
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 16 April 1985

King's Canyon Development

3. Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

In his press release of 20 February 1985 he said, in relation to the proposed tourist resort development at King's Canyon, that the Northern Territory government would 'ensure that there is no repeat of Yulara where infrastructure for Aborigines was promised by the Commonwealth but not provided'.

To what infrastructure is he referring?

Grants-in-Aid, Sporting Bodies

6. Mr SMITH to MINISTER for YOUTH, SPORT, RECREATION
and ETHNIC AFFAIRS

How much money has been given to sporting organisations over the last 5 years under the Grants-in-Aid scheme in (a) Nhulunbuy; (b) Katherine; (c) Tennant Creek; (d) Alice Springs; and (e) Darwin?

From 4 June 1985

Land Holdings, Myilly Point

8. Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

1. What are the details of the arrangements made with the Paspaley family and associated companies for the acquisition of their land holdings within the area of the proposed casino-condominium complex at Myilly Point?
2. What alternative land has been offered as part of those arrangements?
3. Have arrangements been made or are they being negotiated with other land holders within that area; and, if so, what are the details?

Travel outside Territory by Members

9. Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

1. Since the beginning of 1984, how many trips, financed by the government, have been taken outside the Territory by non-office holding Members of the Legislative Assembly?
2. In respect of each of those trips -
 - (a) which Member was involved;
 - (b) what was the reason for the trip;
 - (c) where did the Member go; and
 - (d) what was the total cost?

Freight and Related Costs Inquiry

10. Mr SMITH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. What action has been taken by the government on part 1 of the report of the Inquiry into Freight and Related Costs which was tabled on 1 March 1984?
2. What further action is being considered?
3. What action has been taken or is being considered in respect of part 2 of the report of that Inquiry which was tabled on 30 August 1984?

Gardens Hill Development

11. Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

1. How much will the Housing Commission pay for the pensioner units that will be constructed in Stage 1 of the Gardens Hill Development?
2. When will the Housing Commission be taking over those units?
3. Who called for the tenders for the development?
4. What will be the developer's contribution to the upgrading of services in the area (referred to in the Minister's adjournment speech of 29 August 1984)?
5. What is the component of land cost in the total cost of \$1.985m quoted by the Minister in his speech of 29 August 1984?

From 20 August 1985

Overseas visits by Officeholders

14. Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

1. Since 1 January 1984, how many trips, financed by the government, have been taken outside Australia by office-holding Members of the Legislative Assembly?
2. In respect of each of those trips (a) which Member was involved; (b) by whom was the Member accompanied; (c) when and where did the Member go; and (d) what was the total cost of the trip to the government?
3. In respect of each of the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85, what amounts were paid out to each office-holding Member of the Assembly for travelling allowance including full details covering total payouts and any subsequent reimbursements from Members?

Gas Pipeline

15. Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. Did the Northern Territory government or its agents sign any contracts for the purchase of pipes for the gas pipeline?
2. If so, (a) were those contracts transferred to the 'consortium' and (b) did this involve any cost to the government?

Car Park, Doctor's Gully

16. Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS
and HOUSING

Has the government allocated or paid any amount which has or will be used for the construction of a car park adjacent to the Doctor's Gully fish-feeding venture and, if so, please give details?

Land holding, Doctor's Gully

17. Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

1. Was the sale of the land at Doctor's Gully to Marshall Perron for a fish-feeding business subject to any conditions?
2. If so, (a) what were the conditions and (b) have they been complied with?

Coal jetty, Channel Island

18. Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. What was the cost of manufacture of the steel pilings for the proposed coal jetty at Channel Island?
2. Does the decision to have a gas-fired generation plant mean that the pilings are now not needed?
3. If so, what action has been taken or is planned for their alternative use or disposal?

Court Proceedings - Northern Territory Government

19. Mr B. COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

1. Since self-government, in what proceedings has the Northern Territory government been involved before either the High Court or the Federal Court?
2. In respect of each proceedings, what was the cost to the government?

Land, Myilly Point

20. Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS

What is the total amount paid to date by the government for land acquisition in the Myilly Point area? In addition, have further amounts been committed and, if so, how much?

Backbench Committees

21. Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

1. What committees have been formed of government backbenchers to carry out official functions or investigations on behalf of the government?
2. In respect of each committee, what government resources have been made available to it and at what cost?
3. Have any of these committees submitted progress or final reports? If so, please give details (including availability).
4. If not, please advise, for each committee, when its report is due or expected.

Performing Arts Centre, Darwin

22. Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In relation to the Darwin Performing Arts Centre, (a) what is the latest estimated cost to the Northern Territory government, of the Darwin Performing Arts Centre; (b) what was the original estimated cost; (c) please give details of the reasons for any increase; (d) when will the Centre be open for use; (e) what was the originally planned date for the Centre to open; and (f) what are the reasons for any delay?

New Age Thinking Seminars

23. Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

1. Are New Age Thinking Seminars still being held for public servants?
2. How many public servants have attended the seminars and at what cost to the government?
3. Were tenders called for the seminars or were quotes for similar courses obtained and, if so, what are the details?
4. Was any commission paid, or did any benefits accrue directly or indirectly, to the Northern Territory agent of the Pacific Institute of Seattle, for the use of the seminars by the Northern Territory government and, if so, give details?

Land Claim Court Costs

24. Mr B. COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

What was the cost to the Northern Territory government of the Appeal to the full Federal Court of Australia in the case of Perron and the Northern Territory Planning Authority v. Central Land Council?

TIO Advertising

25. Mr B. COLLINS to TREASURER

What have been the costs of advertising by the Territory Insurance Office for each month since July 1984 for -
(a) television;
(b) radio; and
(c) other media?

Waramunga Land Claim

26. Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

What was the cost to the Northern Territory Government for its opposition to the Waramunga land claim during the period 1 January 1982 to 31 July 1985 for -

- (a) private consultants and QCs engaged to prepare the government's case;
- (b) internal costs incurred by -
 - (i) Department of Community Development;
 - (ii) Department of Law;
 - (iii) Chief Minister's Department; and
- (c) the total cost of defending this land claim?

Electorate Office - Member for Eleyse

12. Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

1. What were the costs of (a) removal; and (b) new furnishings, fittings etc, for the recent change of office of the Member for Eleyse to the new T10 Building in Katherine?
2. What are the rental costs of both the old and the new premises?

ANSWER

1. (a) The removalists account is \$100.00;
(b) New furnishings - \$2440 and fittings \$56 994. This amount includes partitioning, window frames and glazing, electrical, mechanical and consultants fees of \$5450.
2. Old premises approximately 55 square metres @ \$70.90 per square metre per annum.

New premises 135 square metres @ \$135.00 per square metre per annum.

Sale of Government Vehicles

13. Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS
and HOUSING

1. How many government vehicles, divided by class, have been sent out of the Northern Territory?
2. Which company was awarded the contract to transport the vehicles to the point of sale?
3. By whom were the vehicles sold?
4. How were the vehicles sold?
5. What was the average price for each class of vehicle?

ANSWER

1. A total of 36 vehicles have been sent interstate, 24 to Brisbane and 12 to Sydney. They consist of 6 light utilities, 7 4x4 utilities, 9 sedans, 6 station wagons, 1 4x4 station wagon, 4 hatches, 1 4x4 swb hardtop, 1 twin cab and 1 panel van.
2. TNT Car Carrying, Winnellie Road, were contracted to transport 12 vehicles to Sydney.

Autoways, Stuart Highway, were contracted to transport the remaining vehicles to Brisbane.

3. The Brisbane vehicles were sold by Southside Auto Auctions Pty Ltd, 456 Logan Road, Stones Corner and the Sydney vehicles were sold by Christeys Motor Auctions, 25 Derbyshire Road, Leichhardt.
4. All vehicles were sold by public auction.

5. Class of Vehicle	Quantity	Average Price \$
Light utilities	6	3708
4x4 utilities	7	6110
Sedans	9	5072
Station wagons	6	4366
4x4 station wagons	1	10 750
Hatches	4	2031
4x4 swb hardtop	1	7700
Twin cab	1	4350
Panel van	1	2750

Child-Care Services in Katherine

Mr DALE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, I ask this question on your behalf as the member for Elsey. What steps have been taken to meet growing demands for child-care services in Katherine?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the issue of child-care facilities in Katherine is one that we have been looking at for the past 6 months. It would appear that there is a bit of a baby boom in Katherine. I am not sure whether that is a result of your direct representation of the area, but the area seems to be developing at quite a rapid rate. As a result, various working parties have been set up to establish facilities. As you would be aware, the government's intention has been to develop child-care facilities into neighbourhood centres and district centres as has occurred in Palmerston. I understand that the member for Elsey has some reservations about the development of those facilities within high schools and primary schools and there has been some reluctance on the part of various people involved in the development of child-care facilities in Katherine to proceed along those lines. As a result, the Women's Adviser in my department has met with people in Katherine. Various locations were inspected which were deemed suitable for the provision of child-care facilities and I understand that a particular facility has been selected. It is hoped that we will be able to open a child-care facility as an interim measure. I say 'interim' because, if the Tindal project proceeds, the rapid development expected in Katherine will require a lot more facilities. However, I am happy to advise that a facility has been set up, a working party has commenced and child-care facilities will proceed in Katherine on an interim basis within the very near future.

Child-care Regulations

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Is it a fact that, since the introduction of the Community Welfare Act in April 1984, there have been no regulations governing standards of child-care centres?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the question of regulations for child-care centres is one that the department's Children's Services Bureau has been addressing. In fact, we are now seeking leave for one of the officers within the Children's Services Bureau to develop legislation governing this particular area. I understand that they have operated under the previous standards which have been in operation for some time. These state the number of children allowed in each child-care area and the play area that must be available. I will inform the member for Millner of the regulations that the bureau is currently acting on and the status of those regulations. I can advise the Assembly that legislation is being drafted at the moment to introduce new regulations to cover a wide range of activities including extended day care and 24-hour day care. I will advise the member for Millner of the status of the legislation which is currently being enacted to cover those areas.

Renal Dialysis Unit

Mr VALE to SPECIAL MINISTER for CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister for Constitutional Development in his former role as Minister for Health. It follows earlier questions that I have asked of the minister in this Assembly. Is he aware that there are 10 former residents of central Australia now residing in Adelaide in order to receive dialysis treatment? Two more patients from central Australia are expected to move to Adelaide shortly so that they can also undergo this treatment. Can he advise the current status of the proposal to set up a renal dialysis unit in Alice Springs and will consideration be given to the temporary use of one of the vacant wards in the hospital for this purpose?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I assume that I have your leave to answer that question. The latest information that I have is that there are currently 6 patients in South Australia on full-time renal dialysis treatment. Nonetheless, the number has the potential to grow in the manner of an exponential curve. There is no doubt that there is a deep-seated problem, particularly in central Australia, of kidney and liver failure. It is not a major problem yet but it is likely to be one very soon.

The position in South Australia is that, in order to look after its own patients, quite obviously it cannot look after the ever-growing number of patients in the Northern Territory. It is not reasonable though to try to set up a renal dialysis unit in a vacant ward of the existing Alice Springs Hospital. There is only one way to do it and that is to build a special-purpose facility. That is precisely what I advised this Assembly about 2 sittings ago.

It is a very expensive business. The figures that I was quoted varied between \$179 000 and \$180 000 with a recurrent expenditure expectation of about \$65 000. That advice comes from Adelaide. Of course, without knowing what the position is in the Northern Territory, to do it would cost probably double that. Nonetheless, it is subject to the availability of government funds. Compliments of a person in another place, this particular financial year is hardly one in which we can look forward to having any excess funds. I do not know just what this government can do this financial year. Nonetheless, one of the last things I did do as Minister for Health last week was to instruct the department that a formal submission be put up to Cabinet in order that at least Cabinet is fully familiarised with the extent of the problem. I have no doubt that my colleagues, when fully apprised of the difficulties, will be seeking to do everything they can to overcome them. I can only plead and ask the incoming Minister for Health to make a further plea to the South Australian authorities to assist us over this difficult period, at least until we can establish our own facilities.

The reason why we simply cannot tack it onto an existing ward in the old Alice Springs Hospital is because of the quality of the plumbing needed. By plumbing, I mean all of the hygiene equipment and control systems which are necessary for renal dialysis equipment. It is not really as it used to be whereby one could just flush these machines out. Indeed, we had a wonderful guy in this Chamber, Mr Justice Ward, who used to plug himself into his machine at home. That is fine if you have a machine dedicated to a particular

patient. Our problem is that, in addition to the normal renal failures in central Australia, we have another rampant problem: hepatitis B. That is a highly-contagious infection which can be transmitted from blood to blood. Quite obviously, the staff involved in any renal dialysis treatment of a patient who has hepatitis B would need to take a great deal of additional care. Monitoring and sterilisation of the equipment would need to take place.

Given the difficulty of our suspected patients and our anticipated patients, it is a task which must be undertaken properly. As a result, it would require a great deal of expenditure. No doubt the new minister will form his own conclusions but I am still of the view that only a special-purpose addition to the Bloomfield Community Health Centre is the answer to the problem. I do not think it is the sort of thing you simply tack onto a hospital. It would create severe difficulties because of the possibility of cross-infection, particularly if it were within the confines of a hospital where the people are suffering from all sorts of post-operative recovery problems and so on. I think it is something that really needs to be isolated. I do not want to over-dramatise the risks involved but there are risks that should not be taken. It is a priority and, given the capacity to pay for it, I believe it ought to be done properly in the first instance. That is why I have asked for a Cabinet submission to. In the meantime, I think we can only rely on the best offices of the South Australian authorities to maintain the present services.

Article Alleging AIDS Spread Among Aborigines

Mr B. COLLINS to SPECIAL MINISTER for CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I ask the minister this question in his former capacity as Minister for Health. The front page of last week's Sunday Territorian carried an extremely alarming story in respect of a major testing program being carried out specifically for AIDS in Aboriginal communities. It was much to my alarm because, just the week before, I visited the health centres in my electorate and they either knew nothing about it or did not mention it to me. The Acting Secretary of the Department of Health, Dr Quinn, quite comprehensively rebutted the story this morning on Territory Extra. What is the correct position in regard to the matters raised in that newspaper report?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I can imagine the way in which this article upset him. I must say in all frankness that it upset and annoyed me intensely. I am not going to cast any aspersions upon the journalist. He came to me some 2 weeks ago with an awareness that there were health difficulties in Aboriginal communities, particularly in some remote Aboriginal communities. With genuine and proper motivation, he wanted to find out the facts. I obtained from the Department of Health a full and comprehensive briefing. I must admit that I did not tell the Department of Health that it was for dissemination to the media. Perhaps that was mistake number one.

On the other hand, I do not believe that Ministers for Health in any government should hide from the public realities and serious problems, and we have them. I think the public is entitled to the information. In that way, the public can be alerted to the fact that governments must simply expend vast amounts of money on curing these problems. I think the public ought to be aware that only from the federal government can we find the necessary financial resources.

What I think upset the Leader of the Opposition, as it upset me, was the extremely damaging and false allegation that there were specific blood tests being carried out among Aboriginal people, particularly in the Arnhem area, in relation to the disease AIDS. That is one point. But then, when you couple that with an equally false - and I am no expert on these things - allegation that that has something to do with a traditional sexual behaviour of young men, the damage becomes pretty obvious.

Mr Speaker, as I understand it, there is no truth in either allegation. I categorically state that there is no specific program going on at the moment to target Aboriginal people for blood tests for the disease AIDS. What is going on is a series of normal blood tests as a result of an ever-increasing incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases. In addition to that, I have already mentioned the difficulty we have among Aboriginal people. It is a genetic problem which we cannot understand. I wish we could because then we might be able to address it. We have the best medical brains in the country working on it. Thank goodness for the Menzies School of Health Research. I think it will be an institute of great value to the Northern Territory. In any event, for some reason or other, Aboriginal people are more susceptible to the hepatitis B strain than we are. We are the fortunate ones. We must do something about all the Aboriginal people who are subject to it.

However, given the rapid increase of sexually-transmitted diseases and the need to monitor hepatitis B, the Department of Health is carrying out blood tests. What a nonsense it would be, when one has a vial full of blood and is looking for other things, not to take the opportunity to check for AIDS. It is completely logical. It is quite unreasonable to connect that routine check for AIDS in a sample which is being used for other purposes with deliberate targeting of Aboriginal people as if we suspected them of carrying AIDS because of a mythical analogy between that and the alleged behaviour of young Aboriginal people.

When you start to do that sort of thing, the net result is that any plans the Minister for Education might have in relation to the integration of Kormilda and Yirara Colleges will automatically cause unwarranted fear among non-Aboriginal people and indeed Aboriginal people, particularly if it involves an area that allegedly is prone to it. There is already enough difficulty in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships. This we need like a hole in the head, particularly when it is utterly and completely baseless.

I have spoken with the journalist involved. I am quite sure that, when I explained the realities of that article to him, the news upset him as much as it upset me. Between the time of writing a story and its publication, an awful lot of things can happen to it. I have no doubt that the author of that article did not deliberately write into it the implications which any person reasonably would have constructed from it. Nonetheless, any reasonable person would have read those implications into that article. It is a matter of great regret to me indeed.

Gunn Point Prison Farm

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Will the prison farm continue in situ at Gunn Point or will it be moved to another place?

ANSWER

Mr Deputy Speaker, the prison farm at Gunn Point has been in the paper of late and has prompted questions in one way or another from the honourable the member for Koolpinyah. The issue of Gunn Point remaining as a prison farm is one that I have addressed in recent months, and in particular in light of the Apsey report which was a review of correctional services in the Northern Territory and which was tabled in this Assembly some months back. It is my belief that, for the moment, Gunn Point Prison Farm will remain where it is.

As I said in this Assembly many times, the cost of keeping prisoners behind bars is becoming very expensive - about \$12m per year and \$92 per person per day at Berrimah or Alice Springs. On the other hand, the cost of keeping prisoners in an institution such as Gunn point is dramatically lower. I am not saying that it is simply a cost-saving factor but we simply cannot incarcerate people, let them serve their time and then open the shute and let them bolt out on the day they have finished their term of imprisonment. In short, I believe the prison farm has much to offer at Gunn Point. Some comments have been raised of late as a result of the recent prison escape. We have reviewed some of the prisoners there and 4 of them have been returned to the more secure surrounds of the Berrimah Prison.

As you no doubt realise, Mr Deputy Speaker, I announced recently the establishment of a prison industry committee that will look at ways and means of occupying the prisoners' time in productive work. One of those projects is numberplate printing. It is carried out in many institutions throughout Australia and it is done very successfully. It is a labour-intensive industry and currently contracts are awarded outside the Northern Territory. As you would realise from today's statehood debate, charity begins at home and we will be moving towards the development of various types of industries within our prisons.

One of the other industries which we are looking at is the development of a woodchip industry. The industry advisory committee is looking at that in close consultation with the Conservation Commission. There is timber available at Gunn Point, some of which needs thinning out. Woodchip is worth quite a lot of money. The forestry area located at Gunn Point will enable us to venture viably into the woodchip industry. I believe that there is a role for Gunn Point to play where it is situated at the moment. There are industrial opportunities.

I might add that there have been 7 prison escapes from Gunn Point, including the case of one inmate who escaped on a tractor. When he was apprehended by the police a short time later, he said he was en route to Berrimah Prison, and he was returned. There has been another escape involving 2 inmates. Luckily, they came back to Gunn Point some days later telling horrific tales of being chased by buffalo and crocodiles. They were glad to get back into the secure surrounds of Gunn Point prison and 3 meals a day.

There is a saying in the community and some institutions that, if we left the door open, people would complain about the draught. What we are looking at now is getting the prisoners involved in labour-intensive areas where we can develop some of the industries that are available using the labour force provided by the prison. It is indeed a problem for the Northern Territory because we still have 5 times the Australian average imprisonment rate. Furthermore, our remand situation is nothing to laugh about. We face the problem in prison farms such as Gunn Point - and I will be making other

statements on prison farms in the coming sittings of this Assembly - of getting people involved in labour-intensive industries and ensuring that they can make use of their time in prison to develop skills and trade qualifications. The objective is to enable them to re-enter the work force and fulfil a useful role within the community. In catering and tourism, for example, the correctional services industry provides the only competition for the School of Hospitality and Tourism. This is because many of the chefs have been produced by the Department of Correctional Services. They sit for the Certificate of Catering which is awarded to them through the Darwin Institute of Technology. These activities are also encouraged and developed at Gunn Point.

In short, Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe there is a role for Gunn Point to ensure that prison industries develop and prosper. For the time being, Gunn Point will be maintained as a prison farm.

Petrol Rationing

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES AND ENERGY

At the time petrol rationing was introduced last week, how many days of normal supply were there for Darwin and, given Darwin's isolation and vulnerability to natural disasters, what action has been taken to ensure that supplies do not again fall to a level where it becomes necessary to introduce rationing?

ANSWER

Such a question deserves a careful reply. I am sure honourable members are interested in this matter. Expecting a question on the subject, I had some notes prepared. On Monday 12 August, there were 1890 t of super petrol in the Darwin tank farm. At a normal rate of consumption, that would have lasted 9 days. At that point in time, the BP Enterprise had not left Kwinana in Western Australia. As normal steaming time to Darwin for the tanker is 7 days, that would have meant that, at best, we would have had enough fuel for 1 day left in the Darwin tank farm when the tanker arrived; that is, if rationing procedures had not been introduced. In addition to that, some service stations, particularly those supplied by Ampol, would have run out earlier than the 9 days of supply that we had in total. That could have caused panic buying.

The government has a general policy of non-intervention in the commercial activities of the fuel companies. But when they fail to manage themselves responsibly and put in jeopardy the service to the community, the government is prepared to examine all the options open to it. Darwin is serviced by 4 major companies - Shell, BP, Mobil and Ampol - all of which have storage facilities in the Dinah Beach tank farm. The companies do not have equal storage capacity and, in some instances, 1 company holds stock on behalf of all companies; for example, Mobil at present holds all the stock of unleaded petrol.

Based on normal average usage figures computed by oil companies and the department, the Dinah Beach tank farm's maximum storage capacity is: super petrol - 99 days; unleaded or standard petrol - 300 days; distillate - 78 days; avgas - 109 days; avtur, which is jet fuel - 104 days; and fuel oil - 102 days. The Department of Mines and Energy monitors stocks on a weekly basis. During 1984, average weekly stocks were: super - 45 days;

unleaded petrol - 108 days; distillate - 31 days; avgas - 41 days; avtur - 46 days; and fuel oil - 42 days. Since early 1984, weekly stocks have dropped below 30 days as follows: super - 8 times; distillate - 8 times; avgas - 5 times. Since early 1984, stocks have fallen below 10 days as follows: super - 2 times; distillate - 1 time; and avgas 2 times. When distillate fell below 10 days supply in late 1984, emergency procedures were commenced but not promulgated. Very strong communications were sent to the companies at that time but the situation was not regarded as serious enough to threaten fuel supplies.

Low-stock positions caused by the non-arrival of the scheduled tanker can be attributed to a variety of external factors. These have most commonly been engineering breakdowns on the tanker or at the refinery, interstate or local industrial disputes, weather delays and schedule complexities. There are a limited number of tankers on the Australian coast and 1 delay can seriously affect subsequent planned shipping programs. The Fuel Emergency Advisory Committee meets when stock forecasts indicate an emergency situation is likely to arise. This group oversees the situation and advises the government on the best course of action to conserve stocks and a possible contingency action by the companies or government.

We have options to maintain stocks at a higher level. Firstly, we can rely on industry, as we have done in the past, and attempt to give it a ginger up from time to time by complaining about specific incidents. That has been practised. Secondly, the government could hold stocks itself. Thirdly, the government could require companies to hold minimum stocks. The first option - relying on the industry - is the situation at present. In general, it is considered - and this is advice and not necessarily my opinion - satisfactory that there have been 2 declared fuel emergencies and 2 alerts during the last 18 months.

Option 2 is for the government to hold stocks. The government could hold stocks either on its own behalf in separate tanks or have companies hold stocks of government fuel. I point out that there is no point in the government holding an emergency stock of, say, super petrol. If you are talking about the town running out of fuel, you have to hold the amount of each fuel you require as a buffer. To hold 30 days stocks of super, diesel and avgas would cost \$10.62m. That is the cost of the stock. Of course, that could be converted to a finance holding charge in order to pay \$10.6m worth of interest perpetually. Then you can have that value of fuel tied up. The cost of holding these stocks is estimated at \$1.9m annually, equal to a cost of 0.4¢ per litre. There would be additional costs for leasing of tanks from the companies and government administration. Therefore, that \$10.62m that I mentioned is solely the value of the fuel itself.

Option 3 is for the government to require companies to hold minimum stocks. Legislation to require companies to hold a minimum stock of 30 days could be based on a licence system whereby you would need a licence to wholesale fuel in the Territory. The licence would of course be conditional. The companies would in all probability seek to pass on the cost of holding such stock to the consumer. The estimate of these charges is somewhere between 0.3¢ to 0.5¢ per litre. Therefore, with normal town usage of 50 L per week, motorists would pay an extra 25¢ per week or \$13 per year. That does not sound like a great deal of money and some people may say that it is a good idea and that we should all pay the extra sum. I would be happy to hear comments on this matter. I presume the honourable member for Stuart will be giving us his comments during the next few days. I would like to hear what

people think. What are people prepared to pay for the luxury of not having fuel rationing introduced from time to time to reduce the possibility of running out of fuel totally? I have been in Darwin a long time and I cannot remember a time when we were completely out of fuel. During the past 18 months or so, however, there have been 2 occasions when rationing had to be introduced to conserve stocks but, as I understand it, there was no occasion when we were out of any particular fuels. The recent rationing related only to super petrol. There were very adequate stocks of diesel. Avgas has been very short of late and some has been trucked in. There were a few more days supply of unleaded petrol than there were petrol supplies. I urge people to think carefully before adopting the simple solution to the whole problem and advocating that we hold \$10m worth of fuel in stock.

Gas Pipeline

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

There are 2 parts to the question. What steps are being taken by the Department of Mines and Energy, either solely or in conjunction with the Department of Primary Production and or the Conservation Commission, to prevent the possible spread of noxious weeds, including mimosa, where machinery constructing the gas pipeline carries seed along the route? Further, what steps are being taken by the department to ensure that large-scale erosion does not emanate from the gas pipeline works?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have some information for the honourable member and I am sure other honourable members will be interested. I can advise that control of soil erosion, like all environmental and other technical controls in relation to the pipeline, is exercised through the Energy Pipelines Act. The licence issued under that act contained specific conditions which must be adhered to by NT Gas. Furthermore, power exists under the act for myself or senior departmental officers to issue directions to the licensees. Licence conditions include compliance by NT Gas with detailed environmental management safeguards developed during the environmental assessment of the pipeline project. These provisions go into some detail with regard to erosion control measures and my department has ensured that they are followed through in project contract documentation.

Specific erosion control methods include the conservation of root stock, the respreading of topsoil over the pipeline corridor to encourage regeneration and drainage control, including contouring and erosion control banks to minimise gullyng. Of course, the erosion control includes engineering solutions and the pipeline industry has considerable expertise in this field. The last thing that a pipeline operator wants is for his pipeline to be exposed by erosion and the industry has great experience in avoiding the problem.

Mr Speaker, Williams Brothers, the engineers for this project, have 2 scientific personnel specifically watching out for environmental problems during the construction of the pipeline. At river crossings, construction techniques receive particular scrutiny and the Water Resources Division of the Department of Transport and Works has considerable expertise in the design of the pipe across rivers. In addition, the Department of Mines and Energy has engaged its own consultant. The consultant has an experienced pipeline construction and environmental inspector living and working with the construction crew to monitor on a daily basis compliance with the licence conditions.

One of the problems that has been encountered previously is the use of restored right of way as an access track by vehicles. Honourable members will appreciate that clearings through the scrub will be considerable between here and Alice Springs and the use of such areas by off-road vehicles could cause problems. The intention is to ensure that the right of way is fully covered with vegetation and, during the regeneration phase, it will be deliberately obstructed with fallen trees, earth clumps etc to discourage vehicles from using the track.

Although a great deal of attention needs to be paid to this issue to ensure the right result is obtained, I feel confident that it will be obtained because of the convergence of the needs of the environment and the pipeline itself as well as the careful attention by the inspectors from my department. In addition to Department of Mines and Energy pipeline inspectors, there are inspectors employed by Williams Brothers, the project engineers. The Conservation Commission Environment Unit will be making occasional inspections independently of the formal role of the Department of Mines and Energy. The Department of Mines and Energy has a consultant firm called Pipetech on the project. It is expert in the field and will be virtually living with the construction crews. The contractors themselves have their own managers who are there all the time and who are aware of their contractual obligations. Harry Butler is working for Williams Brothers as an environmental adviser on the project. If we have any problems, it might be with inspectors falling over each other in trying to find something out of place.

On the question of weed control, the same general principles apply as far as monitoring is concerned. Detailed planning took place before construction commenced and field survey crews included environmental consultants watching for areas where a risk of spread of noxious weeds existed. As a routine precaution, all vehicles and plant coming onto the project are thoroughly washed down to prevent the introduction of disease or plant life from interstate. Strict controls exist on the behaviour of construction personnel during the construction phase. Detailed environmental guidelines, including provision for the prevention of weed control, have been issued to all field supervision staff. Construction personnel are not allowed off the 30 m right of way. Movement of vehicles in high risk areas will be monitored, frequent spot checks will be made and, where necessary, wash-down procedures will be instituted at strategic points. We cannot tell where the weeds have been transported until the next growing season. For this reason, the licensees will have an ongoing responsibility under their licence to monitor the right of way for the spread of noxious weeds.

Private agreements have been entered into with landholders along the route and, under these agreements, the licensees have a clear obligation to make good any damage caused by the project. This would include the eradication of any weed spread that got past the control procedures that are in place during construction. In addition, the Department of Mines and Energy, with advice from the Conservation Commission and the Department of Primary Production, will be carrying out follow-up monitoring of erosion and weed control measures after the project is completed.

I am sure that the government is doing all it can to ensure that this project goes smoothly and with absolute minimal damage. That damage which does become evident will be addressed very quickly.

Nhulunbuy Wharf Facility

Mr LEO to MINISTER for PORTS and FISHERIES

Who will control the operation of the new public wharf facility in Nhulunbuy which is to be built at a cost of \$0.48m to Territory taxpayers? If the managers are not part of a government instrumentality, what guidelines will the proposed managers be obliged to operate under?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will respond to that question later today.

Katherine East Subdivision Stage 2

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS

I preface my question by referring him to the contract to develop the Katherine east subdivision stage 2. Will he table estimates of costs and returns for this subdivision?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I take that question on notice. I will refer to it later.

Federal Budget Effects on NT Tourism Development

Mr VALE to the TREASURER

Given that one of the major economic thrusts of the Northern Territory government in recent years has been to develop tourism, how does he view the impact of last night's federal budget on the Territory's tourism development?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the impact of the budget on the Northern Territory is really important for honourable members to understand. Could I preface my remarks by saying that full credit must go to the federal Treasurer for the way he has tackled the issue of getting the deficit down to \$4900m. I think it is fair to say that that effort was far outside anybody's expectations and is good news for the country.

Setting politics aside, all Australians should applaud the government's determination to appear before the next wage hearing and argue for the discounting of the next wage increase so that it does not take account of the devaluation. That is another aspect of the budget that I believe is good for Australia and, ultimately, will be good for the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, there were no surprises for the Northern Territory in terms of additional cuts. We had those in the mini-budget in March when the Northern Territory copped about 10% of the mini-budget cuts even though we have 1% of the population. The other cuts that we received as a result of the federal government's activity at the Premiers Conference and its interference with the memorandum relating to the subsidy for NTEC have also been indicated in this Assembly. So far as we can see, there are no further intrusions into the Northern Territory's funding arrangements that would require the government to introduce additional taxes in the budget that is to be brought down next week.

There are some aspects of the budget that are a matter of concern for all Territorians. Firstly, let me say that the announcement by the government that there is a concession for primary producers and fishermen of 2.4¢ a litre for diesel to run their operations is good news for the Northern Territory's agricultural sector. Let there be no mistake that people in the bush are suffering badly and this sort of relief will go a long way towards easing their problems. Let us also bear in mind that it is giving back to them 2.4¢ a litre that was taken from them in March. Let us also bear in mind that

the fishermen of this country who are operating offshore over 100 miles out are also paying a levy for diesel fuel that goes towards building roads in the bicentennial roads program. They have not exactly received a reasonable deal out of it but it is a big improvement.

My great concern in the budget was the fact that there was no provision made for funding the Darwin Airport and the completion of the construction that is already under way. You would remember, Mr Speaker, that the Darwin Airport was conceived some 5 years ago, it ran the gamut of a public works committee, about \$20m was expended directly or indirectly on the project, and then it was stopped. It is one thing to review the project, and take 6 months to do it - and that has already happened - but it is quite obvious from the budget now that the government has no intention of providing any funding for the Darwin Airport under the arrangements that were announced last night. It really sticks in one's craw when one considers that Townsville was allocated \$14m last night for an airport. Given that there are 2 international airports in Queensland already, at Cairns and Brisbane, it would not have been unreasonable to expect the Northern Territory to get a go and allow completion of the work that has already started. That is most important in terms of the Territory because much of our infrastructure development at the moment - the construction of hotels etc - has been based on the promise to complete the airport by 1986. We now have a lot of money being spent in this town, much of it offshore, on tourist infrastructure, and it was reasonably assumed that that infrastructure would benefit from the construction of the airport. That is a matter of great concern.

There were no funds indicated in the budget last night for ALOP agreements between local government and the Commonwealth. That is a matter of concern in the sense that the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council have been negotiating for some time with the federal Minister for Transport to try to put in place an ALOP arrangement for the Alice Springs Airport. It would appear that funds will not be available to effect that in this financial year.

The other area of concern is Kakadu. Kakadu was given an extra \$2m to \$3m for infrastructure in that area and that is totally inadequate. The federal government was aware of it.

Mr B. Collins: You do realise that it is the best-funded national park in the country?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it may be the best-funded national park in the country but it is not adequately funded.

Mr B. Collins: Of course not.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is the point that I am getting to. In fact, on 2 or 3 occasions, the federal government has committed itself to spending \$30m at least in that area to provide suitable infrastructure, Nothing has happened so far other than the ordering of the barbecue kits. The \$2m that has been offered in this budget is totally inadequate.

The Leader of the Opposition referred yesterday to the fact that I support totally the development of tourism in that region and the role that the Aboriginal people of Arnhem land can play in promoting Kakadu National Park. I do support that concept but, whatever happens, we will need tourist infrastructure in that area. The \$2m is really barking at the moon.

I think all Territorians, particularly the people of Katherine, would welcome the announcement that Tindal will get \$28m this year for its development. That is good news for Katherine and it will also be supported in our budget next week with necessary funds to develop the town.

Another area of great concern for Territorians is the accelerated Stuart Highway program. Honourable members will recall that, on the announcement of the cancellation of the railway, the federal government made great play of the fact that we would receive an extra \$9m a year for 3 years to upgrade the Stuart Highway. Actually, in the first year, we received \$2.5m out of the \$9m, and now that whole vote seems to have disappeared from the budget papers. It could be shown in another place or it could be that we have had our chips totally. I think the latter is more likely.

Mr Speaker, I want to reflect again on the \$40m NTEC subsidy. We have had many discussions in this Assembly on the reduction of that subsidy. It is truly unfortunate that it has happened, and it has hurt the people of the Northern Territory terribly through the adjustment of electricity charges.

There are a couple of other areas of interest. One is the Commonwealth new works program in the Northern Territory which is shown as \$1.8m. That would not seem to be much but I think we need to take into account that there are other votes in the budget - such as the Tindal vote - that reflect a considerable Commonwealth contribution to the Territory. Perhaps the new works program does not reflect the total commitment.

I must also welcome the commitment of \$1m by the Commonwealth towards the buy-out of the prawn boats. There is no doubt in the mind of anyone who has anything to do with the fishing industry that our prawn fishery is in a state of chaos. It has been for some time. Somebody needs to take care of its management and start to deal with the excessive number of boats operating in the fishery. Put simply, we have about 17 000 t of effort looking for 4000 t of prawns. You do not have to be smart to realise that many people will go broke in an exercise like that. In the last 12 months, we have suffered the problem of prawn boats getting into the nurseries and raiding them. That is not helping the fishery at all. Therefore, the Commonwealth's contribution to start buying out boats is welcome.

People of the Territory will also welcome the news that a radar facility will be built at Gove at a cost of about \$1.3m. Attracting funding like that from his federal counterparts is a feather in the cap for the local member. The rest of the Territory wishes they could do the same.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude by saying that all Australians must acknowledge the achievement of reducing the deficit to \$4900m. We must also bear in mind that we have only had the first half of the budget. It will be interesting to see what the rest of the budget contains when it is brought down in September.

Teachers in Alice Springs Schools

Mr D.W. COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Why are certain teachers in schools like Ross Park and Gillen receiving letters advising them to apply for their own jobs in 1986?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. I am aware of the situation that has arisen, and I have received a number of letters on that particular issue.

It is indeed unfortunate that things have happened in the way they have. The department was trying to give teachers who are excess to requirements the opportunity to apply for positions. It was trying to be fair in its manner of appointing people to those particular positions. We did not want to have a Bega case here. In Bega, New South Wales, serious industrial action was taken when a superintendent identified an officer in a school as in excess. The officer was directed to move out of that particular school. That situation created a great deal of concern in the community. The teachers were concerned that such action could be taken and there was a great deal of industrial unrest in New South Wales afterwards. We did not want to have that situation arising here.

One must remember that the situation that has arisen, not only at the school in Alice Springs but in other schools throughout the Territory, has been one that would not have occurred last year. The normal process of assessing schools in relation to their entitlements for the following year would have taken place in the July-August period, and those people who were in excess would have been given 18 months in which to apply for other positions.

The situation changed dramatically when we became aware at the Premiers Conference of the scope of the cuts that were to be placed on the Territory by the Commonwealth government. It was necessary for the Department of Education to look very carefully at its own situation. We did not want to affect the formula. We did not want to affect school-based funding. We had to look for an area where reductions could be made. 80% of the education budget is tied up with salaries. We had to look at areas where we could save money immediately.

The situation that we have is that, where teachers are over formula in schools, instead of having that extra year when, through attritions or for other reasons, they would be able to apply for other positions, we had to cut the time back to 6 months. I think that is only fair in view of the fact that some of the teachers would apply for positions during that 18-month period and, when they were successful in obtaining a position somewhere outside of the Northern Territory, they would leave a school in the middle of the year.

From the period of notification that the school will be staffed to a certain level next year, the teacher has 6 months to apply for positions if he is in excess of the normal formula requirements. I want to emphasise that the formula as such is not affected in any way. We still have a formula that is equal to the best in Australia for primary schools. We have the best in Australia marginally for secondary schools and definitely we have by far the best in Australia for Aboriginal schools. Mr Speaker, those formulas are being maintained and this is a normal process of assessing the promotion positions in a school and the requirements of the school in the next year. That happens at this time each year and that is not new.

When concern was expressed to the department, it set up a panel which examined the situation at Gillen school in particular, and at other schools in Alice Springs. My understanding is that the issue has been resolved. The teachers who have been declared as excess to requirements have been identified

and they have been notified by telex. I might say here that the teachers who were in excess have all been positioned in schools in Alice Springs for the coming year.

Statement of Public Accounts

Mr B. COLLINS to TREASURER

Why is the Statement of Public Accounts for the 12 months ended 30 June 1985 not available, which is contrary to normal practice?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I signed the statement some time ago and, as far as I know, it is with the printer or coming through the system. I will check its exact whereabouts for the Leader of the Opposition and let him know.

Aboriginal Town Camps in Darwin

Mr DALE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What progress has been made in discussions between the government and organisations representing Aboriginal town camps in Darwin about the satisfactory location of such camps?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as a result of an incident in the member for Wanguri's electorate some months ago, I reactivated the Town Campers Action Group which was a group of people that had been meeting over a number of years to look at the problems of itinerant town campers. Last week, the Chief Minister and myself met with officers from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on this particular issue. The town camp situation has had some publicity in the media over the last 3 or 4 months yet the issues do not seem to have been resolved.

One example has been brought to my attention by the member for Koolpinyah. I refer to the 15-mile camp on which the government has spent a considerable amount of money. Electricity was supplied and houses were built. However, one person who was asked to leave the camp has re-established himself on the side of the road from which the 15-mile campers were removed originally. The Attorney-General will be making a statement about trespassing laws and regulations that are available to have people removed from areas where they are not supposed to be. The reactivated Town Campers Action Group has met 3 times to consider the various issues. The Railway Hill town campers are of concern to the member for Port Darwin. That is a particular problem because it is not necessarily only Aboriginal people involved. In fact, I understand that 50% of the people camped at Railway Hill are Europeans.

The problems are tremendous. An offer by the Kulaluk group to provide an interim camp of some kind within its boundary has been considered by the action group. No doubt, the member for Ludmilla will have something to say about that. This is a problem which traverses the whole of the Territory. In pointing this out to the members concerned, I am only trying to bring attention to the magnitude of the problem right throughout the Territory.

The problem at Lee Point was created when the town campers were moved after they had come in from Maningrida to a rock concert. That population has fluctuated. This particular issue has not yet been resolved to the

satisfaction of the government. The government has said that, until it can be convinced that the town campers are making full use of those camp areas which have been designated and on which it has spent a considerable amount of money to put in solar hot water systems and reticulated services, it would be reluctant to declare other town camps. As demonstrated by the 15-mile camp, it is not the solution to all the problems. I see the honourable member for Braitling nodding his head over there. I am reminded of the problems with town campers that he is faced with in the Alice Springs area. Until these people can sit around the table and resolve some of the issues themselves, we will remain in a quandary as to which way to move next.

I can inform the honourable member for Wanguri that we have reactivated the Town Campers Action Group. It is meeting. It has representatives from police, health, lands and the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs. My department chairs that particular group. However, the people involved must sit down and come up with the solutions themselves to some of these problems that they are facing and that they place on themselves. That does not seem to have progressed although, as I said as early as last week, we were sitting down with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which will address...

Mr B. Collins: Come on, you've got to sit down sooner or later.

Mr COULTER: ...these particular issues. I hope to be able to inform the Assembly that this is a really serious problem. I am just trying to address the issues and no doubt the honourable Leader of the Opposition...

Mr B. Collins: Let's hear it all again.

Mr COULTER: ...has a particular problem in his electorate.

Mr B. Collins: Bet you 5 bucks you cannot make it to 11 o'clock.

Mr COULTER: I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that many of his constituents are moving in to the Darwin area. In fact, I intend to raise the matter of the urban migration which is occurring. People are moving in from designated Aboriginal areas.

Mr B. Collins: This is unbelievable. Just 1 or 2 points.

Mr COULTER: People from outstations are moving into the city areas and the facts are outstanding. I will just get them seeing as how the honourable Leader of the Opposition has shown so much interest.

Mr B. Collins: Just 2 decibels lower.

Mr COULTER: I would like to inform the Assembly of these problems. This is from an Aboriginal newsletter: 'The proportion of Aboriginals living in rural areas has declined from 55.7% in 1971 to 41.6% in 1981. The major part of the decrease is due to movement into small urban localities'. Most Aboriginals now live in urban areas - 58.3%. So much for land rights! These are the issues that are being faced and they must be resolved.

Sexist Advertising on Government Buses

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I am sorry to incommode him with his bronchial disability today but no doubt he will be able to answer my question adequately. Is he aware that government buses are carrying what I consider to be undesirable sexist advertising on their sides? What will he do to redress the inequality of this advertising?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am quite concerned about the inference that the honourable member is making. Until she explains exactly what the problem is, I am unable to address it.

Report of Task Force on Juvenile Crime

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Given the recent problems facing residents of Wagaman, particularly those who live adjacent to laneways, from young louts who terrorise them through the night, what action has been taken on the report of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime that was presented to him last May?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will try not to get excited on this issue.

Mr B. Collins: Use the Coulter solution: bulldoze the laneways and shoot everyone under the age of 15.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: I hope that is on the record, Mr Speaker. It just seems to me that the ALP has a gun fixation. We have the honourable member for MacDonnell discussing selective sniping, Senator Walsh's office plotting to bring out machine-guns and now the Leader of the Opposition wanting to shoot everybody under 15.

Mr B. Collins: That's your solution, Barry.

Mr COULTER: Talk about a gun fixation among a small group. It just shows how dangerous it would be if it were in power - gun happy! Fortunately, it would be shot in the foot in the first 5 minutes before it got the gun out of the holster and then it would not be able to walk at large throughout the community.

Mr B. Collins: You're a raving ratbag, Barry! The greatest cowboy minister in the country!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr COULTER: Cowboy! There he goes again. He can't help himself.

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, Mr Speaker, the Task Force on Juvenile Crime submitted its report to me some time ago. Indeed, the

honourable member was on that committee as was the member for Wanguri and the member for Millner. Since that time, the member for Braitling, who chaired the southern region Task Force on Juvenile Crime, has also submitted his report. Many legislative changes have been recommended. I have therefore provided the report to the Juvenile Justice Review Committee which was set up under the new Child Welfare Act to examine the operation of the legislation. The Police Commissioner has been quite vocal on the legislation, particularly in relation to the lack of powers for the police. The Juvenile Justice Review Committee will be reporting to me in September on proposed changes to the act to accommodate some of the recommendations of the task force.

The Chief Minister has spoken about police presence within high schools. The Minister for Education has examined the problem of truancy officers. There have been recommendations for Aboriginal involvement because of the high proportion of Aboriginal people involved in juvenile crime. There has been consultation with organisations such as Aboriginal Legal Aid and the Aboriginal Task Force of the Darwin Institute of Technology. I have asked for public comment on the reports, and those comments will then be collated and considered. Then we will look at some other issues that have been raised by the public as a result of the findings of the Crime Task Force.

Three major issues must be addressed. One relates to the legislation. I will be waiting for the findings of the Juvenile Justice Review Committee which is also examining the Report on the Uncontrolled Child. I will also be examining counselling services and some programs have been implemented already in this regard. The other matter is public education. I thank the media for its cooperation. Juvenile crime declined every time a story was published that created public awareness.

Social Security Payments to Aboriginal Communities

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Yesterday, in the statehood debate, the minister complained at some length - and, in fact, sought to incorporate a book into the Hansard to prove his point - about the level of social security payments made to Aboriginal communities. He is agreeing with me. What areas and to what degree would he wish to see social security payments, which are available to all Australians, withdrawn from Aboriginal Australians?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, let me correct the honourable the Leader of the Opposition. I never suggested that they should be withdrawn. However, I would like to take the opportunity to point out what social security benefits cost. I said the book should be compulsory reading for every member of this Assembly because it indicates the cost burden on the taxpayers of Australia in relation to social security payments to Aboriginal people in particular.

Mr B. Collins: Why in particular?

Mr COULTER: Because that was the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition and I was defending the Chief Minister in terms of the contribution that was made by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and the cost burden. I was not saying that it should not happen but simply pointed it out as a fact. For the Northern Territory alone, it costs \$32m a year. The fortnightly payment to Aboriginal communities and outstations is \$1.27m. The

book is about the Aboriginal economy in town and country. This book points out just what the Aboriginal economy is. I congratulate the author for addressing this particular issue. We should all know about it because it is a little known area.

Mr B. Collins: What are you going to do? Are you going to knock off their old-age pensions?

Mr COULTER: It is not just the old-age pensions or invalid pensions or family allowances but the unemployment benefits which are received in these areas as well. The unemployment figures are astronomical. This is the type of debate which the opposition wishes to develop into an emotional issue. I was simply presenting the facts. The facts should be recognised and addressed. The sooner we can introduce economies in some of these areas, the better the whole of Australia will be. The Chief Minister indicated our desire to have Aborigines involved in tourist ventures. The Chief Minister and I have both been very active in fighting Commonwealth legislation in order to establish at Jabiru a 200-bed facility involving Gagadju tourist development. If we are to have social welfare handouts, as the opposition seems to suggest we should, that is fine for it. We are hoping to get into Kings Canyon with Aboriginal involvement. I remember an article in The Bulletin at the time of self-government which indicated that, unless we have Aboriginal involvement in these types of ventures, the Territory is sunk. We need their involvement. An excellent example is Peppimenarti where Harry Wilson refused to receive unemployment benefits. The people there did something. We need such people. If we are going to pay out welfare cheques totalling \$32m a year, that is fine. I feel that we should examine the economics of Aboriginal communities and help them to achieve a more meaningful role in the Northern Territory community and also in the economy of Australia.

Traffic Problems With Stott Terrace

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What discussions have taken place between officers of his department and the Alice Springs Town Council concerning traffic problems associated with Stott Terrace? Has any consideration yet been given to installation of traffic lights between Stott Terrace and Todd Street?

ANSWER

The answer is yes. Discussions have been held between officers of the Department of Transport and Works in Alice Springs and the Alice Springs Town Council on the department's proposed short-term solutions to assist the traffic flow along Stott Terrace. However, the town engineer has been on leave and response from the council is expected soon in relation to that matter. A recent traffic count on Stott Terrace has indicated that traffic signals may be justified. Currently, Stott Terrace is controlled by the Alice Springs Town Council. However, it is one of the roads nominated for declaration as a 307 road to come under the control of the Northern Territory government. It is expected that gazettal action will be taken soon in relation to that, possibly in the next couple of months. Following that declaration, the Department of Transport and Works will implement traffic management schemes which will attempt to overcome the problems currently being experienced in Alice Springs.

Coastal Radio Communications

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What progress has been made to develop coastal radio station communications for barges to the Top End Aboriginal communities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it seems that this question is raised at every Legislative Assembly sittings. Indeed, the member for Ludmilla has followed this particular issue through from the very beginning. We have tried to have some form of communication made available to Aboriginal communities which rely on barge transport to deliver goods. Simple radio equipment would enable barge operators to notify the settlements that they are on the way. Some of the people who live across the top of Arnhem land and around the coast have experienced difficulties in getting people to the barge landing. Some of the barge landings are at a distance from the communities and, if there is nobody at a particular community or trucks are not available and there are perishable goods on board, it creates havoc.

Unfortunately, as I outlined in the Assembly last sittings, the bureaucracy has tended to restrict us in our attempt to provide Aboriginal communities with this type of communication. All sorts of licensing criteria must be implemented. I outlined in the last Assembly how a report had to go from Darwin to Adelaide, then to the Canberra office which returned it to Darwin so that it could get a report on what should happen. The letter was in transit for a considerable time.

However, I understand that provision has now been made for a communication system. The Department of Community Development has allocated money for the

installation of the radio system and the barges will not be able to use it. I believe that this will be in operation before the end of this year. I am hopeful that this will be carried out with minimum delay.

There is still a problem of licensed operators etc on the communities but I understand that there are people there who are willing to undertake courses in how to operate such machinery. I am hopeful that all this can be resolved and this problem can be overcome by the end of this year. I can only say that it has taken 2 years too long. It is just another example of the bureaucracy gone mad. We try to communicate but we cannot even communicate with the people charged with the responsibility of controlling communications.

Mercury Levels at Warrego Gold Room

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

I ask the Chief Minister this question because he was the minister responsible for most of the period referred to. What test for mercury levels were conducted by the Department of Mines and Energy at the Warrego gold room in the period after completion of renovations ordered by the department in 1981 up until June 1985? What were the results of those tests? Did any of the results exceed the threshold limit value and, if so, what action did the minister take? Will he undertake to table all test results next week?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I give the member the opportunity to put the question on notice or redirect it to my colleague, the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Darwin Airport Project

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT AND WORKS

In view of a recent report to federal minister Morris confirming the obvious conclusion that the cheapest and quickest option for the Darwin Airport is continuation on the existing site, what further procrastinations can Territorians expect before we see this final project resurrected?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the concern of the member for Wagaman in relation to the development of the Darwin Airport is shared by all members of this Assembly and indeed by all Territorians because it is a matter of vital importance to our development, particularly the development of our tourist industry. As members know, on 4 April the federal Minister for Aviation announced that the federal government was deferring further contracts on the development of the Darwin Airport terminal on the north side of the runway. Most Territorians are aware that a vast amount of money, estimated at almost \$10m, had already been expended on that site with a further \$10m expended on the development of design documentation, consultants fees etc. That brought the expenditure on the northern side almost to \$20m before the development was deferred.

The federal minister cited pressure on the federal government to reduce the level of budget expenditure for this year as the reason for reviewing the project. He also stated that a complete reappraisal of the project would be carried out over the following 6 months and that the government would look at options for a lower-cost development by October this year. Actually, 8

working groups were formed to carry out the reappraisal. I think most people would agree that that involves the expenditure of a large amount of money to try to save money.

The Northern Territory is represented on 4 of the groups which I find rather disappointing. I made representations to the federal minister for full representation on all the working groups. However, it was considered that Territorians are people who obviously do not know enough to be able to contribute to all these working groups. We have members on the general aviation working group, the existing terminal working group, the access and services working group and the environmental working group.

The exciting options that the working groups were examining were reported to their respective ministers by late May 1985 - the Minister for Aviation and the Minister for Defence. Apparently, those ministers have approved the report recommendations which called for further assessment and preparation of detailed cost estimates for 3 sites: the existing terminal building area, which I am sure all Territorians would find disturbing; the north side site, which is the one which has been part developed to the extent of almost \$20m; and the RAAF bomber replenishment area, which is on the south side.

Mr Speaker, in relation to the deliberations that have been occurring, it has become apparent that the site where part development has taken place obviously is the one most beneficial to Territorians in relation to the time frame and possibly expenditure. Appropriate environmental impact studies, public works committee hearings and all the requirements that have to be in place before works can be carried out have been completed on that site and work has commenced. What disturbs me is that a report has been prepared on interim improvements required for the existing terminal building as a holding operation. I think everyone would consider that work needs to be done on the existing terminal, and I use that term loosely because I consider it an insult to travellers even to move through that barn.

Mr Tuxworth: Don't praise it too highly.

Mr B. Collins: Have you been to the terminal in Canberra lately?

Mr MANZIE: I have been through the terminal in Canberra. I have been through a number of terminals in Australia. It certainly makes me extremely disappointed that anyone even looks at that and describes it as a terminal. However, there has been a report which says that some money should be spent on it. As I was saying earlier, I think there should be money spent on it while the northern side site is developed as a terminal so that, until that work is completed, people travelling to the Northern Territory at least have some facilities that are better than the mess we have at the moment.

What concerns me, however, is that, if we carry out any patching works on the existing barn, the federal government may be tempted to back away from its commitment to total civil airport redevelopment in Darwin. That is a real concern to me and, I am sure, to all Territorians.

The other day, I was looking through the July issue of Aviation Australia and I found some articles relating to the Adelaide airport terminal which is 36 years old. One article said that Adelaide's domestic terminal is 36 years old this year and its early birthday present is a pushy little brother international terminal across the road. They have just had a new international terminal built at Adelaide Airport. I found another article in

which the Minister for Aviation, Peter Morris, said the government will make a decision on its second Sydney airport site by the end of the year. Sydney is getting 2 major airports. I found another article relating to the \$450m airport project in Brisbane. If the opposition thinks that this is not something that should be discussed, I am extremely disappointed.

Mr Bell: Out of date and puerile.

Mr B. Collins: Make a ministerial statement.

Mr MANZIE: Honourable members who perused the federal budget papers would have seen Appropriation Bill No 1. I might bring this to everyone's attention. On page 73, under the Department of Resources and Energy, there is an item 12 which says: '12. Assistance to Queensland Mines Limited for the purchase, storage and insurance of uranium, an amount of \$43.611m'. That amount of money is being expended to store and insure uranium which could have been exported to earn income of \$43m. That is a total of \$86m. That money could have been well spent on developing the Darwin international airport terminal.

Tests at Warrego Mine Gold Room

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What tests for mercury levels were conducted by the Department of Mines and Energy at the Warrego gold room in the period between the completion of renovations ordered by the department in 1981 and June 1985? What were the results of those tests? Did any results exceed the threshold limit value? If so, what action did the then minister take? Will the minister undertake to table all test results in this Assembly next week?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no trouble in obtaining the information that the honourable member seeks on these monitoring activities and the results of those tests by my department. Obviously, I do not have such information before me...

Mr B. Collins: You should have. It was raised yesterday.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, if the honourable member had some particular request that he was very anxious to follow through, perhaps he should have raised the matter in the MPI discussion yesterday. But I do not recall being asked those questions or being asked to have answers ready on my desk for him this morning.

While the honourable member is taking such an interest in the matter on the political front, he might care to take a little more interest on the technical front. If he is going to put himself forward as some sort of spokesman on mine safety - and I am delighted that he might take that interest - he might also take some interest in the various methods of sampling which can be used in mine safety monitoring because it was clear in yesterday's debate that he has very little knowledge of the matter. Of course, he did not particularly want to expand on the subject other than to stand and criticise government.

I might point out to honourable members that, in relation to the dispute which has been going on for some time at Warrego, I propose to go to that mine tomorrow at the request of the unions involved to have discussions with the management and the unions to see if we can resolve some of the problems that appear to be there. I do not say that I am going down there to solve those problems. I am not sure that I have the role of solving problems which are seemingly disputes between the company and the unions.

The responsibility for mines safety and monitoring quite clearly does not rest solely with the government short of having a government inspector in every mine in the Northern Territory to ensure that not only does management undertake its responsibilities under the various acts in the Northern Territory but workers are indeed wearing the various pieces of safety equipment which are provided to them and which they are required to wear by our regulations. They must wear the equipment if they are to minimise possible injury to themselves. As the member for Wagaman pointed out, the responsibility is shared between miners, mine owners and the government. The government sets the rules and regulations which are to be followed and monitors from time to time the performance of those 2 groups in adhering to the regulations.

Environmental sampling in a gold room is quite complex. Chemists and other experts themselves must refer to textbooks and the various procedures involved because it is very important that procedures in sampling are carried out correctly. The interpretation of the results is also important.

I welcome the member for Stuart's continuing interest in this matter but I do hope that he takes an interest that goes beyond simply political point-scoring because all he has been trying to do over the last 2 weeks is to debate the matter publicly. He has not been to the mine and, certainly, he has not talked to the mine owners. I doubt that he has talked to any unionists at the mine. Perhaps he could take an interest that is a little bit deeper than he has taken to date.

Tests at Warrego Mine Gold Room

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Is he prepared to table those results next week? Will he also tell us how frequently the tests were taken and whether Peko was given advanced notice of the impending tests? Were tests undertaken at all stages of the gold extraction process?

No answer given.

Place Names

Mr VALE to MINISTER for LANDS

Mr Speaker, a recent press report in Alice Springs stated that the Place Names Committee will consider only the names of deceased people for the naming of streets and other public facilities within the Northern Territory. Given that buildings and streets in the Territory have already been named after people who are still living, can he advise whether the reports are true?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand the honourable member is referring to an article which appeared in the Centralian Advocate on 26 July 1985. The article stated that you must be dead before the government would name a road after you. That is an overly simplistic view. The government relies on the advice of the Northern Territory Place Name Committees in naming public places and natural features in the Territory. The committee has established guidelines for its own use and to assist members of the public who wish to have a certain name applied to a particular feature. The guidelines are based on the requirements of the act and on social conventions throughout Australia.

The object of the newspaper article was to encourage public participation in naming the new roads and places in the large residential area currently being developed around Alice Springs. With that object in mind, I would like to list the major guidelines.

Broadly speaking, acceptable names should be associated with the Territory, not duplicate or cause confusion with existing place names, be fully authenticated when a commemorative aspect is intended and not honour a living person. It is this last point which the newspaper chose to emphasise. I would stress to honourable members that these are guidelines, not hard and fast rules. While it is normal practice around Australia not to name places after living persons, the government may consider honouring a living person in this way in truly exceptional circumstances.

Funding for Aboriginal Assistant Teachers

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

The minister stated early this year that Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal assistant teachers would cease in December this year. What further negotiations have there been on the cessation of this funding and is the employment of Aboriginal assistant teachers in outstation communities at risk?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. He has been persistent in requesting information regarding the payment of teaching assistants in Aboriginal communities. It has been a very important question that has been addressed by both the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government. As I mentioned during the last sittings, a working party was set up. As a result of that, I have received a letter from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, in which he indicated that funding would be made available until the end of December 1986. After that date, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would not be funding those particular positions.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned on other occasions, the outstation movement is one of considerable concern to the Northern Territory government. It is a move that we have supported but it is a move that also has tremendous financial implications for the Northern Territory. It is an issue in which the Commonwealth government has a responsibility as well. We will continue to negotiate the matter of funding for teacher assistants in those particular communities.

I was very pleased to note that the federal government has decided that funding for education matters will be put in its rightful place in the education portfolio. In the past, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would transfer funds across to education as required. Unfortunately, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has seen fit to pass the responsibility across to education but I do not believe the funds have been moved across to meet that commitment. We are continuing negotiations. Funding will continue until the end of June 1986. We will be continuing negotiations because it is important that satisfactory funding for Aboriginal teacher assistants is agreed to by both the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth. We are prepared to play our part when schools are established. However, the enormous impact of the outstation movement makes it imperative that we come to a joint arrangement with the Commonwealth. I welcome the decision of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in relation to extending that funding to the end of June 1986. I look forward to further negotiations on the whole issue of funding teacher assistants.

Doctor's Gully Tourist Venture

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

What is happening to the land title for Doctor's Gully tourist venture run by his colleague, the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy, now that the lease on it has been surrendered?

ANSWER

I would like a few moments to gather the details of this particular lease arrangement. They are fairly complicated. I will answer in question time.

\$5000 Caveat on Rural Blocks for Electricity Supply

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Will the \$5000 caveat on blocks in the rural area relating to electricity supply affect financial transactions such as current or future mortgages on a particular block?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as honourable members are aware, we passed through this Assembly earlier this year amendments to the Electricity Commission Act to provide NTEC with the power to place caveats on properties where electricity supply becomes available. The new scheme overcomes previous inequities whereby some property owners were prepared to contribute to the cost of reticulating electricity in an area whereas others were not prepared even though they benefited by the line going past their properties.

On 4 July this year, NTEC placed caveats on some 200 blocks in the Darwin rural area. The caveat warns any prospective buyer of that land that electricity is not freely available for it. There were allegations that some land was transacted in the rural area of Darwin with the claim that power was available at very little cost when in fact that was not the case. However, this caveat is now placed on titles to warn prospective purchasers.

In addition to that, the Electricity Commission Act prohibits the transfer of land by the owner unless that owner has first paid to NTEC the amount of

liability owing. Therefore, at the point of sale of the property, the caveat would be withdrawn simultaneously to NTEC being paid the amount owing to provide electricity to the land in question. As a result, the purchaser would acquire the land without a caveat so the mortgagee would not have to consider that aspect in determining the extent of mortgage finance to be provided to the purchaser.

Should an existing owner wish to raise additional finance on his property whilst an NTEC caveat is registered on the title, the owner would be obliged to pay NTEC the amount owing unless the mortgagee agrees to lend, subject to the caveat, and NTEC consents to the mortgage. I will be asking that the standard practice in the case of applications for consent to mortgage land under this caveat be to grant that consent. Regarding owners who currently have mortgage finance on the property, I do not envisage any change to existing loan terms and conditions.

If any of the honourable member's constituents bring problems to her attention whereby an existing mortgagee is trying to be difficult with the landowner because of the NTEC caveat, I would very much appreciate hearing of it. Of course, the simplest way to remove the caveat is to pay the \$5000 charge. That would enable the owner to have power connected to the land and improve his standard of living.

Doctor's Gully Lease

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS

Is it true that, as the owner of the tourist venture at Doctor's Gully, the Minister for Mines and Energy, has had to make only 1 annual lease payment in the 4 years he has held the property?

ANSWER

I do not keep details of how frequently people make lease payments on blocks of land. I can confirm that the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy is the owner of a block of land on Doctor's Gully.

TAB

Mr DALE to CHIEF MINISTER

In his capacity as the minister responsible for the Racing and Gaming Commission, would he please give an update on the operations of the TAB?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the introduction of the TAB throughout the Northern Territory has been a rather interesting exercise given the history of introducing it over a long period and actually getting it into place. The oncourse bookmakers' turnover at Fannie Bay racecourse for the period 6 July to 10 August, and that includes the carnival period, was \$4.16m. This was an increase of \$1.9m or 82.7% over the corresponding period last year. The racing administrators believe that the increase in turnover had much to do with the improvement in the racing carnival this year and the resulting carnival attendance. The attendances at this year's cup carnival were absolutely enormous, the best in the history of the Darwin Cup and the carnival that accompanies it. People came not only from other parts of the

Territory but from all over Australia and it is fast becoming one of the best Winfield Cups in the country. Winfield, the sponsor, believes that it would drop other capital cities in its sponsorship before it dropped Darwin. There is also no doubt that it has had a very great impact in renewing the interest of the Northern Territory community in racing. That has been shown by the amount of money invested in recent days in new horse stock.

Mr Speaker, there have been some difficulties during the introduction of TAB. The technical problems experienced with the terminals have been aggravating for the people operating them, for the TAB management and, most particularly, for the customers who have been inconvenienced by the poor performance of the machines. The TAB board advises me that it believes it has identified the problems with the equipment and that the manufacturer is now moving to fix it and the problems should be overcome in the months ahead.

TAB in the Northern Territory has indeed been a learning experience for just about all of us: for the TAB staff, most of whom have not had any experience with TAB before; for the agents who have taken on a TAB agency in conjunction with other businesses; and for the casual staff who maintain the TAB functions at the weekends. Certainly, the telephone betting operations are a new adjunct to Northern Territory sport. Telecom staff have been a great help in supporting the introduction of the TAB in the Northern Territory. They, too, have had their problems in maintaining interstate links.

Given the learning curve that everybody has been on, the introduction of TAB has gone well. The public has found it an interesting learning period because most of the people who are now using TAB have been used to the traditional method of SP bookmaker betting. Regrettably, I think SP betting will still be part of the Northern Territory scene even though we are moving to head it off. The government was always mindful that SP betting would resurface in the Northern Territory in some form because it is alive and well in all the states. We could not believe that, because we closed our legal betting shops, a vacuum would not develop and interstate operators would not come in and set up illegal operations in the Territory. It is most likely that that is happening. There are 1 or 2 instances where it is known to be happening.

I would like to advise honourable members that the special gaming squad has been set up in the police force to monitor the activities of SP betting and every effort will be taken to ensure that SP betting does not get a grip on this community as it has in other communities because there is no doubt that there is a very strong connection between SP betting and organised crime, and we do not need either of them in the Territory.

Doctor's Gully Tourist Venture

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Is it true that the Northern Territory government has provided funds for the construction of car-parking facilities at Doctor's Gully adjacent to the tourist venture previously mentioned? Secondly, did the construction of the car-park require the relocation of port waterlines and, if so, at whose expense was that carried out?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not know what the opposition is trying to impute. I shall be quite forthright in explaining that some sealing has been done on council land adjacent to the Doctor's Gully area. This follows advice from the Northern Territory Tourist Commission that a car-park at the end of the Doctor's Gully road would benefit the local tourist industry.

Mr Bell: Locals at Doctor's Gully.

Mr MANZIE: I would appreciate the members of the opposition being quiet here.

Mr B. Collins: You are making all the noise.

Mr MANZIE: They ask questions and then they do not want to hear the answers. As I was saying, the area was nominated by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission as being heavily utilised by buses in the tourist industry. I am sure that any person who has been to Doctor's Gully would be aware of the number of very large coaches that move down the road and are then required to manoeuvre, park and turn around on a very large, uneven, dirt area.

The Darwin City Council also acknowledged the need and wrote to the Department of Transport and Works seeking a contribution to the project. That is normal practice with special projects that council undertakes. That application was supported by the Tourist Commission, by the department and by the government because it is an asset to our growing tourist industry. I think it is a shame that anyone would even consider that, in our growing, sophisticated tourist industry, we should be encouraging buses to use an area of road which is absolutely disgraceful.

Mr Speaker, \$40 000 was contributed to the council for this project. The council then commenced the work. It owns the particular car-park in question. Work is proceeding and it is due to be completed this month.

Mereenie to Alice Springs Oil Pipeline - Payments to Subcontractors

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

Have alleged problems of payments to subcontractors by the Mereenie to Alice Springs oil pipeline construction group been resolved? If not, will the government use what influence it can to prevent a repeat of the Palm Valley gas pipeline fiasco which hurt many subcontractors and businesses in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have any particular information before me on the progress towards a resolution of the dispute which unfortunately arose in the construction of the pipeline. A contractor on that pipeline had a number of claims against the principal who in turn counter claimed in relation to the work carried out, cleaning up and so on. As a result of that legal wrangle, quite a number of Alice Springs suppliers and subcontractors suffered greatly inasmuch as their bills were not paid. One subcontractor went into voluntary liquidation.

I have asked officers to monitor the situation because the government cannot take a very significant role. It is a clear matter of litigation between 2 private parties, which happens virtually everyday in the business world. But we are very concerned that it took place at all and that it harmed quite a number of Territory businesses. If any influence can be brought to bear by the government or by myself to reach an amicable solution, I am certainly prepared to take that course of action.

In regard to trying to avoid a similar occurrence with the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline, the situation is much the same as in the Alice Springs case. The pipeline is being constructed by a private consortium. The consortium has engaged 4 project managers who have in turn commenced letting contracts for the construction of that pipeline which will be built in 4 spreads all running at the same time next year.

Once the contract is let, subcontractors will be brought in for various services. This particular project is a very large one and quite complex in its nature. It must be done to a very strict timetable and, therefore, an enormous amount of resources will be placed on that project in order to have it completed and gas flowing to our new Channel Island gas-fired powerhouse by December 1986. There is always the possibility of litigation between any 2 parties and the consequent possibility of a third party being adversely affected. I do not know what the government can do to avoid that.

However, I would caution any businesses in the Northern Territory who seek to supply goods or services to contractors to satisfy themselves, either through bank reports or other advice, that their bills will be paid and that the extent of credit that is asked of them is reasonable. Perhaps in some cases, bonds could be requested. The business world is fairly hard and fast and, if you are too finicky about the conditions of dealing with a potential client, he can always pack up and go somewhere else. That is private enterprise and that is how things get done quickly, efficiently and as cheaply as possible. My warning to contractors and suppliers is to be careful in any financial arrangements in these matters and to try to protect themselves in any reasonable way.

Darwin Casino Operators - Possible Breach of Agreement

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In light of reported decisions by the operators of the Darwin casino to lower significantly the existing standards of service, and in light of the retrenchments and resignations that have occurred - and a reference to yesterday's Centralian Advocate would indicate that the Alice Springs casino is having the same difficulties - does the government consider that these events have put the operators in breach of clauses 3.2, 3.6 and 3.7 - that is, the performance clauses - of the operators' agreement?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the concerns that the Leader of the Opposition raised have been raised with me privately and have been floated in the media from time to time. I have taken the trouble to examine the issues that have been raised and to take them up with the management of the casino. It is something that I would invite the Leader of the Opposition to do because he might find the background briefing of its point of view helpful.

Mr Speaker, as you would know, the upgrading of the casino is now well under way and the operators are spending in the order of \$3m to \$4m on improving the facilities so that the casino management's marketing program in South-east Asia can proceed full bore. The operators have said they are reluctant to get into a full marketing program in Asia until the casino is up to the standard they would like. The operators have said to me that they are trying to run the casino, make the improvements and give the customers the standard of service that should be given but it is proving very difficult. One of the things that is making life almost impossible for them is that the casino is so popular even in its existing state that there is often standing room only.

I have taken the trouble to go there at midnight on odd occasions recently to see what sort of attendance the casino is attracting. There is no doubt that anybody in Darwin who has been to the casino after 10 o'clock at night would admit that, on most nights, it is extremely busy and, on 3 nights a week, you cannot even scratch yourself. The last time I was there, I had to get into a queue if I wanted to play a one-armed bandit.

Mr B. Collins: I wish we were getting some money from all this action.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is right. We will be getting some money from it.

The most important thing that we have to do is to bring the casino up to the standard that the operators want so that there are reasonable facilities for all clients, overseas ones as well as local ones. Once that happens and operating at a profit, we can start obtaining some tax out of it. In the meantime, the important thing is that we must be a little patient with the casino management which is trying to rebuild and refurbish the interior of the casino.

Excise on Diesel Fuel

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for PORTS and FISHERIES

Could he advise what effect the removal of the excise on diesel fuel announced in the federal budget will have on fishermen and primary producers?

Mr B. Collins: They will pay less for their fuel.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that interjection by the Leader of the Opposition is true for a change.

In his speech on Tuesday, the Commonwealth Treasurer, the Hon Paul Keating, pointed out that the federal government is concerned about the economic difficulties faced by many primary producers. I might say that I welcome that statement by the Treasurer. There is no doubt that certain actions this year have seriously strained the economic capacity of the primary industries. It is pleasing to see that the concerns which have been expressed here on numerous occasions have been noted by the federal government and that steps are being taken to assist the rural sector.

There is to be a full rebate of the excise on diesel fuel. This is estimated to provide a reduction of some 2.4¢ per litre which will effectively

return some \$300 000 to the Northern Territory rural industries, in particular, this year. While this is indeed welcome news, the Commonwealth government still has not taken any moves to restore the fuel freight equalisation scheme which was removed in the May 1985 economic statement. The removal of the fuel freight equalisation scheme has hit the Territory's rural industries much harder than those in the other states in Australia because of our distance from normal sources of supply. In fact, the costs to the rural industry in the Territory of that action in May of this year was of the order of \$500 000 per annum. In respect of the fishing industry, it was estimated that the removal of the fuel freight equalisation scheme increased the costs to fishermen by up to 4¢ per litre in some locations. This in some way redresses those actions of May of last year. It corrects some of the injustices that were done to the industry and I do not think the federal government needs to crow too loudly about its performance so far as that is concerned. It still has a way to go to restore the situation that existed at the beginning of this year.

Mr Keating also advised that the tariff on imported grain harvesters will be removed and assistance will be provided to local manufacturers by means of a subsidy to production. The tariff on grain harvesters was a major bone of contention for southern grain producers.

Mr B. Collins: This has nothing to do with fuel.

Mr HATTON: It is in the budget and it does affect primary industry. Harvesters use fuel. Given our embryonic grain industry in the Northern Territory, this is a particularly welcome move. Our grain producers will be able to get some reduction in the costs of their grain harvesting equipment. It is worth noting that last year's grain production was some 13% above that of the previous year. It is a steadily expanding section of our economy and is now worth in excess of \$1m per annum to the Northern Territory.

In respect of the B-TEC program...

Mr B Collins: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is becoming quite ludicrous. This answer has nothing whatever to do with the question.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable minister will confine his remarks to the question asked.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will not deal with the other aspects of the budget that affect the primary industries. I will simply reiterate that there has been some relief from the injustices that were done to the primary industry sector in May of this year. I welcome these changes.

Myilly Point Development

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for INDUSTRY and SMALL BUSINESS

Prior to the June 1985 sittings of the Legislative Assembly, the minister announced that there would be an announcement from the government within 6 weeks on the final development of Myilly Point. In response to a further question from me at the June sittings, 2 months ago, the Deputy Chief Minister told the Legislative Assembly that an announcement on a '400-room or 600-room hotel at Myilly Point' was only 2 weeks away. What are his latest predictions in respect of weeks and rooms and, in fact, what is the current position with Myilly Point?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, at that time, the Leader of the Opposition picked up a point that was made on a radio interview in which I said that I was hoping that, in about 6 weeks, I would be in a position to take to Cabinet a concept of what was to happen at Myilly Terrace.

Mr B. Collins: I am now referring to your answer at the last sittings.

Mr DONDAS: My answer at the last Legislative Assembly sittings reiterated that point. I told the Assembly that I was hopeful that, within about 2 weeks, I would be able to provide my Cabinet colleagues with a conceptual plan for the development at Myilly Terrace. I did that. The press inadvertently picked up this concept while it was displayed at the Chan Building prior to my giving a briefing.

Mr B. Collins: Inadvertently?

Mr DONDAS: Yes, inadvertently. It was shown to the whole city of Darwin. As I said at the time, it was a concept. That particular concept was displayed to my Cabinet colleagues and is still being considered. The architects who are putting this particular package together are requesting that we consider a development of in excess of 400 rooms, plus convention centre, plus some other space that will allow us to keep our agreement to provide some additional casino space in the Myilly Point development.

Mr B. Collins: That is a case of have to, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: That is a case of have to within 5 years.

The current situation with the Myilly Terrace development scheme is that we have asked the architects to reassess the first concept which has gone on display to my Cabinet colleagues. There was a particular problem regarding its layout that concerned Cabinet. I am still waiting for some further developments on the final layout so that we may consider it. I am not in a position to say that it will be ready next week or next month.

Tourist Facility at Mount Conner

Mr VALE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Does the government have any plans to install any tourist facility at Mount Conner in central Australia?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I know of the honourable member's interest in Mount Conner. He has asked me whether we could look at this issue. At this stage, we do not have plans to construct any tourist facilities at Mount Conner nor am I aware of plans of any other government department to do so. However, in light of the comments recently made to me by the honourable member, I have undertaken to investigate the possibility. We are not in a position to make any specific undertakings.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Doctor's Gully

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to provide a response to the member for Millner's earlier questions. In respect of development recently at Doctor's Gully, he asked about the circumstances for surrender of that lease and whether only one lease payment had been made.

Mr Speaker, that lease was issued to the lessees in 1981 and it contained development conditions requiring an additional \$150 000 of improvements. The development covenant was met, thus entitling the lessees to convert the lease to freehold. Freehold title was issued on the block on 23 May of this year immediately after the Crown lease was surrendered. A normal process was associated with the issue. It is quite consistent in respect of the premium. There was a premium paid at the commencement of the lease which was equivalent to freehold title. One rent payment was made for the period August 1984 to August 1985. This is in line with all development leases where rent is waived for the development period under that lease.

Channel Island Power-station

Mr DALE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

When will tenders be awarded for the gas turbines to be installed at Channel Island Power-station and what is the latest general report on the project at Channel Island?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am sure all Territorians are interested in the progress of the Channel Island project because we have all experienced unsatisfactory electricity generating systems. A decision is expected before the end of the month on the type of gas turbine and combined cycle plant that is to be installed at the Channel Island Power-station. The total project is estimated to cost \$191m. Eight companies were invited to tender for the supply and installation of turbines and 7 bids were received from those 8 companies. Negotiations over the past several weeks with NTEC officers, Treasury officers and Northern Territory Development Corporation officers have brought the list down to 2 of those bidders. The latest information is that 1 bidder is now being spoken to with a view to finalising contract arrangements and contracts are expected to be signed before the end of this month.

In addition to the tender for the turbines, we invited in the same documents tenders for financing those turbines. Honourable members will be aware that some countries which manufacture turbines and other major equipment are so keen to have their products sold that they make available export financing on favourable terms. Sometimes companies themselves are large enough to carry a degree of the financing in order to enhance their particular tenders. Some 47 separate loan offers were received with the tenders. We also received many financing offers for the turbines from companies which did not actually put in a bid to supply and install them. The Northern Territory Treasury and Barclays Australia, which is the financial adviser to the government on the project, are assisting in evaluating those offers.

In addition, counter-trade proposals were sought as part of the tender package and these have been evaluated with the assistance of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Although the counter-trade proposals were generally disappointing, it is hoped that some additional industrial activity may develop in the Northern Territory as a result of the successful tenderer's proposal.

The laying of the foundations for the gas turbines is scheduled to start on Channel Island in April next year. The first open-cycle gas turbine plant is due to be commissioned in December 1986 to coincide with the completion of the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline. The second open-cycle gas turbine is scheduled for commissioning in January 1987, the third in February 1987 and the combined-cycle block in October 1987.

On Channel Island, contractors have started digging trenches and installing conduit for the provision of power, telephone and water services. A concrete batching plant has been set up by Pioneer Concrete to provide concrete to the project on site. Continuous security on the site has been reintroduced. To date, the following work has been completed: water supply to the island, roads to the island, the Channel Island bridge, site clearing, supply of concrete drainage pipe, supply of armarock and site preparation. In total, more than \$50m has been spent on infrastructure work on the project to date.

The Elizabeth River Bridge, providing access from Palmerston, is open to traffic and the final clean-up is under way. Gutteridge Haskins and Davey, and Black and Veatch have been retained as project managers following the switch from coal to gas, and an amended project management agreement was signed earlier this year with that group. Environmental monitoring is continuing in accordance with the approved EIS and a program of further study has started to supplement the EIS, taking into account the change from coal to gas. I am sure that there will be a significant improvement in environmental effects following that change.

A firm offer has been received for the purchase of piles originally intended for use in the construction of a wharf for coal ships to unload and a final contract is now being negotiated. Unfortunately, the steel piles can be sold only at less than cost because of the market at the present time. Officers have been attempting all around Australia, and indeed overseas, to find a buyer for those piles. The piles of course were ordered in advance of the decision to switch to gas.

In addition to the tenders for gas turbines and combined cycle plant, tenders have closed and contracts are expected to be awarded shortly for two 132-kilovolt transmission lines between Channel Island and Hudson Creek. Tenders for the 132-kilovolt switch-out equipment closed on 27 August. Those projects are quite big. They appear to be simply lines from Channel Island to a point near Palmerston and Hudson Creek, but one of them is worth some \$11m. Project advisers engaged for the Channel Island project are: legal contractual - Freehill Hollingdale and Page; insurance - Reed Stenhouse; financial advisers - Barclays Australia; industrial relations - Northern Territory Confederation of Industry; and commerce - Confederation of Australian Industry. Approximately 10 further contracts remain to be tendered and let during the next 9 months. These include the purchase of many specialised items of equipment and construction contracts for foundations, buildings, tanks and electrical and mechanical installation.

Price Fixing

Mr B. COLLINS to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Is he aware of recent public allegations concerning the pernicious and illegal practice of price fixing? Is he aware that the allegations involve an alleged meeting at a Darwin hotel of executives of fruit juice distributing companies in the Northern Territory and that, at that meeting, 2 options allegedly were put to a local Northern Territory distributor by a Brisbane-based firm which owns the company Northern Territory Fruit Juices Pty Ltd, and that these options were: the local distributor accept an offer to be bought out or join this firm in a price fixing arrangement? Will he confirm to the Assembly that the Northern Territory's representative of the Brisbane firm delivering this ultimatum was the now honourable member for Jingili, Mr Rick Setter, and can he advise the Assembly if the Northern Territory government is cooperating with officers of the Trade Practices Commission in its inquiry into these allegations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unaware of the detail that the Leader of the Opposition has given this morning but I am aware of the allegations that have been made. Indeed, they were made again in a front page article in the Sunday Territorian. I can advise the Leader of the Opposition that the Commissioner

for Consumer Affairs within the Department of Community Development is cooperating with the Trades Practices Commission. In fact, a member of the Trade Practices Commission will be visiting Darwin on 28 August and he will be continuing his investigations which have been going on for some time now.

In June, the Trade Practices Commission also conducted inquiries into the alleged taped telephone conversation. For the benefit of honourable members, I will read out the briefing which gives some background about this event. I am informed that the Trade Practices Commission has been aware of the problem for several months and officers visited Darwin in June in an effort to have the local Darwin businessman making the complaint sign a statement concerning the taped telephone conversation. The businessman refused the request because of concerns for his safety and, with only an unverified tape, the commission had little with which to proceed further.

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs will be assisting the Trade Practices Commission in its investigations. We do not have any jurisdiction in this area; it comes under the Trade Practices Commission. Under section 45 of the Trade Practices Act, it is quite clear that price maintenance as alleged by the article in the Sunday Territorian is prohibited. The Trade Practices Commission will try once again to verify these facts. I am unaware of the detail which the Leader of the Opposition has but the Trade Practices Commission will be continuing its investigations and, through the Consumer Affairs section of the Department of Community Development, will be advising me of the results of its inquiries as they proceed.

Agricultural and Horticultural Land

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for LANDS

What is the time frame for turning off more land for agricultural and horticultural use either in the Douglas-Daly or Katherine areas and under what conditions will the land be released?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Douglas-Daly area has been the location for research carried out by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority into the possibility of the establishment of a grain industry in the Northern Territory. The results have been quite satisfactory, particularly in recent times. I do not propose to take up the time of the Assembly this morning with the details of the performance but suffice it to say that 2 of the project farmers at the Douglas-Daly have now accepted offers to purchase their farms and become private farmers. I refer to the Royles and the Dawes. Both are now private farmers although, obviously, they are still actively involved in the grain growing industry in association with ADMA and are taking advantage of the many facilities that ADMA is providing to the grain industry in the Northern Territory.

There were problems in that area with respect to another family, the Vidlers, who operated a property known as Ruby Downs which had some very serious conservation problems which required heavy soil erosion embankments on that property. That made it very difficult for Mr Vidler to operate. In the last growing season, Mr Vidler moved onto another farm in the area and has successfully farmed that. Ruby Downs is now operated by 2 share farmers who have accepted offers to become project farmers under the ADMA scheme.

There are 2 other potential properties in the Douglas-Daly area and we are investigating the possibility of having those properties released this year as grain farms. The possibility for expansion of grain farming in that area looks good. There are problems in respect of the Fish River property because that area cannot be developed successfully until such time as there is an all-weather bridge placed across the Douglas River to the Fish River property so that there can be all-year access to and from those properties. As with the properties on Ooloo Station, the soils are sandy and some of the crops that are being grown there are more suited to heavier soils such as those on Douglas Station. I have had discussions with the owners of Douglas Station. We are looking at the possibility of having that property subdivided to enable further grain farming on the areas that are more suitable to what are now becoming the traditional grains being grown in the Territory, in particular maize, soya beans and sorghum which perform better with heavier soils. We anticipate that we will be able to subdivide some of Douglas Station, probably through the owners of that property rather than by any process of acquisition and then subdivision by ADMA. That would enable us to bring more farmers into grain production on those heavier soils in the Douglas-Daly region. That augurs well.

In respect to the sandier soils, work has been continuing. We anticipate good prospects for the growing of peanuts. We understand that, in this coming season, some properties will shift towards growing peanuts. That may increase the prospects of the sandier soils in that area.

In the Katherine region, ADMA has written to the management of the Mataranka property. It is proposed this year that a series of horticulture blocks will be released starting at the Katherine end of that property. That has been the subject of quite intensive soil, conservation and agricultural analysis to ensure that any development is carried out properly and in a sensitive manner. We do not want any soil degradation as a consequence of cropping in that area. Some of those farms will become available for release later this year. On the Mataranka property itself, it is further anticipated that we will be able to release 2 other blocks for grain production. Again, it is anticipated that, in this coming financial year, we will be able to bring those properties onto the market.

Mr Speaker, in determining who should get access to these blocks, it is not simply a case of the first person with enough money to pay the highest price for the land. We must ensure that whoever goes onto these farms not only has the financial capacity but also the technical capacity and the ability and experience to be able to farm the country properly. The development of agriculture in the Northern Territory has been one of boom and bust. It has been a story of bad management and the industry, quite frankly, cannot afford any major disasters. We need to move carefully and we will be investigating ways in which we can introduce some pre-qualifying process in the applications so that those who finally obtain those farms are people who have experience and the financial and technical capacity to operate those farms. In this way, we will be able to continue the expansion of the grain industry to meet the continually growing local demand for grain products.

Air Charter Operator

Mr BELL to MINISTER to TRANSPORT and WORKS

I refer to the Ombudsman's case notes on complaints for the year 1983-84, specifically matter E.778 in which a private air charter operator was

seriously disadvantaged as the result of a ministerial decision. Is the minister aware of that particular matter? If so, which air charter operator was involved and has the government taken any action by way of compensation for this particular operator?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unable to give a detailed answer to the honourable member. However, I assure him that I will obtain the details and supply that information to him later during this sittings.

Pensioner Concessions

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Considering the increasing concern by aged pensioners at the continuing decline in their well-being at the hands of the Hawke government, what is the progress of his department's review of Northern Territory pensioner concessions?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of the member for Wagaman's interest in pensioner issues. In fact, he has been very active with various pensioner organisations and I thank him for the opportunity to address some of his questions. The aged population is now the second-fastest-growing group within our Northern Territory population. It is growing at around 6.5% a year. This is second only to our youth, which has one of the highest percentages of total population in Australia in the 0-16 age bracket. The Northern Territory government took a conscious decision to encourage people to retire in the Northern Territory. About 4 or 5 years ago, St Pauls school held a share-a-grandmother day or share-a-grandfather day. Grandparents went to the school because people were always talking about grandma and grandpa down south. The big problem in the Northern Territory is the lack of the extended family caused by people packing up and retiring down south. The honourable member for Flynn announced recently the need to investigate the establishment of a retirement village in Alice Springs. I have been active in looking at the concept of a pensioner village at Palmerston. Indeed, the member for Koolpinyah has been working with the Rural Old Timers' Association to examine ways of developing village centres for pensioners to retire.

It is an issue which needs to be examined. My department has developed an information paper which will be going to Cabinet in the very near future. It addresses the problems of pensioner concessions. Some of those concessions are quite good. However, there have been accusations of people misusing those concessions and of people who may not be eligible for them, in particular electricity concessions which are available to pensioners. As a result of those accusations, my department has conducted a complete review of the pensioner concessions. Further details on that will be available soon.

I note that the member for Wagaman suggested that, under the Hawke government, our aged people are not doing so well. There is ample evidence of that in terms of assets tests etc. Indeed, even in the budget, I noticed that, compared to youth, pensioners did not receive much of an increase in allowances etc.

In the Northern Territory, pensioner concessions cover things like rates reductions, which can be as high as 62%, and spectacles and travel. These are very generous concessions. It is good to see that people are starting to retire here. They are retiring here because of the concessions and because the Northern Territory government is prepared to look after them. The extent of bus concessions and some other concessions will be notified in the very near future, as will be the moves the Northern Territory government intends to take to tidy up some of the misuse of those concessions which have occurred in the past and to ensure that our aged people in the Northern Territory can make this place their home. They are welcome here. We look after the needs of our senior citizens and give them the respect that they deserve.

Bunker Oil and Diesel Fuel Levy

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Have all consumers of bunker oil and diesel fuel agreed to pay the Northern Territory government's \$1 per tonne levy? If all consumers have not agreed to pay the levy, what steps will the government take to enforce payment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member is pre-empting what I will say in a few minutes. In fact, the government will be introducing energy consumption tax bills during the next couple of days. I would be absolutely amazed if people were waiting with cheque in hand ready to pay. If they are not ready, then that would be absolutely normal. If they do not put up any resistance at all, that would be unbelievable. I am sure the honourable member for Nhulunbuy appreciates that as much as everybody else.

Turtle Population on Sir Edward Pellew Group

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

In an article in the Northern Territory News on Saturday 24 August, Galarrwy Yunupingu, Chairman of the Northern Land Council, called upon the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to investigate the effects of development on the Sir Edward Pellew Group's population of green and flatback turtles because the Northern Territory government could not be trusted to take environmental factors into account. What knowledge does the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory have of the local salt water turtle population of the Sir Edward Pellew Group and what precautions did the Northern Territory government take before releasing the 11 weekender blocks recently sold on Centre Island?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I was quite surprised to see that article in the paper from the Chairman of the Northern Land Council on Saturday. Quite frankly, I thought that the gentleman should have known better. After all, Mr Yunupingu is a board member of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and should have been aware of the facts. Certainly, he would have been more aware if he attended meetings of the Conservation Commission board more frequently.

Mr B. Collins: All the other members are probably bored too.

Mr HATTON: It is pleasing to see how much interest the honourable Leader of the Opposition pays to conservation with those sorts of trite comments.

Mr B. Collins: Oh, groan, moan, shame.

Mr HATTON: The fact is that the Northern Territory government has paid quite a deal of attention to the environmental problems on Centre Island, and in fact on the whole of the Sir Edward Pellew Group, over a number of years. We are working on a very comprehensive and detailed program of research, planning and protection for that area in combination with the Aboriginal people.

Mr Speaker, having noticed that article, I sought to obtain a more detailed briefing from the Conservation Commission. It might be interesting for me to take the opportunity to refer to some of the points in that briefing. Firstly, there is relatively little solid information on the turtle lifestyle in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Conservation Commission has carried out 2 surveys of dugong and turtle populations in the areas and there is a small amount of historical information. The lower gulf has extensive seagrass areas and both the green and flatback turtle use the region as a feeding ground. To date, we have not confirmed reports of green turtles' nesting. Most reports from locals and historical information relate to the flatback turtle. The flatbacks nest throughout the islands of the Sir Edward Pellew Group, principally on North Island, Pearce Island, Urquhart Islet and Turtle Island, with moderate activity on the other islands, including Centre Island.

Paradoxically, most of our scientific information on the turtles in the area results from research carried out during a rescue operation by the Conservation Commission which was carried out in March last year in the wake of Cyclone Kathy. 214 green turtles were checked during the rescue operation. There were 30 dead and, of these, the 28 females were autopsied. Although it was the breeding season, only a small population of 12 adult males was found. Together with the fact that no fertilised females were found, this tends to indicate the area is primarily important as a feeding area for the green turtle rather than as a nesting area.

The Conservation Commission has a research program running on both species of turtle and dugong, and we wrote to the NLC 10 months ago asking for its help in making contact with local communities. To date, there has been no reply. However, the commission is continuing to explore this complex subject and hoping to carry out another field expedition in October.

After Cyclone Kathy, a number of Aboriginals from the Borroloola area came forward and gave invaluable assistance and information during the rescue operation. One of these, Mr Graham Friday, has continued to assist the research effort. To help build up a bank of knowledge, the Conservation Commission sent him to a Queensland training program on turtle biology and research in 1984, and this year to a workshop in Townsville on traditional hunting of marine animals.

Mr Speaker, this information was the subject of a press release issued by me on 21 February this year. In this context, the Northern Territory government would be delighted if Mr Yunupingu could coerce the ANPWS into providing additional research input into the life cycle and habits of these important animals. Its track record on this matter is indicated by its refusal to assist with funds for the turtle rescue although it did belatedly contribute to the dugong portion - hardly a high level of interest and involvement.

Regarding the proposed developments on Centre Island, the quite genuine concerns expressed by the Chairman of the NLC were taken into account in 3 ways. Firstly, the government made the decision to place all such development on one location so that we could avoid sporadic development over a number of locations. Secondly, we took the advice that Centre Island was less important as a nesting site than other islands in the group. Thirdly, the covenants on the developments are such that disturbance on the beach and dune areas is minimised, and a declaration of a restricted use area under the Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act restricts access to the beach to pedestrian traffic only. These approaches were developed in consultation with the Bureau of the NLC. With such provisions, the impact on the ecosystem will be kept to acceptable limits.

Mr Speaker, I would like to go back through the history of negotiations involving the Department of Lands. In 1981, the Secretary of the Department of Lands and the Surveyor-General met with Mr Leo Findlay and other traditional owners for discussions. Discussions continued, particularly in October 1983, when the then Director of the Southern Division met with traditional owners to discuss the area and, in August 1984, when traditional owners came to Darwin to talk to the deputy secretary. In all cases, the traditional owners and custodians of sites said that Camp Beach was okay. In fact, that was the site proposed by the traditional Aboriginal owners as most suitable for living areas. They said it was okay but that there were several sensitive areas to be considered. These have been taken into consideration. They include sacred sites, dugongs and general maintenance of the country. At no stage was concern expressed about turtles by the Aboriginal people or by the NLC.

I suspect Mr Yunupingu has been led up the garden path. I understand that one of his staff members in the NLC is a senior person in the Environment Centre, and the press statement reads very much like comments by the Environment Centre people. I think he has done himself, the NLC and the Aboriginal people of that area a grave disservice with that outburst.

Alice Springs Casino

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

I want to try to remove some confusion in public statements in respect of the Alice Springs casino. Hopefully, with the assistance of the Chief Minister, more confusion will not be created. In the Chief Minister's public reference to the possible combination of the existing Alice Springs casino with the golf course development, does the proposal involve a transfer of the existing Alice Springs casino from the Northern Territory Property Trust to other owners or is this part of the development of the golf course estate referred to in the Chief Minister's statement to the Assembly on Wednesday 27 February 1985? To what the extent does this require any renegotiation of the operator's agreement?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, my references to the Alice Springs casino and its future related to the level of profitability or the degree of loss that surrounds that operation. The point that I have been making is very simply that it is not in anybody's interest for us to maintain an operation that has shown, and looks like showing for some time, a loss on its total operation. There have been a range of suggestions put forward as to how profitability at the Alice

Springs casino might be achieved. Suggestions have been made by the operators and by other interested parties. We all have an interest in some way. For instance, the government's interest is that it would like the casino to pay tax and that is a pretty reasonable expectation. However, while it is operating at a loss, that is not likely to happen. I have flagged some of the options that are available and some of the suggestions that have been made by people on how its operations might be reviewed to make it profitable. I am quite relaxed about any direction that we might take but I must confirm that any change of direction would need to be negotiated by the trust, have the consent of the operators and generally have some optimistic outlook. Everybody I have dealt with - and I feel very strongly about this myself - believes that the Alice Springs casino should be put into a profitable mode as soon as possible.

Taminmin High School

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In view of the popularity of agricultural courses at the Taminmin High School, the fact that it is the only rural high school in the Northern Territory and the vast distances in the Northern Territory, has he given any thought to a boarding school associated with the high school where children from other parts of the Northern Territory can board and receive a rural education?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. I have not given consideration to including boarding facilities at Taminmin High School. I might say that the curriculum at the high school will encourage further enrolments. Agriculture has a tremendous future in the Northern Territory and I am sure that the enrolments will continue. The issue of boarding facilities is one that the government has addressed not only in relation to giving students access to agricultural pursuits but also for giving isolated students the opportunity of having access to a full range of subjects. That is something that isolated students have missed out on for many years. We have boarding subsidy schemes which are available but they do not really address the problem. To date, we have been looking very seriously at the provision of boarding facilities in Darwin. The recent announcement that we were looking at establishing an agricultural component in the Tennant Creek High School has directed the government's thoughts in relation to providing boarding facilities at Tennant Creek. The issues themselves are being addressed by the government. However, I would not say that we are looking at putting boarding facilities at Taminmin High School.

Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

Given the selective quoting he has been indulging in lately in the press, will he undertake to table in this Assembly the latest study on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway before the Assembly rises on Thursday?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, if I have adopted any habit of selective quoting, I have probably copied it from some people across the room who are pretty good at it

themselves. I would not like anybody to think that I had a monopoly on selective quoting.

Mr B. Collins: Would you like us to move that dispatch box over to your desk to save you the trouble?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to stand at the dispatch box. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his interest in my comfort while I am addressing such a boring question from the opposition.

If the member for Stuart would like to be patient for a day or two, he will be able to learn in more detail about the proposal for the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. He will find the proposition most interesting and a little unfortunate because it will put paid to many of the propositions that the ALP has been peddling around Australia for a few years: that the railway is not an economic venture and should not be supported by the government, particularly the federal Labor government. The report to which the member for Stuart refers will become a public document later in the year but, in the meantime, he will have an opportunity some time this week to discuss the contents of a ministerial statement on the same issue. He will be able to give us his views on that.

New Cemetery for Darwin

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What progress is being made towards the establishment of a new Darwin cemetery at Berrimah?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Jingili has a cemetery in his electorate which is becoming filled. There have been discussions for some time on moving the cemetery facilities from Darwin to another place. It would appear that the facilities will be transferred to the electorate of Berrimah. Some \$50 000 was approved in 1984-85 to plan the project. We are looking for an additional \$200 000 this financial year to enable the supply of essential services and earthworks and fencing to be done on the proposed site. It is proposed that representatives from the Darwin City Council will be appointed as interim trustees to ensure that the new area is established and ready for operation before the McMillans Road facility becomes full. Based on current trends, it is estimated that, within 2 to 3 years, the cemetery at McMillans Road will be full and consideration is also currently being given to the long-term management options which may involve other councils in the management of such a facility. The member for Koolpinyah has raised in this Assembly on many occasions the fact that her constituents pay more for burials in Darwin than Darwin people. Issues such as this will be addressed.

A management committee needs to be established to look at ways of burying our dead with dignity and to look at the cost implications of running cemeteries. They are very expensive facilities to run. I understand that the cemetery in McMillans Road cost something like \$90 000 to run last year over and above the charges that were levied on people being buried in that particular facility.

Mr B. Collins: What is happening about the crematorium?

Mr COULTER: The issue of the crematorium has been raised from time to time. The cost implications are high. We will be looking at the most efficient way for people to have their dead buried with the dignity they deserve. I am reminded of a joke but I will not continue any further. I will be in touch with the honourable member later.

Employment of Apprentices on Public Works Projects

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

Has the Commonwealth a policy similar to the Territory regarding the employment of apprentices on its public works projects?

ANSWER

The short answer to the question is no but I think that it is certainly interesting for members of this Assembly to reflect on the fact that all states and the Northern Territory have some program in existence whereby apprentices are required to work with firms that win government contracts. I raised this subject recently in Perth at a meeting of Ministers for Housing and Construction. I raised it with Mr West, the Commonwealth Minister for Housing and Construction. I asked if he would examine the matter of the Commonwealth being slightly out of step with the states and the Territory on this matter. The minister gave an undertaking that he would have his department investigate the possibility of introducing a scheme similar to that employed by the states and the Northern Territory. It is a matter of some concern to us because of the future development of Tindal which will involve the employment of a number of people. I believe that the training of youth in skilled professions is something that we should all be concerned about. In relation to the recent statement by the Prime Minister on training schemes for youth, that certainly disappointed me a bit. Even though apprenticeship training is of some importance to our country's future, that was not addressed by the Commonwealth. I believe that it needs addressing very urgently. The possible construction of an airport terminal in Darwin also has implications for young people in Darwin.

Yulara Trust Account

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Why were payments into the Yulara Trust Account \$8m in 1984-85 and payments out of that account \$6.3m? Is the \$6.3m above the expected amount and, if so, what is the cause?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will obtain that information for the honourable member and provide it to him later today. If he had given me notice an hour ago that he wanted it, I could have given him the details now.

Uncontrolled Dogs

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Darwin residents recently have been voicing great concern about uncontrolled dogs in suburban streets. Has he any legislative plans to address this problem?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I know of no other controversy in the community at the moment which affects everybody more than the question of dog control. The member for Millner mentioned in the Assembly last week the problems associated with dogs. He said that it was very difficult for him to walk around his electorate without being bitten. I have checked with some other honourable members and they do not suffer the problem to the same degree as the honourable member for Millner. However, there is a problem with dogs and we are indeed addressing it. Honourable members may have heard on the radio this morning that 2 owners are to be prosecuted for their dogs savaging wallabies at East Point. The problem has become very serious indeed. The number of dogs at Palmerston and Darwin has grown over the years and the degree of responsibility shown by the dog owners seems to have declined. Many options have been suggested to the government over a period.

Recently, the Chief Minister and myself were travelling in the bush and we came across a police station which detailed the cost of registering dogs in a particular community. The registration fee for male dogs was \$10 and \$8 for female dogs. Pensioners received a 50% reduction. The option of desexing has been considered. Recently, we heard from the honourable member for Millner about the dog catcher at Mount Isa. That town has quite stringent regulations. The dogs must be on a lead.

We intend to introduce changes to our legislation. The major change will be that we will treat every dog which is in a public place without a registration tag as an unregistered dog. That is the first problem that we have in picking up dogs. There is also the cost involved in running pounds and institutions such as the RSPCA facility for unwanted dogs. Honourable members would be aware that the ownership of dogs follows a fashion. Red setters are in vogue one year and great danes the next. As soon as they go out of fashion, people seem to discard them or do not feed them. There are those sorts of problems. If a dog does not have a tag, it will be considered as an unregistered dog.

As an alternative to impounding, we also intend to provide for on-the-spot notices to be issued to an owner where a dog has committed a minor breach. We also intend to provide that the offences which apply when a dog is in a public place will also apply when the dog is in a place where the owner has not consented to the dog's presence. This also will be a major legislative change. The draft is in its final stages of preparation. When it is in a suitable form, discussions will be held with the Canine Association, local councils and other interested groups to address this very serious problem.

ADMA Purchase of Peanut Processing Plant

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for PRIMARY PRODUCTION

In response to my earlier question, the minister mentioned the growth of the peanut industry in the Douglas-Daly area and the sandy soils. Early this year, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority purchased at auction a peanut processing plant. What is planned for this machinery?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in April of this year, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority purchased equipment at auction at Kingaroy to enable it to

set up a peanut processing plant. The board of the authority considered likely sites for such a plant. I might say that it has been the subject of quite an incredible amount of debate. I do not think a decision of the authority has created as much debate for some time. There has been lobbying within the grain industry for its location at various places, all of which were investigated. There were proposals to put it at the Douglas-Daly area, Katherine, Adelaide River and Darwin. This debate went backwards and forwards and it was a most interesting period.

However, at this stage, what the authority has decided is that the equipment will be stored until the peanut industry has proven itself further. The equipment was purchased at very realistic prices. To purchase new equipment would cost something in the order of 4 to 5 times as much as we spent at the auction. Mr Dalzell, a board member, is currently in Saudi Arabia. On his trip, he made contact with Japanese buyers of peanuts. He was confident that he would be able to arrange a sale of our peanuts direct into Singapore in the coming season.

As a consequence of this equipment being available, we will be introducing initially pre-cleaning equipment into the Douglas-Daly area to reduce some of the transport costs. A number of farmers have now purchased seed in advance with the intention of moving significantly into peanut production in the Douglas-Daly area. So it is pleasing that one of our board members has been able to identify a potential export market for that product. We should have detailed information on that by the end of this month. The buyers are interested in shelled nuts. If Mr Dalzell is successful, it will be necessary to set up enough of the plant to shell the peanuts to enable them to be shipped to Singapore for final processing. This would need to be done by June 1986.

With all the debate that has been taking place, and the decision to hold off until the peanut industry establishes itself more, it seems that events have started to overtake us again and that in fact we may have a significant planting and a reasonably good market for the product overseas. We may then proceed to locate the plant. I imagine ADMA will be engaged in more debate and discussion with the members of the Grain Growers Association to determine finally that location.

Pipeline Easement between Palm Valley and Alice Springs

Mr BELL to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Have erosion problems on the pipeline easement between Palm Valley and Alice Springs been drawn to his attention and, if so, what action has he taken?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not recall any problems of that nature being drawn to my attention in the last few days. However, I will undertake to seek information. Relevant officers within government have the necessary power to require rectification where problems such as erosion arise, so the matter may well be in hand. However, I will seek some information for the honourable member and perhaps say more on the matter tomorrow.

Araluen Art Centre

Mr VALE to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Has an agreement been reached with the Alice Springs Town Council concerning the funding for the Araluen Art Centre and what were the total operating costs of the centre for the last financial year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Araluen Art Centre has undergone some changes of late. The director of the centre has left and a new director has been appointed and will take up his position some time in the next few weeks. The financial status of the centre has been addressed by a working party made up of representatives of Treasury and the Department of Community Development. It has met with the trustees and the previous director of the centre to work up a plan of management for the centre and to look at ways of funding it.

When it was established, it was given \$300 000 as an operational grant to set it up. The development of the art centre and its popularity have increased over the years. Its initial request for funding for 1985-86 was somewhere in the vicinity of \$600 000. I questioned the amount of funding requested and, as a result of that, we examined the funding of the centre and its total operation. I am now in a position to inform the member for Braitling that a Cabinet submission has been prepared covering those issues relating to Araluen. It will be discussed in Cabinet in the near future. Whilst there have been no formal discussions with the Alice Springs Town Council, approaches have been made to the council to see if it would take over some of the running of the centre. Whilst it has representatives on the board of trustees at Araluen, it was hoped that the Alice Springs Town Council would take a higher profile in the operation of the centre. The Alice Springs Town Council has suggested that in fact it is a regional centre and not just a centre for Alice Springs. It is a magnificent centre and worthy of the title and status of a regional centre.

However, negotiations are continuing with the council. As I said, a submission will be going before Cabinet in the very near future. I will keep the honourable member for Braitling informed of events as they occur over the next couple of weeks.

Territory Shark Sales to Victoria

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for PORTS and FISHERIES

What is the Territory government doing in relation to the restrictions placed on Territory shark entering the Victorian market?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as honourable members would be aware, in late June the Victorian government announced that it would place a number of restrictions on the entry of shark into Victoria. This was done to limit the entry of shark with a specific level of mercury content into the Victorian market. Mr Speaker, you would be aware that the requirements in Victoria are the most stringent in the world. The figure is 0.05 parts per million which is about half the requirement of almost anywhere else in the world.

I raised this matter by telex virtually immediately with the relevant Victorian minister. Subsequently, I met with him during a meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council in Darwin in early July.

Victoria really has pulled a neat little trick on the Northern Territory. I am prepared to accept the Victorian minister's explanation that that trick was pulled unwittingly. However, instead of having regulations which limit the shark by specifying the mercury level, it has tried to simplify its procedures by limiting the species of shark that would be allowed into the market. The effect has been that only 2 of the species caught in northern Australian waters are included in the list of approved species. These 2 species constitute less than 25% of the NT shark catch by weight. The Victorian market is by far the most significant market for shark in Australia and so this placed quite a heavy burden on our developing shark fishery industry. In fact, the black-tipped shark makes up some 70% of the catch for inshore boats and was seen as a viable alternative for people coming out of the barramundi fishing industry.

As I said, I raised this with the Victorian minister. Discussions have been held with that government at both ministerial and officer level to develop arrangements for the sale in Victoria of all Territory shark and shark products which can meet mercury standards. Negotiations are continuing but a change in Victorian fisheries legislation will now take no less than 3 months and alternatives through existing health legislation are also being investigated.

Mr Speaker, the regulations in Victoria were amended in June and then, on 30 June, the Victorian government decided to change its procedures for the determination of regulations whereby the public is allowed to comment and there is a process of public consultation. Since July, this has stretched out dramatically the amount of time it takes to introduce changes even by way of regulation. Therefore, even when we finally reach agreement with the Victorian government, it will take several months to bring the Victorian situation more into balance for the Northern Territory.

Apart from that, our department is working quite actively in trying to develop and promote alternative markets for the shark. In fact, there is an increasing potential for our shark in the Californian market. Indications from the Australian Trade Commissioner in California, Mr Graham Rice, are that we have a very good potential for selling almost all of our catch in that

market. What we need to do now is to work out ways of consolidating, packaging and supplying that market through the wholesaling and broking systems as they exist in California. That would provide an even more lucrative return to the shark fishermen in the Northern Territory.

Mercury Levels at Warrego Gold Room

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

With reference to the continuing concern regarding mercury levels at Warrego during the period 1981-85, and with reference also to statements yesterday in the press where he is alleged to have said that he would make a statement yesterday regarding Warrego, I now ask him once again: will he table all tests carried out by the Department of Mines and Energy in the gold room between 1980 and 1985 and will he furnish a statement as to their frequency, the stage of the extraction process during which they were carried out and such further details as would allow this Assembly to assess the performance of the minister responsible over that period?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, during this sittings I will table the information the honourable member seeks. I would rather spare honourable members the pain of listening to me read them out. There is a raft of data on government samplings and methods over the period that he is concerned about. I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

Municipal Rates in Darwin

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I refer to an interview heard on the radio this morning when a Darwin City Council spokesman said that the reason why the Darwin municipal rates were going to increase was that the Valuer-General had increased property values. Considering the minister is in the process of active consultation with rural people on the subject of rates and local government, could he comment on this statement?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think the question is a valid one considering that there was such an interview on the radio this morning. I know how sensitive a matter it is to the member for Koolpinyah. The radio interviewer was quite out of order when she said that the increases will not be across the board in that flat owners and northern suburbs residents will be the hardest hit whilst some residents will actually pay less this year. The interviewer then went on to say that the wide variation of increases results from a 3-yearly assessment of properties by the Valuer-General and this is outside of the council's control. It would be construed from that that, because the Valuer-General has reviewed the unimproved capital valuations in the Darwin area, the council will have to increase the rating burden on the area. That is absolute nonsense. There is no need for the council to increase the rates based on the unimproved capital values.

I have attended many meetings in the rural area recently with the member for Koolpinyah at which I suggested that the total unimproved capital value for the entire proposed shire in the rural area, based on 1979 figures, is about \$65m. The 1984 figures, which will be released soon, take it to about \$130m. We have said that we are after revenue-raising capacity of about \$325 000. Therefore, that would require about 0.5¢ in the dollar on unimproved capital value, based on 1979 figures. If we use the 1984 figures, we would require 0.25¢. In other words, it would halve as the unimproved capital value doubled. This system is available to the council. It can put a ceiling on it or do whatever it likes. In fact, the whole philosophy behind the new Local Government Act, which will come into force in July 1986, is to devolve powers on the councils and to allow them to be innovative and look at various ways of collecting rates. It could be done on improved capital values but those figures are not available to the council yet. It could be done on unimproved capital values or there could be a differential rating system. In fact, they now have the power to introduce a whole range of rating systems throughout the rural area.

The report is absolute nonsense. The council is not compelled by the Valuer-General to increase the rates at all. The independence of the Valuer-General should never be questioned by anybody. He is independent and, under the unimproved capital value system, ratepayers can appeal against the unimproved capital value which is levied on their particular premises.

Mr B. Collins: You just said that no one was allowed to object.

Mr COULTER: They can appeal.

As a result of the interview, I sought from the council its budget estimates presented by the Lord Mayor last evening. In fact, there have been decreases in some areas. I will give some examples of that for honourable members. On the 1982 UCV, a strata title unit in the Esplanade in Darwin would have been valued at about \$10 000 and would have attracted a rate burden of \$149.10. Under the 1985 UCV, it would be worth about \$12 000 and the rate would be about \$133.20. The 1984-85 rate was 0.01491 and the 1985-86 rate, based on the increased unimproved capital value, is down to 0.0111. The increases are largely in places like Rapid Creek, Nightcliff, Malak and Leanyer.

I notice that the council's capital works program is quite extensive. The cost of running the council is quite high and the programs which it will be undertaking this year are quite extensive. The responsibility rests with the council to determine its rating system. It will pay the penalty at the ballot box for any mismanagement just as members of this Assembly will. The present government has little to worry in that regard but I cannot say the same about the opposition. The council is not compelled by any increase in the unimproved capital value to increase its rates. That is at the discretion of the council itself.

Revenues and Costs Relating to Casinos

Mr B. COLLINS to TREASURER

Can he confirm the accuracy of the total gaming tax revenue from the Alice Springs and Darwin casinos in the next financial year, contained in the estimates of the budget papers, as \$45 000? Can he also confirm the accuracy of the estimate that the cost of the regulatory and inspectorial services for the 2 casinos, to be paid for by the government, will be \$470 000?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the figures shown in the budget to cover the regulatory aspects of the casinos are the expected costs that the government must pay. The anticipated revenue from the casinos is shown as \$45 000 and, unless there is a marked upturn in the level of profitability of the Alice Springs casino in particular, that is the amount of revenue that we would expect to collect.

Mr Robertson: What about payroll tax?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Special Minister for Constitutional Development asks about payroll tax. Of course, there are additional revenues and benefits that come to the Northern Territory government from having the casino in place. In particular, there are the employment opportunities that it offers young people in the Territory. While I have to acknowledge that the revenue is not as much as we would like, we certainly appreciate the job opportunities that have been created for many young Territorians. That is a worthwhile aspect of the whole operation.

Wagaman Primary School

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Why is Wagaman Primary School to be downgraded in 1986 and what assurances can he give for the ongoing educational well-being of its students?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I wish the member for Wagaman would refer to it as reclassification rather than downgrading. I guess we only hear about those schools that are downgraded. I might point out that many schools are upgraded. It relates to the number of enrolments at a particular school. That is the system as it exists. I might say that it has been rather disappointing that we have had to make certain changes within the system in relation to the rating of schools and the staffing of schools. We were placed under very strict constraints in relation to the cuts from the Commonwealth government. It was necessary for us to ensure that the face-to-face teaching was not affected. Many other state education systems have been forced to make changes as a result of Senator Walsh's actions. Recently, an article in the Bulletin referred to the overstaffing of schools in the ACT. Senator Ryan and others have been brought to task and made to bring their staffing back to realistic levels.

Mr Speaker, as I have said on many occasions, the Territory has formulae equal to the best in Australia in relation to the staffing of schools. They are very good formulae and we have had to ensure that we can maintain them. I do not enjoy saying to part-time instructors and others that they cannot continue at schools. The policy of government in the past has been to assist schools by providing extra teachers to help them at the time of their establishment and initial development. Unfortunately, we have been forced, in order to maintain our formulae, to reduce the number of part-time teachers. It is disappointing because many part-time instructors are operating very good programs indeed. In fact, the programs operated by those people are interesting to the students and are keeping students at school.

The over-establishment teachers at the schools are being removed. We are sticking rigidly to the formulae. There are other schools that are being affected in the Territory. Milingimbi is an example of a school that was favourably treated in recent years in that it had a generous allocation of assistant teachers. That was based on the fact that it had over 300 enrolments. With the outstation movement, many people are moving from those particular areas and many adjustments had to be made. This year, the enrolment at Milingimbi peaked at something like 150. The school is adequately staffed, but we had to make adjustments there.

I am disappointed that these adjustments had to be made but I can assure the honourable member for Wagaman that the actual rating of a school is based solely on enrolment numbers and the actual face-to-face teaching has not been affected. We are keeping those formulae as equal to if not the best in Australia and we will continue to do so.

Beagle Circuit at Nhulunbuy

Mr LEO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

If the Northern Territory government accepts the responsibility for necessary road works in and around the community of Nhulunbuy, when will the remainder of Beagle Circuit be sealed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as the member opposite realises, the government does not accept full responsibility for all roads in his electorate. There are complicating factors because of the area of Aboriginal land and the fact that it is a mining town. The area itself is under the control of the Nhulunbuy Corporation. We are presently having discussions with Nabalco to see whether we can come to some mutually-agreed arrangement in relation to the development of some roads in the Nhulunbuy area. At present, roads in that area are under the control of the Nhulunbuy Corporation and, until such time as things are sorted out, I am afraid I am unable to enlighten the member further as to when any progress will be occurring in relation to roads such as Beagle Circuit. If the member talks to the corporation, he may possibly get some undertaking from it.

Conservation Commission Rangers

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What action is being taken to install additional Conservation Commission rangers in Territory parks this year? In particular, I refer to the proposed Litchfield park on Stapleton Station. Since the announcement of the park earlier this year, there has been a significant increase in the number of people visiting the park and this is endangering the tracks and ecology of that area.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this year's budget provides for some moderate expansion in the Conservation Commission's activities in major parks in the Northern Territory. We have been able to achieve this by some fairly careful reorganisation and reallocation of resources within the Conservation Commission budget and within the constraints resulting from reductions in funding from the federal government this year.

Nonetheless, we are in a position where the development of Berry Springs zoo is proceeding. The nocturnal house will be open to the public early next year and 5 staff will be appointed to the zoo this financial year for the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. That is a pleasing development that we are now getting off the ground. We will be in a position to provide some facilities that can be enjoyed by the community and tourists.

Kings Canyon is a major area of activity for the Conservation Commission. There are now comprehensive discussions on the development plan for that park in very close consultation with the Aboriginal community. We will be putting 3 additional rangers into that park.

As far as the proposed Gregory Park is concerned, there are 2 rangers presently living in Katherine and Bullita and they will be relocated at Timber Creek as soon as suitable accommodation is available later this year. I ask you to note, Mr Speaker, that the budget does provide for some development at Timber Creek to enable us to do that this financial year.

In respect of Litchfield park, the member has spoken to me a number of times over the last 2 or 3 months concerning growing problems with the publicity that area has received. There has been quite a significant increase in visitor pressure as people start to realise there are quite unique attractions available there. We will be placing a ranger there and administrative funds are included in the budget announced yesterday by the Treasurer. The new ranger position should significantly ease user pressure on the area. The ranger will undertake litter collections, erect directional signs, patrol major problem areas and assist in the design of facilities for the future national park. He will provide some control and limits on the effects of visitor pressure while we are continuing our work on development proposals and the plan of management for that park.

Mercury Levels at Warrego Gold Room

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

With reference to the Warrego paper he tabled yesterday, why did he not table test results for the period from December 1981 to September 1984 or details of any inspection between December 1982 and October 1984, given that the December 1982 visit report mentioned that 2 men had to be transferred out of the gold room following advice by the Department of Mines and Energy to Peko of the results of unspecified and undisclosed tests?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member asked a series of things. The information that I tabled yesterday was supplied to me by the Department of Mines and Energy. It related to the inspections and tests which were conducted at the Warrego gold mine over the period covered in his question. In addition to government monitoring of such activities, the company itself monitor the situation and has continuous health and medical examinations of workers in mines. That information was not tabled because it was not sought.

Rating System for Darwin Rural Area

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What are his views on representations made to him on behalf of residents of the rural area that a flat rating system be imposed there which will raise as much as an unimproved capital value rating system?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I guess if there is one subject on which people have firm views, it would be local government in the rural area. There is no simple answer to this. Unfortunately for honourable members, it will take me some time to answer in the detail which the question deserves. I ask for the patience of the Assembly whilst I explain where we are on this particular issue.

As honourable members will know, the present Chief Minister set up a group known as the Darwin Rural Advisory Council some 3 years ago to investigate options for local government in the rural area. A report was submitted to the then Minister for Community Development, the now Minister for Transport and Works. Later, it fell to me, as Minister for Community Development, to implement the findings of that report. It is a little ironic because, in fact, I was a member of the Darwin Rural Advisory Council. This morning, I spoke with the member for Millner who provided me with information from the Local Government Association at one stage.

Mr Smith: I am not responsible for the final result though.

Mr COULTER: I like to involve as many people as possible in this issue.

After the report had been received, a few things happened of which the members of the inquiry group would not have been aware. They could not have made recommendations to counteract the events that took place after the report. One event is the national inquiry into local government which is being carried out throughout Australia under the chairmanship of

Professor Peter Selph. The other was the Grants Commission inquiry into both funding and relativities in the entire Northern Territory. As a result of those 2 reports, there was a need for us to elect people in the rural area and, if we did not, there was a penalty. The penalty is that those people would not be entitled to PITS funds, the Personal Income Tax Sharing agreement, and some other Commonwealth funds for which they would be eligible.

The report recommended the establishment of a rural ward at Palmerston. We declared the Municipality of Palmerston on 1 April this year. There have been requests from the Darwin City Council to move into the rural area as far as the Darwin 1945 acquisition line. Some matters have been in abeyance until we implement the findings of the Darwin Rural Advisory Council report. For planning purposes, the electorate of Koolpinyah is divided into 2 areas - RL1 and RL2. RL2 was not included in the Darwin Rural Advisory Council report but it is now considered that it is necessary to include it because of the pressure that we are under from the Grants Commission and the Selph inquiry that rural people should be contributing towards municipal-type services within their area.

I have conducted a number of meetings over the last 6 or 7 months. In fact, I have been involved in this exercise now for almost 4 years. What happened last night was a result of the consultative process which this government has been involved in over that 4-year period. These people met last night. As honourable members will be aware, the sittings did not rise until 10.30 pm. I arrived home at about 10.55 pm. I received a telephone call from one of the representatives of the group that met last night. I was instructed over the phone that it had reached a model. These people were representatives of the various progress associations within the area. I was informed that these people had unanimously decided on a flat rate system and that they in fact came up with the dollar value. I think it was \$105 for the RL1 area and \$55 for the RL2 area.

The 4 most pressing issues in this whole exercise have been whether we elect or whether we appoint and whether we have UCV valuations or whether we have a flat rate. I congratulate the people who were at that meeting last night. They met me this morning and presented me with that model which requires a little tightening up here and there, but basically it is a model which they believe will be acceptable to the people in the rural area.

I was quoted on the radio this morning on a news bulletin as saying that this group of people were not representative of the rural area. In fact, the particular spokesperson went on to say that the reason that I had knocked back their proposal last night was that my officers would have been advising me. I can assure that particular spokesman that, whilst my departmental officers work extremely hard for long hours, they were not available at 11 o'clock last night and did not advise me one way or the other on that particular issue.

My concern is simply that these people should represent the views of the rank and file members of their organisations. I do not want it to appear as if 12 apostles arrived out of the bush, sat around the table and came up with the model. I do not want that model to pertain simply to those 12 people. I want to be assured that their model is acceptable to people in the rural area. I believe that is a wise thing to do because it is a very delicate question in the rural area.

As a result of this morning's meeting, those people have agreed to go back to their various organisations with the particular model that they have

presented to me. They will put that model to the people. If they obtain the endorsement of their rank and file members, I am prepared to proceed with the model. They also put to me a couple of other variations. I can advise members that this model for local government in the rural area has had more reviews than the Tivoli Theatre. They now request a further review to consider dividing the area into 5 wards. We reduced it from 6 to 4, and we are now considering 5. In addition, there is the possibility of electing the chairperson from within the group.

Another issue which I have been asked to consider is whether or not one ward could encompass an RL1 and an RL2 area. The representatives are concerned about the possibility that RL1 will outvote RL2 if ward numbers are not properly balanced. Members of this Assembly would understand their concerns exactly. I told the representatives this morning that I would consider that. I will be approaching the Northern Territory Electoral Office to see if it can provide a model containing that particular compromise. I will be endeavouring to arrive at a model which is the most acceptable to rural area residents.

Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the people who have been involved in this exercise. Even 4 months ago, people were saying they would not have rural local government and they would not pay rates. We now have a demonstration that the residents of the rural area are responsible people and that they are prepared to pay their way. They are very independent people who do not want to develop the reputation that they are riding on anybody else's back. I believe that we have come a long way in 4 months.

Over the 4-year period during which I have been working on this particular project, there has been considerable anguish, demonstrations and...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 204. The honourable minister has been on his feet for in excess of 10 minutes. We get 1 scant hour in this Assembly in which to ask questions. We have been able to put 1 question in 25 minutes, Mr Speaker. It is becoming somewhat of a joke as interjections from the other side have demonstrated with calls of, 'Do you want an extension of time?' when the minister had hardly started to speak. The business of this Assembly is being persistently and wilfully obstructed, Mr Speaker, and I would refer you to standing order 204. We have been able to ask only 1 question in 25 minutes. I have a number of extremely important questions to put to the government on this last day of the sittings concerning its handling of the financial affairs of the Northern Territory. It is becoming impossible to ask...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the Minister for Community Development kindly complete the answer.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I can assure you that this particular issue is of great concern to the third most densely populated area in the Northern Territory, namely the Darwin rural area. It has the right of an answer in this Assembly to a question which has perplexed the government for some 4 years.

Mr B. Collins: It doesn't want to know what you had for breakfast.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I would appreciate an opportunity to complete...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer you to standing order 204.

Mr SPEAKER: The question will not be debated, honourable Leader of the Opposition, and the minister will confine himself very narrowly in the final part of his answer.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that the model which has been presented to me will be considered and given the credit that it deserves. Once again, I congratulate all those people and look forward to the endorsement of the model from the rank and file of the various groups that they claim to represent.

Alice Springs Sheraton Ownership Proposals

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Are any of the parties involved in the proposed restructuring of the ownership of the Alice Springs Sheraton also involved in any discussions over the sale of the Alice Springs casino?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not sure exactly who the parties are at this stage because the options are being canvassed.

Mr B. Collins: That's terrific!

Mr TUXWORTH: If the honourable Leader of the Opposition is prepared to be patient, Mr Speaker, I could follow that through at officer level and obtain an answer for him today. Discussions are in progress but I am not a party to every one of them.

Upgrading of Stuart Highway

Mr VALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What is the total length of the Stuart Highway that still requires upgrading to national highway standard and when will this work be completed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, of the 1700 km or so of the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory, about 950 km is sealed to national highway standard. Of the remaining length, some 500 km is sealed to 2-lane standard, and about 280 km is completed to a narrow seal. I believe that the Stuart Highway will be substantially completed to near national highway standard within current funding projections by 1992. However, progress will be dependent upon future federal funding attitudes and financial commitments to the Northern Territory's road development. The fact that we received \$4.7m less from the federal government in relation to our road funding this year in comparison to the amount received last year shows that that commitment is not what it should be.

Alice Springs Sheraton Proposals

Mr B. COLLINS to the CHIEF MINISTER

At the major casino briefing held earlier this year, a senior official of the Northern Territory Development Corporation said in relation to the raising of funds for the casino purchase: 'Raising \$16m is a time-consuming process'. Yesterday the Chief Minister informed the Assembly that a company would be formed as an ownership vehicle for the Alice Springs Sheraton and other development projects in the Territory. He said that this company must be formed as it does not exist at present, and it must raise \$35m before 12 September 1985. What are the precise details of the way in which this company is to be put together and raise \$35m in 11 working days?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes of the Assembly's time, now that the honourable Leader of the Opposition has raised this question, to reaffirm, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and any other doubting Thomas, the government's unswerving commitment to support tourism and the development of our tourist infrastructure in the Northern Territory. I acknowledge that we have some problems and we are going to fix them. Firstly, the support by government of tourist and other infrastructure in this country is not new. There has been such support for 100 years and, because of the development phase that we are going through, the Northern Territory is conducting a process that governments in this country should conduct.

I would make the point, Mr Speaker, that, over the last couple of days, the press has reported that, because of changing circumstances, the Western Australian government has been confronted with a \$7000m payout on its North-West Shelf to Perth pipeline.

Mr B. Collins: That has been known for years. What are you on about?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am making the point that, from time to time, changing circumstances require governments to review proposals and projects. I would also make the point that the South Australian government gave heavy support to its tourist ventures, particularly the Hilton in Adelaide.

Mr B. Collins: You could also answer the question.

Mr TUXWORTH: If the Leader of the Opposition would like to be patient for a moment, Mr Speaker, I will put this into perspective. I also make the point that governments in Queensland and Victoria have supported aluminium projects in Victoria and pipelines in Queensland, and so they ought to. In each case, they supported them on the basis of assumptions and facts that were known at the time and, occasionally, as circumstances have changed, they have had to review their entire arrangements and, in some cases, refinance them.

Mr B. Collins: They were not dills, which was a big help.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that they were not dills. Many people in the business community would like to take issue with that point, and cite the agreement that has been made by the Victorian government on the aluminium smelter and the use of power from the new power-station down there.

Nevertheless, circumstances change. However, one thing we are committed to in the Northern Territory is the fact that we will develop our tourist industry and no one else will do it for us. We will be the main beneficiaries of that development. We shall get it up and running and our objective will be to attract 1 million people into the Northern Territory in the mid-1990s. One reason for that objective is that young Territorians, people like these in the Assembly today who are observing this question time, ought to have an expectation that they will obtain employment. We ask ourselves how we are going to provide jobs for young Territorians but the opposition wants a big slush bucket and job-creation programs.

Mr B. Collins: Slush bucket?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if the honourable Leader of the Opposition had been in the Assembly yesterday when his deputy replied to the budget and suggested that we have an enormous fund for job creation, he would be able to understand what I am talking about.

What I am arguing is that we have to put infrastructure in place to attract tourists here to develop the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. The assumptions upon which the government based its decision in the early 1980s to establish Yulara and other hotels around the Northern Territory were good and valid assumptions at the time. There was no question about that. Changing circumstances have caused the projects to be in a more difficult financial position than anybody would have anticipated. There was no intention on my part to push it under the carpet or to blame other people. The responsibility that falls to me is to try to overcome the problems and I am happy to pick up that responsibility. All the time that I am trying to do that, I have the Leader of the Opposition yelling, screaming...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The question was very precise, and it has not been addressed. How will the company be formed to raise \$35m in 11 working days?

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, in replies to questions, ministers must confine themselves within the boundaries of standing order 93. Would they please read that standing order and answer their questions accordingly?

Subsidy to Darwin Bus Service

Mr DALE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

With the recent increase in bus fares, can he advise the Assembly of the dollar value of subsidy provided by this government to the Darwin Bus Service over the past few years and a comparison of the current cost recovery rate as against the recovery rate recorded by other states?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, prior to the recent bus fare increase in Darwin, fares have been artificially low since 1979 when the last fare adjustment was made. To maintain bus fares at that 1979 level, the government had provided a subsidy representing the balance between the total cost of providing the service and the recoveries by way of the fares collected. Since the financial year 1980-81, when the subsidy was \$1.9m, the cost to the government has almost doubled. The subsidy for 1984-85 was around \$3.7m. For the interest of members, the subsidy amounts over the period from 1980-81 to 1984-85 were:

\$1.9m in 1980-81; \$2.9m in 1982-83; \$3.3m in 1983-84; and \$3.7m in 1984-85. In other words, over \$14m has been paid over the last 5 years to subsidise the running of the Darwin Bus Service and to try to keep the fares at that 1979 level.

The subsidy of \$3.7m is some 86% of the cost of running the Darwin Bus Service. Prior to the recent fare increase, the Darwin Bus Service was recording a cost recovery rate of some 14%. Hopefully, the recovery rate for 1984-85, at the new fare level and based on existing patronage, will be about 36%. It is fair to point out that, for 1983-84, Perth's cost recovery rate was 36%, Brisbane's was 40%, Adelaide's was 43% and Sydney's was 48%. It should be noted that those capital cities recorded their last bus fare increases in 1984.

I believe that public transport authorities around Australia have a policy objective to try to achieve a 50% cost recovery rate through fares. The differences between the Darwin minimum and maximum rates is rather favourable when compared to those in other capital cities. In Darwin, the minimum fare is 50¢ and the maximum \$1.50. Perth has 50¢ to \$2.50, Brisbane 50¢ to \$1.00, Adelaide 70¢ to \$1.40, Sydney 50¢ to \$1.80 and Canberra 60¢ to \$1.80. There is only one other area in Australia that has a cheaper bus fare than Darwin. We must make our public bus service more efficient and recover a greater amount of the cost involved in running the service. We do provide quite a good service. Most honourable members would be aware of the quality of the bus service and the amount of patronage it receives from Darwin people. However, we must ensure that the costs of that are not borne by the taxpayer to a greater extent than 50%.

Visitor Numbers to Uluru National Park

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

In view of the issues canvassed in debate on tourism and yesterday, can he give figures for the number of visitors to Uluru National Park this year compared to the number of visitors for the same period last year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can give information on the number of visitors to Uluru and it might be appropriate to refer to the visitor numbers at Yulara, given that they are both in very close proximity and one obviously influences the other. The figures that I have are from the Conservation Commission and the Yulara Development Corporation. As I understand the position, in the first 6 months of this year, visitor nights at Yulara were 96 827 compared to 51 961 for the same period last year. That is an increase of some 86.4%. The number of persons who visited Yulara increased by 70.6% over the same period. I have statistics for all of 1984. The figures for Uluru are for a calendar year and the figures for Yulara are for a financial year. In Uluru last year, there were a total of 90 121 persons made up of 77 431 adults and 12 685 children. Interestingly, they travelled on 14 414 vehicles, being 11 444 cars, 2242 coaches, 303 bicycles and 425 aircraft.

Alice Springs Sheraton Proposals

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Only as late as this morning, he demonstrated on ABC radio his capacity for laying his cards on the table. I repeat the question that I failed to get an answer to. Will he provide to this Assembly on its last sitting day the information to which it is absolutely entitled? What are the details of the company which is to be put together to raise \$35m in the next 11 working days? What are the details of the parties who will be involved in the company? Precisely who will the directors of the company be? What is the share capital that will be issued in this company and the ability of this company to raise \$35m in 11 working days? It must do that before 14 September otherwise there will be legal writs wrapped around people's heads, I would imagine, from the builders if they do not get their money. Will any of that \$35m that will be raised in the next 11 days be removed from the Northern Territory's Treasury?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will have another go on the basis that the Leader of the Opposition does not interrupt me and move a point of order to stop my thought processes.

Mr B. Collins: I would not have to try too hard to do that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable Leader of the Opposition really is interfering with my thought processes. If he just leaves me be for a minute, I will take up where I left off and complete the answer for him. I know he is impatient to hear the answer but I would like him to get the whole answer and not just a part of it so that he can misconstrue it and use it later.

Mr Speaker, as I was saying a moment ago, one of my challenges is to present to the people of the Northern Territory a satisfactory financial solution for the investors, the operators and the end users of the hotels that we have built at Yulara, Alice Springs and Darwin. It is not just a matter of what the government will do in the next 12 days. We must put it into the correct perspective.

We built Yulara on certain premises and assumptions that I think ought to be discussed here because there is nothing to hide about them. They were very reasonable. The first premise that we used in putting together the Yulara financial package was that it was reasonable and economic to build into the room cost of the Yulara operation all the extraneous costs of water, sewerage, housing and other things.

Mr B. Collins: That has nothing to do with it.

Mr TUXWORTH: It has something to do with it because it is not a one-line answer. It is a complex problem and it needs to be addressed in its totality and not just in a one-line throwaway as the honourable Leader of the Opposition would have us do.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 94. My question has nothing to do with Yulara. It concerns the Alice Springs Sheraton Hotel. I have asked for details of the company that will be

put together to purchase the Alice Springs Sheraton Hotel, the procedures it will use to raise \$35m in the next 11 days and whether the Northern Territory Treasury will be used as a source for those funds.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

DISSENT FROM SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move dissent from your ruling.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have a dissent from my ruling from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I do not move dissent motions lightly, as you know. I cannot remember doing it. In fact, I think it is correct to say that I have never done it in the 9 years that I have been in here. But the fact is that this is the last day of this sittings and we do not sit again until November. I have a full hand of questions here this morning. None of them will be answered before we run out of time at 11 o'clock. It is a deliberate and calculated attempt on the part of the government to avoid answering questions, and it has succeeded.

I do not seek to move specious points of order. I waited almost half an hour this morning before I was able to put my first question. I think that involves a considerable degree of patience. I simply repeat what the facts are. I moved a dissent from your ruling on a very precise ground. Standing order 94 of this Assembly provides that answers shall be relevant to questions. Mr Speaker, when I failed to get an answer to this question the first time, I put it again. The question involves quite specifically the purchase of the Alice Springs Sheraton and the procedures that will be put together to bring that purchase about. It has nothing to do with the tourist drive at Yulara. The Chief Minister in 10 minutes of waffle so far has failed to come close to addressing even the first part of that 3-part question.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I can add nothing to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition so my role is to reiterate what he has said.

It is clear under standing order 94 that a minister has a responsibility to answer in clear terms the question that was asked. The opposition has been patient this morning with the very clear efforts of government ministers to attempt to prevent this Assembly debating issues of great importance. On this particular point, the Chief Minister on 2 occasions has quite clearly refused to answer very specific questions put to him by the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, in the opposition's view, your ruling is wrong because, under standing order 94, you had a clear obligation to order the Chief Minister to answer the question.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, if you were a complete stranger to this place in the last 2 days, perhaps the motion of the Leader of the Opposition might have some credibility. The fact is that you have listened to debates in the last 2 days. The Leader of the Opposition's question concerns the financial matters surrounding the whole issue. This subject has been broadly canvassed, including the contingent liabilities or, as they are now properly called, the actual liabilities, which the government faces. With that knowledge, the Speaker is entitled to allow the Chief Minister to answer the question. All of the information he is giving is

relevant to the financial matters which are under discussion in this Assembly and which the Leader of the Opposition himself says are of such importance. The interpretation of what is relevant, Mr Speaker, is surely a matter for you and not the Leader of the Opposition.

Motion negatived.

Yulara Project

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for TOURISM

In the light of figures on the tourist numbers at Yulara just provided by the Minister for Conservation, can he confirm that the Yulara development project has added a major stimulus to tourism in central Australia?

ANSWER

I do not want to be accused by the Leader of the Opposition of taking up the remainder of question time on a subject that I am thoroughly familiar with. The short answer is yes.

Alice Springs Sheraton Proposals

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

I cannot reasonably ask it in 7 parts, which is how many questions I have, so I will ask it in 2 parts. The first concerns the Chief Minister's statement to the Assembly yesterday when he said that the \$35m injection of Northern Territory funds, presumably from the Treasury, would have to be paid out on the basis of a budget produced by the Sheraton Hotel people - and I quote the Chief Minister - 'based on the Yulara experience'. Why was the government unaware of the poor Sheraton performance at Yulara when one of its own senior Treasury officials is chairman of the Yulara Development Company which manages the whole resort? Secondly, I ask the Chief Minister to provide this Assembly with details of the company which is to be put together to raise \$35m in the next 11 working days and will any of those funds be drawn from the Northern Territory's Treasury?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think the proposition of the Leader of the Opposition that he is being thwarted is totally unreasonable. He says he has 8 or 10 questions. He should know, as everybody else knows, that nobody in this Assembly has the opportunity to ask that many questions. There is nothing wrong with his ringing my office beforehand to indicate his questions and ensuring that I have answers to them. Other members do that from time to time so that ministers have the opportunity to provide some detail. I am keen to bring it all out. But the very important point that I am making is that you just cannot look at this whole problem by looking at one project or the other - they are all related. The fact is that the Yulara experience does impact on the Sheraton Alice Springs figures, experience, projections and solutions. The point that I was coming to a moment ago was that we made some assumptions about Yulara that were reasonable at the time but changing circumstances affected those assumptions. We went for a 5-star facility in the remote area at Yulara. It was believed at the time that there would be sufficient traffic to sustain such a facility. The only way you actually find out whether you do have the traffic and the occupancy rate to support a 5-star

operation in a place like Yulara, which is green fields in this business, is to build it, market it for a year and see how you go. The reality so far as the tourist promoters, the wholesalers and the marketing people are concerned is that that expectation was not real. We have to review that standard if we want to get the occupancy levels up and the room rates down so that it becomes an economic proposition.

The other point that I was making for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, when he so rudely interrupted me, was that we cannot market places like Yulara at \$130 and \$120 a night when other facilities around Australia charge \$30 and \$40 a night less. That was the reason why we had to review our whole philosophy and remove the public works sector out of the cost of the room rates so that we could become competitive.

I have those people opposite yelling, biting, scratching and yapping day in and day out, but that will not worry me. We will fix the problem and we will make it work the way we wanted it to work. I do not expect to make them happy. They have done nothing but whinge ever since they were elected to this Assembly. They knock, criticise and berate every proposal. You never hear them say one positive thing about the Northern Territory. You never hear them say one bad thing about the federal government that gives us heaps from time to time. They apologise for it day in and day out.

Mr B. Collins: I have a funny feeling that the question will not be answered.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition keeps talking and it is pretty hard to answer the questions over the top of him. He cannot have it both ways.

Mr Speaker, let me move onto the matter of solving the financial problems with our tourist infrastructure. I floated in the paper yesterday a range of suggestions that are before the financial people at the moment for consideration. There are no definitive answers today and they might not be here tomorrow. We have to find definitive answers within the time to which the honourable member refers so that the problem can be solved. It would be unreasonable for me to stand here today and say: 'This is the answer'. There may be better advice forthcoming. I would rather take a little bit of time to get it absolutely right and set in place a financial foundation for these projects based on new information and more recent assumptions so that the future of these projects are guaranteed. We must pursue such projects because, if we do not, people cannot come. The tourist industry and the Territory economy depend on the establishment of such infrastructure. As soon as I receive reasonable and sound information, I will give it to the honourable member and all Territorians. But I will not be hassled into a quick fix for the Leader of the Opposition so that he can kick another political goal and spend another week tearing Territorians down.

Allocation of Houses by Housing Commission

Mr FINCH to MINISTER for HOUSING

What rules apply in respect of the allocation of rental houses by the Housing Commission when tenants are unsatisfied with the type and location of houses offered?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in common with other areas of government administration which involve the allocation of public resources, the allocation of rental housing by the Housing Commission is subject to the constraints of supply and demand. As far as is possible, the commission attempts to be flexible when allocating houses for rent. Most honourable members are aware that provision is made for applicants to nominate a preferred location when their initial application is made. Obviously, the commission attempts to respond to the applicant's preferred location and the ability to satisfy an applicant's preference is determined by the location and the stock of houses available at the time.

Honourable members will appreciate that the commission has no control over the particular style of dwellings that are returned to stock for reallocation. The allocation of preferred house styles is therefore not feasible because of this constraint. Under normal circumstances, only 1 choice of housing is offered. In extenuating circumstances, including medical grounds, the commission is prepared to examine individual cases and treat them on their merits. Where it is justified in exceptional circumstances, a transfer with entitlement is offered. In addition, in recognition of the needs of the community and individuals, a scheme has been introduced which enables tenants to apply for a transfer with housing entitlements after a satisfactory period of tenancy. A transfer fee of \$150 is payable under this scheme.

I am pleased to announce that recently I approved a reduction to 6 months for the period of satisfactory tenancy which governs eligibility in this scheme. The scheme enables eligible tenants to nominate house style and location. The commission makes every attempt to respond to the applicant's preferences. The transfer within entitlement also operates within the constraints of available housing stock. The scheme restricts transfer applicants to one choice of housing. While the commission does make every effort to be responsive to applicant's preferences, its prime concern is to accommodate applicants as quickly as possible. I think it might be worth adding that I recently approved a scheme whereby a choice of 2 houses can be made in Palmerston where, obviously, the number of houses available allows for greater flexibility in relation to allocation.

Alice Springs Sheraton Proposals

Mr B. COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Will the arrangements that must be put in place before 14 September when the purchase must take place involve the use of Northern Territory Treasury funds?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the point that I made to the honourable Leader of the Opposition a moment ago was that there are a range of options being considered. None of them at this stage has been shown to have an advantage or disadvantage over the others. That is what is being investigated. When the answers to that are clear, the government will make decisions on how the refinancing of the projects should go ahead. Upon that basis, we will proceed. But we are not going to be hustled into affirmations or denials of certain courses of action purely to suit the political motives of the Leader of the Opposition who really wants to spend another couple of weeks tearing the Northern Territory's heart out.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on notice.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from putting a number of further questions to the government.

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