racing and Gaming Commission advertises for applications before a new bookmaker's licence is issued so as to enable selection of the most appropriate person to hold that licence. We have a fair way to go should a serious application be received by the Racing and Gaming Commission for an additional bookmaker's licence.

Education Statement Booklets

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In view of the general nature of the education statement released yesterday, can he advise when the supplementary booklets referred to in that document will be available and if they will be released all at once or progressively?

ANSWER

A number of the documents are virtually ready for release. To date, there are about 9. We can release the completed ones shortly. As new areas of interest emerge in the education field, more documents will be produced. We can release those that are in hand and I will endeavour to see that all members receive copies of them as soon as possible.

Funding for BTB Program

Mr VALE to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Can he advise if the government will ensure that the \$24m required to fund the BTB program is made available to the cattle industry immediately so that the BTB program can use the short mustering season to full advantage?

ANSWER

The honourable member would be aware that, for some time now, I have been canvassing with the federal government the possibility of the Northern Territory speeding up its BTB eradication program. The federal government is the prime funder in this area. Funding of the BTB eradication program, and the \$24m that the honourable member refers to, was made up by 50% from the Commonwealth, 25% from the meat industry through a levy charge and 25% from the Northern Territory government. The program is considerably behind the level of activity in the states and we need to press on with it and make some progress. Prior to the federal election, the Northern Territory's program was endorsed at the Agricultural Council ministers' meeting. It was regarded as a sensible program to proceed with this year. We received a commitment by the then government that funds would be available.

The Northern Territory has made representations through the Chief Minister to the Prime Minister and from myself to the new Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Kerin, seeking confirmation that the Commonwealth funding will be available. I am happy to read the context of a telegram sent from the Chief Minister's office on 15 March 1983 and to which there has been no reply:

To the Right Honourable R.J. Hawke AC MP, Prime Minister.

Northern Territory Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Program.

No doubt you will be aware that the Northern Territory fully supports the accelerated program for the eradication of brucellosis and tuberculosis as agreed recently in Agricultural Council, and endorsed in your government's policy speech. The immediate implementation of this program in the Northern Territory is essential so that the additional assistance measures can be in place for the opening of the cattle working season around April of this year.

I therefore seek your assistance in concluding negotiations for the BTB campaign funding arrangements and in executing an agreement between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth as soon as possible. The Northern Territory Minister for Primary Production, Ian Tuxworth, has today contacted the Honourable John Kerin on this matter which is of vital importance to the Northern Territory. Officers of the Northern Territory Department of Primary Production have been discussing this matter with Commonwealth officials and I understand that the agreement is now close to its final form. I trust that arrangements can be made to have funding available in the Northern Territory for the accelerated

program in the last quarter of the 1982-83 financial year. Any assistance you can give to the speedy conclusion of the execution of the agreement and the funding program for the Territory's BTB campaign would be appreciated.

Paul Everingham, Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I thought that the response from the federal government would be reasonably prompt considering the urgency of the matter for the government's program. I was concerned that the Leader of the Opposition indicated during debate in this Assembly that he believed this whole program would be subject to financial assessment along with everything else that the federal government had on its plate and that we could not expect that this program would proceed automatically.

Mr Speaker, I make the point again that I believe that programs to stamp out disease in this country are above party politics and I hope that the federal government will respond in an affirmative manner in the very near future.

Family Law Court in the Territory

Mrs LAWRIE to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

He will be well aware of the shortcomings and lack of privacy presently faced by people attending the family law court in Darwin, and possibly in Alice Springs. Has he made, or is he making, any approach to the federal Attorney-General to have separate facilities established for a family law court in the Territory?

ANSWER

This difficulty relates to the Children's Court also. I have not had any specific information given to me in relation to privacy of the family law court. I would not think that the federal government would be of a mind to spend money on those sorts of court buildings. Nonetheless, now that the honourable member has raised it, I will certainly take the matter up with officials of the department and perhaps court staff themselves to see what proposals may be put to the Commonwealth government to alleviate the problem. To construct a completely separate family law court for the needs of Darwin might be thought to be somewhat excessive. It would require a library, facilities for counsel, interview rooms, judges' facilities and so on. It would be an enormously expensive undertaking, having regard to the number of family law matters which go through the family law courts in the Northern Territory. Nonetheless, I will certainly raise the matter with the appropriate officials and see what the position is. We will follow it up from there.

Ophthalmologist for Alice Springs

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for HEALTH

What efforts are or have been made by the Department of Health to attract an ophthalmologist to Alice Springs?

ANSWER

The department has advertised extensively for an ophthalmologist for Alice Springs. I had discussions with the Vice-President of the Royal College of Ophthalmology to see whether we could obtain assistance in recruiting an

ophthalmologist for the Alice Springs area. I am unable to give the honourable member any further information other than that the department is continuing at all times to try to fill that position.

Carriageway Intersections on Vanderlin Drive

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

When is it expected that improvements to carriageway intersections will be effected on Vanderlin Drive between Lee Point Road and McMillans Road?

ANSWER

Improvements to those intersections will take place in the next couple of months. I have been advised that 3 sets of traffic lights will be installed in the northern suburbs. One will be at the intersection the honourable member refers to. Another will be just a bit further down opposite the garage. As well, lights will be installed where Lakeside Drive enters Trower Road. I will check the facts again and advise the honourable member.

Taxi Confiscated by the Liquor Commission

Mr LEO to MINISTER for HEALTH

What will be the future of Mr Noel Swan's taxi which was confiscated by the Liquor Commission?

ANSWER

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave to the honourable member for Fannie Bay last Tuesday. I referred to sections 96(1) and 101 of the Liquor Act. At the same time, I advise the honourable member that I will obtain a legal opinion regarding the action of the Liquor Commission. As far as I am concerned, the Acting Liquor Commissioner acted responsibly in this matter. I understand that the Acting Liquor Commissioner has written to Mr Swan advising him that his original decision to take \$1000 off him for the return of his vehicle stands. However, I understand that Mr Swan has been given an extra 70 days in which to pay the penalty.

Self-government Lotteries

Mr VALE to TREASURER

Can he advise if he is considering lotteries to celebrate self-government - in other words, annual self-government lotteries? Can he also advise the reaction to date of the proposed 1 July lottery this year?

ANSWER

We have had a very encouraging response to the proposed lottery. Tickets will first go on sale on 7 April. I have been advised that agencies around town are already taking names of people who want to be on the list to buy one of the new Northern Territory government lottery tickets, of which there will be 50 000. We expect that they will be fairly popular.

At this stage, we have not made a decision about running the lottery again. It has been suggested that, if this one is successful, it could become an annual event as part of self-government celebrations. The government will decide that in the future. Specifically, it was looked at as a one-off event.

Bankers' Seminar

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Can he inform the Assembly of the outcome of the Bankers' Seminar which was to have taken place last year? Has any success been achieved on the government's stated intention of encouraging commercial funding of agricultural development in the Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will obtain that information for the honourable member.

Job Skills Course at DCC

Mr VALE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Have funding problems for the job skills course at the Darwin Community College been resolved yet?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the answer is yes. Some few weeks ago there was concern that an Aboriginal job skills course run by the Darwin Community College would not be further funded this year. After some toing and froing between ourselves and the Commonwealth government, it agreed to fund the course again this year. It is of concern to state and territory governments that Commonwealth governments - and at present we are talking of past Commonwealth governments - have tended to take such initiatives as this, fund them for the first 1 or 2 years and, once they were running, pull out and leave the state either to pick up the tab or wear much of the odium of the activity shutting down.

The Commonwealth government adopts this practice very deliberately and quite openly. At many ministerial councils and premiers conferences that I have attended, this practice has been condemned persistently by all states. The argument put forward is that, if the Commonwealth proposes a new initiative, it should either continue to fund the project or make financial adjustments in favour of the state involved so that it has the capacity to continue funding it. This was just one example where we got into trouble. The Commonwealth proposed pulling out but, at the last minute, agreed to fund the course for this current year. It will be interesting to see what happens when the problem arises again at the beginning of the next study year at the Darwin Community College.

Buffalo Export to Thailand

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Is he aware that the director of the King of Thailand's buffalo herd, Dr Tim, is in Australia? Has any contact been made by the Northern Territory government with this gentleman with a view to interesting him in Northern Territory buffalo?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, over the past few weeks, the government has been looking closely at the possibility of exporting buffalo to Thailand. This was as a result of an initiative taken within the private sector. Our advice from the

Department of Trade and the Department of Foreign Affairs is that, while there is a buffalo bank in Thailand and there is opportunity from time to time for people to do business with that bank, there is no great export potential for the Northern Territory in this area. At this stage, we do not foresee any real opportunity of selling buffalo to Thailand. From time to time, there may be an opportunity to present buffalo to Thailand, in very small numbers, as an act of goodwill between governments. I can assure the honourable member that the matter is not being treated lightly and it will be monitored by the government very closely over the years to come. We are very keen to export buffalo to our northern neighbours and make it a viable industry. To do that, we must peddle our wares continually in that part of the world, look for opportunities and make the most of them when they become available.

Pastoral Leases

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

Have all pastoral lessees met the requirements of their covenants regarding payment of annual rents and, if not, what action is being taken to ensure compliance?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I cannot answer that question off the top of my head. I can advise the honourable member that not all pastoral lessees have met all of their covenants. I requested a review of that position a couple of months ago. I cannot really remember the details of the review but I provided details to the press. I can recall seeing articles in the newspaper indicating that the Barkly region was the region with fewest defaults, central Australia was second, the Victoria River district third and the Darwin and gulf region had the most. It is almost certain that there are lessees who have not paid their Crown rent but I cannot say how many. I suggest that this is an appropriate question for the honourable member to put on notice or write to me about. It is ridiculous to expect a minister to carry round in his head the number of pastoral lessees in the Northern Territory who have not paid their Crown rent for the current 12 months.

As for what is being done to enforce covenants, I am arranging for notices of default to go out to pastoralists who have not complied. I have already signed a number of notices that have been sent to pastoralists in various areas. I must say that, generally, the position is quite reasonable. I refer the honourable member to the newspaper article of a couple of months ago which was fairly complete on the subject.

Driving Licences for 16-year-olds

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I ask this question on behalf of the member for Tiwi. During the last sittings of the Assembly, she asked the Minister for Transport and Works to comment on the position in relation to 16-year-olds in country areas obtaining driving licences. Could he advise current government policy on this matter?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the government has assessed the situation very carefully and will allow 16-year-olds to obtain driving licences. The department, in consultation with the police, Road Safety Council and the Department of

Education, is developing a package of conditions that might be attached to the driving licences of 16-year-olds. This will balance the benefit and privilege of driving at this younger age with a need to reduce the likelihood of accident or injury and incorporate a positive approach to driving skills and road safety.

Issues that will be considered will be the possibility of restricting these first-year licences to A class and E1 class and strengthening practical tests for obtaining a driver's licence. An A class licence is for private motor vehicles under 4.5 t gross vehicle mass and an E1 is for motor-cycles under 250 cc. I hope to be in a position to introduce any necessary amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act in the May sittings.

Pensioner Flats

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HOUSING

Last year, the Northern Territory Housing Commission made an application to the Northern Territory Planning Authority regarding the erection of 24 single-storey pensioner flats on a large area of land in Parap Road in Darwin. This proposal has not yet been proceeded with, I understand, because the land has not yet been given to the Housing Commission. Does the Housing Commission still intend to proceed with this proposal in view of the grave shortage of ground-level pensioner flats in Darwin?

ANSWER

My understanding is that the Housing Commission will not proceed with that particular development but has secured land in the northern suburbs. For example, the Housing Commission has successfully negotiated the purchase of land in the Coconut Grove area off Dick Ward Drive for the construction of that type of accommodation. The Housing Commission is also looking at another block of land on the corner of old McMillans Road and Trower Road for the establishment of some pensioner flats there. I am unable to confirm that it will not proceed in the Parap area but my understanding is that other locations are being sought. I will clarify that for the honourable member and advise her at a later date.

Trade Apprenticeships for Females

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I understand that a number of females have taken up apprenticeships in the Territory in trades which have previously been dominated by males. Could he provide any details of those apprenticeships?

ANSWER

I am advised that, with the exception of hairdressing, most trade apprenticeships have been considered in the past to be non-traditional areas for female participation. But I am pleased to advise the Assembly that, whilst in 1979 there were only 2 female apprentices in non-traditional trade areas - that is, trade areas other than hairdressing - in 1982 the figure had jumped to 35 and in 1983 we have 42 female apprentices. These are in the areas of horticulture, electrical work, fitting mechanics, motor mechanics, carpentry and joinery, hand and machine compositing, upholstery, butchery, dental mechanics and instrument fitting.

Mr Speaker, if this trend continues, it will show that there is a definite

erosion of the traditional attitude in the community that such trades are really only for male participation. I am sure that some honourable members will be most interested in those figures, having regard to earlier debates.

Old East Arm Hospital

Mrs LAWRIE to MINISTER for LANDS

I understand that responsibility for the administration of the old East Arm hospital has passed from the Department of Transport and Works to the Department of Lands. Could he advise on any future plans for this area?

ANSWER

I am not aware of any specific plans for the East Arm area at the present time. My recollection is that we will locate a cement or clinker grinding plant there but, aside from that, I am not aware of any specific proposals. There is a noxious industry zone in that locality. To the best of my knowledge, no one has made any specific proposals for the use of the East Arm area.

Northern Territory Budget

Mr VALE to TREASURER

In view of speculation about the federal budget deficit, is the Treasurer willing to make any forecasts concerning the Northern Territory budget?

ANSWER

The best I can do is indicate that, with some 3 months to go, it is clear that the Territory should complete the financial year as it has managed to do the previous 4 years: with close to a balanced budget. We will be aiming, of course, for a small surplus. However, there is a little way to go. Even over a 3-month period, much can happen by way of unforeseen circumstances which could affect the outcome of the current year. As far as projecting - as the federal government seems to do - a deficit 15 months hence, I would not even like to try. Certainly, this government has never adopted a strategy that even considered deficit budgeting. As long as I am Treasurer, I hope we shall not plan for deficit budgeting in the Northern Territory.

Bus Service for Karama

Ms D'ROZARIO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Are there any proposals to provide an express bus service to and from Karama during the morning and afternoon peak hours and, if so, when is it expected that such a service will become available?

ANSWER

I do not have that fine detail available to me this morning, but I shall be happy to investigate the matter and advise her as early as I can.

Pumping of McMinns Lagoon Bores

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I ask this question on behalf of the member for Tiwi. With reference to pumping from McMinns Lagoon bores into the Darwin water supply, could he

inform me how much is being pumped on a daily basis, how long it will continue and how does this pumping affect the level of the bores of individuals living in the area?

ANSWER

An average of 11 mL is pumped per day. There are no plans to vary substantially the amount being pumped at present. Under normal circumstances, pumping from McMinns bore field has little effect on the groundwater available to individual householders. In the extreme, in isolated cases water levels could drop by 4 m which would still leave a depth of 12 m of groundwater available.

Boundaries of Koolpinyah Station

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

Has any decision been taken on the realignment of the boundaries of Koolpinyah Station?

ANSWER

In fact, Cabinet considered a submission from the Department of Lands some little time ago regarding Koolpinyah Station. Cabinet reached certain decisions in relation to the rationalisation of the area of that particular property. Negotiations are presently proceeding between the landholder and the Secretary of the Department of Lands. Those negotiations will be somewhat protracted because taking land is like extracting teeth. We appreciate that there are areas of Koolpinyah that are valuable for reasons other than for pastoral purposes. There are a couple of places on Koolpinyah; the Black Swamp, from memory, is one of them. It is a breeding ground for crocodiles and interests the Conservation Commission. There are other areas of particular interest to the Department of Mines and Energy and some are of interest to the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority.

I am trying to remember details from documentation that I saw before Christmas and I cannot vouch for the absolute accuracy of this information. My recollection is that, after a full investigation of Koolpinyah Station, it was found that there was very little good agricultural land there. It seems that the bulk of it is suitable only for pastoral purposes. Although we want certain rationalisations, changes to roads and a bit of land here and there to add to the Gunn Point Reserve, from memory I do not think any radical changes are proposed.

Housing Commission Contracts

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for HOUSING

Can he advise on procedures adopted by the Housing Commission to assess the economic viability of firms tendering for Housing Commission contracts?

ANSWER

My understanding is that the Housing Commission investigates all tenderers for Housing Commission contracts. There is a special committee which involves the technical branch of the Housing Commission. It evaluates all tenderers. Before a contract is let to a successful tenderer, the committee makes a recommendation to the Board of the Housing Commission, advising if that tenderer has the financial and technical capabilities to fulfil the contract.

Marina at Sadgroves Creek

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

What stage has been reached in the development of marina facilities at Sadgroves Creek?

ANSWER

I am not the best minister to ask about the development of marina facilities. Whilst strictly speaking, this falls within my portfolio, a couple of other ministers are a lot more active in the development of marina facilities. I understand that plans are advanced with the Port Authority for a system of moorings which will be located in or near Sadgroves Creek. The moorings are of a fairly complex nature and will enable a considerable number of craft to anchor there. I seem to recall that some dredging will be necessary. Certainly, Mr Speaker, you can rest assured, as can the honourable member for Millner, that this is a subject of lively interest to at least a couple of members of Cabinet. The matter is proceeding with all reasonable expedition.

Housing Commission Contracts

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for HOUSING

Have any Housing Commission contracts been let to tenderers in the last 12 months without a preliminary economic assessment being made of the tenderer?

ANSWER

At the moment, I am unable to provide that information to the Leader of the Opposition but I will obtain it for him. My understanding is that the answer would be no.

Medical Superintendent at Gove Hospital

Mrs O'NEIL to MINISTER for HEALTH

The former Minister for Health in this Assembly last August said that Department of Health doctors would be rotated in and out of remote areas such as Gove. Is this still his department's policy in relation to the Medical Superintendent at Gove Hospital?

ANSWER

It has been the practice of the Department of Health to rotate its medical staff in remote areas on a 3 to 6-month basis. The reason for this is that, once young doctors come up from south and are employed in remote areas, they tend to lose contact with their peer group. It is a good idea to bring them back into the mainstream of the health services to keep them abreast of changing technology and to give them a chance to provide the department with information on what is happening in remote areas.

The honourable member referred to Gove Hospital. At the moment, we have a very good hospital superintendent there, Dr Howard Baker. He has been doing a very good job. In the last 3 or 4 months, the health situation at Gove has settled down under his guidance. Originally, Dr Baker was a private practitioner operating out of the Tennant Creek region. Members of this Assembly placed undue strain on the former Minister for Health by asking him various questions about the arrangements pertaining to Dr Baker's private

operations in the Tennant Creek Hospital. The former Minister for Health's loss in this matter has been the Gove area's gain. I would certainly pay tribute to Dr Baker for his services to the people of the Gove area.

Agricultural Development Study

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Has the joint Conservation Commission, DPP and ADMA study for the achievable scale of agricultural development in the Top End been completed?

ANSWER

I know that it has not been completed because I asked the other day about areas that are of particular interest to me. My advice was that there was still some work going on by the 3 agencies of government which have been interested in this field. I will be pleased to obtain an updated report for the honourable member but I can assure him that the study is not completed yet.

First-Aid Information in Motor Vehicles

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Has he given any consideration to the desirability of permanently fixing basic first-aid information in motor vehicles?

ANSWER

The answer is no.

Overseas Travel by Senior Public Servants

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Have senior public servants, who have travelled overseas on official business over the last 12 months, been accompanied by their spouses at government expense? Can he explain the government's policy on senior public servants being accompanied by members of their families on overseas trips?

ANSWER

Some senior public servants have been accompanied on their overseas journeys by their spouses. I take personal responsibility for approval of overseas travel. Such visits are reviewed by a committee consisting of 3 very senior heads of the department who submit their recommendations to me. In certain circumstances, I have suggested that a particular senior public servant be authorised to take his spouse with him. Many of the senior and middle management people in our public service work very hard and long for the Northern Territory because of the tremendous amount of travel involved in operating out of the Territory. When you go south for something, you are gone for 3 days. I know that my wife is not terribly happy with the sort of life that she has to lead as a result of my continuous movement. I do not expect that the wives of senior and middle management public servants are much different. I know of 1 person who is sitting in this public gallery at this very moment who, in the next 3 weeks, probably will not be at home for 1 day because he will be attending to 2 essential commitments in the south. Also, he has to go to Singapore in the middle of all that, again for something that is essential to the interests of the Northern Territory.

I have approved the visits of spouses overseas and within Australia with their husbands. It is an ad hoc situation. Sometimes there is a request for such travel to be allowed and, at other times, there is not. I see all requisitions for overseas travel and travel within Australia for people within my department. Sometimes when there is no request for the spouse to travel, and I know that someone has been required to travel a great deal and work hard, I suggest - quite frankly, as a perk to try to help the spouse accept the situation - that the spouse go with the husband. I am not ashamed of that at all. I believe that it happens in private enterprise. If my wife wants to come with me on some of my visits, why should not the same be the case for the spouses of other men and women whose jobs involve considerable travel? If it is good enough for me, it is good enough for them.

Marrara Sporting Complex

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for YOUTH, SPORT and RECREATION

Does he intend to establish a management committee for stage 1 of the Marrara Sports Complex?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand that a manager for the new Marrara indoor stadium has commenced work in the Darwin area. I intend to let him settle in for a couple of weeks to adjust to the conditions relating to his position. Once I have had a chance to have a discussion with him, I will propose that the Director of Youth, Sport and Recreation consult with him to work out what kind of management operation we want for the Marrara indoor sports stadium. It has been said to me that, since the manager is now here, it might be a good idea to involve the user groups and sporting organisations in our management committee. I see that as a pretty fair proposal but I need a couple more weeks to assess what the final solution will be.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr DONDAS (Housing) (by leave): The honourable member for Port Darwin asked me a question regarding Carinya flats. It related to the provision of a hot water service to some of the flats. I am happy to advise him that work will commence on the installation of a hot water service for those units before July of this year.

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