

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 24 November 1987
Wednesday 25 November 1987
Thursday 26 November 1987

Part I - Debates
Part II - Questions
Part III - Minutes

NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Fifth Assembly
First Session**

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Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
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Minister for Conservation	
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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 24 November 1987

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10.30 am.

STATEMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, unfortunately, the console which controls the microphone system for Hansard is out of order. Technicians are working on the board at the moment and it is hoped that the microphones will be back in use as soon as possible. In the meantime, I ask that all members who wish to speak come to the microphones by the dispatch boxes on the Table. A temporary arrangement has been made for these to operate.

PETITIONS

Recreation Lake at Emily Creek Site

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 940 citizens of Alice Springs praying that the Legislative Assembly ensure the development of a recreation lake at the Emily Creek site, Alice Springs. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of Alice Springs respectfully sheweth that: (1) there is no recreation lake in Alice Springs or its immediate surroundings; (2) the honourable Minister for Lands and Housing, Hon R.A. Hanrahan, stated in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday 9 June 1987 that the plans for the development of Undoolya included the construction of a recreation lake as a part of the proposed development; and (3) that the minister further stated that, although the government is desirous of seeing a recreation lake built in Alice Springs ultimately, certainly at this point in time, it would be unwise to commit that amount of money for that purpose. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the members of the Legislative Assembly take all necessary action to ensure that the development of the recreational lake at the Emily Creek site be proceeded with as part of the initial development of the project to provide the citizens of Alice Springs with an urgently needed recreational facility, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Recreation Lake for Alice Springs

Mr POOLE (Araluen)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 517 citizens of Alice Springs relating to the building of a recreation lake for Alice Springs. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I do not intend to move that the petition be read.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Sanderson

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted

to Hon Daryl Manzie, Minister for Education and Attorney-General, for today as he is attending a conference in Perth.

Leave granted.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that, on the next sitting day, I shall move that:

(1) the Minister for Health and Community Services be censured by this Assembly for -

(a) failing to realise that the proposal to establish a private hospital within the Royal Darwin Hospital raised issues which needed to be resolved at ministerial level;

(b) placing at risk the continued provision of high standard health facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital; and

(c) failing to undertake negotiations with the Commonwealth government which would ensure a smooth start to the Darwin Private Hospital; and

(2) this Assembly call upon the Minister for Health and Community Services to resign forthwith.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, this motion is accepted as a motion of censure. The normal rules of debate will apply with 2 speakers from each side of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I ask that all questions for this day be placed on the Question Paper.

Mr TUXWORTH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of Government Business indicated that there would be 2 speakers from each side of the Assembly on this particular motion in accordance with the normal rules of debate. I would like that point clarified before the debate starts.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, it has long been said in this House that convention is thrown out the window occasionally and, at times, the member for Barkly has proved that point. From this side of the House, we have stated repeatedly that, unless otherwise agreed with the Leader of the Opposition, we would hold to the convention that has operated in this House for several years that, when a censure motion is moved, there will be 2 speakers from each side. The government considers that the members opposite constitute the opposition and it is our intention, unless requested otherwise by the Leader of the Opposition, to adhere to the convention that has applied in this House.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I accept that those rules of debate apply to matters of public importance. The Leader of Government Business moved earlier this year to apply similar rules to censure motions. That did not receive a very favourable reception as I recall and the matter was shunted off to a committee to be reviewed. In the meantime, I would argue that the existing rules governing the number of speakers on a censure motion ought to apply. Anyone who wishes to speak should be allowed to do so unless there is a particular reason for reducing it to 2 speakers per side.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there is no convention in this House governing the number of speakers on censure motions. There have been a large number of debates on censure motions where there have been more than 2 speakers on each side. There is no agreement between the government and the opposition on the number of speakers in a debate on a censure motion. If the government wants to gag debate on a censure motion, it can do so but it should not try to involve us in that matter because there is no convention and there is no agreement.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I find it amazing that this debate has erupted. For years, there has been an understanding between the opposition and the government that, in a debate on a censure motion, there will be 2 speakers on each side with the mover of the motion having the right of reply. There have been only 2 occasions when that has been varied and that occurred following discussions between the government and opposition whips. In those cases, additional speakers were permitted. That has occurred during the course of this year, Mr Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to drag out debates to fill in time in an attempt to justify his nonsensical statements in the press last week. He knows very well that there is very little business on the Notice Paper which has to be dealt with during these sittings. He is merely trying to waste the time of this House with nonsensical motions such as this one so that he can argue that we are sitting late. If we sit late, it will be only because the Leader of the Opposition has tried to beat up stories to waste the time of the House.

We know, as the Opposition Leader knows, that he intended to raise this subject for discussion as a matter of public importance. The opposition could not get its act together and have the MPI in by 8 o'clock so it converted it into a censure motion. If the opposition wants to waste the time of the House through this mechanism, so be it. If the opposition wants to fill out the day by talking about this crazy motion, so be it, but it does so with a very clear recognition that it is going against a long-standing understanding between the opposition and the government. We know that the Leader of the Opposition pays scant attention to the procedures and conventions of this House. But, do not let him confuse the argument or pretend to anybody that he is doing other than trying to change the long-standing conventions of this House. If he wants to break the cooperative arrangements on these sorts of matters in this House, let it be on his head.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I can understand the Chief Minister's difficulty in comprehending what this debate is about because, whilst he spoke long and hard on the conventions that have operated in this House, he simply would not know. He has only been in the House for 10 minutes. It is a fact that I was the opposition whip for 7 years in this House. It is a fact that, on a number of occasions, the government and opposition whips came to arrangements in respect of the number of speakers. There is nothing abnormal about that. However, to describe that as a convention that there will be only 4 speakers on a censure motion is absolutely ludicrous. There has been no convention in this House on the number of speakers to a censure motion. On a number of occasions, arrangements may have been reached between the government and the opposition which involved the number of speakers on a censure motion, but there has been no agreement reached, as I understand it, on this debate today. If this debate is cut short, it will be because the government brings down the guillotine, and that is within its power. However, to say that the use of the guillotine will result from the breaking of some convention is absolute nonsense. Mr Speaker, I ask for your ruling on whether standing

orders allow for more than 4 speakers on this matter. If standing orders allow for more than 4 speakers on a motion of censure, I am afraid the government will have to use the guillotine.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Limitation on the number of speakers on a censure motion will have to follow a motion from the floor of the House.

CENSURE MOTION
Minister for Health and Community Services

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that:

(1) the Minister for Health and Community Services be censured by this Assembly for -

(a) failing to realise that the proposal to establish a private hospital within the Royal Darwin Hospital raised issues which needed to be resolved at ministerial level;

(b) placing at risk the continued provision of high standard health services at the Royal Darwin Hospital; and

(c) failing to undertake negotiations with the Commonwealth government which would ensure a smooth start to the Darwin Private Hospital; and

(2) this Assembly call upon the Minister for Health and Community Services to resign forthwith.

Mr Speaker, last night on the Channel 8 news, there was a report of a proposition that was supposed to be put to Cabinet to create an office of good news within the Northern Territory government. I thought it was a singularly appropriate proposition. We would have 1 minister for good news and the other 7 ministers would carry the bad news. That is about the proper balance at present in the operations of this government.

Quite clearly, in respect of this particular issue, the Minister for Health and Community Services is a minister for bad news. Through his bungling, he has put the private hospital in jeopardy. 'Bungling' is probably an inappropriate word because it is not strong enough. 'Incompetent' is a better word to describe the performance of the Minister for Health and Community Services in this particular matter. Unfortunately, incompetence of this type is endemic in this government. I am not surprised that it cannot find 1 minister for good news.

This government is unbusinesslike and greedy. It is the cause of the Northern Territory's poor commercial image. I will not list yet again the comedy of errors which the Territory taxpayer has had to pay for as the grandiose schemes of this government have gone astray.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition is straying from the topic of the censure motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to relate his remarks to the motion before the House.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, people know the list by heart although it is getting a little too long to recite. This time, the bungling is serious indeed. It is not simply a few million dollars that has gone astray; it is not simply another grand idea gone up in smoke; it is not simply the embarrassment of an expensive court action which has been lost; it is an issue of far greater importance because it involves the health of Territory people. Through his inaction, the minister has put at risk the delivery of health services and health care. It is not simply money this time, but our health. Why has he done this? Why has he put in jeopardy not only the private hospital but also public hospital services? The only answer can be that he is incompetent. The Minister for Health and Community Services has failed in his ministerial responsibility by not recognising that there were significant issues involved that needed to be discussed at ministerial level in terms of the Darwin Private Hospital and, in doing so, he has placed health services in the Northern Territory at risk.

These issues are significant not only for the Territory but nationally. To illustrate this, let me read part of a press release from the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia which, as we all know, is an organisation of the voluntary health insurers. Obviously, it has an interest in having people in private hospitals and having people pay for private facilities. This is what it said yesterday:

The Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia has called on the federal government to maintain a tough line against the conversion of public hospital facilities to private hospitals. The Chief Executive, Russell Schneider, said moves to turn public facilities into allegedly private hospitals ran contrary to the spirit and concept of Medicare.

I remind members that the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia is saying this.

At a time when the public sector is undergoing considerable problems of queueing, it is outrageous for any state government to be turning public beds into private beds. This can be seen as nothing more than a device to prop up state coffers by ripping off insured patients. In the case of the Royal Darwin Hospital, the Northern Territory government has argued that its decision to allow development of a private hospital was based on the need for more beds but, by leasing a floor of Royal Darwin to a private company pending the development of a new 160-bed private hospital, the Northern Territory government was merely reducing the available public beds for no justifiable reason. In effect, public hospital bed availability had been reduced from about 350 beds to 274 beds.

Mr Schneider went on to say that on 12 November, at the Annual General Meeting of the VHIAA, the following resolutions were passed:

This meeting of VHIAA member funds expresses its concerns at recent moves by state and Territory governments to exploit patients carrying private health insurance. Secondly, this meeting expresses its particular alarm at moves to declare sections of public hospitals as private hospitals for benefit purposes. Such moves run contrary to the interests of persons contributing to health insurance and are also contrary to the 'universal' concept of Medicare. Thirdly, these arrangements can only be seen as rorts on the community and do nothing to reduce health care costs.

Mr Speaker, I say again that these statements come from the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia. I read that statement out, not because I necessarily agree with all of it, but because it points out very clearly that the issues involved not only have Northern Territory relevance but national relevance. They concern people outside the Territory in the voluntary health insurance business in other states. This has widespread application and interest.

As I have said, these are very strong words. If the bells had not tolled for the minister before the motion was passed on 12 November, they should have tolled for the minister then. But, the minister's incompetence is shown by his not taking up until yesterday the issues, amongst others, raised there. This is where this government always comes unstuck. It does not follow procedures and it does not observe accepted protocol. It does not do its homework. It simply blunders in at breakneck speed and then blames the poor old public servants when its schemes fall apart.

Mr Speaker, consider for a moment the proprieties involved in establishing our first private hospital in this unique situation of being within an existing public hospital. The now Minister for Tourism acknowledged last year, when he was Minister for Health, that there would be a need for a licence from Canberra for a private hospital, and no one disputed that. That was for a new hospital with extra capacity. However, the present minister chose to reduce the number of beds available in the public hospital and to reduce services to the public hospital in order to obtain his private hospital.

The minister should have known that this would vary the basis for our federal funding and that this would require negotiations with his federal counterpart. By his own admission on the 7.30 Report last night, the first conversation he had with Dr Blewett was yesterday afternoon at Dr Blewett's request. I am sure that this was only because he found himself in some trouble with the community and his Cabinet colleagues.

Now that Dr Blewett has been advised of the government's intentions, he has raised some perfectly reasonable concerns with the minister. Those are concerns that the minister himself has recognised as being reasonable. They are concerns that the minister believes that he can iron out. The point of this censure motion is that they should have been ironed out weeks ago, not days after the private hospital has been put in place.

The concerns of Dr Blewett include the following: the extent of disorganisation of the existing hospital caused by the loss of 1 floor; the continued access to free public hospital treatment; whether there is an agreement between the operators of the new hospital and the government to direct privately insured patients to the private hospital; the cost of health care insurance in the Northern Territory as a result of this privatisation; the social implications of varying standards of treatment being provided by 2 organisations within the 1 building; the ability of the public hospital to provide specialist services; the lack of consultation; the haste and necessity for this takeover of wards and facilities; and, lastly, the funding implications. Those are the issues the honourable member should have addressed weeks ago. Many of the issues have been addressed by the shadow minister for health in the last fortnight.

For example, on 10 November, he said that the granting of the third floor of the Royal Darwin Hospital to a private concern would put the squeeze on public patients and staff, and I will come back to that. On 11 November, he

made another statement expressing similar concerns. On 12 November, he called on the government to ensure that the proposed Darwin Private Hospital would be run on a private enterprise basis and that takeover would not endanger patient access to the hospital. I will quote him: 'It appears that families are going to be pressured into taking expensive private care because public facilities are being cut'. I will come back to that in a minute too. He made a statement in that press release which comes to the nub of what this debate is about: 'If people think they can make a go of a private hospital, then they are welcome to have a go, but not in a way that hurts families seeking basic public health care'.

That is the essence of our concern and it is the essence of the concern expressed by the federal Minister for Health once he was made aware of the proposal. Some of the elements of our concern are: whether privately insured patients are being forced into the private hospital; the loss of maternity beds in the Royal Darwin Hospital, and whether that is a device to force people into the private hospital; the possible squeeze on specialists; the postponement of elective surgery; and even simple matters such as the orthopaedic section being moved up 3 floors. On 18 November, the shadow minister said that Territorians seeking a bed at the Royal Darwin Hospital were being referred to the private hospital against their wishes - and I will come to that in a minute too.

The first issue that Dr Blewett raised is the disorganisation of the hospital. It is worse than disorganisation, it is chaos. It is almost a case of musical beds out there: if you haven't found a bed when the music stops, you are asked to leave. That is how bad the situation has become. I have a circular issued by the Director of Nursing which outlines some of the changes that have had to occur because of the Darwin Private Hospital commencing operations on the third floor, and I will read out the highlights of the timetable as they are expressed in this circular:

Wednesday 28 October: limit elective surgery to 1 major and 2 minor cases per surgeon.

Monday 2 November: admit day surgery to ward 3B (not 5B).

Tuesday 3 November: transfer midwifery patients from ward 6A to ward 5B, 22 beds; establish a midwifery overflow annexe in ward 7A, up to 10 beds; continue use of ward 6B for midwifery patients, 14 beds; control elective admissions to ward 7A.

Wednesday 4 November: suspend all elective surgery including day surgery.

Thursday 5 November: transfer orthopaedic patients from ward 3A to ward 6A, 32 beds.

Friday 6 November: hand over ward 3A to the Darwin Private Hospital.

Monday 9 November: relocate ward 3B patients to wards 2A and 2B, gynaecological patients to ward 2B; recommence day surgery in ward 2A, beds permitting.

Wednesday 11 November: hand over ward 3B to the Darwin Private Hospital; when Darwin Private Hospital commences accepting midwifery patients, close ward 6B and midwifery overflow annexe in ward 7A.

Mr Speaker, if you were unfortunate enough to be a patient in the Royal Darwin Hospital during that particular exercise, you were likely to add dizziness to the complaint that you were suffering from. What are the results of that merry-go-round that has taken place in the Royal Darwin Hospital? We have had the outrageous situation of the maternity ward being relocated adjacent to the psychiatric ward. The obstetric unit has been distributed throughout the hospital. Antenatal beds now adjoin infectious children's beds and premature babies have been segregated from their mothers. In other areas of the hospital, equally inappropriate action has occurred, and I quote from a letter in the NT News yesterday: 'How would you like to wake up in the children's ward after a vasectomy or having just had a pregnancy terminated?'.

Mr Dale: You couldn't have had both, though.

Mr SMITH: That just adds to your reputation. That is one thing I admire about you: you are very determined to gain a reputation that no one else in the world would possibly want to have.

Mr Speaker, instances have been reported to me involving people arriving at the hospital for surgery. In one case, a child was told to go home - in contrast to the honourable minister who said publicly that his elective surgery had been deferred, but that he had known that for several days in advance - this child had to go into hospital for surgery and had not eaten since midnight. The parents had taken time off without pay to take the child to hospital and, when they arrived at the door, they were told to go home because there were no beds and no operating theatre was available. What sort of public hospital system are we operating in the Northern Territory when that sort of incident can occur?

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mr SMITH: That is right: it has not happened in the Northern Territory before. Are you trying to drag us down to the standards of the rest of Australia? That is an indictment as well.

Mr Speaker, there has been considerable disorganisation and disruption. Hardship and suffering have been caused by the closure of wards and operating theatres. In the face of all of that, can the Northern Territory government guarantee unrestricted access to free public hospital treatment for the 50% of the Territory population who are uninsured and, if so, will it be at the expense of private patients who will be encouraged to go to the private hospital - and how will they be encouraged? The Royal Darwin Hospital, with its full complement of beds, before this recent 20% reduction, had an 80% occupancy. It is now anticipated that the rate will rise to over 90% which, by normal hospital standards, is an unacceptably high rate. The minister's attitude on this particular question has been, at best, equivocal.

The question is: what role do private patients play in the Royal Darwin Hospital? He said on radio yesterday: 'I have given undertakings all along that, in fact, patients would not be forced from the Royal Darwin Hospital into the private system'. Mr Speaker, that is not true. Last week, people making telephone calls to the Royal Darwin Hospital, inquiring about privately insured patient admission to the Royal Darwin Hospital, were referred to the private hospital number. Presumably, the staff at the hospital were following the minister's statement in this House on 29 October when he said: 'It is expected that most people who are privately insured will use the Darwin Private Hospital. They will certainly be encouraged by the Royal Darwin Hospital to do so'. Last week, that encouragement extended so far that they were not even informed that they had an option.

In the light of that information, the federal minister wants to know, quite legitimately, the exact nature of the relationship entered into by the government and the private hospital on this question of private patients. Whatever the case, hospital employees have regarded themselves as a referral agency for the new private enterprise hospital. Apart from the ethics of such an arrangement, there are insurance gap problems too. Even if people are insured at the top of the range, it will cost them money. The private hospital has some of the highest rates in the country. The effect will be to increase the cost of health insurance which will further add to the cost of living in the Northern Territory, particularly if private patients are forced into the private hospital.

The federal minister has legitimate concerns about the health insurance rates, both in particular instances and for their potential flow-on effects. The Northern Territory minister failed to recognise those concerns and initiate discussions on them. It is only now that he is prepared to address that matter, along with the other matters raised by the federal minister.

Mr Hatton: If the federal minister had concerns, why didn't he raise them?

Mr SMITH: He did not raise them because he was not advised by the Minister for Health and Community Services in the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: His department was advised on 2 September.

Mr SMITH: There is no point in blaming Commonwealth or Northern Territory public servants.

Mr Hatton: What about revoking the delegation?

Mr SMITH: If you want to speak, you can speak later.

The federal minister has pointed to the social inequities that may be all too apparent where both a top-of-the-range private hospital and a public hospital operate under the same roof. This will be best evidenced by the availability of specialists. The implications are clear. If there are too few private patients at Royal Darwin Hospital or specialists have their access to facilities limited, then both private patients and specialists will be forced to move to the private hospital. If this happens, it will disadvantage public patients by reducing the number of specialist services available and will further force privately insured patients into the private hospital. The only consolation offered by the minister, in reply to a question, is that the private hospital fully intends to attract specialists in a range of fields to Darwin.

To reiterate those concerns, I refer to a question and answer in question time on 29 October 1987. The question was asked by the member for Karama. He asked: 'Will patients at the Darwin Private Hospital still have access to specialist services at the Royal Darwin Hospital following the opening of the private hospital?' Replying to the question, the minister said:

Mr Speaker, there are contractual employment arrangements which apply to specialists in the Darwin area. Firstly, there are the private specialists who make their own arrangements. They work now in the Royal Darwin Hospital on a sessional contract basis. I expect they will be negotiating with the private hospital for visiting rights. I understand that that process is well under way. The majority of

specialists at the Royal Darwin Hospital who are employed by the department have a contract of service which allows them to practice privately to a limited extent. Those specialists will be able to make such private arrangements as their contracts allow.

For diagnostic services, in particular radiology and pathology, salaried specialists will be able to use their 35% rights for private practice to provide those services to the Darwin Private Hospital patients.

The reason I read that in such detail is that the question refers to the provision of specialist services at the Royal Darwin Hospital whereas the answer refers to measures which make it easier for specialists to provide services to the private hospital. If that is not a sign of the approach of the Minister for Health and Community Services and how he believes the situation will develop when the private hospital is operating, I do not know what is.

I share the federal minister's concern about the haste with which these arrangements have been undertaken. I question the motive behind this extraordinary occurrence and the disruption it has caused. I must ask what sort of arrangements and leases were entered into. Are we so desperate for the \$200 000 a month we are apparently to receive that we had to make these unprecedented moves? I call on the minister, when he sends a copy of the agreement between the government and the private hospital to the federal minister, to table a copy in this House.

The federal minister has also referred to concerns about our federal funding. Given that Medicare funding is provided partially on a beds basis, one cannot expect the federal government to sit by when 20% of the bed capacity of the Royal Darwin Hospital is taken away. Clearly, there are serious implications for the current federal Territory Medicare agreement. Unfortunately, the minister was too thick to even see that. Apparently, he seriously expected his present level of Medicare funding from the Commonwealth to continue even though he had handed over 20% of his bed capacity to private enterprise. It boggles the imagination that he expected that he could get away with that.

I pity the poor private hospital which has been the meat in the sandwich in this unpleasant exercise. Unfortunately, it is only 1 of a large number of firms and companies that, over the past few years, have been the meat in the sandwich. After assessing the market and determining the need, the private hospital people applied in good faith to construct a hospital. Later, they were urged by the government to take over 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital. When they had done the work and had prepared to open, they found that the minister had failed to take the first basic step. He had failed to advise his federal counterpart of what is a first for Australia and he failed to put in train a process that would have enabled him to talk to his federal counterpart about the problems that had been identified before the private hospital was established. The smooth start to operations that the private hospital had wanted had been thrown away by the incompetence of the minister. What we have is a monumental failure of the minister to do his job properly. He has indicated that he will be able to satisfy the concerns of the federal government. The point of this debate is that these issues should have been raised by the minister with his federal counterpart weeks ago and the concerns ironed out then, not days after the private hospital had opened for business.

disrupted, wards have been placed in inappropriate positions, elective surgery has been cancelled and there are concerns about access to specialists. Private patient have been told, and perhaps are still being told, that they are not wanted in the Royal Darwin Hospital. This matter has been handled in an appalling way by the Minister for Health and Community Services. What should have been a positive step forward for the provision of health services in the Northern Territory has turned out to be something a little short of a disaster for the simple reason that the honourable minister did not do his homework and did not address the concerns that have now been raised by the federal minister.

Mr Speaker, this issue is simple. The Minister for Health and Community Services, in putting together this proposition which is a first for Australia, should have had the wit and the ability to realise that there were implications that demanded discussions at a ministerial level. That is a view expressed by the federal Minister for Community Services and Health. Quite clearly, in terms of the interest taken in this matter by the Voluntary Health Insurance Association and others, that is a view that is commonly shared. There are national implications in the decisions that have been taken by the Northern Territory government, yet the Minister for Health and Community Services did not take the necessary first step in sorting those problems out. That first step was to consult with the federal Minister for Community Services and Health. Put simply, that is the reason why we are in the situation we are in today where patients at the private hospital do not know what the situation is and where the private hospital has no guarantee of its continued existence. This has occurred because the Minister for Health and Community Services did not do his homework and, on those grounds, he should resign immediately.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I have 30 minutes of the Assembly's time in which to address a matter that the opposition has seen fit to raise as a censure motion. As the Chief Minister mentioned earlier, the opposition intended to raise this as a matter of public importance. Apparently, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not get out of bed in time and the opposition lost its paperwork. By introducing this censure motion, members opposite have prevented themselves and the independent members from asking relevant questions of the ministers of this government on a number of issues relating to this matter.

Mr Speaker, it is quite amazing that, all of a sudden, the opposition has come out of the woodwork on this subject at the eleventh hour or, as I said the other night, at the eleventh and a half hour. The Leader of the Opposition has amazed me once again by being the spokesman on a subject that is obviously a health and community services matter. I wonder whether or not we have only a token spokesman on the opposition benches on this particular matter. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition is wound up by his Canberra mates and is obligated to run hard and fast on any issue that they put to him.

Mr Speaker, I have not been approached by the opposition spokesman on health and community services on this matter. He has not requested a briefing on the private hospital itself nor on the privatisation of the 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital. In the midst of a lot of drivel, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the fact that the federal government had no idea what was occurring and that it would have national implications because it is a first. Let me read from a document that I have had handed to me. It relates to the Royal Australian Nurses Federation Annual Federal Council meeting.

Assistant Federal Secretary for the RANF, Jill Kennedy, addressed the council on the reduced number of public hospital beds in Victoria and the Northern Territory as a result of government deals with the private sector. These include the contracting out to private enterprise of 100 beds in the Monash Medical Centre, Victoria, with an option to buy the entire centre after the expiry of a 15-year leasing period.

Thus, it is not the first.

Let me also advise the Leader of the Opposition that privatisation of wards within a hospital has occurred at the Calvary Hospital in Canberra, in the backyard of the federal minister.

Mr Smith: Since when has Calvary Hospital been a public hospital?

Mr DALE: You had better check, because it is. Wards have been privatised there and the people who were managing the hospital are now managing the private section in a private capacity. This has also occurred at a hospital in Moorabbin, Victoria. I do not know whether the federal minister, Dr Blewett, had any problems in those negotiations. Perhaps they involved a socialist approach to privatisation which probably would not have concerned him.

Mr Speaker, let me put some rhyme, reason and common sense into this debate by referring to what has actually occurred with the privatisation of 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital. First of all, you would understand that the federal government cuts to the Territory required a cut of some \$5m in the budget for my portfolio of Health and Community Services. I told this House many times, and stated many times publicly, that every possible option for cutbacks was being considered. You will recall that there was a great deal of scaremongering by the opposition and the ALP throughout the Northern Territory. The Katherine region was a classic example.

The Royal Darwin Hospital costs approximately \$6m per year to run. Obviously, I had to look closely at it. One of the options was simply to close 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital. That would have reduced the beds available both to the public and private sectors in the Northern Territory. Nurses would have been retrenched. Obviously, there would have been a reduction in the availability of beds to patients throughout the Northern Territory, in particular in the Darwin area. I did not choose that easy option. I looked further. I looked at how I could make savings for the Northern Territory government and my department in particular whilst, at the same time, keeping the same bed numbers or, if possible, increasing the bed numbers. I negotiated with the entrepreneurs who are building the first private hospital in the Northern Territory. They were delighted to take the opportunity to privatise the 2 wards and to give themselves a lead time prior to the opening of their hospital in August 1988. It was a pretty obvious step to take. We conducted the negotiations and arrived at a situation where both parties were happy to agree to the procedures.

The privatisation of the 2 wards offered the opportunity for effective savings, the maintenance of the existing total number of beds and the provision of an early private hospital option for the 40% of Territorians who have private medical insurance cover. The Leader of the Opposition has stated that the options for people in the Northern Territory have been reduced. Quite clearly, that is wrong. 40% of Territorians have private cover and are therefore entitled, in my view, to receive the benefits of that private cover.

The decision was announced, together with all the budget reductions, on 20 July 1987. The opposition and everybody else knew about it.

During August, there was officer-level contact between the NT Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Community Services and Health in Canberra to determine what the attitude of the Commonwealth might be. We sought out its attitude at that time. At the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Medicare Standing Committee meeting in late August, the budget reductions list was placed on the table for discussion. The Commonwealth did not object to what we were doing.

Negotiations with the Darwin Private Hospital proceeded through August and September. On 24 September, the Darwin Private Hospital applied for a licence. It provided notice of that application to Canberra. The leasing agreement with the Darwin Private Hospital was signed on 2 November 1987. On 3 November 1987, the Chief Medical Officer formally advised the Commonwealth and requested that the necessary declaration by the federal minister be made under the Health Insurance Act. In our view, it was appropriate that the matter be handled at officer level. There was nothing remarkable about this particular negotiation.

On 18 November, the federal Department of Community Services and Health asked for a commitment that access to the public hospital would not be restricted. That was given, not in a week or a month but on the very next day. Dr Blewett's most senior staff have had that information since 19 November 1987. On Friday afternoon last, we discovered that Dr Blewett still had some difficulties. I think I know where his difficulties lie. We received formal notice of those at 6.30 pm on 23 November - that is, last night. I telephoned Dr Blewett yesterday afternoon and asked him about his concerns after a Dorothy Dixer was asked in the federal parliament by the member for the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: He was doing his job.

Mr DALE: Of course he was doing his job - as required by his bosses in Canberra. We all know that. Finally, the penny dropped.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about how this government persists in negotiating with private enterprise and how we do deals for the betterment of the Northern Territory and its people. He was right. We do that and we do not apologise for it. I must point out, however, the consistency with which members of this opposition and ALP members from the Northern Territory in the federal parliament represent their federal colleagues and make excuses for them in the Northern Territory. The people of the Northern Territory must take note of all of these issues that they continue to raise and their negative attitude towards the development of and the provision of services to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I would like to read into Hansard the actual document that was sent to me by Hon Neal Blewett so there cannot be any misinterpretation of what he has asked for. It reads:

Dear Mr Dale,

In confirmation of our telephone conversation today, I set out below the concerns that the federal government has in respect of the transfer of beds and operating theatre capacity from the Royal Darwin Hospital to Health and Life Care's Darwin Private Hospital.

Our concerns relate principally to the questions of access to public hospital facilities which is one of the cornerstones of the Medicare agreements. It would therefore assist me in considering these issues if you could provide guarantees on the following:

- that your government will continue to ensure free and unfettered access to persons seeking admission to Royal Darwin Hospital either as public or private patients;
- that beds, operating theatre sessions and hospital care will continue to be made available to cater for this level of demand;
- that waiting times will not be generated for persons seeking admission to Royal Darwin Hospital as a result of transfer of facilities and capacities to Darwin Private Hospital;
- that your government agrees to enter into meaningful negotiation on adjustment to the national inpatient fee component of the Medicare grant to reflect assessed and actual reductions in private patient volumes in Royal Darwin Hospital brought about as a result of free and voluntary decisions by persons to enter Darwin Private Hospital;
- that the agreement between your government and Health and Life Care of DPH, as appropriate, be made available to the federal government;
- that any necessary amendments to that agreement to reflect the federal government's concerns be agreed by both your government and Health and Life Care or DPH; and
- that you advise the federal government of your government's intentions in respect of the transferred facilities and capacities once Health and Life Care opens its proposed freestanding facilities.

In order to monitor the proposed arrangements, I understand your department would be prepared to provide regular statistics showing, for example, breakdowns of admissions to Royal Darwin Hospital and Darwin Private Hospital - classified as public, basic private and top table - breakdowns of theatre usage in both hospitals by patients insurance status, and waiting times and comparative statistics for the 6-month period to 22 November 1987.

The last paragraph reads:

If I can have satisfactory guarantees and provision of advice on the above aspects, and your agreement to the entering of early negotiations on those matters that cannot be fully resolved immediately, I will be prepared to agree immediately to the declaration of Darwin Private Hospital under section 23A of the Health Insurance Act for the purpose of basic table health insurance benefits.

Yours sincerely,
Neal Blewett.

I want people to remember that last paragraph.

Mr Smith: If only you had talked to him before, there would not have been a problem.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, we certainly will have responded within 24 hours to the request for those requirements. I received the request at 6.30 last night. The response will be sent this morning from me to Hon Neal Blewett. I will read it:

My dear Minister,

I refer to your letter of 23 November 1987 regarding your concerns about the transfer of beds and operating theatre capacity from Royal Darwin Hospital to the Darwin Private Hospital Pty Ltd. I would now like to reply to each of your concerns specifically.

1. The government of the Northern Territory does not intend that access to any person seeking admission to Royal Darwin Hospital as either a public or private patient will be curtailed in any way. Free and unfettered access to Royal Darwin Hospital will continue to be assured to all Territorians and visitors.

2. Beds, operating theatre sessions and hospital care will continue to be available to meet the expected level of demand for both public and private patients in the Northern Territory.

3. The Northern Territory currently has the lowest waiting time of any hospital system in Australia and we do not expect that this will increase. This will, of course, depend on levels of demand and I can assure you that the current number of beds available plus arrangements which can be activated is sufficient to meet the current level of demand.

4. The Northern Territory government agrees to enter into negotiations concerning the Medicare agreement as requested in your letter.

5. The government of the Northern Territory has this morning provided your officers with a copy of the agreement between the Northern Territory of Australia and the Darwin Private Hospital Pty Ltd.

6. I would be prepared to enter into discussions with Darwin Private Hospital concerning any changes to the agreement on receipt of further advice from you as to whether there are any matters not satisfactorily resolved by this letter. Any changes would have to be agreed to by DPH.

7. The arrangement with DPH is to continue until the opening of the Darwin Private Hospital in its new premises which is expected in August 1988. At that time, all conditions and undertakings of the agreement between the parties will cease. A decision on the reopening of the 2 wards currently leased to DPH will depend on the level of demand for beds at the time and the need to make satisfactory arrangements within Royal Darwin Hospital while the fire safety upgrading program is carried out. I must stress that, when the DPH opens in its new premises, the number of hospital beds available in the Territory will increase.

With regard to the provision of statistics, my officers can provide any that are required relating to RDH. Statistics for Darwin Private Hospital usage would need to be provided by Darwin Private Hospital. I trust that this has resolved your concerns and that you will immediately declare Darwin Private Hospital under the Health Insurance Act so that Territorians will not be denied freedom of choice in access to private care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope I can now say: end of story. The Leader of the Opposition touched on the Medicare agreement. The Medicare agreement started in February 1984 and was to terminate in June 1987. It is based on an extremely complicated formula. At the time of the negotiations, I am informed that the basis of the agreement was for 296 beds. That is how the present agreement was basically negotiated. Mr Deputy Speaker, guess how many beds we have now at the Royal Darwin Hospital, not counting the privatised wards? Two hundred and ninety six.

Mr Smith: You have stuck them in the corridors as well, have you?

Mr DALE: Before I privatised the 2 wards, we had 360 beds. Take out the 64 beds that we have privatised and set them aside for a moment. If I need to, in addition to those 64 beds, I can find 395. There is absolutely no shortage of bed space at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia conspiracy. Perhaps I should not use the word 'conspiracy'. A press release was made 2 days ago. How ironical! It talks about all the fire and brimstone. It does not talk about what happened at Calvary in Canberra. It does not talk about the Moorabbin Hospital. I wonder why not? It seems simply to be opposed to private hospitals. It really causes me trouble and irks me to think of the hypocrisy of some of the people who represent the socialist point of view in Australia.

There is a television advert being aired in Victoria and New South Wales at the moment. It is an advertisement for a type of crisis line for people who are on the waiting lists at the various public hospitals down south. It says: 'If you are concerned, ring us up. If you think you have been waiting too long, ring us up and we will tell you when you will be going into hospital'.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier, and I suppose it is rather difficult for some people to understand and it is rather cruel when you do put the words together, but there are many thousand of elderly people throughout Australia who never suffer the pain of an operation because they die before they can get to the operating theatre. There are some 90 000 people in Victoria and New South Wales on a waiting list for elective surgery in the public hospital systems. The private hospitals in stand-alone buildings there have occupancy levels of something like 30%. If the federal government and some of the state Premiers and their various Cabinets had the intestinal fortitude to face their responsibilities and take a leaf out of the book of the Northern Territory, some of those people might have the satisfaction of having their hip joint replaced or whatever other elective surgery they need to have before they simply die.

Mr Smith: You say private hospitals have 30% occupancy and you want to give them space in public hospitals - what are you talking about?

Mr DALE: You don't understand, do you? Mr Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is that 40% of Northern Territorians are privately insured. We can provide private space for them to obtain the service they are paying for. In the Royal Darwin Hospital, there are no private facilities as such. I will refer to the obstetric ward in the Northern Territory. Does the Leader of the Opposition realise that many of the Aboriginal women who come into the public hospital do not feel comfortable with some of the people with whom they are required to share the ward? They feel very uncomfortable because of their cultural background and the fact that people of other lifestyles are around them. The privatisation of the 2 wards of the Royal Darwin Hospital will give all people the opportunity to choose the facilities and the circumstance under which they are treated in hospital.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am extremely confident that the privatisation of the 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital will increase the quality of health services to all people of the Northern Territory. I do not have time to go into all the matters that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about. Suffice it to say that 95% of what he said was simply inaccurate. The moiety that he was concerned about, the gap between the charges and what will be paid by the various insurance companies, will be reduced to about \$10, and that is what is accepted right throughout Australia anyway. It is true that there has been some disruption to the operations of the Royal Darwin Hospital because the logistics of what has taken place over the last couple of months have certainly been difficult. I thank and congratulate all those members of the Royal Darwin Hospital staff who, in a very professional and dedicated way, have applied themselves to the privatisation and all the problems that were able to be foreseen for a couple of months. However, some others, who have close associations with the members opposite and certainly have close associations with the honourable Mr Snowden, have seen fit to get together with Hon Neal Blewett and try to cause some disruption to the implementation of the privatisation of the 2 wards.

I make no apology to the members of this House or the public of the Northern Territory that, once again, we have shown innovation in what we do in managing the affairs of the Northern Territory. It has sat the federal minister and some of his Labor party colleagues fair on their pants because he has not had the intestinal fortitude to implement a similar proposition in some of the areas that he should down south. We do not have some 90 000 people on a waiting list for 12 to 18 months before they can get into hospitals. We have the best system so far as the availability of specialist operating theatres and beds-to-patients are concerned as compared to anywhere else in Australia. As far as I am concerned, this censure motion is only an indictment of the ability of the members opposite to come to terms with what this Northern Territory is all about. They raise opposition for opposition's sake, and that is probably where they will stay. By the way, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am asked to resign and I can assure the honourable members that, like all Northern Territorians, I am resigned to the fact that we have no opposition here and we certainly have no federal representation. I wonder where Senator Bob Collins stands on this subject? His silence is deafening in support of the Territory member for the House of Representatives.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition censuring the Minister for Health and Community Services in respect of his failure to realise that the proposal to establish a private hospital within the Royal Darwin Hospital raised issues that needed to be resolved at ministerial level.

At times, public servants do act on ministerial directions and I believe this has been the case when the Northern Territory government was considering privatising a hospital which was built initially for the public of the Northern Territory. It is that area which I would like to touch upon. This morning, we heard the Minister for Health and Community Services lash out at people involved in the federal Department of Community Services and Health, saying that there was no communication between that department and the Territory Department of Health and Community Services. I am sure that, on occasion at least, the minister takes advice from his ministerial advisers, the people involved in advising him on matters as important as private hospitals.

Not only has this minister placed the future of our private hospital in jeopardy, he has shaken the confidence of the community in the hospital also. It did not need to get off to a shaky start. Private enterprise knows how to conduct its business. I wonder if the minister does. I have no issue with the concept of private hospitals but I have concerns about the way in which this one has been launched. I want to ensure that Territorians are not disadvantaged.

We all know of the attitude of government ministers, quite often, to the 35% of people in the Northern Territory who are of my race, and we all know about the user-pays mentality of this government. We also know that only 50% of Territorians have health insurance cover and that, in many cases, that cover may be inadequate for treatment at this new and expensive private hospital. The minister has made sure that this issue is of real concern to people who want access to this new hospital. He made sure that there would be no benefits while he tried to sort out an agreement. I would have thought that this would have been one of the basic matters which would have been taken care of first with the federal Minister for Community Services and Health. We now find out what a bungle the department has made in its efforts to finalise the agreement which would otherwise have commenced smoothly in the interests of the better health of the people of the Northern Territory. If the government wanted its concept to succeed - and benefits are central to the care of private patients - that would have been the first and not the last matter attended to.

What of the 50% of the people who do not have insurance? What are their rights now? My concerns are the same as those of the federal minister. I raised them publicly and they have proven to be true. On 10 November, I pointed out to the minister that the conversion of the third floor of the hospital was putting the squeeze on public patients and staff. The dislocation and scattering of obstetric services has caused distress to patients and staff alike. The placing of mothers and babies next to the psychiatric ward is asking for trouble. Last year, I believe a nurse was attacked by a psychiatric patient. Now we have had an instance of a psychiatric patient interfering with newborn babies. This must be frightening to mothers who are caring for their babies next to the psychiatric ward. I am not convinced that security is adequate.

On 12 November, I called on the government to give assurances that public access would not be endangered by the takeover of the wards by the private hospital. We had a whole series of phone calls from people who had had their elective surgery cancelled. Surgeons were having their access to theatres to theatres limited and things generally were not too happy at the hospital. The federal Minister for Health, Dr Blewett, is now seeking the same assurances. I sought to ensure that no Territory family would be hurt by this push for private medical care.

On 18 November, we found that people inquiring about admission to the Royal Darwin Hospital as private patients were being referred to the private hospital. This was scandalous, especially as people were not fully covered for private hospital fees. One had to be very firm with the people in admissions to convince them that it was still possible to have private patients in the public hospital. This practice of referring patients to the private hospital has been raised specifically by the federal minister with the Minister for Health and Community Services.

On 11 November, I asked a series of questions of the Minister for Health and Community Services. I asked how people without private health insurance would meet their costs, what return or benefit the people of the Northern Territory would receive from the closure of the public hospital wards, what was the reason for the maternity shutdown at the hospital and what other security problems had occurred in the hospital psychiatric wing.

Mr Dale: When did you ask that?

Mr LANHUPUY: On 11 November. I sent a telex to the minister.

Mr Dale: Did you have the right address?

Mr LANHUPUY: Yes, I am sure I did. I also asked what would happen to public patients' access to surgery when the private hospital was given access to the public hospital's operating theatres. I now table those questions and ask the minister to answer them.

Relocating orthopaedic patients to an area that is not cyclone proof, at the onset of the wet season, does not make much sense. Typical of the problems at the hospital was the recent blackout. Clearly, the department should have checked all facilities to ensure ongoing health services to patients, whether they are private or public. The generators ought to have been checked, especially given the type of storms that occur here. I would have thought that this would have been an essential part of the operations of the hospital, especially when patients are on dialysis machines and life support systems. Are we to tolerate this for another 12 months? It would seem that we must.

The crucial aspect of this matter is that the minister did not even discuss the arrangements with the federal minister. It is unthinkable that a federal government would not have an interest in the public health services available to Australians in general and Territorians in particular. It is quite normal practice for members of this government to avoid, at all costs, discussing anything with federal ministers and the federal government. The Minister for Health and Community Services has promoted the concept of a private hospital. He has had the carriage of the project and it was his job to open discussions with Dr Blewett. It was his job to assure the federal government and the Northern Territory community that no one would be disadvantaged. It was up to him to anticipate these issues and the concerns which he professes to share. If he shares them, why didn't he avoid the crisis by talking to Canberra? All this fuss need not have happened. There is no excuse for his incompetence. It is elementary for a minister to talk to everyone who has an interest in a project, to canvass issues and concerns, to give assurances and find remedies. But, not this minister. He did not bother to talk to Dr Blewett until yesterday, after the private hospital had opened. The discussions with the federal minister should have occurred months ago.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Dr Blewett will now be watching our performance very closely. We will be wanting to ensure that the people of the Northern Territory are not disadvantaged. I said in a press release once that it is all right for this government to proceed to take over hotels and casinos in the Northern Territory, but a public facility such as the hospital is different when people's health and the safety of Territorians' lives are in danger and this government indicates that it intends to offer a few wards for sale.

We share the desire that the government has to give Territorians the best possible hospital system but this move to place a private hospital inside a public hospital is unusual, to say the least. Such a move cannot help but have effects. One serious effect is clear: the cost of health insurance in the Territory will certainly rise, and I quote from a statement issued by Dr Blewett this morning:

It needs to be realised that this decision could lead to significant health insurance cost increases along with a reduction in public hospital services. If people with basic private insurance, who want to be treated as private patients, are made to go over to a private hospital, as seemed to be the original intention, they will either face massive out-of-pocket costs or will have to pay for supplementary private insurance.

This is a concern that is also very forcefully expressed by the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia. The whole question of 'privatising' public hospital beds was deplored by the Annual General Meeting of the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia which unanimously passed the following motion:

This meeting of VHIAA member funds expresses its concern at the recent moves by the state and Territory governments to exploit patients carrying private health insurance. This meeting expresses its particular alarm at moves to declare sections of public hospitals as private hospitals for benefit purposes. Such moves run contrary to the interests of persons contributing to health insurance and also contrary to the 'universal' concept of Medicare. These arrangements can only be seen as rorts on the community and do nothing to reduce health care costs. Recent moves involving the use of public facilities for private purposes and profit should be stopped.

This enormous upward pressure on private insurance costs, both at basic and top-table levels, is of concern to governments around Australia - that is, all governments except, I believe, the government of the Northern Territory. If it were of concern to the government, the minister would have negotiated with his federal counterpart and consulted with the Voluntary Health Insurance Association and alerted the community to the possibility of increased premiums. By his inaction, this minister has demonstrated his inability to act responsibly and competently and his inability to deal with all the necessary components of implementing this initiative. He has put the federal government offside, the Territory public offside and, no doubt, the hospital's operations offside. The minister is now in a position where he has to give belated assurances to bail us out of this mess. I have no doubt that he will give those assurances but, for the Territory people, it is too late.

Once again, we have managed to prove to the rest of Australia that we are poor managers and that we cannot get anything right. The federal Minister for Community Services and Health has said that the federal government wants to

scrutinise the agreement with Health and Life Care and, if necessary, to have the agreement modified - and I am not surprised. Dr Blewett has already voiced his concern about the way in which this venture has been established and I quote from Territory Extra this morning. He said: 'I want to see the agreement itself because there have been indications that there are points in the agreement which are designed to ensure that people are encouraged into that private hospital'. I wonder how many Territorians are concerned about the type of agreements that we have with the private hospital. Dr Blewett continued: 'There are worries about that because private people, people who want private attention, will have to pay very much more for that private care in that private hospital. It is important to remember that a lot of Darwin people get treated as private patients already in the Darwin public hospital'.

The other extremely vexed question to come out of this controversy is that of our Commonwealth funding. We have the Medicare agreement with the federal government. This complex relationship that exists between all states and the federal government is the cornerstone of our system. The subsidy we receive from the federal government will now be renegotiated. However, the question now is when the minister should have begun these negotiations. It should have happened when the decision to proceed with the integrated structure was made. Dr Blewett made it quite clear in his statement that there will be reductions in our Medicare grant. Mr Deputy Speaker, the taxpayers will not subsidise private hospital patients through our health care levy.

The central issue in this whole fiasco is the guarantee of access to public hospital facilities, whether as private or public patients. Ongoing ready access to public health care must be assured. No wonder the federal minister has taken a stand on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory: such access is a basic right that all Australians enjoy and pay for. I am not convinced that the Minister for Health and Community Services can guarantee access. I am not convinced that he will be able to fulfil his assurances. I am not convinced that there would not be subtle but effective pressure put on people to stream them into the private enterprise venture.

The federal government is to be praised for its vigilance and its responsible approach. If the minister had adopted this same professional approach, he would not stand censured. Recently, he accused me of lack of understanding on basic points of public health management. He was wrong. I understand only too well the fears and concerns of health care consumers. I was in one voice with the federal government. It is the minister who does not understand. It is the minister who has not done his job properly. His performance can best be judged by a statement that he made last week. I quote from his press release:

The Royal Darwin Hospital is a public facility, one of the biggest in all of Australia. I have no intention of changing its status. The services of the Royal Darwin Hospital are available for any Territorians who wish to be admitted as public patients.

The minister's claim to have no intention to change our hospital's status should have been made a year ago before its accreditation was downgraded as a result of government neglect. The services available for public patients are not a priority for the minister, as recent treatment of maternity patients has shown and as any person who has taken a sick child to the hospital emergency area at night knows. Despite the professional and hard-working attention of staff, patients can enjoy a long wait. The minister is also content with a public hospital which cannot provide itself with immediate backup of electricity supply. I expressed that view earlier and I believe that the

minister will be making a statement in respect of the blackout which occurred at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the opposition in relation to this censure motion and, quite frankly, it is a nonsense. It has been proven to be a nonsense by the Minister for Health and Community Services. Once again, we have the federal government telling Territorians what to do. Quite frankly, opposition members should be ashamed of themselves. Are they interested in what happens to Territorians or services to Territorians? They are not. The members on this side of the House are interested in Territorians. We are looking at providing the best possible services to Territory people and we do not resile from that at all.

Mr Speaker, to take up the Leader of the Opposition's point about specialists, we have a problem in relation to specialists. We are trying to attract specialists to the Northern Territory and the establishment of the private hospital is part of that whole program. It will attract specialists to the Territory. We will save taxpayers' dollars by not having to send people south who are unable to receive the treatment they need here in the Northern Territory. It will save taxpayers' money in the long term.

As I said, we are addressing those problems. It really is a nonsense to try to censure a minister of the government - in this case, the Minister for Health and Community Services - when he is trying to do the right thing for Territory people. The opposition should be condemned for moving this motion. It really does have a hide. I believe that the person who should be censured is none other than the House of Representatives member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon. He is not interested in his constituency at all. On 3 separate occasions, he has slipped into the system here the Pine Gap issue, the University College and now the private hospital. As far as the University College is concerned, we are trying to give our students the same opportunity as would be their right in the states. That is a subject for another day. However, Mr Speaker, I can assure you that Territorians are not second-rate citizens and we will have institutions here that will have credibility anywhere else in Australia. Members opposite should be condemned for bringing forward these issues. They should be trying to help to provide these things for Territory people, not opposing them.

Mr Speaker, why shouldn't we have access to facilities similar to those enjoyed by people in the states? It is interesting to note that, if we are lining up with the other states on a per capita basis as far as private hospital beds are concerned, we would have 180 private beds available in the Northern Territory. I believe that it is our duty to try to provide the best possible facilities and services for people in the Northern Territory. We have been seeking to establish a private hospital in the Northern Territory for some time, and I was actively involved in that process. The contract was let prior to my moving from the health portfolio. When expressions of interest were called for back in 1986, there was an overwhelming response.

Mr Speaker, the motion reads that the Minister for Health and Community Services 'be censured by this Assembly for (a) failing to realise that the proposal to establish a private hospital within the Royal Darwin Hospital raised issues which needed to be resolved at ministerial level'. Goodness gracious me, the minister is concerned. He has looked at this whole issue. We have not failed to realise that there are implications. The member for Arnhem raised the matter of the siting of the private hospital being unusual.

It is unusual but the reason for taking that decision was to give better access to public patients as well as private patients to facilities in the public hospital.

We had decided that there needed to be a sharing of resources. I am sure the opposition will remember the problems that were associated with the CT scanner at the hospital. We were able to negotiate and to have put into the hospital a state-of-the-art CT scanner which has operated extremely successfully. It has provided a very good service to Territory people. That is the type of thing that we are interested in. We are trying to be sensible in putting these packages together. It is responsible to try to ensure that the very expensive equipment that is necessary to health care is utilised fully and it is important that public patients have access to that equipment as well. We have done that.

Part 1(b) of the censure motion refers to 'placing at risk the continued provision of high standard health services at the Royal Darwin Hospital'. What a load of nonsense! We have been trying to utilise the facilities in a manner which will give the public better health care and access to treatment.

Part 1(c) refers to failure 'to undertake negotiations with the Commonwealth government which would ensure a smooth start to the Darwin Private Hospital'. Mr Speaker, there is no requirement that a minister should talk to other ministers and, indeed, there are many occasions when federal ministers do not talk to our ministers. What about the issue of petrol sniffing? I can recall when thousands and thousands of dollars were poured into the Northern Territory. There was no contact with the ministers here and no concern about duplication of funding in those areas which needed addressing and which this government has addressed. There was no contact at all. Perhaps ministers should start to talk about such things. We have been trying to obtain consultation for a long time. What about the programs which the federal government simply decided to stop funding? The excellent FORWAARD program is a good example of that. The federal government did not consult with our minister on that matter.

We have raised this problem of consultation on many occasions but, when the opposition states that it was a requirement that we talk with the federal minister in relation to the establishment of the private hospital, it is not correct. The Minister for Health and Community Services made it very clear that the Territory had notified the Commonwealth formally, through the consultative committee which was set up with the introduction of Medicare back in 1984. That committee, I might say, has met every 6 months since that date. The issue was raised clearly at the committee's last meeting. Health and Life Care also notified the Commonwealth government of what it was proposing to do. Indeed, the minister mentioned the letter written by Dr Max Chalmers, the chief executive officer for the private hospital, on 24 September. It is interesting to note that he did not receive any response to that letter. In fact, as I understand it, the response to Dr Chalmers' letter went to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Community Services. Dr Chalmers' letter made it very clear that the private hospital was to open in mid-November. In terms of bungling, I am sure that many backsides would be being kicked at the moment down south. I believe that officers of the federal Department of Community Services and Health knew exactly what was going on and that they did not inform their minister in relation to this very important issue. I believe he would now be very angry with some of his officers. It is a fact that they knew exactly what was going on and I believe that the federal minister will kick some backsides.

We have heard talk about disruptions that have occurred recently at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Might I say that I believe the disruptions will be beneficial in the long term. The intention has been to transfer the workload in a responsible and planned manner so that, when the private hospital is opened, hopefully in August next year, there will be fewer problems. Discussions are presently under way between the private hospital and the federal minister and I understand that there will be some agreement regarding health insurance whereby ex gratia payments will be made until the registration is finalised.

Mr Bell: That is shutting the gate after the horse has bolted, Tom.

Mr HARRIS: It is all very well to say things like that. We are trying to provide a better service to Territorians and that is what this is about. It is about the provision of care. The member for Arnhem says that he is concerned about Territory people. He should be getting in there and trying to help.

I heard the federal member for the Northern Territory on radio the other day. He was totally scathing in relation to issues that will help Territory people, such as the University College, which is a matter for another day. If the opposition is not interested in trying to promote projects that will improve health and education services for Territorians, it will be on the opposition benches forever. It should be condemned for raising these issues in the manner in which it has raised them. The ministers have been across the issues through their officers but there has been no direct contact between them. That is something, I acknowledge, which needs to be looked at because there are problems on both sides of the fence. Mr Speaker, as a former minister, I can tell you that there are many occasions when there is duplication and waste. It occurs because there has not been the necessary contact between federal and Northern Territory ministers. I think this would also happen in the states. We have limited resources and we are trying to improve things for Territory people. We certainly have to know what is going on and, if it is not possible for that to occur at officer level, then perhaps we need to look at how ministers could be involved more actively.

I emphasise once more what the Minister for Health and Community Services said this morning: that the present situation at the Royal Darwin Hospital is not permanent. There was the threat of the forced closure of wards as a result of Commonwealth government cutbacks. This issue is not one of who is rich or poor; it concerns health care. It is time that the opposition understood that. The private hospital will operate well and will provide a very good service to Territorians. It will provide an opportunity for specialists to come to the Territory to service people. We are not second-rate citizens. We really need to put pressure on those who can help us to provide the same services as are available in the states.

The Minister for Health and Community Services should be commended on his efforts in pursuing this government's objective of providing excellent services to Territory people. The censure motion is a complete nonsense. The people who should be kicked in the backside are the officers of the federal department because they were aware of what was happening. It really is a shame that, even though the Darwin Private Hospital people notified Dr Blewett on 24 September, they received notification 2 days before the hospital was due to open. Instead of responding to Dr Max Chalmers, to the group who wrote the letter, the federal people responded to the Department of Health and Community Services.

Those issues are very real and they needed to be addressed. They are being addressed. The minister has made it clear that he has given those assurances to the federal minister in relation to the situation that exists with the private hospital and I believe that, instead of all this nonsense and humbug, we should be trying to ensure that our people receive the necessary services that they rightly deserve.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, what has so far not been addressed by the minister and the member for Port Darwin, in his attempt to defend the indefensible, was the basic point that we have raised in this debate: the fact that the minister did not talk to the federal minister. We have a project which this government has been building up over many months as the solution to our health problems, as a means of saving funds and as a means of getting the health budget back into some sort of balance. For whatever reason, that was its decision and it had the ability to determine that policy. It had the ability to privatise those wards, but it also had a responsibility to the people of the Northern Territory and to the people who come within the ambit of the health care system. That responsibility was to be good managers and to follow the normal management process of consulting with the people who were affected.

The member for Port Darwin admitted that that had not been done in this case, and attempted to defend it. He said that the federal ministers who become involved in developments in the Territory and do not consult with their counterparts at a Territory level are to be castigated. He enumerated various instances which he said indicated that we on this side of the House have no problem with ensuring that communication is a two-way process and that federal ministers do have discussions with their Territory counterparts when they are involved in joint projects in the Northern Territory. That is only sensible, Mr Speaker. Then, in response to an interjection, the honourable member attempted to say that somehow that was not applicable when we were talking about the obligations of a Territory minister to consult with a federal minister. That is a load of codswallop. Of course, if the honourable minister had any ability in his job, he would have taken that most rudimentary of steps.

I rose to my feet because the minister made the most outrageous statement. He stated that the reason why we will have a private and public hospital system is not, apparently, to provide the benefits of the private system to those people who pay extra for private medical cover. It is not for their benefit. It is for the poor people at the bottom end of the economic spectrum. He referred to Aboriginal women and tried to make out that it was for their benefit because somehow they were offended with having to sleep next to people who were obviously better off than themselves. What an absolute load of rubbish! He couldn't even say it with a straight face because it is patent rubbish and should be seen as such.

Mr Speaker, I have some worries similar to those of the federal minister. We have not been advised as yet how much this proposal is costing us. We have not been advised how much the private hospital group is paying out for those wards or how that has been determined. We have not been advised whether we are subsidising them or whether this whole project is simply a means of establishing a cash flow in difficult times while this group is trying to develop its hospital next door. We have not been provided with answers to any of these questions. If the minister is so confident that it is a cost-saving exercise, I would have thought that he would be willing to provide those answers to the Assembly. He could have done that if he had planned correctly and had assessed the cost benefits of the project. As a result of the fact

that he omitted the basic step of discussing it with the federal minister, my concern is deepened.

We have a Medicare agreement with the federal government. That matter has not been addressed at all. It will be addressed in this debate by a later speaker, but it is extremely important for the continuation of our hospital system here that that agreement, which was negotiated with the federal government, is not arbitrarily broken by the Northern Territory government. We cannot expose ourselves to the risk of the federal government, within its rights under the agreement, arbitrarily assigning an amount to be withdrawn from that allocation.

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mr EDE: It is obvious from that interjection that the minister should read the agreement again because it is quite apparent that he has not discussed these matters with the federal government. He has not told it what services formerly provided by the Northern Territory government will now be provided instead by the private group. Those services were assessed as part of the cost to the Northern Territory government of providing health services and, on the basis of that assessment, the level of funding under the Medicare agreement was determined.

It is essential that Northern Territorians have confidence in their health system. It is essential that they are able to see that their public health system is being maintained at the standard that has applied during the last 10 to 15 years. That is our obligation to every Northern Territorian but I am afraid that the minister's actions have caused me to lose confidence in his ability to meet that obligation and, for that reason alone, this censure motion should be supported. His resignation has now become an essential component in restoring the confidence of Northern Territorians in their health system.

Mr Speaker, I call on all members of the House to consider this censure motion purely as a means of ensuring that Territorians have confidence in their health system, that the Northern Territory government lives up to the conditions of deals that it has made with the federal government and that it does not put negotiated agreements at grave risk as it has done in this instance.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I can remember previous debates on censure motions in this House - especially during the time of the former Leader of the Opposition - which were argued with some conviction and, at times, with some substance. However, as has been said quite forcefully and convincingly by the Minister for Health and Community Services, this motion is no more than a scam. Members opposite could not get themselves organised by 8 am this morning to bring an MPI before this House and we have had to suffer the farce of seeing it presented as a censure motion. All members on this side of the House have total confidence in the Minister for Health and Community Services and no argument advanced by members opposite has done anything to erode that confidence.

In fact, the strategy of the Leader of the Opposition is to invite the gag. He quite loudly turned to his colleagues prior to lunch and said: 'Who is going to speak now so that we can invite the gag?' I would like to inform him that he has now succeeded. For the Hansard record, I walked into the House after the lunch break and I asked the Leader of the Opposition if he would be speaking. He replied that he would be. I asked: 'Now?' He replied: 'Yes'.

Mr Smith: You are a liar.

Mr HANRAHAN: Don't call me a liar.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw that remark.

Mr Smith: Mr Speaker, out of deference to you, I withdraw that remark.

Mr HANRAHAN: That highlights to me the farcical behaviour of the opposition in moving this censure motion.

I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 8

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Hanrahan

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Bell

Mr Collins

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly divided on the motion of censure:

Ayes 8

Noes 15

Mr Bell

Mr Collins

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Tuxworth

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Hanrahan

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Vale

Motion negated.

TABLED PAPERS
Letters from Federal Ministers

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table a letter received from the Special Minister of State, Hon Susan Ryan, in reply to my letter to the Prime Minister, Hon R. Hawke, in which I forwarded the terms of the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 23 September 1987 relating to the Australia Card. Copies of Senator Ryan's letter have been circulated to all honourable members.

I also lay on the table a letter received from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon G.L. Hand, in reply to my letter in which I forwarded the terms of the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 20 October 1987 relating to the Jawoyn Katherine Gorge Land Claim. Copies of Mr Hand's letter have also been circulated to honourable members.

TABLED PAPER
Ministerial Statement on Services to Aboriginals in the
Northern Territory

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I table the text of a ministerial statement on services provided for Aboriginals in the Northern Territory. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr Speaker, the paper is a very lengthy document which would take in excess of an hour to read to honourable members. I request that the paper be incorporated into Hansard for the information of honourable members opposite.

Leave granted.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, the purpose of the statement is to set out this government's approach on services for Aboriginal Territorians provided by my department. The subject of government relations with Aboriginals is an emotive topic. I seek to stimulate a debate and to achieve a positive result in that debate. Just under a quarter of the Territory's population is Aboriginal yet the bulk of my department's annual budget goes towards services for this group. This statement gives me a chance to set the record straight on the extent of this government's achievements in providing services to Aboriginals. The statement sets out some startling statistics related to living conditions in remote Aboriginal communities, crime, substance abuse, communicable diseases and other health problems. I outline some of the programs this government has undertaken to rectify these problems.

I have also stressed the need for Aboriginals to take more initiatives in getting back control of their own destinies. The need for more Aboriginal communities to take on the responsibility and benefits of self-management is vital to their continued development. Finally, I have also addressed the problems that can arise from the federal government's involvement in Aboriginal affairs in the Territory, particularly in funding independent health and other community services. Too often, the Territory government has come under pressure to take over funding of programs which might be inconsistent with our own approach in implementing appropriate programs. I commend the paper to honourable members.

TABLED PAPER
Ministerial Statement on Services to
Aboriginals in the Northern Territory

Mr Speaker, the purpose of this statement is to set out this government's approach on services for Aboriginal Territorians provided by my department. In doing so, I believe I am setting an agenda for debate on one of the most important issues likely to affect the Territory for many years to come.

The subject of government relations with Aborigines would be recognised as one of the most emotive topics Australians have to confront. For this reason, many discussions and points of view on the subject can be characterised by a lack of logic and realism. By this statement, I seek to stimulate a debate soundly based in truth. A debate carried on in a spirit of responsibility and goodwill can achieve a positive result which will raise the image of the Northern Territory. A realistic result will be the hallmark of the Territory's maturity.

Aborigines comprise just under a quarter of the Northern Territory's population yet the bulk of my department's annual budget goes toward services for this group. Secondly, perceptions held by the greater Australian community about this government's Aboriginal policies and programs will have a significant impact on our chances of achieving statehood. There is no doubt that it suits some cynical sections of Australian society to create a perception of Northern Territorians, and their government, as red-neck racists. There are no grounds for such accusations and I intend to demonstrate in this address some of the concerns of this government and the actions it has taken for the well-being of Aboriginal Territorians. The delivery of this statement offers me an opportunity to set the record straight and present to Australia the reality of this government's achievements in the provision of services to Aborigines.

The historic role of the Aborigine in Australia has been influenced by generalised assumptions that have hampered effective government approaches to what has been described as the 'Aboriginal problem' for much of our history of settlement. These basic assumptions should be stricken from the Australian psyche. The first assumption is that the Aborigine needs special treatment so that he can 'advance' in the white community. The second is that equality, in Australia's dominant white society, comes when a minority group merges with the majority and has discarded its religion, language, arts and other unique cultural characteristics. Admission to full membership of the white community has often been held out to Aborigines as a promised reward since the time of settlement. But, it might not have occurred to many white Australians that such a reward might hold little attraction for an Aborigine.

In these times leading up to Australia's bicentenary, we are beset by people and organisations trying to expiate what they believe is a national guilt shared by white Australians about the plight of the Aborigine. I, for one, reject that fanciful notion outright. I cannot be responsible for this nation's history. But, I would like to be able to understand it and try to do something about our future instead - something a little more constructive than talking about a treaty or compact of understanding. It is my aim to ensure that the

next 10 years of Territory development see a dramatic improvement in the quality of life for Territory Aborigines.

One very welcome result would be the removal of the mendicant mentality from Aboriginal communities. This state of mind allows an Aboriginal to sit back and complain about the lack of water, the fact that his toilet is blocked up, that there is no work, that the prices in the store are too high and that a member of his family has just been taken off to jail. The mendicant mentality, trained by years of suffocating goodwill that has stifled initiative, assumes that some whitefella from DAA or the Territory government will come along and find the water, fix the sewer and so on.

It is time for people who still have this attitude to change. We need people in our community who are ready to make something of their lives and who do not want to sit back and let things drift along aimlessly. It is time for us, as a government and as leaders of our community, to get behind those who have rejected this mentality or who want to get out of the cycle of dependency. The aims and aspirations of each community must be kept clearly ahead of us. It is our job to encourage Aboriginal communities to be independent and resourceful, contributing their share to the growth of Australia.

A major indicator of the lack of a mendicant mentality is the degree to which a community, or for that matter a person, manages its or his own affairs. 'Self-management' is a term which has become somewhat confused through usage. Sometimes, what is meant is that a community should be self-sufficient or that, from its own resources, it should be able to look after its own affairs. Such meanings do not appeal to me. For my purposes, what fits the bill is a community which is in control of those things which affect its well-being. A community which had achieved this state would recognise its needs for, say, health and community services. It would seek those services, control their implementation, evaluate their success and adjust them as necessary. This definition does not require that the community necessarily pays for the services, but it does call for management control and that residents take an active and decisive role in their community's well-being.

Self-management requires decisions based on the balance which must be struck between a community's various competing needs. For instance, a group of people who decide that they want to live on an outstation or homeland centre must first consider their position carefully. The unreal expectations of the mendicant mentality are perhaps never more clearly expressed than when a group of people establish themselves on a piece of land. They might do so because their ancestors once had responsibility for that area, but there is little thought for the cost of access to services such as sewerage and water in an isolated spot. Somebody else will pay for it.

I am not arguing against the outstation or homelands movement. However, I am saying that, if Aboriginal people had easy access to a good water supply and a reliable sewerage system, their health status would improve dramatically. This must, I believe, become a matter of concern to people when they are making decisions about where they will live. At least part of the reason why people move to a particular land or place is an historical or cultural attachment. Failure to recognise cultural imperatives has often been a reason for

the failure of expensive and apparently sound programs. There is no value in our installing child-care centres in Aboriginal communities, for instance, if they are inappropriate. It is foolish for our health system to expect an Aboriginal health worker to treat a person whom he is forbidden to touch. It is also, of course, flying in the face of reality to suggest that the outstation movement should stop and that people should move back into the old settlements. Culturally relevant programs will evolve only out of consultation with the people concerned.

This brings me to a point which I hope will be heard and understood in a spirit of cooperation, with the aim of increasing the well-being of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. The Territory government takes its responsibilities to all Territorians seriously. We have a record of which we are proud. We are able to communicate with and assist Aboriginal people to improve the quality of their lives. To that end, we welcome the assistance of the federal government in the development of policies - and certainly in the provision of funds. However, we do not need, and should not tolerate, the meanderings of Canberra mandarins in respect of a matter of such significance as the well-being of Aboriginal Territorians.

Congress Health Centre in Alice Springs and Anyinginyi in Tennant Creek perform very useful services and are run by dedicated people. But, they are also totally dependent on the whim of the federal government. How secure is the future of these health services while they rely on the federal government for funds? Who knows what will happen after 1988? Will the federal government pull the plug on these services? Will we have another FORWAARD - doomed to failure at the stroke of a policy writer's pen? Because some people's expectations have been raised unfairly, will the Territory government again be called on to step in and fund a program which a federal instrumentality has tossed aside?

The Territory government has spent millions of dollars on services to Aboriginal people every year since self-government and we will spend more in years to come. Our level of expenditure helps make the Aboriginal industry one of the biggest in the Territory. It employs more people than the pastoral, mining or tourist industries. Perhaps we could spend more. But, if the expenditure of money were the answer, then I suggest the problems would have disappeared years ago.

I will outline what this government believes are some of the solutions to these questions but, before I do so, let me set out part of the situation we face. Humanitarian reasons are the prime motivation for improving the quality of life in Aboriginal communities, but we have an additional and compelling reason. I refer honourable members to my statement during the September sittings on health promotions. I made it quite clear in that statement that the cost of hospitalisation and medical treatment of a patient far outweighs the cost of steps which could have been taken earlier to help avoid the possibility of an illness arising. This is significant when considering the following information. The Australian Bureau of Statistics claims that 34 739 Territorians (22.4%) are Aborigines, of whom 24 034 (or 69%) were counted on census night 1986 as being rural - that is, living in communities of less than 1000 persons.

Health status may be measured by such indicators as mortality, morbidity and disability. For the purpose of this exercise, health status can be used as an indication of overall community well-being. One measure of the effectiveness of past endeavours is the fall in the infant mortality rate of Territory Aborigines (the death rate in children under 1 year of age). This rate has declined substantially from 143 per 1000 in 1971 to 36 per 1000 in 1986. Despite this improvement, the infant mortality rate for Aboriginal Territorians is still more than 4 times that of non-Aborigines. Aboriginal stillbirths occur more than 5 times more frequently than among non-Aborigines.

The life expectancy of an Aborigine is about 20 years less than that of the average white Australian. Rheumatic heart disease and infectious and parasitic diseases occur far more often among Aborigines. Far too many Aboriginal infants tend to die from gastroenteritis and pneumonia yet both ailments are preventable and both are associated with environmental conditions. 'Lifestyle' diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are leading causes of death. All are amenable to prevention and, in the long term, prevention is far less costly than sophisticated end-stage terminal treatment.

In every age group, mortality rates are higher for Aboriginals than for other Australians. The greatest discrepancy occurs in the 30 to 40 years age group where the Aboriginal death rate for males is 7 times higher, and for females 13 times higher, than for non-Aboriginals. Aboriginal deaths from motor vehicle accidents, alcohol and violence are 4 times higher for females and twice as high for males in comparison with non-Aboriginals.

Another accepted indicator of morbidity or the degree of ill-health in a community is the hospitalisation rate. Aborigines have a higher frequency of hospital admission and stay longer than non-Aboriginals. The admission rate to Territory hospitals for every 1000 Aboriginal children is 107, compared with 23 for non-Aboriginal children. Trachoma is still a major problem for Aborigines in the Territory and chronic otitis media is the cause of hearing disabilities among about one-third of our Aboriginal school children. More Aboriginals are notified as suffering from dysentery than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco are significant factors influencing the high hospital admission rate of Aborigines. A recent survey in the Darwin, Katherine and East Arnhem regions indicated that, of the 40% of Aboriginals who drink alcohol, 70% do so at levels likely to cause physical, social and economic harm. Alcohol psychosis among Aboriginals occurs at twice the rate of that among non-Aboriginal Territorians. The level of substance abuse among Territory Aboriginals is one of my department's main concerns. Along with the undeniably major problems of alcohol and tobacco abuse, we are worried about the levels of consumption of kava and of petrol sniffing.

Associated with these factors is the growing incidence of child abuse in Aboriginal communities. The number of child protection cases on Aboriginal communities is increasing too. As well as malnutrition in children, which is often associated with serious substance abuse by

adults, there is an increasing level of physical abuse. Family violence has become a major concern.

If the simple statistics are not sobering enough, then the economics of our situation should make every taxpayer take notice. My department's budget consumes almost \$200m a year. The operation of health services requires three-quarters of this budget and the bulk of that is spent on Aboriginals. The prevalence of gonorrhoea is 4 times that of the general population and syphilis is detected 74 times more than in the general population. Syphilis, therefore, is of pandemic proportions among Aboriginal Territorians, as is hepatitis B. Physical disabilities among Aboriginals occur 3.5 times more often than in non-Aboriginals.

These horrific statistics indicate the woeful conditions in which many Territory Aboriginals live today. The Territory government cannot be expected to be able to reverse within a decade the deadly tide of neglect built up over the preceding 50 years of colonial institutionalised care. However, this government is prepared to evaluate and adjust its efforts on behalf of Aboriginal communities according to properly-researched statistical evidence rather than hearsay or supposition.

I refer honourable members to a book published by my department late in 1986 in cooperation with the Menzies School of Health Research. It is entitled 'Health Indicators in the Northern Territory'. The statistics in this book will be upgraded over a regular 3- to 5-year cycle. I trust that, when the next issue is available to this House, it will demonstrate a marked improvement in the health status of Territory Aboriginals.

We have come a long way from the days when Australia 'managed' Aboriginals - from the days of the Native Welfare. We developed the 'mendicant mentality' first with flour, salt, beef and tobacco. It was perpetuated with 'sit-down' money and what became known as the '4-wheel-drive dreaming'. We will succeed in developing the health and well-being of Aboriginal people only if this mentality is replaced by a desire for responsible self-management. We are already a long way down this track. In every area of my department's activities, we encourage communities to play an active part in managing their lives rather than waiting for hand-outs.

The approach of my department is to provide essential care based on practical, scientifically-sound and socially-acceptable methods and technology. This care should be universally accessible to all in a community through their participation. It should be provided at a cost the community and the country can afford to maintain at every stage of development. If this approach is to be successful, it is vital that individuals and communities take control of as many external influences in their own lives as possible.

Modern health care systems are becoming increasingly complex and costly. Resources are concentrated in sophisticated urban institutions housing highly-specialised medical technologies. Application of the current strategy will narrow the gap in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians. In economic terms, it is clear that no effort must be spared in emphasising the primary health role. In the present financial year,

for example, the Department of Health and Community Services will spend in excess of 45% of its budget on hospitals. Far less is spent on primary health care. It is important to achieve a better balance between the money allocated to preventive and community programs, hospitals and prisons in order to improve Aboriginal well-being. I will be working towards redressing this imbalance.

As I said earlier, if money were the answer, then I venture to suggest that we could remove the problem. Our policy direction, however, depends first and foremost on Aboriginal people being prepared and able to take control of key factors, such as health and community service programs, in their own lives. One of the most important methods adopted by this government to assist people and communities to take charge of their own primary care has been the Aboriginal Health Worker Program. The first Aboriginal Health Worker Program originated in the Northern Territory in the 1950s, under Dr John Hargrave.

The Territory government has supported the development of training programs for Aboriginal health workers. Aboriginals selected by their communities are trained to a basic skills level at one of the Territory's health worker training institutions. These people then return to their communities as front line workers in primary health care. These Aboriginal health workers possess skills that make their role in the community as important as those of the doctors and nurses. They have a knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and valuable communication skills. In achieving the well-being of Aboriginal Territorians, these skills are vital. This government's policy is that primary health care be implemented through the health worker. Of course, the health worker is not alone in this effort. Doctors, nurses and the resources of the department reinforce the health worker's role which is to address the main health problems in the community and provide promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services.

Health workers have a unique part to play in bettering the well-being of Aboriginal Territorians. They are able to fully understand the needs and wants of Aboriginal people and establish a communication process to facilitate health care. The role of the successful Aboriginal health worker supports the government's strongly-held view that Aboriginal communities are in the best position to manage their own affairs. The degree to which individual health workers can contribute to self-management may vary between individuals and depend on their level of training and experience. They are able to make an important contribution even though some do not appear, in European terms, to have very high academic achievement in numeracy and literacy skills.

Clearly, I support the Aboriginal Health Worker Program. In recent days, I have authorised the advertisement of a position of Senior Aboriginal Health Worker Coordinator for the Katherine region. Two vacant tutor positions at the Katherine Institute of Aboriginal Health will be filled. Funding will be provided under the Grants-in-Aid Scheme for 2 extra Aboriginal health workers for Kalano, an independent Aboriginal-run health organisation serving town camps in Katherine. As a further indication that I am fair dinkum about developing the Aboriginal Health Worker Program to the extent it deserves, I have asked my department to negotiate with the

Department of Education to organise a training course for a Diploma in Aboriginal Health Work.

It would be foolish of me to pretend that the program has been as successful as we would have liked. It has not. Problems have been encountered because, at times, Aboriginal health workers are treated as though they are nurses at the very bottom of the pay scale. Some fully-trained community health sisters have had difficulty understanding the role which Aboriginal health workers can and should play. Aboriginal health workers are not nurses, and were never intended to be. There are specific courses for that. They are meant to perform a vital role in the progression of communities to self-management and control over their own lives.

Of course, while health workers carry out culturally-sympathetic, health-related roles on communities, they and other community leaders also could have effective roles to play in other programs operated by my department. The concept of self-management requires communities to make their own decisions in areas such as sport and recreation facilities, youth and children's services, child protection, consumer affairs, methods of controlling substance abuse, the development of responsible attitudes towards law-breakers and ways of developing enterprises such as art and cultural material. We believe that, in these areas, it is the government's responsibility to have programs available which are culturally relevant but which will always depend on the people to take a decision, to make a commitment and to take control. The success of individual programs will depend on the level of commitment each community decides to give.

In respect of child protection, for instance, we have programs in place which give appropriate weight to the views of the community and the individual's own responsibility. Where a child's family is unable or unwilling to provide suitable care for the child, welfare officers from my department take on that responsibility. This is not a revival of the old Welfare days when children were separated from their families. Reuniting the family is the top priority of our departmental officers. Consistent with our philosophy, the first approach used is prevention by means of education on nutrition, hygiene and parenting through family resource centres and other community education approaches. When a situation sufficiently serious to warrant statutory intervention arises, community welfare workers encourage the extended family to resolve the problem. They try, where possible, to have the issue resolved at the community level.

The Northern Territory Community Welfare Act is unique in Australia in that it includes specific Aboriginal child-care provisions. It requires consultation with the extended family and, if a child is removed, requires that consideration be given first to placement of the child within the extended family. In negotiations, welfare workers use funding and staff provided through the Family Support and Aboriginal Community Worker programs. This increases the participation of Aboriginals in coping with family breakdowns in their communities. It also ensures greater success in arranging care for children.

Substance abuse indicates to us that there is an immediate need for preventive programs to be introduced and maintained. Experience has

taught us, however, that the introduction of programs which work well in urban society does not necessarily work in rural Aboriginal communities. A variety of approaches are available. Our strategies in this area are designed using the following guidelines: intervention is designed to enhance rather than retard Aboriginal self-management; intervention strategies, as far as possible, utilise and build on the strengths of Aboriginal culture; approaches which assume that substance abuse can be 'cured' on an individual basis are likely to fail; as well as short-term strategies to control substance abuse, long-term strategies are introduced to address the causes of the problem; preventive programs are generally broadly based rather than focusing solely on particular substances; and evaluation should be built into all intervention efforts.

It is not particularly useful to have programs available without money or other resources. Our concept of self-management requires that there be something to be managed and some resources to apply. A major objective of our Grants-in-Aid program is to encourage Aboriginal people to take greater responsibility for services to their own communities. In the last financial year, \$2 416 944 in grants-in-aid was allocated for the provision of Aboriginal health services. Of this sum, \$1 297 956 went to health services actually managed by Aboriginals and \$36 500 was granted to organisations managed by Aboriginals to provide services for problems related to drugs and alcohol. A further \$2 074 292 in grants-in-aid was spent in grants to Aborigines for programs relating to child protection and welfare and disability services. Organisations which implement or maintain programs which will increase the control and management by Aboriginal people of their own health and welfare will receive my support.

In this statement, I have made much of the need for Aboriginal people to be prepared to manage their own affairs. I have indicated the health status of Aborigines and I have talked about some programs designed to address aspects of the problems which we face. It is the role of Aboriginal communities and their leaders to set priorities and to achieve their own aims and goals. However, for me to sit back and wait for signs of this independence would be a denial of my responsibility for a significant portion of the Territory community.

I would like to outline some priorities in relation to health and community services for Aboriginal people. These priorities are not difficult to find. Quite simply, we must address basic needs. Environmental conditions in remote communities today are a legacy of decades of inaction and misguided programs by governments which were more concerned with problems in the southern states. Just raising the standard of basic living conditions to an acceptable level is a task of mammoth proportions. Access to clean water in sufficient quantity is still a major problem. Sanitation systems are still extremely poor in some communities and non-existent in others. Nutritious food is not consumed as widely as is required for good health.

Water and sewerage services are matters which largely fall outside my portfolio. There are, however, aspects of these factors for which I am responsible. The effects on people of poor water supplies and sanitation systems are matters which fall within my responsibility. I spoke earlier of the need for people to make decisions about where

they wish to live, taking into account such questions as access to good quality water and sanitation. I stress again that the Northern Territory government cannot afford to follow small groups through the bush carrying drilling rigs for bores and toilet systems. Neither can the government make adequate water appear where it does not exist.

Aside from water and sewerage, there are factors which can be addressed. The consumption of nutritious food is one. Dietary habits are an important factor in the lifestyle-type diseases that are leading causes of death for Aborigines. Infant malnutrition is also a serious problem. To combat this, community dietitians, together with Aboriginal health workers, community health nurses, community welfare workers and district medical officers, are working with rural Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory to reduce risk factors associated with lifestyle diseases, to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition, to improve the nutrition of vulnerable groups and to promote skills and knowledge which will enable Aborigines to make better choices about the food they eat.

Under the Community Welfare Act of 1983, malnutrition qualifies as a form of child abuse. Children suffering from malnutrition may be placed in substitute care under the guardianship of the minister. Such action is a last resort and every effort is directed towards improving family and community resources to deal with the problem. The Family Support and the Remote Areas Funding programs provide for the establishment of specific programs of education and practical training in nutrition, hygiene, home economics and literacy in order to upgrade parenting and family life skills in the community. For effective evaluation, programs which aim to alter a lifestyle need time to ensure that changes are lasting and thus have the desired effect in improving health.

Of course, programs in good nutrition require that food is available in sufficient quantities and at affordable prices. In that regard, let me issue a plea to those who operate or profit from the stores on Aboriginal communities to consider at least the longevity of their clientele. Let them consider whether the profits of shops should subsidise licensed clubs which is the case in some instances, whether freight costs are so great that a can of powdered milk should cost \$17 which is the case in some places, whether the prices of basic items need to be so high and whether food of a higher nutritional value might be stocked as easily as some less desirable items. Poor nutrition is a major cause of poor health and thus lowers resistance to infection.

Ears and eyes are areas of the human body which are vulnerable to poor environmental conditions. With regard to ear health, the Departments of Health and Community Services and Education and the Menzies School of Health Research are currently working together to combat otitis media, an infection of the middle ear. Steps are being taken to employ an expert who will be responsible for establishing and overseeing research and evaluating ear health programs throughout the Territory. Recent research has suggested that a treatable cause might exist in many cases. Further research is needed and will be conducted.

This government is also making considerable progress in combating trachoma in rural areas. My department, together with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, funds the Northern Territory Trachoma Control and Eye Health Committee to address prevention, treatment and control of trachoma and other eye health problems in the Territory. The trachoma committee, which has a predominantly Aboriginal membership, makes recommendations to and works with my department. It employs Aboriginal health workers who are involved in screening for trachoma and in community education programs.

For some years now, an eye drop program for the control of the blinding effects of trachoma has operated in the Territory for Aboriginal school-aged children. The trachoma committee, in conjunction with the Menzies School of Health Research, recently conducted a scientific trial to review the effectiveness of the eye drops. From the outset, Aboriginal communities were consulted and Aboriginal health workers conducted the pre- and post-trial screening. 1143 children with follicular trachoma from 36 Aboriginal communities were involved in a randomised, controlled study. Results of the trial showed without doubt that the eye drop program is the most effective way available at present to control trachoma. The program reduces the amount of active infection and prevents scarring which leads to blindness in later life. The study was the first of its kind to be conducted and has relevance in many parts of the world where trachoma is endemic. Again, the Territory shows the way for Australia and, this time, the world.

I have made the point several times today that the environment in which many Aboriginal people live is an important factor in determining their health status. As an example, take the disease glomerulo nephritis. The disease leads to kidney malfunction which can affect children. Current research indicates this is primarily the result, at least in its initial stages, of poor environmental conditions. The cost of hospitalisation is severe, but glomerulo nephritis in childhood can result in weakened kidneys which can then lead to renal failure in later life. Where this happens, of course, the patient either receives a transplant, undertakes regular renal dialysis or dies. I recently opened a renal dialysis unit in Alice Springs. This unit has 14 machines and can assist many people. Current indications are that we will need several more units unless we are able effectively to address the environmental conditions which appear to be at the root of the problem.

High morbidity and mortality rates from communicable diseases created the impetus for establishing the Communicable Diseases Centre in Darwin. This serves as a teaching and information resource centre, including program development for disease investigation and control. In association with the Menzies School of Health Research, the centre is involved with research programs and field studies. The Territory has had outstanding success in some areas of communicable disease control. Earlier this year, staff at the centre produced a protocol which can be applied whenever infections show signs of reaching epidemic proportions. The guidelines of the protocol could reduce the impact of diseases. However, there are many diseases that continue to cause an unacceptable level of morbidity, mortality and cost.

Leprosy and malaria control are examples of highly successful programs. Leprosy was first detected in the 1880s and reached epidemic proportions by the 1950s. Screening, for early detection of illness, and treatment have controlled leprosy in the Territory using specially trained Aboriginal leprosy paramedical workers. Darwin is fortunate to have one of the world's leading leprologists, Dr John Hargrave, who is involved in research and reconstructive surgery. Darwin has also had the honour of being selected to hold the National Leprosy Register. The leprosy control computerised database served as a model for other community health information systems.

Malaria has not been locally transmitted in the Territory since 1962. This is directly due to vigilant public health measures. The Territory is still vulnerable to malaria because it has the appropriate mosquito vectors plus conducive environmental conditions. Malaria could be reintroduced either by infected travellers or via infected mosquitoes on aircraft and boats. Due to effective mosquito control and quarantine measures, Australia has been certified by the World Health Organisation as a malaria free area.

Immunisation is one of the most cost-effective aspects of modern medicine and, despite vast areas with scattered and sparse populations, immunisation coverage of Aboriginal children in the Territory is higher than in most states. The Territory's immunisation policy takes into account special features of the Territory, World Health Organisation recommendations for tropical countries and National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines.

Hepatitis B is endemic in the Aboriginal population. Rural Aboriginal communities have an overall carrier rate of hepatitis B of 10% and 80% to 90% have immunity due to past infection. In comparison, the non-Aboriginal community has a hepatitis B carrier rate of 0.1% and less than 5% have antibodies indicating past infection. Vaccine against hepatitis B is expensive - \$126 (at government cost) for a course of injections. In February 1987, the Commonwealth provided the vaccine free of charge for newborn children of high risk groups. All newborn Aboriginal infants are being immunised against hepatitis B and all pregnant women are screened for infection and antibodies.

The generally poor conditions in which most Territory Aboriginals spend their lives makes them especially vulnerable to introduced diseases to which they have not developed any resistance. For this reason, the advent of AIDS has potentially devastating consequences in Aboriginal communities. This has brought about an urgent need for primary prevention of all sexually-transmitted diseases. Community health nurses and Aboriginal health workers have been appointed to each region and programs for primary prevention have been well accepted by many Aboriginal communities. Behaviour modification and the use of freely supplied condoms may reduce the incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases, including AIDS, in the future. Each case of AIDS will cost the Territory more than \$100 000 from initial contraction of the disease until eventual death.

I should point out that the Northern Territory has taken the lead in Australia in providing effective AIDS education programs among

Aboriginal people. In 1985, an AIDS prevention and control program was developed and implemented as a priority. The program was designed to meet the special needs of the Territory and has been successful so far in preventing transmission within Aboriginal communities. Our efforts have been recognised by the World Health Organisation in recent weeks. Two Aboriginal officers in my department, Bernadette Hudson and Phillip Mills, were invited to attend an international conference dealing with AIDS and indigenous peoples. The World Health Organisation sponsored their travel and invited them to present a report on the introduction and implementation of AIDS education programs in Aboriginal communities. I was delighted to learn that the efforts of these 2 officers, and my department, had been honoured in this way.

The Northern Territory was first to introduce Territory-wide voluntary screening for AIDS virus antibodies in pregnant women at their initial antenatal visit. The Territory was also first to initiate compulsory screening of prisoners. The AIDS program provides a good example of the approach which this government is taking in the general area of provision of health and community services to Aboriginal people. Communities have the facts provided in a specific manner. It is made completely clear that the transmission or suppression of AIDS is their responsibility. They are provided with the best available information about how to prevent transmission. This is all done in a culturally sensitive way. With the AIDS program, we acted quickly. We were able to draw on past experience and, more importantly, on the expertise which Aboriginals were able to bring to the program. That education program has proved successful to date.

Petrol sniffing programs of a similar nature are also proving to be successful. I believe it is important that it be understood that this is not merely a case of devising a program which is culturally relevant and acceptable to one group of people. Our approach must be flexible. We must be capable of change and sympathetic to the needs and views of the people with whom we are dealing. It is simply carrying on a myth, for instance, to expect that a petrol sniffing prevention team which develops a method of dealing with people at Yuendumu necessarily will be able to achieve success at Minjilang or Angurugu. Cultural relevance is vital in devising and initiating programs which will increase the level of social well-being.

Under agreements negotiated by the Territory government with the Commonwealth, it has been possible to establish 3 consultancies which will specifically examine the needs of remote communities. The need for these consultancies was recognised by this government because it became aware that a disproportionately large share of available funds was being allocated to urban-based organisations. These urban-based organisations do a tremendous job and often are skilful lobbyists. Again, there are no similar service delivery organisations in remote areas, despite the fact that services are apparently sorely needed.

To address the problem, money has been found from a range of programs including the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, the Home and Community Care Program, the Family Support Program and the Aboriginal Community Work Program. Often, it is inappropriate to transplant services designed for the urban situation into a remote Aboriginal community. There can be important differences in culture

and scale. Sometimes, they can actually worsen a social problem in an Aboriginal community by weakening traditional strengths of the Aboriginal family. A study initiated earlier this year by my department is examining service delivery approaches used on Aboriginal communities to handle various situations including crisis accommodation, community-based care of the aged and disabled, family support and children's programs. The study has involved extensive consultation with Aboriginal people. This method builds on Aboriginal strengths to create solutions relevant to their own circumstances.

Such solutions do exist. One approach used successfully on various communities has been the establishment of family resource centres run by the local women. These centres run nutrition and care programs for the young and elderly, family budgeting, laundry and preventive health programs. These centres seem to have a lasting positive impact in strengthening family life, apart from the specific activities mentioned. Examples of programs that are working well are the program at the Daly River Women's Resource Centre, the Port Keats Home and Community Care Program, a nutrition program at Milikapiti and programs at centres in Galiwinku, Milingimbi and Ramingining.

Another very important program aimed at improving the quality of life, and which depends for its existence on its relevance to the people, is the Aboriginal Recreation Program. This program operates in 12 communities, and funds have been approved to enable a further 3 community councils to employ recreation staff. Funding enables the YMCA to provide professional support in training and sports development. Where possible, recreation officers are Aboriginal in keeping with the principles of self-management and cultural relevance. The officers live in their home community and understand the needs of local people.

The program is presented in a very positive light, providing opportunities for entertainment, activities that reinforce traditional skills and new activities that will encourage interaction with the broader community. The program is not, and should not be, 'problem oriented'. However, I see its importance as being very much in a social context. With high unemployment and a range of social problems, Aboriginal communities have much to gain from a comprehensive recreation program, to the point that there can be a reduced demand on government for other services in the health and correctional services areas.

By encouraging a more active lifestyle, I hope the long-term effect will be a healthier Aboriginal population. At the same time, I believe recreation can play a major role against antisocial behaviour by reducing boredom, conflict and substance abuse. Under ideal circumstances, I would take any opportunity I could to improve the sporting facilities available in Aboriginal communities. I see there is great value in putting funds into the promotion of healthy sporting and recreation activity as a useful way to combat attitudes which might lead to criminal activity. The money put into such facilities helps to avoid the need to inject larger funding into the construction of jails later on.

I cannot say that this program has been without its problems. However, a very positive step has recently been taken to improve the

effectiveness of the program. My department is currently working with Batchelor College to develop a formal accredited course for recreation officers which, I believe, will be introduced during 1988. This will ensure that officers will have a much greater understanding of their role, it will improve their confidence and it will help to reduce staff turnover. The combined effect will be a much improved service to these communities.

In developing a range of programs to turn around those young people who have come in contact with the criminal justice system and divert young people who are at risk of following that path, emphasis must be placed on providing alternative recreational activities. This does not simply mean organised sport and structured recreation programs. It goes further. Following consultation with Dr Paul Wilson of the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Coordinator of the Aussie-Sports concept, the notion of setting up sporting, recreational and leisure time activities as delinquency prevention measures will be established. As part of the implementation of the recommendations of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Task Force, a full-time recreation officer will be recruited to Groote Eylandt. His role will be to establish acceptable alternative activities for youngsters in the communities and to help reduce petrol sniffing and other antisocial pursuits.

It is a sad fact that we do not convince all potential offenders that it is better to become educated and to work and participate in sport or community services. Some break the law. My department does not sentence offenders, but it must, however, deal with those who are sentenced. Unfortunately, Aboriginal Territorians continue to be disproportionately represented in our correctional institutions. In the juvenile justice system, Aborigines constitute nearly half of all clients, and 70% of those in custody.

In adult community-based programs, such as probation, parole and community service orders, Aborigines comprise 48% of those under supervision, although the fine default diversionary program in particular has reduced the level of imprisonment for fine defaulters. Only 16% of adult Territorians are Aboriginal yet an examination of the 1771 receptions into Territory prisons in 1986-87 shows that Aborigines accounted for 70% of those. When adjusted to population size, this means that the ratio of adult Aboriginal receptions to non-Aboriginal is 12:1. An extremely high proportion of Aborigines in jail attribute their law-breaking to the influence of alcohol.

A royal commission is now examining Aboriginal deaths in custody. It saddens me that there have been deaths in Territory jails. They have, however, apparently not had any racial cause. Incidence of death correlates with the proportion of Aborigines to Europeans in the penal system.

I have expounded at length to this House before on the rather exasperating statistics related to Aborigines and crime in the Northern Territory. Much of what I have had to say today is relevant, I believe, in any explanation of the high proportion of Aboriginal people in our jails: self-management and the removal of the mendicant mentality; addressing the basic problems of the environment in which many Aboriginal people live; and the certain failure of programs which are not relevant to the people at which

they are aimed. These are relevant to our approach to Aboriginals who move into the criminal justice and correctional services system. We have proved that programs which require active participation from the people concerned and which take account of the lifestyle, needs and cultural requirements of the people concerned will be successful. A number of programs are in place which fit these criteria.

The Aboriginal Community Justice Project was first developed and implemented at Galiwinku (Elcho Island) which has a population of about 1600. The concept was designed with 2 main purposes in mind: first, to more effectively involve the responsible relatives of Aboriginal offenders in the disposition, treatment and supervision of those offenders; and, secondly, to identify through genealogical lines who the responsible relative(s) of a particular offender might be and, in the absence of that person, who is the relative next in line of responsibility for the offender.

Prior to the court process, the responsible relatives of offenders due to appear in court are identified and counselled about a number of factors, including the nature of the offence, the family and community reaction to the offence and family views on what might be a suitable court disposition for the offender. The responsible relatives accompany an offender to court where they are available to provide advice to the presiding magistrate on the circumstances of the offender and advise on a suitable disposition. As well, community leaders sit on the bench with the presiding magistrate and are available to advise the magistrate on the community's reaction to the offence and the community's views on a suitable punishment. Frequently, the sentence of the court following this process involves the offender entering into a good behaviour bond. Conditions of probation might require the offender to accompany a responsible relative to a clan outstation, where the offender would be away from the risk of further conflict with the law.

This program has been extended to other major Aboriginal communities where there are significant criminal activities, particularly Groote Eylandt, Port Keats, Ali Curung and Papunya. This concept is particularly relevant where juvenile offenders are facing the court. For some time now, resident probation and parole officers and juvenile justice officers have been located in those Aboriginal communities experiencing significant social problems. At present, officers are located at Groote Eylandt, Nhulunbuy, Port Keats and Papunya. As well, regional probation and parole officers at Katherine and Tennant Creek regularly visit and service remote Aboriginal communities. The aim is to involve Aboriginal communities more actively in the diversion, treatment and supervision of offenders. These officers in Aboriginal communities have a wider than usual role and liaise closely with other government organisations such as welfare, health and education authorities in order to reduce the problems which lead to young Aboriginals being over-represented in the criminal justice system.

The Aboriginal Community Corrections Officer Scheme is a Northern Territory initiative and may well be the only program of its kind operating in Australia. Aboriginal community corrections officers, who are nominated by the relevant Aboriginal community, work under the supervision of statutory probation and parole officers. They are being trained in probation and parole duties, including supervision

of offenders and the provision of assessments and information for courts and the Parole Board.

Funding for the employment of these officers is being negotiated with the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and community councils at Groote Eylandt. It is hoped a tripartite funding arrangement will eventuate, with equal shares in the salaries being paid by the Northern Territory government, the federal government and the Aboriginal community. This program has been operating at Groote Eylandt since 1985 and was recently expanded to Papunya. In the near future, it is hoped to extend the program to Port Keats, Maningrida and Elcho Island.

Also at Groote Eylandt, and as a result of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Task Force Report, a Coordination Manager has been appointed. This officer will be responsible for liaison between Aboriginal communities and the authorities. The implementation of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Task Force Report is an example of the way we are able to cooperate effectively with the federal government.

A number of the programs which are now in place are also examples of cooperation between the 2 governments: the Supported Accommodation Assistance Package, the Home and Community Care Program, the Family Support Program and the Remote Areas Funding Package. Projects which occur under these programs generally require joint approvals by the relevant federal minister and myself. Generally, cooperation between state and federal officers assists in the resolution of any difficulties. The need for streamlined procedures was discussed in Canberra 2 weeks ago by ministers responsible for Home and Community Care (HACC) programs in all states and the Commonwealth.

There is some overlap between Territory and Commonwealth services, particularly in respect of services to Aboriginals. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs, for instance, is still involved in direct funding of service delivery organisations. An example of such funding is that provided to Anyinginyi in Tennant Creek and Congress in Alice Springs.

Let me put these services in context. They carry about 20% of the primary health care role in the communities they serve. All other health care, of course, is provided by the Territory government. I am not arguing that the organisations should not exist nor that the money should not come into the Territory. I am arguing that the money should be part of the Territory government's overall program and that such services should be consistent with those in Territory Aboriginal communities.

A classic example of how federal government interference can destroy positive programs was the removal of a petrol-sniffing prevention team from central Australia earlier this year. The team had instituted a program regarded as highly successful on some communities and its work was funded jointly by the Territory and federal governments. At a special ministerial conference in Alice Springs, a major theme of an agreement reached between all ministers was that programs and services relating to petrol-sniffing were to be under the control of the relevant Territory or state ministers. The federal government would provide funding, but would not introduce programs without the consent of the appropriate minister.

Soon after that conference, the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs took steps to remove, without my agreement, the jointly-funded team from the Northern Territory. After he deprived the Territory of this petrol-sniffing initiative, the final irony was that he asked the Northern Territory to continue funding the team's activities in other states. He did not consider the possibility of leaving the Territory team in the Centre where it could begin training other teams. His actions deprived the Territory of a valuable resource group and terminated the team's program in the Centre.

I have gone to some lengths in this statement to set out our approach to the provision of services to Aboriginal people. I believe that our approach is correct and that it can and will work. I therefore have some reservations about an inconsistent system-funded approach by the federal government. I am concerned first about the extent of overlap between the services provided. This can lead to a waste of precious money. Secondly, there is a lack of consistency between the services in the qualifications of staff. The third, and in the long run my most significant concern, is that, after the expectations of people are raised, the Commonwealth may simply withdraw its funding, leaving the organisations it has fostered to fail.

Take the example of an organisation which I have talked about before. FORWAARD is an Aboriginal organisation originally established and supported by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to carry out residential rehabilitation programs for Aboriginal people with alcohol-related problems. After some years, the federal government changed its mind about the direction it felt such programs should take and funding was cut. FORWAARD is currently struggling to survive. The Territory does not have the spare resources to step in and fund it to the level previously provided. A needed service will apparently disappear and those who have worked hard for years in its service will be left disillusioned.

I recognise that the Commonwealth has a special responsibility for Aboriginal people throughout Australia. I understand and support the necessity for the introduction of programs specially designed to address their needs and to be relevant to Aboriginal people. I have set out in this statement how this government carries out this task. I ask that the federal government confine itself to developing policies and programs for the overall good of Aboriginal people throughout Australia and that it respect the rights of the Territory's elected government to establish and maintain programs for the delivery of services in our part of Australia.

If the federal government can work with us in this way then, after the next 10 years, we will be able to measure our successful progress. We will be able to point to infant mortality and morbidity statistics and clearly demonstrate our level of success. We have already commenced research projects which have high potential for a positive impact on the health status of Aboriginal people.

In February this year, a project examining lifestyle diseases in Aboriginal communities was commenced. Participants include Dr Kerin O'Dea, a visiting senior research fellow, community dietitians, the Menzies School of Health Research and 2 Aboriginal communities in the Darwin region. The project is undertaking community-based screening to determine the prevalence of

non-communicable lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension and their relationship to diet. This baseline data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of various nutrition education intervention strategies.

A project presently being conducted in central Australia involves the department, Melbourne University and the Menzies School of Health Research. The project aims to determine the extent of diabetes among Aborigines in central Australia and how to implement appropriate intervention strategies. Highly relevant information is being gathered. In another Alice Springs project, the department is working with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress to develop diabetes education and secondary prevention programs for Aboriginal diabetics.

A major drug consumption survey in Aboriginal communities is being undertaken by the Drug and Alcohol Bureau. The survey has sampled drug consumption patterns in town camps, outstations and major communities. To date, the Top End and Katherine regions have been covered and information from central Australia is currently being analysed. Results will provide a sound basis for policy formulation and planning. In addition, we have research work proceeding on hepatitis B vaccinations, a streptococcal control program and Aboriginal immune response.

The value of the research which we conduct and encourage has recently been confirmed by results relating to kava. In collaboration with Aboriginal Health Workers in an Arnhem Land community, researchers from the Menzies School of Health Research have completed a pilot study comparing the health of kava drinkers and non-kava drinkers. This survey work has again put the Territory at the leading edge of research in another area of Aboriginal health. Before undertaking this work, very little study had been available on the effects of excessive kava consumption. While other states have either refused to recognise the potential threat to Aborigines or have failed to take any precautionary steps, the Territory initiated its own kava studies. Preliminary results indicate some causes for concern and demand that further research be undertaken.

Researchers surveyed Aborigines who were users of kava and compared their health with Aborigines not using the substance. Preliminary results show that kava drinkers are more likely to suffer from: general ill-health, including shortness of breath and a characteristic skin rash; malnutrition with 20% loss of body weight, 50% loss of body fat and with other biochemical changes; liver damage with biochemical changes similar to those caused by large doses of alcohol; and other changes in red and white blood cells and platelets. Although more research is required, it is prudent to assume that, on the basis of these results, heavy kava usage can be very harmful to health. Accordingly, Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land should be strongly advised to reduce their consumption of kava as much as they can. People who continue to drink kava are strongly advised to eat an adequate diet.

The implications of this study for kava drinkers and the Territory government are being discussed at the moment. On 23 November this year, representatives of all Arnhem Land communities, including health staff, were brought to Darwin to review the results of the

kava study. These results justify our early cautious approach to the use of kava in the Arnhem Land area. They also indicate that we must continue our research and continue to consult with Aboriginal people.

I have consistently put the view that one of the major determinants in the success of our programs will be the degree to which Aboriginal people are prepared to take decisions for themselves and the degree to which they are prepared to manage their own affairs. I am convinced that, if given the opportunity, the great majority of Aboriginal people will do just that: manage their own affairs. It is our responsibility to assist in getting the basics into place, but it is not possible for the government to create water where there is none, nor to change dietary habits. The government stands ready to introduce programs and to talk and listen to Aboriginal people. We must see Aboriginal people themselves taking the initiative to control their own lives to a much greater extent than at present if we are to continue the work and progress of the last 10 years.

I have presented to honourable members today the complete situation. Honourable members are now in possession of all the facts relevant to Aboriginal health, services and costs. There is no excuse for any member of this House to suggest that he does not appreciate the gravity of the situation. There is a challenge contained in this statement for all honourable members. Members can refute the information I have given them today, but if they will not, or cannot, then they have a responsibility to put these messages to their constituents.

In summary, my statement today has been built around 4 major themes. I have discussed the advantages of self-management for Aboriginal communities. I hope the many Aboriginal communities which have taken up this challenge already will help me spread the word to other communities. It is very important to me that honourable members do not misinterpret the information I have put to them today as a means of denigrating Aboriginal people. Far from it. The fact that so many Aboriginal Territorians have to cope with poor living standards for themselves and their families each day is abhorrent to me. I am fully aware that the circumstances most find themselves in are not of their own doing. The fortitude exhibited by many Aborigines does them credit.

I also wish to applaud the achievements evident in many communities where Aboriginal people have responded to the challenges and opportunities available in our changing world. In several communities I have visited, the confidence and positive outlook of residents is evident. There are several places where immediate handicaps have been overcome or are being resolved. Such places must receive our support and encouragement.

I have talked about the priorities which I set in getting the basics into place. Again, there has been considerable work done in this area already, and this must be acknowledged. The need for programs to be culturally sensitive has been staring us in the face for some time. We have been fortunate in the Territory to have established a tradition in health and community services of supporting people in the field whose good standing and respect in Aboriginal communities is rivalled only by the professional respect given to them by their peers.

I have also tried to make a very careful point about federal involvement in Aboriginal affairs. Insensitive federal actions can result in the creation of false expectations, inconsistencies in dealing with communities and undue pressure on this government's resources. Such matters should be the province of state or Territory governments. The implementation and delivery of services should be left with the level of government best able to work closely with individual communities: the elected government of the Northern Territory.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER

Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and Contingent Liabilities of NT Government

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Actual and Contingent Liabilities of the Northern Territory government, and I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and Contingent Liabilities of NT Government

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

It gives me some pleasure to present this first report to the Northern Territory parliament from its Public Accounts Committee in relation to a specific reference. The reference to investigate the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory government arose as a result of debate in this House on 28 August 1986. The committee was directed by the parliament to report particularly on the liabilities in relation to Yulara, the Alice Springs and Darwin Sheratons and the proposed development on Myilly Point.

The major effort of the committee was spent in coming to terms with the intricacies of the Yulara and Sheraton projects. Given the wide scope of the terms of reference, the committee also agreed to look specifically at the liabilities to government associated with the Beaufort Darwin Centre. In considering the reference, the committee was at all times aware that the terms of reference precluded it from considering the appropriateness or otherwise of the Northern Territory government becoming directly involved in the projects.

Following the dissolution of the parliament and the subsequent election and re-establishment of the Public Accounts Committee, the committee resolved that 30 June 1987 was an appropriate date at which to fix the level of liability for the purposes of this report. Before calling evidence in relation to the projects, the committee considered the paper previously prepared by Miss Elizabeth Nosworthy of Morris, Fletcher and Cross for the benefit of our Treasury officials and which is entitled 'Project Risk Management'. That paper is reprinted in full as an appendix to the report and, in my view, makes very worthwhile reading.

The paper addresses a number of issues ranging from the doctrine of sovereign risk and Crown immunity through to the problems faced by servants of the Crown also serving on the boards of private companies, and problems which

may arise as a result of conflict of duty. The paper addresses other issues such as the ramifications of a Crown default and why, in the eyes of the financial community, it is almost inconceivable that the Crown would default or fail to meet its obligations under the terms of a commercial arrangement.

Miss Nosworthy makes the point that the Territory should enter only into arrangements that it can carry out in conjunction with, and not to the detriment of, its other obligations. She points out the need to minimise the possible future pressures that could be brought from other quarters to back away from any arrangements and which, if done, would put the financial credibility of the Territory in considerable jeopardy. She raises the issue of executive necessity and the common law right of the Territory to back away from any arrangements by the invocation of that right. However, she stresses the inevitable loss of credibility that such actions must incur.

One of the major points in the paper is the legislative inconsistency in various acts of the Territory's statutory corporations which give those bodies the power to borrow, raise and lend money and the power to provide guarantees and indemnities. The paper points out that, whilst there may be good and valid reasons why the various statutes vary so markedly, they provide difficulties to financiers in establishing a number of points not the least of which is the need to establish that any transaction is not ultra vires - that is, beyond the legal authority of the particular corporation. The paper identifies and discusses the various types of arrangements entered into that may constitute a liability, contingent or otherwise, and also discusses the various types of defaults that may arise. Miss Nosworthy stresses the need to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent a default arising and, in the unlikely event of a default arising, that adequate, safe and timely remedy provisions are in place.

One of the major points raised by Miss Nosworthy, and one that particularly caught the attention of the committee, was a need in the interests of proper coordination for a central point through which all proposals involving guarantees and indemnities should be channelled so that all relevant parties could be properly consulted and informed. The concerns the committee felt in this area are reflected both in its conclusions and recommendations. The committee inspected a central register of government guarantees and indemnities held by Treasury and, whilst there is no reason to believe that all guarantees and indemnities are not included in the register, the conclusion drawn and the recommendations made in respect of the upkeep of the register reflect the concern of the committee that all such undertakings are not required to be listed. A particular concern in this respect lies in ministerial executive powers which can allow a minister to give a guarantee or indemnify someone or a thing against a contingency and not report the same to the Treasury. Again, the committee has no reason to believe that such undertakings have been given without Treasury knowledge. However, I would ask all ministers, present and future, to be mindful of the need, in the interests of the good government and financial credibility of the Territory, to advise the Treasury of all such dealings.

Miss Nosworthy finishes her paper with the following statement, a statement with which I am sure my colleagues on the committee agree:

In the long term, the Territory's ability to maintain a creditable stance in the financial community and to continue to meet its commitments without difficulty will be materially enhanced by the establishment of some centralised system of control with respect to the matters referred to in this paper.

Following a briefing session with Miss Nosworthy, the committee submitted a number of formal questions to the Treasury and these, along with the responses, are contained in Appendix I to the report. It can be seen from the questions that the committee addressed itself to 2 major issues: firstly, the overall effects on the Territory's future budget that commitments involving guarantees and indemnities may have and the need to accurately predict and minimise such effects and, secondly, in respect of the particular projects, the need to properly protect the Territory's interests in those projects and to ensure that a situation does not arise that may jeopardise the Territory's good name in the eyes of the financial community.

Turning to the projects in question, being the Yulara development and the Darwin and Alice Springs Sheratons, those of us that have been on the committee since its inception have been fortunate in that we have been able to benefit from what has amounted to 2 inquiries, one before and one after the election. The dynamic nature of the tourist industry and the effect that has on the commercial projections for each of the projects makes it extremely difficult to quantify at any particular time the level of Territory risk and thus our contingent liabilities associated with each of those projects. The benefit of being on the committee since its inception is that we have been able to observe the ever-changing situation and come to a greater understanding of the dynamics involved.

The Yulara project has been the subject of much debate and criticism since it was first announced. Fortunately, in recent months, that criticism has changed from the allegation that it was a white elephant - or pink as the case may be - to the assertion that it is now inadequate to meet the level of tourist demand. In the absence of private equity funds, the Northern Territory government, under the stewardship of Paul Everingham, identified the tourist potential of Ayers Rock, the tourist market and the generator effects a major tourist complex at Ayers Rock would have on other tourist enterprises and the Territory economy in general. The Northern Territory government identified the type of accommodation required, and it took the risk. Today, the Yulara project can be described as nothing less than an outstanding success. The government has recognised the need to provide more for the lower and middle ranges of the market and has initiated an expansion program at Yulara to meet that need.

Make no mistake, Mr Speaker, in developing Yulara, the Territory government embarked on a commercial enterprise. The isolation of Yulara, the total lack of normal services and infrastructure, including worker accommodation, and the uncompromising nature of the environment all led, and continue to lead, to high initial capital costs and relatively higher ongoing costs. The fact is that it costs more to provide a bed at Yulara than it does, say, at Brisbane or, for that matter, Alice Springs or Darwin. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect to pay more for a bed at Yulara than at Brisbane, Alice Springs or Darwin. Probably, a better comparison is to compare the room rates of the Yulara Sheraton with similar accommodation on the Whitsunday Islands. The Whitsunday Islands accommodation is generally 100% more expensive.

The Territory government has an obligation to its people to ensure that their investment in Yulara is as secure as possible. Ultimately, that means that it must ensure that the project is trading as profitably as possible. Upon the collapse of the current arrangements, sole ownership of the Yulara project will be vested in the Territory Insurance Office. A decision will then have to be taken as to whether to sell the project and return to the Northern Territory government its investment, along with interest, or to

retain ownership and continue to share in its profits. I will not, at this stage, attempt to judge which would be the most prudent action but I will say that any sale price will reflect the trading history of the project and, therefore, the better the history, the better the price. I reiterate the point that the Territory taxpayer took the risk and the Territory taxpayer should reap the rewards.

Mr Speaker, of the other 2 projects, the Alice Springs Sheraton is the more simple arrangement. The fact is that we own it and will not be in a position to sell it until its trading history is such that it proves to be profitable and an attractive proposition to a private investor.

The Darwin Sheraton is a more complex arrangement and, of the 3 projects, probably presents the highest risk. The assessed loss of \$23.5m that may be incurred to the Territory by the project is not a dollar loss but an opportunity loss, being the shortfall of the return expected against that which could have been achieved had the funds been invested at 15%. I would point out, however, that, with less than 2 years of trading history, it was difficult to assess the exact position of the project and any increased profitability will markedly affect the suggested \$23.5m loss.

It is my view that, in purely commercial terms, all 3 projects seem to present an acceptable risk. Not included in balance sheet considerations of each of the projects as yet, because of government involvement in the projects, are the other revenues generated and the total effect the projects have on the Northern Territory. In direct revenue to the Commonwealth government, in 1986-87 the projects provided about \$13.5m. The net return to the Territory government was about \$18.5m. The projects earned \$49.5m in tourist revenue and paid \$34.5m in salaries. The total overall effect on the Territory economy is difficult to define but, from those figures, it can be considered to be significant.

In my opinion, the greatest financial risk posed to the Territory by Yulara or the Sheraton projects lies in the Territory government succumbing to the uninformed and ignorant view that we should move to divest ourselves of our involvement in those projects. In the case of Yulara and the Darwin Sheraton, the arbitrary collapse of the current arrangements by the Territory government would make it liable to substantial penalties and put in considerable jeopardy our reputation in the financial marketplace. The premature sale of the Alice Springs Sheraton could be described as nothing less than imbecilic.

There is little point in commenting on the Beaufort Darwin Centre other than to reiterate the committee's conclusion that it is satisfied with the actions being taken to protect the Territory's interests in respect of the capitalised rent and services contribution and the unpaid taxes and charges.

Another concern held by the committee is the emerging cost of the Northern Territory Public Service Superannuation Scheme. The Northern Territory is in a better position than the Commonwealth or the states in that the employer contributions are partially funded on an annual basis. The table at Appendix F of the report paints a grim and graphic picture. It is this type of non-capital liability that causes me the greatest concern.

At first glance, the figures presented at Appendix G, being the loans repayable by the Northern Territory government, may give cause for concern. However, those figures only represent one side of the balance sheet. What is not shown are the assets to which those liabilities relate. To place a value

on the assets held by the Territory by way of houses, schools, power stations, roads, bridges, all manner of constructions and capital items, would be prohibitively expensive and achieve not much more than to warm our insides when looking at our level of indebtedness.

There has been much written and said about the propriety or ethics of governments passing on debts to future generations. The issue is much more complex than the high moral ground adopted by some commentators in deeming all government debt to be sinful. Much of the debt relates to capital investment in infrastructure which is not provided for the sole benefit of one generation of taxpayers but rather provided to enhance the long-term economic prospects of the Territory and to be of continuing benefit for generations to come. The question that poses is: should today's taxpayer be expected to pay for tomorrow's facilities? What should not be allowed to happen is for the debt to outgrow the value of the asset to which it relates or to outlive the useful life of that asset.

An issue to which the committee has not addressed itself and one which I believe would represent a useful exercise is to identify the emerging costs associated with the upkeep and maintenance of ageing assets. The easy view to adopt is that by far the greater part of the Territory infrastructure is relatively new and has a reasonable life expectancy and that therefore such a review is at this stage both premature and unnecessary. Such views will in time lead only to a repeat of the London and New York experiences. In those places, the geriatric nature of such things as gas and sewerage lines has led to extraordinarily expensive maintenance bills and replacement costs so great as to be out of the question. An illustration of the point is that it is not uncommon for repairmen in London, when looking for gas leaks, to find gas running through conduits in the clay, with the pipe long since corroded away. Forward planning and a replacement program instituted no more than 20 years ago would have resolved much of the problem.

The major problem lies with unseen or hidden infrastructure - that is, water, sewerage, underground electricity and, in other places, gas mains. The very fact that they are out of sight tempts government to divert funds away from their upkeep in favour of more visible capital works or maintenance programs. An exercise aimed at fully identifying the contingent liability associated with the replacement of our urban infrastructure would, I believe, provide government both now and in the future with much useful information and allow long-term budgetary consideration to be given to the need to replace those assets.

I previously posed the question as to whether today's generation of taxpayers should be expected to pay for facilities to be enjoyed by tomorrow's. Equally as valid a point is whether or not tomorrow's generation of taxpayers should be expected to pay for the maintenance of the lifestyle or living standard of today's. It is my belief that the answer to both questions is an emphatic no. I believe it to be both immoral and politically corrupt for governments to borrow money for the purposes of falsely propping up the economy and maintaining standards of living when the underlying state of the economy is such that those standards of living could not otherwise be maintained. In times of economic uncertainty, the politically expedient maintenance of living standards through borrowings will surely hasten our progress along the Argentinian road.

Government debt and borrowings have a proper place in the financial administration of the Northern Territory. It is my view that they are not excessive and, if directed towards infrastructural development, could be

allowed to grow. I believe the Public Accounts Committee has an ongoing and useful role to play in monitoring the level of government debt and, specifically, should continue to hold a watching brief in relation to Yulara and the Sheraton projects. It should investigate the options available to government in relation to the rapidly growing superannuation debt. It should identify, in a preliminary manner, the emerging liability associated with the replacement of ageing infrastructure and, in general, it should ensure that government debt is kept to manageable proportions.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to express publicly my thanks to Miss Elizabeth Nosworthy for her assistance, to Mr Otto Alder for his ongoing cooperation throughout the investigation, to the staff of the committee and, finally, to my honourable colleagues on the committee for the bipartisan manner in which the question was approached and discussed. I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the chairman of the committee has given the House the benefit of his views. I believe that the report stands on its own and I certainly would appreciate comments from members of the House. I am sure other committee members would also appreciate such comment rather than reiteration of the contents of the report.

The matter of public debt and indebtedness is an ongoing issue. Following the budget and the Auditor-General's report, the committee can investigate these matters without requiring further specific references from the Assembly. Having worked with the other members of the committee, I am confident in saying that they have a very high level of interest in this matter of public indebtedness and that there will be future reports to the House on these matters.

The other matter I would like to raise is one which I would like to take up with the Chief Minister who, unfortunately, is not here. I would like to ask him whether or not the Secretary of his department has been instructed to survey government departments on the cost of providing information to the Public Accounts Committee. It has been put to me that the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister has been surveying government departments in relation to the cost of supplying information to the Public Accounts Committee. If that is the case, I would like the Chief Minister to say so. If it is not the case, it is clear that I have been misinformed. A response from the Chief Minister will clear the matter up quite nicely.

I have no difficulty with anybody surveying any government department on the cost of providing information to the Public Accounts Committee. However, if it is being done in some clandestine way, I would be obliged to ask why the information is being sought. If it is being sought purely for information purposes, that is fine. If it is being sought to be used as ammunition for the destruction of the Public Accounts Committee, I think that this House would like to know about it as well. However, I look forward to the Chief Minister's reassurance of his commitment to the Public Accounts Committee and a reassurance that all of his ministers are committed to the purposes of the Public Accounts Committee which, basically, is making for more accountable administration in the Northern Territory.

With those few words, I would like to indicate that I would appreciate hearing any views on the report from members of the House. It has been a very interesting exercise. I have enjoyed working with the members of the committee. It has been a personal education for myself and I am sure that, in

the future, the committee will be providing the House with reports on other matters.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the second report of the Public Accounts Committee and I must say I was surprised that the committee managed to find the amount of common ground that it did. The important aspect of any report is its conclusions and I believe that the conclusions are worthy of reading into Hansard so that we can finally put to rest some of the claims and counterclaims that have been fairly common in this House over the last 3 years when we have talked about government liabilities.

The committee was satisfied that 'given the government's policy to support the Yulara and Sheraton projects, the arrangements entered into in respect of each of the projects provide adequate protection of the government's interest in all of those projects'. The committee also noted that 'the potential for loss in each of the 3 projects is limited to the amount by which any sale of the projects is insufficient to meet government outlays'. The committee is 'generally satisfied that most public sector liabilities involving government guarantees and indemnities are properly recorded in a central register, but is concerned that all may not be recorded and that appropriate mechanisms may not be in place that in all circumstances would prevent an unwitting default by government'. It is 'confident that the Territory debt in respect of those projects considered by the committee is not such at this stage that it would impact seriously on a future government's ability to service adequately the needs of the Northern Territory. However, whilst recognising that the Northern Territory Superannuation Scheme is partially funded, the committee is concerned that the emerging costs associated with this scheme may impact unreasonably upon future Territory budgets'.

In his review, the chairman commented on the call by some members of this Assembly for the government to divest itself of its financial obligations in the Yulara and Sheraton properties. I must say I agree with the chairman that, for the government to follow this course of action would simply mean that the government would not under any account recoup its moneys. The committee noted that Yulara is performing well and that the government's commitment could be substantially reduced and, whilst the Alice Springs Sheraton has had a slow start, it was drawn to the committee's attention that, in recent months, its performance has picked up and is looking much better in this financial year.

This government was put in the position in the early 1980s of having to go out into the southern marketplace to find developers to invest and build 5-star hotels in the Northern Territory. There was a reason for this at the time, which was that the tourist industry was constantly telling the Northern Territory government that it did not have the quality of accommodation that was needed and expected in the marketplace - certainly in the overseas marketplace and, I believe, in a growing percentage of the local Australian domestic market. I can remember well talking to groups like Travelodge, Hilton Hotels, Regent and Quality Inns in Queensland and, apart from the Hilton group, nobody was interested in building in the Northern Territory. Everybody was interested in building in Sydney and Melbourne particularly and, in some cases, on the Gold Coast itself. I think Hilton was the only hotel group that showed any interest at the time and, if it had not been because of some internal difficulties within its own company, I believe that the Hilton Hotel group would have built in Alice Springs. In any event, Sheraton eventually stepped into the breach and built in Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory government has had to lead private industry by starting the ball rolling and getting investment moving in the Northern Territory. Anybody who had been away from the Northern Territory for the last 4 or 5 years would be stunned if he walked around places like Alice Springs and Darwin and, to a lesser extent, Katherine and Tennant Creek, to see the amount of construction that has taken place. The changes in the hotel industry are tremendous. The fact that Four Seasons was invited to participate in the Yulara project at Ayers Rock has resulted, of course, in expansion for that company to a property that has been built in Alice Springs and a commitment to take over and manage properties in Tennant Creek and Katherine. Of course, that has helped an emerging force in tourism in the Northern Territory, the Aboriginal groups, to come into their own at places like Cooinda.

The staff that is employed, the wages that are spent and the taxes that are paid, of course, all contribute greatly to the Northern Territory economy. If it had not been for the Northern Territory government's foresight in encouraging people to come to work in the Northern Territory and to assist financially to build these magnificent hotels, I am sure we would not be where we are today. The fact that our domestic market has grown from around 280 000 visitors in 1980 to nearly 750 000 in 1987 should certainly be noted.

There has been comment of recent times with regard to low-cost accommodation and budget-style accommodation in the Northern Territory and I think we should lay that to bed as quickly as we can because the simple fact of life today is that you cannot build a low-cost motel because of construction costs. When we start talking about rates at such places as Yulara, as the chairman already mentioned, we should compare them to places like the Whitsundays and we should think of places like Yulara as island resorts. Instead of being surrounded by a sea of water, they are surrounded by a sea of sand. Requirements must be freighted in from 300 or 400 miles away and whether it is by road or rail is irrelevant because the cost is high either way. You cannot compare the cost of operating a property in the centre of Australia with the cost of operating a property that is 50 miles out of Sydney.

The Public Accounts Committee is an interesting committee to serve on. I found it very informative and I congratulate our efficient chairman, the other members of the committee and, especially, our secretary and his staff for the help and guidance that they gave me personally. I commend the report.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this report, I would like to place on record my thanks for the work of Mr David Rice, our secretary, and Ms Judy Cumberland our research assistant, for the work that they did on the preparation of the report and in following up the many queries that we had.

We all have our rather humorous little stories to tell of the various attempts to establish the finer points of what contingent liabilities actually are. We discussed whether the purchase of a racehorse could be a contingent liability. However, we managed to reach a conclusion as to what contingent liabilities are and eventually to find ourselves at one with the Auditor-General. That taxed his powers of, shall I say, endurance and I would like to put on the record my thanks to him because he certainly provided us with considerable technical assistance by explaining the terms and guiding our thinking so that we were tackling the issues in the way that the House had instructed us to do.

Mr Speaker, I believe we were extremely constrained by the fact that it was laid down that we were not to look at the policy issues involved in the various projects and, to my mind, this made some of our recommendations appear a little hollow in that, in one way, we were looking at the aftermath rather than the event. Of the payments that were talked of earlier, the actual non-project payments which return to government, it has been stated that some \$32m is returned to government because of the various projects and those are detailed in Appendix H of the report. It shows that there is an essential difference between a project which is commissioned by a government or that a government actually develops and a private enterprise development.

It is quite justified, in fact it is essential, that these off-site project costs and benefits be taken into account in the total equation so that the actual benefit to the economy as a whole can be seen rather than simply the benefit to the project. In that regard, it is unfortunate that we were unable to put in a disbenefit which probably should appear in relation to that particular project, which is the amount of taxes not collected. As honourable members all know, the whole initial financing deal for Yulara was based on a system of avoidance of taxation. I believe that that is no longer an acceptable method of financing such a project and that there have been some changes in the taxation industry to alter those procedures marginally so that it was clearly a case of avoidance and not evasion. There are costs to the federal government because it is not collecting those taxes. The \$32m or \$13.5m that we describe as a benefit to the Commonwealth government should be offset by the amount that it did not collect.

The committee examined various projects, the main ones obviously being Yulara, the Alice Springs and Darwin Sheratons and the Beaufort. It became clear to me that there was an essential difference between Yulara and the other projects. Yulara was established in an area where there was very little infrastructure and where there was agreement that existing infrastructure had to be removed so that the park could develop. Whilst the old motels around the base of Ayers Rock had fond memories for many of us, from the rather wild and woolly days a number of years ago, they were not an acceptable continuing component of a national park of the standard of the Uluru Katatjuta National Park. It was necessary for something else to be developed.

For the government to prime the pump to establish new facilities would have been a justifiable use of funds, provided the outlays were not crippling to the government of the day or to Territorians of the future. We on this side of the House have complained year after year - and it is all recorded in Hansard - about the amounts of money that have been paid out in some years for the Yulara development. They were quite spectacularly high. We felt then and we feel now that the burden has been a particularly harsh one for Territorians. It appears now that projections are tracking fairly well according to the actuality of the project and that, if those projections can be maintained, the annual expenditure of government funds will be reduced very substantially. We are hoping that, after 1996, we will have reached an equity position in the project such that we will, in the event of a sale, at least recoup in cash terms the amount which the government has expended on the project. That is an example of pump priming.

Whilst I have referred to government expenditure on Yulara as pump priming, it was most unfortunate that investors did not see it that way. It is very evident to me, having spoken to people who were government ministers at the time, that investors saw Yulara as a precedent. When they came to the Territory, they said: 'That is what you did for Yulara. We want to develop another project and we want a better deal than you gave the people at Yulara'.

They began their negotiations from that position and that was the basis for the development of the Sheratons in Alice Springs and Darwin. There is no way that the situation in relation to the Sheratons in Alice Springs and Darwin can be likened to the Yulara situation.

Yulara was pump-priming. In Alice Springs and Darwin, there was already an emerging first-class accommodation industry. The casino in Alice Springs was already operating and one of its big problems was that it did not have enough accommodation. The casino in Darwin was already operating and the government was assisting the Beaufort. By assisting the Sheratons in Darwin and Alice Springs, the government did little more than distort the market. We provided assistance to hotels at the top of the market, enabling them to reduce their rates. The result was that establishments catering to lower levels in the market, such as the Gap Hotel in Alice Springs, were squeezed and forced to lower their rates further. Luckily for the Gap Hotel, it obtained Northern Territory Development Corporation loans which were a bit softer than those commercially available. That enabled the Gap Hotel to survive but, further down, was the average small businessman. This is the bloke who received no assistance from the government, the bloke who risked his life savings in a development such as the Mt Nancy Hotel, the Desert Rose or any such fine establishment which is often family-operated and family-owned. Such people were being squeezed because the 4-star outfits like the Sheratons were trading on room rates in the 2- to 3-star range. The hotels in the 2- to 3-star market squeezed themselves down into the 1-star market and that had the effect of squeezing the small operators, the people who did not receive any benefits. They are the ones who have suffered and, to an extent, they have been the ones who have subsidised the Sheratons at Alice Springs and Darwin.

The superannuation scheme is another matter that, as our chairman said, is of great concern to us. Currently, we have something like a \$120m shortfall between the assets and liabilities in our superannuation account. Our projections show that that shortfall will increase by \$20m per year into the foreseeable future. Our shortfall will go from \$140m to 160m to \$180m to \$200m and so on. It is a very bad business and we have no magic solution for it. It is a problem that exists right around Australia. Part of it relates to the demographic changes that are occurring and another part to the competitive situation between different states in terms of the types of superannuation schemes that they develop. It looks as if we are following the same road as the states, albeit some years behind. I hope that it is something that the committee, along with the government, can direct its attention to in the future in an attempt to find some way of at least stabilising the situation before it gets to the cataclysmic stage that it has reached in places like New South Wales and, to some extent, in Victoria and Queensland.

Mr Speaker, with those few remarks, I thank the other members of the committee for the cooperative way in which we were able to address the matter. I know that there were times when we had some fundamental disagreements. However, we did not allow those to deflect us from what we were trying to achieve. We were able to work our way around them and find a means of producing a report on which we could find general agreement. For that reason, I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I would like to commend members of the Public Accounts Committee for their efforts in producing this report. It is one of the early reports in the life of the committee. No doubt, it is one of many reports yet to come on various topics over the next few years. I was involved in the first Public Accounts

Committee which was established and therefore I have some appreciation of the interesting work that such a committee does and the hours of work that are put in by members if they take their job seriously, as I am sure they do. The committee advises this House from time to time by means of reports on a range of matters. In fact, this is a fairly historic day in terms of the tabling of this report. The subject of contingent liabilities would rate very highly on the political agenda in this Assembly over the past 8 to 10 years. It would certainly rate highly along with the subjects such as land rights which have generated more debate than any other subject.

I would like to start by giving a few quotes from Hansard over the years, particularly from the opposition, on the subject of the government's alleged contingent liabilities. On 28 August 1985, the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr B. Collins, spoke about contingent liabilities. At the time, he was speaking to a statement delivered to the House on the subject by the then Chief Minister, Mr Tuxworth. I quote: 'The inescapable conclusion is that the government has plunged the Northern Territory into a dire financial crisis'. He went on to say: 'The truth is that the Northern Territory has an actual deficit of \$250m'. He further said: 'The ratbag economic management of this government will put us into hock for the next 20 years'. Another quote: 'The fear that I raised again and again in this Assembly, that this government was recklessly mortgaging the interests of future Territory governments for the next 20 years, has been proven true with a vengeance'. Another: 'We are now in the Sheratons up to our neck in the same way that we were up to our necks in the casinos and Yulara. What a mess!'

To quote from the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr Smith, in August 1985: 'The government has failed to do its homework and that is why it is in the mess that it is in. That is why the people of the Northern Territory are in the mess that they are in and that is why we will continue to be in that mess for the next 7 or 8 years as we bail ourselves out of these ridiculous deals that we have entered into'. The member spoke of the situation getting out of hand completely and of the government getting deeper and deeper into a financial quagmire over contingent liabilities.

In August 1986, Mr B. Collins said: 'The deals were ridiculous and the Northern Territory ends up the loser'. He also said: 'When these contingent and actual liabilities of the government come home to roost, Territorians will find out that our financial situation is serious'. He went on: 'The government has a hidden deficit of over \$200m'. That is interesting, Mr Speaker, because it was \$250m in another remark at the same sittings by the same speaker. He also said: 'In tight circumstances, the \$8.7m allocated to Yulara, the \$5.1m for the Alice Springs Sheraton and the \$3.4m for the Darwin Sheraton comprise a growing millstone around Territory taxpayers' necks'.

Mr Speaker, I put those few quotes together once again to demonstrate my point that the fuss made about contingent liabilities in this Assembly was really quite dramatic. In debates urging the government to agree to the establishment of a public accounts committee, such a committee was hailed as a panacea to obtain information about the Territory's financial affairs which the opposition claimed it could never get hold of. We were told that only a public accounts committee would enable opposition members to question public servants, to have access to documents and to have access to expert advice which they otherwise would not have on this very subject of contingent liabilities. We now have our Public Accounts Committee which has done its work very thoroughly. It has not done it in any hurried way. The reference that it received was a very direct reference by motion of this Assembly. The committee was not bound to shorten its deliberations in any way and was provided with the resources to call people before it.

All members of the Assembly on the committee have had the opportunity to question witnesses. They have sought and received whatever documents they required. They have listened to the experts. The 2 opposition members on the committee have spoken and have had the opportunity to dissociate themselves from the report and to state whether they felt that the chairman had in some way misrepresented the committee's view. I listened to what both had to say and I did not hear either say anything which detracted from the report's contents. One would certainly have expected them to indicate if they had any problems with the report. There is therefore no further excuse for the opposition to make any more preposterous statements in this House, which we have heard so frequently over the years, about contingent liabilities. No longer can any member in this House hide behind the words: 'We cannot find out the facts and therefore it must be a financial disaster'.

I would like to read briefly from the conclusions of the report, referring particularly to the major projects in the Territory, the Yulara resort and the Sheratons. I refer to page 28 where the committee has concluded that it:

is satisfied that, given the government's policy to support the Yulara and Sheraton projects, the arrangements entered into in respect of each of the projects provide adequate protection of the government's interest in each of those projects;

notes that the potential for loss in each of the 3 projects is limited to the amount by which any sale of the projects is insufficient to meet the government's outlays;

...

is confident that the Territory debt in respect of those projects considered by the committee is not such at this stage that it could impact seriously on a future government's ability to service adequately the needs of the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: What about the preceding paragraph?

Mr PERRON: You can put the preceding paragraph in if you wish.

Mr Speaker, my point is made. The committee is satisfied that the government has not acted irresponsibly in managing the Territory's finances in those projects. The report is a bipartisan one, as all reports by committees of this Assembly are supposed to be. In effect, it says that the Northern Territory government has not thrown its money down the drain and that the Sheraton and Yulara support arrangements, including payouts of many millions of dollars per year, are not irresponsible, not disasters, not ridiculous deals, and that the projects are not millstones around Territory taxpayers' necks. I hope this report means that we will never again hear in this House those phrases and a hundred similar ones that we have heard here over the years. If members opposite want to run that line again at some time in the future, in regard to the activities covered by this report, they will be contradicting the conclusions of this bipartisan report which has now been tabled although it has yet to be formally accepted by the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I want now to touch on a couple of points raised by the member for Stuart. In regard to the tax benefits which are obtained by developers of large projects such as Yulara, he pondered whether Australians might be losing in terms of government revenue. Of course, there is no loss to Australia. In the long term, the Commonwealth Commissioner of Taxation, who approves these

projects before they actually go ahead, makes up his own mind about whether or not he feels that the country is losing revenue that it justly deserves. In projects like Yulara, there is a stipulated time period, which I think is 10 years, during which the financial arrangements go through a complete cycle. Initial benefits to investors are superseded as a project becomes profitable and taxes are required to be paid. The Commissioner of Taxation can determine an arrangement in which taxes forgone in the early years of a project are collected in due course. In addition, projects like Yulara and the Sheratons generate tax revenue simply through their existence. Honourable members will see that an appendix to the report refers to an indicative level of taxation, paid through various types of tax, to both the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments as a result of those projects being developed.

The member for Stuart also referred to superannuation which is a most serious matter for this House. As honourable members are aware, the tragedy is that a change of federal ministers led to a reversal of the Commonwealth's decision to provide the Northern Territory with the capacity to pay in the context of our ability to accumulate funds for superannuation under the Territory superannuation scheme. The PAC report shows that, since then, the Territory government has endeavoured to set aside funds each year as a contribution towards partially funding the accumulating liability of the government. That does not solve the problem. We cannot put aside \$50m a year, which is the rate at which the liability of the Northern Territory is accumulating. We are in that unfortunate situation solely as a result of the attitude of the federal government towards the Northern Territory. It came about during that period of vindictive treatment which the Northern Territory endured from the Commonwealth.

Mr Ede: Tell me 1 state that was funded.

Mr PERRON: The member for Stuart says that our situation is the same as that of the states. The states are in their present plight as a result of administering their own purses for the past 100-odd years. On 1 July 1978, the Northern Territory government inherited a situation that had been largely created by the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth wanted an unfunded employee superannuation scheme, so be it. In the light of experience interstate and adopting a responsible attitude, the Northern Territory government said that it would be prudent, given that the decision was being made then rather than 100 years ago, to make its superannuation scheme for its employees a funded one.

The situation is not unlike the motor accidents compensation and workers' compensation schemes. The Northern Territory government made the choice to fully fund both schemes. New South Wales and Victoria are in a terrible plight with astronomical accumulated unfunded liabilities. In Victoria's case, this is because of its multi-heralded revolutionary work care scheme, which is a disaster. Although I have not heard a recent report, New South Wales has an enormous accumulated liability for its third-party motor vehicle insurance scheme because, prior to an election some years ago, it cut third-party premiums by a very handsome sum - no doubt to help Mr Wran at the time - and moved to an unfunded scheme. I am sure honourable members will know what that means. Coping with those debts certainly will be a horrendous prospect for future Australians living in those states. The Northern Territory raises 15% of its own revenue, a figure we hear often enough from the opposition, yet the federal government turned around and told us to fund our own superannuation scheme. It did not take into account the fact that we had set up all the arrangements with the Commonwealth prior to that. It was simply the way it had to be. I am pleased that the member for Stuart raised

the matter because it is a very important one. It is one that will rebound in the Northern Territory from time to time for years to come and the more years that we go down the line, the worse the situation will become at \$50m a year compounded.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a longer speech than I would have done if the minister who spoke previously had not done so. I would like to congratulate the Public Accounts Committee on its first report on a specific reference. Without wanting to sound patronising, it is an encouraging first report. I still believe that the Public Accounts Committee has some way to go and, quite clearly, it will go in that direction hopefully as it gains more experience and as it is given greater prominence in the parliamentary system within the Northern Territory.

In other jurisdictions, public accounts committees have a seminal role in the operation of government that we have not achieved as yet in the Northern Territory. We still tend to see the Public Accounts Committee as being over there, on the side, whereas in the Commonwealth and state parliaments, where they have been in existence for some time, they are very much up-front and centre. Clearly, that is because of the recognition and the realisation in those jurisdictions that they need a quasi-independent parliamentary group which is able to examine, as far as possible on a non-partisan basis, the operations of government in specified areas. Public accounts committees have performed extremely valuable tasks at both the Commonwealth and the state levels. Over a period, they have saved respective governments millions of dollars and, of course, that is one of their vital functions. They have also played a very valuable watchdog role.

As I said, I do not believe that our Public Accounts Committee has gained that sort of credibility as yet, but we certainly have come a long way in the 18 months or so since it was established and I think even members opposite, even the honourable member for Fannie Bay who fought a major rearguard action for years ...

Mr Perron: Very successfully too.

Mr SMITH: Successfully, yes. One must say he fought for years to prevent a public accounts committee being established. He would probably now say that, on balance, it is a useful parliamentary committee to have. Particularly, he would have to say that given that it has presented a report which, in his view, has settled the question of contingent liabilities for all time. I will come to that in a minute because I do not hold quite that view.

It is important that the PAC should examine its operations and, in the next 6 to 12 months, determine for itself how it can play a more up-front role. I must say that one of the things that has disappointed me about its operations so far is the limited number of public hearings that it has held. I think that we all envisaged that it would have more public hearings than it has held so far. During my short time on the committee, I know that there were good reasons why many of its hearings were held in private because, at the time, the committee was receiving briefings from public servants.

However, I must state again a basic principle that needs to apply to this committee: whenever possible, it should hold its meetings in public so that the public has access to the operations of the committee, can hear the evidence that the committee is obtaining and see the basis on which the committee is making its decisions. If there is a single suggestion that I could put to the committee about how it can gain credibility, it is by

increasing its visibility and holding public meetings where possible. I would urge the committee to examine that matter in its operations over the next few months.

Turning specifically to the comments of the member for Fannie Bay, particularly his assertion that contingent liabilities had been put to bed, I am sure he quoted out of context from some comments made by the previous Leader of the Opposition and myself. What I think he has conveniently forgotten is that the original arrangements entered into for both Yulara and the Alice Springs Sheraton in particular bear only a slight resemblance to the arrangements that are in place at present.

For example, at Yulara, we have had the situation where, in 1985 from memory, there was an extensive purchase of assets by the government to reduce what was an increasing level of government debt at that time. That was certainly not anticipated in the original proposals. This year, despite the fact that, on all the evidence, Yulara is booming, again we had to purchase more assets there to reduce the level of our ongoing interest debt in that project. It is not accurate for the honourable minister to say that contingent liabilities is a dead issue when, in the Yulara example, there have had to be 2 extensive revisions of the original proposition that was put together and the government has had to enter into discussions with the other partners in that particular project to renegotiate our payments. What particularly concerns me about the present Yulara situation is that Yulara is bursting at the seams yet, each year so far, the amount of money that we have put into it has been increased and, as I have said, we have had to buy assets twice in the last 3 years to reduce our yearly commitments. On the strength of that, it would seem to me that there was something basically wrong with the original financing agreement that this government entered into in respect of the Yulara project.

What is interesting, and it is certainly something that I want to pursue in a constructive manner, hopefully in these sittings, is whether that \$17m investment in Yulara in the next 12 months will prove to be a means by which the level of the government's commitment to the Yulara project will be reduced. I hope that that will be the case. There is no doubt that Yulara has been a great success in terms of attracting tourists and providing a tourist facility but, equally, there is no doubt in my view that our original commitment to that project has not been a great success and there have been a large number of problems with it. Whether the government has come to grips with that and whether our commitment will actually reduce over the next few years, I do not know and only time will tell. However, I think it is a very relevant question indeed whether the \$17m investment will reduce the level of government commitment to it or whether we will see a further increase. If that question is not answered in this debate, hopefully it will be answered at some time during the course of these sittings.

The second project where there has been a major change in government thinking in respect of financing is the Alice Springs Sheraton. In the original proposition for the Alice Springs Sheraton, no one envisaged that we would end up as the owner of the place, as in effect we are now according to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. That is something that has resulted from the arrangements that were entered into and was not envisaged at the time. The concerns that were being expressed by the former Leader of the Opposition and myself in August 1985 were legitimate concerns about the type of financial involvement the government had in the Yulara and Alice Springs Sheraton projects. Those legitimate concerns have been realised to the extent that the government has had to renegotiate extensively the deals that were entered into originally.

Mr Perron: But we haven't lost the money.

Mr SMITH: We have not lost the money? I will come to that.

The prediction for the Darwin Sheraton indicates that there is likely to be a net loss to the Northern Territory government of \$23.5m on current projections. It says that the loss is a shortfall in interest which could have been expected had the government invested the funds in an interest-bearing deposit at 15% per annum and that, of course, gets back to the question of whether you determine your losses by the amount you put in or by the interest accumulated over a period of years. Perhaps we will never reach broad agreement on that particular issue.

It is significant that the Public Accounts Committee has assessed that there will be a net loss of \$23.5m in October 1996 on the Darwin Sheraton project. That is at page 21, paragraph 3. Again, that was not the original projection that was put forward by this government when it entered into the Darwin Sheraton deal. The original projection was that, in October 1996, the government would get its money back on that particular deal. Again, in 3 out of 3 projects, the original estimates that this government made of its financial obligations have not been met and that is a subject of some concern. It is the reason why, on 28 August 1985 and at other times, both the then Leader of the Opposition and myself made some quite stringent remarks about the original deals entered into by the government on those projects.

I accept that the projections, particularly for Yulara, are much more promising but they have been reached at a considerable cost to the taxpayer of the Northern Territory and certainly, and this is the key point, at a much greater cost than was originally anticipated. When we consider that the support for those 3 projects this year is around the \$17m mark, that too is a considerable cost in our very tight economic times that the taxpayers of the Northern Territory are meeting.

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: You can have a go in a minute, if you like.

The point that I am making is that legitimate concerns were expressed by the opposition in 1985 and 1986, and that those legitimate concerns have been borne out in the extensive renegotiation of the original deals that were entered into. Of course, as a throwaway line, the honourable minister referred briefly to the Alice Springs casino. If ever there was a case of a bad deal entered into by the Northern Territory government, it is the casinos where we have forgone about \$10m in gambling revenue over the last 3 or 4 years and where, for about 3 years, it cost us more to administer them than we were obtaining in gambling tax. That was a great deal! I am sure that the members opposite have enough grace to accept that, on that particular issue, they were wrong. The point is that the government was receiving liquor and payroll tax when Federal Hotels was there. It was also in receipt of gambling tax which, for 3 years, it was not receiving from the new operators. That is the point of that particular exercise.

In one sense, the Northern Territory government has been lucky or, if you want to be positive about it, it has placed itself very well to participate in the present tourist boom. Northern Territorians have a great deal to thank Paul Hogan for, in particular, because of the extremely effective free advertising that he undertook for Australia and, hopefully, we in the Northern Territory consider ourselves part of Australia. Of course, having positioned

himself very cleverly with his free advertisement, he then went on to make a killing for both himself and Australia with Crocodile Dundee. Together with terrorism in Europe, the marketing efforts of our own Tourist Commission and the value of the dollar, that has contributed greatly to the tourism boom in the Northern Territory.

The projections that we had when we set these projects in place were somewhat conservative and that has been one of the saving graces in the whole exercise. I conclude by saying that, if the original tourism predictions when those proposals were put together had pertained, the financial position in respect of the projects would not be as rosy as it is today. Of course, that is not to say that there are no longer problems with those particular projects. Indeed, the problems, particularly those in respect of the Sheratons, have been identified in the report that we have in front of us.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the committee for the excellent work that it has done over the past 12 months or so. The report that we have before us today is very comprehensive and puts the lie to all of that harping criticism that we have heard from members of the opposition for the past several years in relation to contingent liabilities. The report refers to the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory government. Over the past several years, we have heard continual criticism in this House in relation to this matter. We heard it again today from the Leader of the Opposition - the same old complaints, rehashed and rehashed.

Mr Speaker, let me refer to page 12 of the report under the heading of 'Introduction'. I quote from the report:

Anticipating spin-off benefits to the Territory economy in tourism-related investment, the government accelerated private involvement in advance of the normal course of events by offering some underwriting support. In each case, it was intended that the investment be recoupable in the long term. The government believed that promoting the Territory's tourism industry in such a direct way allowed the Territory to participate in the tourism boom where it otherwise could have been directed elsewhere.

That is the tourism boom in which we are caught up today and which will continue. If it were not for Yulara and the Sheratons, we would not be in a position to take advantage of that very boom. We have been listening to those members opposite criticise continually and there would not be a manager among the whole lot of them. The amount of management expertise on the opposition benches could be written on the back of a postage stamp.

Mr Ede: You wouldn't know.

Mr SETTER: I have been listening to you speak in this House for the last 3 years. I repeat that the amount of management expertise among those on the opposition benches could be written on the back of a postage stamp.

Mr Ede: We are not into price setting but we are pretty good at most other things.

Mr SETTER: You are not into very much at all - and management in particular.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask all members to make their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, there is no doubt at all that the government's entrepreneurial policy, that was established some years ago by the Everingham government, has been more than vindicated.

The report, to which the member for Stuart contributed as a member of the committee, says on page 16 under the heading of 'Liabilities': 'Contingent liabilities, on the other hand, do not become liabilities until the occurrence of some specified future event. If this future event does not occur, the contingent liability never becomes a liability'. What the opposition has been talking about for several years is a hypothetical situation, a situation that might occur if the whole economy collapsed. The liability is not a contingent liability unless things go wrong. In this particular case, the Yulara project, in particular, has been a resounding success.

Some years ago, the Everingham government made the conscious decision that, if this Territory was to go anywhere, the government had to go out on a limb. It had to make the conscious decision to encourage investment, particularly in the tourist industry, because that was the industry that offered the greatest potential for development at the time. Unfortunately, it was a very difficult job to encourage private entrepreneurs to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in a project at Ayers Rock in the middle of the desert - a project that may have some chance of success at some time in the future. It was necessary for the government to encourage the development of that project by the injection of some government funds. I repeat that that decision has been more than vindicated because the occupancy rate at the moment is around the 90% mark.

Mr Ede: What about the Sheraton?

Mr SETTER: I am talking about the Yulara project. There are peaks and troughs but, certainly during the peak season, occupancy was around the 90% mark. In fact, confidence in that particular project is such that the government has decided to develop further infrastructure at Yulara. It is public knowledge that that will be commencing early in the new year and will proceed for the next couple of years.

When we talk about developing tourism and creating opportunity, what we really need to do is to provide accommodation. Without accommodation, there will be no tourists. When tourist numbers in the Territory were 200 000 per annum about 5 or 6 years ago, there was very little accommodation and certainly no accommodation of the standard that is required by international tourists. The decision was made to develop 5-star accommodation in the knowledge that it would take some time before those projects would become viable. Nevertheless, the Everingham government of the day had the vision for the future and the projections tell us - and the members of the committee would be fully aware of this - that, certainly by the late 1990s, we will be out of the woods and going very strongly in all of those projects.

There is no doubt that the Everingham government had that vision for the future and we can see around us now the benefits of decisions that were taken in those days. Nevertheless, all we have heard from members opposite is continual criticism. Even though the opposition has had members on the committee for the last 12 months or so and is fully aware of the so-called contingent liabilities and how the government has constructed its finances, it continues to complain. We heard such complaint only a few minutes ago from the Leader of the Opposition.

The other thing that has not been mentioned is the multiplier effect that the construction of the various facilities has had on the economy of the Northern Territory. We are not talking only about 4 hotels and the other infrastructure at Yulara. We are talking about an enormous multiplier effect on the economy of the Northern Territory over the past 6 years or so. We have seen construction companies, subcontractors and suppliers involved in this development. Where would they be without the enormous funds that have been invested in these projects. Now that the projects are realised in bricks and mortar, accommodating all of the tourists who come to enjoy themselves in the Northern Territory, we find that collectively they employ approximately 650 people. All of those people need to be housed, clothed and fed. The hotels themselves inject an enormous amount of money into the economy of the Northern Territory through the suppliers who supply the food and drinks and who service the laundries and so on.

There are benefits to the shopkeepers in the central business districts of Darwin and Alice Springs. The tourists patronise the restaurants and the various shops. They use the tourist infrastructure such as tours and other services. This all contributes to building up the tourism infrastructure in the Northern Territory. As we well know, tourism is one of the major income-earners in the Northern Territory and is developing at an enormous rate. In fact, I understand that, by 1991, we will have over a million tourists. Let us hope that comes to pass.

Mr Speaker, on page 28 of the report, under the heading 'Conclusions', the committee, on which there are 2 members from the opposition, indicates that it 'is satisfied that, given the government's policy to support the Yulara and Sheraton projects, the arrangements entered into in respect of each of the projects provide adequate protection of the government's interests in each of those projects'. There it is in black and white. There is a statement to which members of the opposition have agreed.

Let us have a look at some of the other difficulties that have been faced by the Northern Territory in putting this plan together. We have heard considerable debate in this House about the need to upgrade the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. That is part of the total concept of developing tourism and yet we have seen that, in respect of the project on the north side of the Darwin Airport, the federal government pulled the rug out from under us after spending \$20m-odd. All we have is a slab of dirt and we are still trying to convince the federal government of the need to develop that particular infrastructure.

We have an abysmal situation in Alice Springs: a tiny airport terminal that is not much bigger than this Chamber. On a daily basis, you would see half a dozen large jet aircraft standing out on the tarmac and the facility itself absolutely chock-a-block with tourists. Is that creating a good impression of tourism in the Northern Territory? Not at all. What do we hear members opposite say about that? Absolutely nothing. The member for Stuart lives in Alice Springs and I have not heard him say anything at all about the development of the airport terminal in Alice Springs. Why doesn't he speak to his federal member, Mr Snowdon?

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The comments from the member for Jingili in respect of the Alice Springs Airport and comments that may or may not have been made by opposition members are essentially irrelevant to the motion before the Chair.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is rather a silly contention from the member for MacDonnell. What the member for Jingili is rightfully saying is that the development of the airports in the Northern Territory is an integral part of the infrastructure being developed for tourism. He is very rightly pointing out to honourable members that the silence from the honourable members opposite has only added to the dilemma of the Northern Territory. If they had been more vocal in their support for the building of the airports, perhaps the Northern Territory could have furthered its case a little more successfully with the federal government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I would ask the member to relate his comments to the question before the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not realise that I had struck such a sensitive nerve in the member for MacDonnell, particularly when I referred to the honourable Mr Snowdon, the member representing the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives. At least, we hope he is.

There is no doubt that tourism is one of our greatest potential income earners. The infrastructure which I have referred to, including Yulara, the Sheratons and the Darwin and the Alice Springs airport terminals, are part of a total package. Our so-called contingent liabilities were incurred as part of a master plan to develop infrastructure, including the airports, and I would like to see our federal representative stand up in the House of Representatives in Canberra and push the case for the development of the airports. I have not heard it so far and I challenge him to do it.

Mr Bell: I have been doing it for 5 years, Rick. About twice as long as you have been here.

Mr SETTER: I am talking about the federal member, Mr Snowdon.

One of the things I would like to see, in order to enhance our position with regard to occupancy of Yulara and the Sheratons, is a move by the Tourist Commission to direct its promotions to attract tourists from Japan and the United States. I hasten to add that I am aware that there is a problem with air transportation and a lack of available seats, particularly with Qantas. I would like to see those tourists directed from Cairns to the Top End and then through Alice Springs, into the Sheratons and out to Yulara, because that would certainly greatly assist the occupancy rate in the Darwin Sheraton. I am quite sure that the Tourist Commission is working towards that end.

The document refers to a number of other liabilities, including the gas pipeline, recreation leave and air fares. These have all been dealt with by the committee because they are liabilities of the government. I heard the member for Fannie Bay refer to them earlier. He made particular reference to superannuation because the Northern Territory government's funding of its superannuation scheme came about when the federal government pulled the rug out from under us about 3 years ago. It told us that our employees could no longer be part of the Commonwealth scheme. There were several quite heated debates in this House and I can recall that the member for Barkly, who was then the Chief Minister, made quite a lengthy statement on the issue. We have been able to negotiate our way through that minefield to the point where I now understand that we are partly funding our scheme. We have already heard about what is happening in the states and the horrendous contingent liabilities they have - as I understand the Commonwealth also has - because they do not fund their superannuation schemes. We just hope that our employees - and they hope that their employees - do not all resign together. If that happened, this country would be down the gurgler. There is no doubt about that.

In concluding my remarks, I would like once again to compliment the committee on the hard work that it has done. I am sure that it will continue its efforts as it addresses various matters from time to time in the future. I commend its members for their efforts and commend the report to honourable members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, because Yulara is in my electorate and because I have listened to a number of debates on this particular issue in the Assembly in the 6 or so years that I have been here, I feel that I have some contribution to make. That is particularly the case when I hear comments such as those the member for Jingili has just made in relation to opposition contributions, garnished with his self-satisfied criticism of a putative lack of management expertise amongst opposition members. I am not sure that some of the comments that I have heard with respect to the member for Jingili's employment record prior to his election to this Assembly particularly support the self-satisfied note that accompanied the comments we have just heard from him.

Mr SETTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I find the comments of the member for MacDonnell offensive. He is attempting to reflect on my good character and I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to the point of order briefly. Far be it from me to reflect on the character of the member for Jingili. I was criticising his comments in this House and commenting on press reports about his employment record, certainly not his character.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the member for MacDonnell willing to withdraw his remarks?

Mr BELL: Certainly not.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I advise the member for MacDonnell that he is not permitted to reflect on a member and that he will withdraw his remarks.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly any reflection that I might have made on the character of the member for Jingili and I withdraw any comments I may have made which might have been construed as such a reflection. However, in no way do I withdraw my criticism of the honourable member's comments in this House today which suggested that he somehow had some superior qualification for making comments on the facts and figures that are presented in this report.

I will give a little history relating to debates in this Assembly on the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory government. For the benefit of honourable members who have spoken in this debate and who were not members of the Assembly at the time - the member for Jingili for example - I refer them to debates which occurred in 1982, although I do not have the exact dates with me. I notice that the eagle eye of the member for Fannie Bay is fixed upon me. I am sure he would remember well the occasion when a company called CADCO, an acronym for the Central Australian Development Company, was putting together a proposal which, as I recall, never saw the light of day. Certain people in Alice Springs gave me a particular memo which suggested that the government was offering specific 'guarantees against capital loss' - I think that was the phrase used in the memo. It was really only when we obtained that particular document that we came to realise the extent of the government's activities in this respect.

Given the propensity of the Northern Territory government to involve itself in extensive and expensive public relations exercises and given the comments that we have heard today about the supposed merits of the government's financial strategy, one would have expected a far more fulsome and public announcement of what has been put forward as a positive outcome in the report of the Public Accounts Committee. That has not happened. The fact is that information about actual and contingent liabilities has had to be winked out of a series of most reluctant Country Liberal Party governments. I suggest that one thing that needs to be put on the record is that the tabling of this report in the Legislative Assembly today marks the culmination of a 5-year opposition campaign to give the public of the Northern Territory the opportunity to find out the facts.

I am the first person to confess that I have not studied this document with care. Let me rephrase that, lest my meaning be misconstrued. I have not had the opportunity to study this document carefully. Suffice it to say that I will do so. I certainly believe that the opposition deserves congratulations from the government rather than ill-informed criticism. Certainly, the public of the Northern Territory will recognise the role of the opposition in at last getting somewhere near the facts. The member for Fannie Bay will well recall his own refusal to provide anything like the degree of detail about these matters which is contained in the PAC report. I see a wonderful little wry smile creeping over his face. He will well remember the incisive contributions made in this Assembly by the then shadow treasurer, Ms June D'Rosario, who in incisive, articulate, well-argued style insisted on answers that we are now getting close to. The member for Fannie Bay will well recall the extent to which he stone-walled and kept saying: 'No. We will not answer'. That went on for several days. The contribution of the shadow treasurer at the time needs to be placed on record in this Assembly.

As well as to the Leader of the Opposition, who has pursued this issue of contingent liabilities with vigour, credit needs to be given also to the member for Nhulunbuy. I noted with wry amusement the conclusion of the committee on page 29 of its report: 'The committee also notes the ongoing need to monitor the Territory's position in relation to the above projects and may from time to time present further reports'. Suffice it to say that that sentence reflects a world of change on the part of the Northern Territory government and its preparedness, quite rightly, to accept the invigilation of these particular liabilities that, after all, are liabilities for each and every one of us in the Northern Territory. The government has the stewardship for these matters but they are liabilities on each and every one of us. I reflect on those many motions put forward, chiefly by the member for Nhulunbuy, to establish the Public Accounts Committee. In the context of this debate, I think congratulations rather than sharp criticism ought to be extended to the member for Nhulunbuy for his efforts in this regard.

I appreciate, and I am quite happy to be bipartisan, the change of heart in this regard on the part of the current Chief Minister. I think that I have indicated in the past my preparedness to offer to him my congratulations for particular stances that he has adopted and I am more than happy to do so in this regard. I am more than happy to say that the Chief Minister has adopted a bipartisan approach with respect to the establishment of the Public Accounts Committee and I think that its deliberations and the result in this report can only reflect well on both the Chief Minister and the Assembly as a whole. Certainly, in nowise was I seeking to single out only opposition members in this regard. However, I point out to the Chief Minister, who was elected to the Assembly in December 1983, that rather more vituperative debates occurred before he was elected to the Assembly. The member for Fannie Bay, to whom I

have already referred, would recall that those debates were not always characterised by the spirit of bipartisanship which, as the Chief Minister interjected, has characterised subsequent public debate in that respect.

I have always been concerned about the financial viability of Yulara which is in my electorate. It is very difficult, as an opposition member representing an electorate that has such a major government investment in it, to find out the facts. For that reason, I appreciate this report. However, I want to refer to the comment that Yulara - I am quoting from page 8 - 'is currently performing better than anticipated and that, as a result, the total government commitment to the project should be substantially reduced'.

Only yesterday, I had the opportunity to be briefed with respect to the proposed extensions at Yulara. At that briefing, I was advised that the initial Peat Marwick Mitchell projections for the 5-year period since Yulara has been in operation were not in fact met. It seems to me that, to blandly conclude that the project is currently performing better than anticipated, needs some qualification. No doubt, Peat Marwick Mitchell would have projected some sort of linear graph whereby dollars were represented on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal axis. Such a graph would show a shortfall. What I am saying is that the comment in the conclusion may very well simply be referring to a single point in time. That conclusion may not reflect accurately what has happened with the cash flow from the Yulara project over time.

Those are the particular areas of my concern. To sum up generally, it would appear that the conclusions in the report support my views apart from those concerns about the conclusion with respect to Yulara. The conclusion about the Alice Springs Sheraton, as my colleagues have mentioned, is hardly rosy. It needs to be placed on record that the report says that, for the Alice Springs Sheraton, 'the projected performance has not been achieved and a full return to government, including interest, may be delayed'. That is serious and a matter for concern. The strategy of contingent liabilities was a useful one but it is my belief that Country Liberal Party governments in the Northern Territory have abused that particular strategy and that this report supports that contention. I am pleased to see that the Yulara project is moving into the black but I believe that it is only at this stage that further such contingent liabilities should have been countenanced, not several years ago as this government has done.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill (Serial 76), Superannuation Amendment Bill (Serial 71) and Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill (Serial 75) passing through all stages at these sittings. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his cooperation.

Motion agreed to.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 76)

Continued from 29 October 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, you must excuse me, I was not expecting ...

Mr Coulter: We do continuously. You have a standing excuse every time you stand up.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the member for Palmerston has a sensitive ego and I must endeavour not to rub it up the wrong way in future. Even when I speak sotto voce, he feels the need to interject. There sits, I believe, a sensitive soul.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is some historical background to the Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill and I think it is worth placing on record that it is one of those matters on which there has been considerable cooperation between the opposition and the government. I received representations from a senior figure in the transport industry in the Northern Territory expressing concern about the application of provisional licences to people who have suffered cancellation or suspension of their licences. Section 10A(1)(c) says that where an applicant for a licence does not hold such a licence because of cancellation or disqualification, the licence granted has to be a provisional licence. If a person with a C-class licence has it suspended for driving with a blood-alcohol content above the limit, he not only suffers a penalty in terms of driving for private purposes, but also for work purposes.

Far be it from me to suggest that such a cancellation or suspension is not just. I am a firm believer in tough laws for drink-driving. However, a particular anomaly has been drawn to my attention, as I say, by a senior member of the transport industry in Darwin. He was concerned, that in addition to the period of suspension, which may be from 3 to 12 months, the convicted driver must then commence again with a provisional licence. However, section 10(4) says that a person with a provisional licence cannot drive vehicles exceeding 4.5 t gross vehicle mass. Some would say that a person in that situation suffers a triple penalty. He is prevented from driving during the period of suspension for private and employment purposes and, when the period of cancellation or suspension is completed, he has to drive under a provisional licence. Under section 10(4), he cannot hold a C-class licence, enabling him to drive heavy vehicles, for a further period of 12 months.

I am pleased to be able to report to the Assembly that the government and the opposition are of one mind in relation to this problem. I should also point out that such an offender would also have to suffer the ignominy of driving around with P-plates. I suppose somebody in his 30s or 40s who drives for a living and then has to go back to a provisional licence and drive around with P-plates on his vehicle would suffer some ribald gestures from his friends. Such a penalty might well be a modern equivalent of the stocks. That seems to strike a chord with the member for Sadadeen. I know the interest that he takes in these forms of punishment.

Mr Dondas: Are you trying for the grand slam by stretching this out until 10 pm?

Mr BELL: No, I apologise to the member for Casuarina, although he does not necessarily have to sit here and listen. As a former Minister for Transport and Works, however, I would have thought that he would be congratulating me on my zealous legislative research in this matter. Perhaps a written critique might help rather than interjections.

Briefly, in order to satisfy the restive member for Casuarina, this bill amends section 10A(1) by removing the requirement for a provisional licence to be provided to somebody who has had a licence cancelled or suspended. I had a couple of concerns about the wording but I will not take up the Assembly's time for much longer except to point out that the current section 10A(1)(a) contains a reference to a continuous period of 12 months during the 5 years immediately preceding the application. That reference has been removed from the amendment before the Assembly now. I am assured that not a great deal hinges upon that and I accept the minister's written advice in that respect.

In conclusion, I indicate the opposition's support for what is clearly a simple piece of legislation. I reiterate that the matter has been of some concern to people in the transport industry. I think that it is more than appropriate that the Assembly should pass this bill. Whereas it may not personally affect honourable members in this Assembly, there are people who will be affected. I am pleased to support the bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also intend to be very brief today. I would like to cover a couple of matters in an attempt to clarify some of the points which were raised by the member for MacDonnell.

The amendment is quite simple. As the minister said during the last sittings, the bill amends section 10 to limit the requirement for a provisional licence to new drivers only and to those who did not hold a full licence at the time of disqualification. The P-plate requirements under the act were, of course, intended to apply only to new drivers and under-age drivers. The anomaly simply was overlooked. At the time when I was Chairman of the Road Safety Council, I was aware of an anomaly in the legislation. Drivers who had a provisional licence and were under 18 years of age essentially were in a position where there was no penalty on them for being caught driving under the influence of alcohol. When the 0.02 blood-alcohol limit was introduced for drivers on provisional licences, we passed an amendment which took into account the disparity between the regulations applying to drivers' licences and those applying under the Liquor Act.

It was unfortunate that, when the adjusted penalties were introduced recently by the minister, in a desire to toughen up the act in respect of drink-driving and related offences, the provisional licence penalty affected professional drivers such as taxi drivers, bus drivers, private hire operators and chauffeurs. Coming on top of the suspension of a licence, the provisional licence provision obviously results in a disproportionate and grossly unfair additional penalty on such persons. The minister has decided that the anomaly should be removed. That is the purpose of the bill which is before us today and I support that bill.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their brief but constructive comments on this amendment bill. It simply provides fair treatment for drink-driving offenders. It will enable us to remove some of the unintended consequences of the legislation enacted earlier in the year. I thank honourable members for their support of the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 71)

Continued from 29 October 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill basically provides for the inclusion of members of the police force in the Northern Territory government's general superannuation scheme. New recruits will be covered by the scheme from 1 January and existing members will have 6 months to choose whether they wish to participate in the scheme or to remain in their present scheme. The scheme broadly offers police the same conditions as public servants. In other words, it offers them a lump sum payment and the employer-financed component after 5 years of service.

The bill also contains a number of other amendments. It provides for the recognition of de facto and Aboriginal marriages under the Superannuation Act. It provides for the payment of a partial benefit to alleviate financial hardship among dependants in the event of the death of a member without the administration of the scheme having to enact probate of the will. It provides for payment of all benefits in the scheme from the Employees Fund, with complementary provisions for the Employees Fund to be reimbursed. It also clarifies some reporting requirements of the Investment Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the bill but we have a number of concerns that I want to touch on. First, I am advised by the Trades and Labor Council that it was not party to any discussions before this bill was proposed. That is an unfortunate precedent. Quite clearly, this bill has ramifications for public service employees and will affect, either directly or indirectly, superannuation entitlements. I would hope that, as a matter of principle in future, where changes are proposed to the Superannuation Act, the government will consult with the relevant employee bodies. I know that the Police Association and the Police Officers Association were consulted but there are elements in this bill that are of some significance to other government employees and I am advised that they were not consulted at all. That posed a potential problem at one stage where there was some concern from the Trades and Labor Council that its representative would not sit on the Review Board in all circumstances. That has now been ironed out, but it would have been a much better exercise if it had been discussed with them before.

It is also not clear on what basis police are being transferred into the scheme in the sense of whether they will bring with them their own contributions to put into the scheme and whether the money that has been set aside by the government for individual policemen previously will go into the broad Employees Fund. Perhaps the honourable Treasurer might like to comment on that as well.

The major concern that we have is with the provision that all entitlements be paid out of the Employees Fund. The concern is that, if you have a system whereby all entitlements are paid out of the Employees Fund, unless certain mechanisms are put in place, that may have quite an adverse effect on the ability of the Employees Fund to generate a reasonable level of interest because, as I read it, quite significant amounts of money will be taken out of the Employees Fund during the course of any particular year to fully pay out employees who retire or resign. I would like an explanation from the Treasurer and an assurance that a system has been put in place to ensure that the interest that the Employees Fund can generate will not be adversely affected

by the requirement that all entitlements be paid out of the Employees Fund, in the first instance, and reimbursement be made from the Employers Fund at another time.

A related issue, as I understand it, is that a dividend rate of 14% has been struck from the Employees Fund. I am not quite sure of the period, but it does appear to me, in light of the rates applying to other funds, that 14% is a fairly low rate. An explanation for that may well be that the rate of 14% has been set since the stock market crash of 19 October. That could be an explanation but, if the dividend rate of 14% was struck before 19 October, it appears to me to be a very low rate indeed. I recognise that the Employees Fund is, at this stage, quite small and I recognise that there is now in place an Investment Board which may better be able to look at investments for the money that is available but, again, I would appreciate an explanation from the honourable Treasurer as to when the interim rate of 14% was struck and whether that still seems to be an achievable rate, a lower rate, or what the current situation is.

I have another question. What is the situation regarding the NTEC Provident Fund? I must admit that I am a little confused about the NTEC Provident Fund. I am advised that, at this stage, that fund is not part of the scheme and I would ask the Treasurer to indicate whether it is correct that the NTEC Provident Fund is not part of the scheme and whether there is a proposition to absorb the NTEC Provident Fund into the general scheme for public servants.

On a more general point, we have heard in another debate today of some concerns expressed about the government's continuing and growing liability to superannuation. There is a related point and I guess it is slightly more positive. As they build up, superannuation funds become extremely significant contributors to an economy. In fact, we have reached the situation in Australia now where superannuation funds together are the largest single players on the stock exchange, and the superannuation funds, together with the life assurance funds, basically control what happens on the stock exchanges in the sense that, if they took a collective decision to put money in or to pull money out, they would have a definite effect on how the stock market operated. They have enormous amounts of money to invest. Of course, they are limited by their need to invest sensibly whilst maintaining the maximum possible return for the people on behalf of whom they are holding the money, in this case the employees of the Northern Territory Public Service.

However, there appears to be the opportunity, particularly in light of the fact that the Employers Fund is around the \$50m or \$60m mark, for the government to look at ways in which the economy of the Northern Territory can be assisted by the wise use of those funds. Of course, the government has taken the decision to spend some \$30m on buying Housing Commission mortgages. I have no problem with that as a principle. I guess my comment is that putting \$30m into Housing Commission mortgages is doing nothing to generate activity within our economy because it merely involves the purchase of existing assets.

The honourable Treasurer may well tell me that the government has already looked at this but, if it has not, it is certainly an appropriate time for it to examine whether it can generate economic activity by the use of superannuation money and, at the same time, provide a reasonable return to government. I know it is quite a difficult balancing act. At this stage, I do not have any particular suggestions as to how that can be done. When money is tight, governments have a responsibility to look hard at every disposable

dollar they have and, in one sense, the money they have set aside for the Employers Fund is a disposable dollar, with some restrictions which we all recognise. Certainly, I do not think the government will hear us criticise an attempt that it makes to use that money to generate economic activity, provided that it is safe and provided that it guarantees a reasonable rate of return. Of course, it is obviously to the government's advantage to obtain a reasonable rate of return on that money because it lessens the amount of money it has to put into the fund to meet its commitments. With those words, I reiterate the opposition's support for the bill.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to the debate. I agree with him that it would have been a lot tidier if we had consulted with the TLC before the introduction of the bill. As it was, the discussions and negotiations were carried out with the police unions, in the first instance, and it was not until after the bill was put together that discussions with the TLC occurred. I take his point in that regard. As I said, perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt there that negotiations on these issues should be undertaken at a very early stage, and I will take that on board.

I also note the Leader of the Opposition's comments on investment. On the matter of the 14% rate, I am advised that the reason is that it falls in line with all new schemes. It is the same standard rate that applies to new occupational schemes. I have been given some other examples of that. The police will receive the same benefits as other public servants. Police gain no additional benefit by transferring to the Territory scheme. In respect of payments from the Employees Fund, the employee will benefit slightly from the arrangement.

In regard to the NTEC Provident Fund, I think there are some 300 members in the scheme at present. We are taking actuarial advice on the scheme and we will have some further announcements about that scheme in the new year. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that we are addressing that particular issue at the moment in an attempt to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr Speaker, if you will bear with me, I have received some further advice from my officers. A note has been handed to me regarding the Employees Fund investments. There is \$35m in superannuation investment funds to be used to ensure superannuation liabilities are met. The government is always looking at the best way to invest its money, and we have had this argument before. I can remember debating with the Leader of the Opposition the security of Northern Territory Housing Commission mortgages. In fact, those are very secure investments but I take his point about generating activity and perhaps assisting projects in the Northern Territory that may require cash infusion to get them under way. Of course, we have spoken many times in this Assembly about high-yield areas. Unfortunately, the high-yield areas also entail high risk. We have spoken about the TIO which also looks to obtain maximum return on its investments. Bankers and insurance people are very conservative and they invest the major proportion of their money in blue-chip or gilt-edged shares that will return the maximum benefit. There is a small section of the TIO's investment portfolio which relates to high-risk and high-yield investment. One of these, of course, is Hungerford Refrigeration. Honourable members will remember the debate on that particular issue.

The \$15m invested with the Housing Commission gives good, long-term returns at about 14.1%. It is a very good return and it is considered an appropriate investment at this stage. Another idea that has been forthcoming recently involves property trusts in and around the CBD area. A number of

properties there have been placed on the market recently and there has been a suggestion that a Territory property trust might be formed. In fact, I have been approached by representatives of Colliers to investigate such a proposal. Indeed, at a seminar that I attended recently with Westpac, some of the major people responsible for the investment of superannuation funds were present. People from the police unions and various other trade union representatives were at that Westpac seminar. There was discussion on how some of the superannuation funds could be used to stimulate activity in the Territory. I take the Leader of the Opposition's point in that regard but, as I said, at the moment the return on the Housing Commission mortgages is considered to be of great benefit.

The Leader of the Opposition was concerned about the detrimental effect resulting from the use of the Employees Fund. I am advised that the repayments from the government are made immediately before the payment to the employee. I understand that the problem relates to the terms of arrangements for taxation etc and the amount of money that is actually taken out of the pool. It is done in that way because it is unknown, at the time, where the money will actually end up because of the private arrangements that have been entered into for that particular payment. In fact, that is covered by proposed new section 29(2): 'In case of a benefit which includes a component financed by an employer, an amount equal to that of the component shall be paid to the fund, immediately before the benefit is paid or as soon as practicable (and in the event within 14 days) thereafter, out of ...'.

I understand that that problem is exacerbated by other arrangements that may have been entered into. I understand that that is a fairly standard clause in respect of superannuation funds. If there is any constructive proposal that can be offered in terms of how to improve on that, I will certainly take that up with the relevant officers but, from the information that I have received, that is the way that it will work. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, today it is my sad duty to deliver this eulogy on the departure of a great Territorian, the late Fred Ah Chee. Fred was born at Oodnadatta on 10 May 1927 where his father, Arthur Ah Chee, was working on the Alice Springs to Port Augusta railway. Arthur was a fettler with Commonwealth Railways and was involved on the construction of the link from Port Augusta to Oodnadatta. Later, he helped build the line through to Alice Springs. After the fledgling narrow-gauge railway was opened for traffic on 5 August 1929, Arthur continued to maintain it right up until the early 1960s. This included the war years when the railway constituted a lifeline to the north ferrying vital supplies and troops to defend Australia. Fred's father and his uncle Tojo, who was a porter on the first Ghan passenger train, are reputed to have repaired the 'Southern Cross' for that aviation pioneer, Charles Kingsford Smith, whilst he was in Oodnadatta.

Fred's mother was Rose Ah Chee, formerly Rose Orrbunda, a full-blood Aboriginal from the Gulf of Carpentaria. She and Arthur raised 6 children. They lived in Oodnadatta until 1936 when they moved to Ewaninga, just south of Alice Springs, where they remained for many years. At that time, their son Fred was 11 years old. He used to attend the Hartley Street school, making the journey by section car from the Ewaninga railway siding, now the southern end of the old Ghan line currently being restored by the Ghan Preservation Society. At the age of 15, Fred left Alice Springs to attend night school in Adelaide. There he gained a certificate in commercial art, studied music and obtained an A-grade electrician's licence. These early achievements were indicative of the diverse talents which Fred would bring to the variety of jobs he tackled during his life.

Fred was a ringer for a while during his younger days. Later, he performed some design work for R.M. Williams and, during the late 1940s, he undertook an apprenticeship with the Gerard, Goodman Electrical Company in Adelaide. Fred carried out contract electrical wiring at rocket sites at Woomera and worked at Maralinga where he installed wiring for the atomic tests. To cap it all off, during the 1950s, Fred went off horse shooting for a while around the top of South Australia, collecting horsehair for Compton and Sons, to help him save the money to get married. He had met Myra Taylor in Adelaide and they married in 1954.

In mid-1958, the year after the birth of their son Paul, the Ah Chee family returned to Alice Springs where Fred soon found a job with the powerhouse as a metal trades assistant. During his distinguished career with the power authority in Alice Springs, a career which spanned 29 years, Fred served as an electrician, rapidly rose to become leading hand electrician, later became the foreman (trades) and was promoted eventually to the position of electrical control room operator in which capacity he worked for the Department of Construction, later NTEC and, finally, for the last few months before his death, for the newly-formed Power and Water Authority.

Fred was one of the most renowned and respected rifle shooters in Australia. He joined the Central Australian Rifle Club in 1960 and, as was typical of Fred, he devoted much time and effort to the organisation. He won numerous club championships, served as secretary, vice-captain and captain, and became the first president in 1987. The club awarded Fred a life membership in 1984 in recognition of his enormous contribution. Fred had intended to go to the Sydney Bicentenary Shoot next year, where he was to have met up with his friends and acquaintances from the shooting movement around Australia.

Fred died in Alice Springs on 3 November and he leaves behind him his wife, Myra and son Paul. On behalf of the Assembly, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Myra and Paul. It is assured that whether as a member of one of central Australia's oldest and most respected families or because of the esteem in which he was held by his colleagues, whether as a friend to his sporting friends or to his neighbours or, indeed, because of the advice and help which he contributed to the Aboriginal people and their elders, Fred Ah Chee will be dearly remembered by all who knew him. The integrity, warmth and humanity of this man from the outback will be sorely missed.

Mr LEO (Nhu'lunbuy): Mr Speaker, in the adjournment this afternoon, I would like to raise a series of questions with the Chief Minister and various other ministers. We have 2 sitting days remaining and I have a number of matters that I would like answers on at some stage during these sittings.

One question arises from the recent government announcement of further development of the Yulara tourist complex. I understand from the minister's press release that some staff quarters are to be redesigned and, basically, let as accommodation for visitors or tourists. I would like some basic information on that. I was led to believe some 18 months to 2 years ago that the Housing Commission purchased the staff accommodation at Yulara because it was the government's belief that employees' accommodation should be provided by the Housing Commission. If that same accommodation is to be redeveloped into visitor accommodation, I would like to know whether or not the Housing Commission is to be compensated for the loss of its property and, if so, by how much and whether that will equate with the amount that it paid out for that accommodation. If the commission is not to be compensated, what financial arrangements will be entered into to allow the staff accommodation to become visitor accommodation?

I raised another matter earlier today when the Chief Minister was not in the Chamber. It concerns the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr Hatton: I was listening to the proceedings.

Mr LEO: I hope that the Chief Minister will be able to clarify the matter during the course of these sittings.

The final matter I wish to raise relates basically to the government's inability to correct decisions, particularly in relation to the majority of my constituents. The Minister for Mines and Energy announced that the Department of Mines and Energy would retain administrative control over the Mines Safety Control Act. I will concede that there are specialist areas in mining that may very well require the expertise that the Department of Mines and Energy can provide. These include blasting, shot-firing, underground mining and so on. The wording of the Mines Safety Control Act is such that it means that every employee on a mining lease is subject to its safeguards and inspectorial powers. That makes absolutely no sense to me. It is absolutely ludicrous that desk jockeys such as office clerks are subject to the Mines Safety Control Act as opposed ...

Mr Hatton: We will change the definition of a 'mine site'.

Mr LEO: I would have no further problems in that regard if indeed the government does intends to amend the definition of a 'mine site'. I would have been quite concerned if that were not the case. I would also advise the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services that there ought to have been some consultation with the employees or their representatives. It is their livelihoods, and in many instances their lives, which will be affected by these administrative arrangements. I have not spoken to any union representative who has had any discussion with any government representative on this matter. Obviously, the matter is relevant to the lives of union members and I would have thought that somebody from government would have been consulting by now with those employees or their representatives. I take heart at the Chief Minister's aside that there is an intention to amend the Mines Safety Control Act. I hope that that happens at the earliest possible time, specifically in the first sittings of the new year. I would appreciate seeing a new bill which contains such an amendment.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise several issues in tonight's adjournment. The first is in the nature of a question which relates to an issue which occupied a great deal of time in this Assembly in 1986 but has not

been before us lately. ADMA purchased buffalo meat from the Mudginberri abattoir. I recall that the price was \$2.30 per kg.

Mr Hatton: They got all their money back.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister is indicating that he has some information and I hope he will be able to place it on record. As I recall, the meat was purchased at \$2.30 per kg and the intention was to resell it at \$2.76 per kg. I would like the Chief Minister to put on record, today or tomorrow, the details of the final arrangements concerning the various amounts of money which were advanced to Mudginberri, whether through ADMA or through the purchase of buffalo meat, in order to set the record straight on the issue.

Mr Speaker, the next issue I wish to raise concerns an old bugbear that you had to deal with when you were the member for Stuart. I have continued to do battle on this issue and I refer to the provision of water on outstation communities in the electorate. The first location I want to speak about is Mulga Bore. As you know, Mr Speaker, Lindsay Bird and his people have lived on the station for a number of generations, working first with Mr Purvis senior and then Mr Purvis junior. One of their difficulties has always been obtaining a water supply whose nitrate levels comply with World Health Organisation specifications. We have said before that the Purvis family grew up drinking that water and suffered no ill effects. The people who are there now all grew up drinking that water and, to date, no ill effects have come to light. However, there is a potential problem and we have not been able to resolve it. I have received letters from Mr Purvis himself saying that tests have been conducted right throughout the whole area and Mulga Bore is the best water that you will get anywhere in the vicinity.

There is a possible problem with nitrate levels even though it has never actually been established. There is a story that possibly a person died after drinking water from a well in Austria some time after the last World War. That is the only known death which has any possible connection to high nitrate levels. In theory, the problem is that high nitrates in some way stop the absorption of oxygen into the cells in the blood, gradually causing a person to suffer the same symptoms as drowning. It is known that the only people who could be affected by this are very young children and, perhaps, pregnant women. It is also known that the symptoms are very easily recognised and that all that is required to completely reverse the condition is to drink some good water for a day. This flushes out the system and restores the person to normal health. It may be that that has to be done every few months.

With regard to the people at Mulga Bore, I have assurances from the doctor and the staff of the Urapunga Council at Utopia that, for some significant time, they have been visiting the community every Tuesday. It takes some time for the condition to develop and the doctor and his staff are prepared to provide written assurances that they will continue to survey, on a weekly basis, the people at Mulga Bore who are at risk in order to determine whether any symptoms whatsoever are developing. If any symptoms develop, they are prepared to take the people to Utopia where they can drink good quality water for a couple of days to rectify the condition.

The problem, as I have told the minister before, can be solved simply by providing rainwater tanks for houses there. Water from those tanks could be used by people in the at-risk category - toddlers and pregnant mums - thereby overcoming the problem. The difficulty with that is that, until suitable water is found, there can be no excision from the station although the station owners are quite happy for the excision to go ahead. Of course, without that

excision, the local people cannot obtain housing and other facilities. It all comes back to the water problem. For many years, we have been skirting the problem and not attacking it head-on and the people continue to suffer. It is time that we identified some strategies which could be implemented to overcome it, whether these include regular medical inspections, rainwater tanks or other appropriate measures.

I hope that the minister will indicate to this Assembly that he is starting to take this matter seriously. It has dragged on for too long. I can identify community after community, right throughout the central Australian region, where this problem exists. I can talk about tragedies. People have died because they have been unable to obtain water, even water that is high in nitrates. They have had to exist on soakage water which is prone to contamination by organisms much more dangerous than nitrates. People have been dying from gastroenteritis and other waterborne diseases. It seems to me extremely ridiculous that we are trying to stop the possibility of illness as a result of high nitrate levels while we know full well that there is a 99% chance that people will become ill from drinking poor quality soakage water.

Finally, I would like to add my condolences to those of the Chief Minister on the passing away of Fred Ah Chee. He was a personal friend of mine, as is his wife, Myra. I was stunned to hear of his death. He could justly be called a great pioneer. He was one of those great people, a gentleman through and through, a good friend, a thinker, a person who was involved in all aspects of the community in which he lived. He worked hard to achieve a better life for Aboriginal people, not only in Alice Springs but throughout central Australia. He was somebody whom one can be proud to have known. I would like to extend my condolences to Myra and Paul. As the honourable member said, he was a great Territorian.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to commence my remarks by endorsing the comments by the Chief Minister and the member for Stuart with respect to the untimely passing of Fred Ah Chee. I had a great deal to do with Fred and his family over a few years in various capacities. I first met his brother, Arthur, when he was working for the then mobile work force as an electrician when I was a teacher at Areyonga. I met Fred during that time. Subsequently, on my election to this Assembly, I was approached to be patron of the Central Australian Rifle Club, a position I still hold and one I am very proud to hold. In that context as well as in the context of my associations with the Aboriginal community in central Australia, I developed a deep respect for and I think a friendship with Fred Ah Chee and with Myra. It is difficult to know where to start. I had many conversations with Fred about life in Alice Springs and rifle shooting and, Mr Speaker, you would know as well as I do that he was a great shot. He was president of the rifle club for many years and won many prizes for the club.

To refer back to the conversations I had with him, he would frequently discuss his hopes and aspirations for the Aboriginal community in central Australia and his desire to work with his family on their behalf to ensure a better life for Aboriginal people in central Australia. I think his death was a deep shock to many of us who knew him. I had spoken to him less than a week before he passed away and it was a deep shock to my wife and me. The funeral in the Uniting Church was a particularly moving occasion. Not only was the church full but every bit of shade around the grounds was pretty well packed. I think that was the sort of gesture that many people in the Alice Springs community, and not only Aboriginal people, wanted to make to Fred.

In concluding my comments, I could do worse than refer to a comment by a fellow member of the rifle club who said that Fred was a gentleman. He was certainly that. He was a man who was keenly aware of the diversity of the population in the Centre and who led a life that brought those diverse sections of the population together.

Mr Speaker, a further issue that I want to raise in this evening's adjournment relates to a recent comment made after the cancellation of the second week of these sittings. I will not expatiate on the comments already made in that regard by the Leader of the Opposition that the Legislative Assembly sittings have been curtailed in this way. It is a matter of great surprise to me. I appreciate that the opposition does the government like a dinner whenever the sittings are on and therefore I should not be surprised that the government had cut and run in this regard. I think it deserves and will receive the earnest condemnation, not only of the opposition, but of many people who really wonder whether they obtain value for money from the input into the Legislative Assembly proceedings that this government gives.

In case the Chief Minister has any doubt about the quality of the opposition's contribution to debate and invigilations of the manifold shortcomings of this government, I can do worse than refer to a comment by a permanent head of a government department during the committee debate on the Appropriation Bill. That permanent head of a Northern Territory government department will remain nameless for reasons that will become obvious. You will recall, Mr Speaker, the outrageous, mammoth committee sittings that we had on that bill where the hour became so late that appropriate consideration could scarcely be given to the matters before the Assembly. I happened to pass this permanent head in the lobbies of the Assembly and I said: 'What do you reckon? I think it is about time we adjourned until tomorrow'. The permanent head, who shall remain nameless, gave a little chuckle and said: 'There is no way that they will do that. It would be like giving you blokes a new ball'. I said: 'Thanks for the compliment'.

In case the Chief Minister has any doubts with respect to the opposition's invigilation of the government's performance, I suggest that there are a few senior people in government who suggest that often we strike very close to the bone. As I say, I can see why the government would be enthusiastic to curtail sittings where it is continually embarrassed by its own gaffes. I do not need to dilate on that this evening because we will have opportunity to do so later in the sittings.

Mr Speaker, the other reason I raise the question of sitting days was because you yourself, Sir, issued a press release on 28 November 1986 saying that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly would sit for 30 days in 1987, an increase of 6 days on the parliament's 1986 calendar. My understanding is that, with the choppings and changings that this tired, fearful government is carrying on with, we will have only made 29, but I will not cavil in that regard. What the press release did quite appropriately go on to say, and I heartily concur, was: 'Mr Vale said his main concern was that Hansard staff often work through the night for up to 3 days each week because of the current parliamentary workload. He said the often lengthy night sittings of the Assembly have put too much strain on the dedicated parliamentary reporting staff, the other parliamentary staff and members. Mr Vale said that the decision to lengthen next year's sittings follows correspondence between himself and the Chief Minister, Mr Hatton'.

Mr Speaker, I have amply demonstrated that the strategy has not worked and that perhaps a little more consultation with the Chief Minister is in order

because I am quite sure that this year's Department of the Legislative Assembly report will indicate that the nights that have had to be worked by the Hansard staff have not decreased.

Mr Hatton: Only because they have to listen to this.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I appreciate that the Chief Minister is suffering from an acute case of the arrogance of power but the fact of the matter is that the opposition has an important role to carry out and that that role can be carried out only when suitable timetabling of the Assembly's proceedings occur. It was said that we would not have those late night sittings. They happened and I think some explanation is required.

Let me foreshadow something positive, Mr Speaker. On Thursday, we have a sitting of the Standing Orders Committee. Off the top of my head, I do know who is on the Standing Orders Committee but, if I can just get a ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member must remain in his place when he is speaking.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the members of the Standing Orders Committee, in addition to myself and the member for Arnhem, are you yourself, Sir, as the Chairman, the Leader of Government Business and the member for Araluen. I foreshadow that, at the meeting of the committee on Thursday, I intend to suggest a process similar to that which I understand applies in the Senate of the parliament of the Commonwealth where, in order to go beyond a particular time, which I believe is 10.30 pm, a definite motion has to be carried by the Senate. Some strategy like that might at least apply the brakes in some small regard. I suggest that the Assembly should be aiming to adjourn no later than 6.00 pm.

Mr Speaker, I have one more matter I wish to address very briefly in the time available to me and, once again, it relates to the land scandals that are continuing to bedevil this government. It was drawn to the opposition's attention that lot 2315 at the corner of Bennett Street and West Lane, the former police car park, was sold off by the government. I wrote to the Minister for Lands and Housing at last sittings saying I would ask a question in this regard. Unfortunately, time constraints prevented me from raising that question then. He wrote to me on 6 November saying that the Valuer-General's valuation of \$260 000 had been accepted for that block of land.

Subsequently, I obtained a copy of the gazettal of that sale which was advertised on 21 May 1986. The grant of that land was made to Nicholas Paspaley Properties Pty Ltd, and I want to know why such a prime piece of real estate was sold off at the Valuer-General's valuation to somebody with such close connections with the governing party?

Mr Hatton: Ask me tomorrow.

Mr BELL: As the Chief Minister should be well aware, because he has been in this Assembly for some time now, he is quite able to make a statement about this at any time. The fact is that this government is starting to smell and now we have a further example. Mr Speaker, you sit there, I sit here and we listen to these blokes day in, day out, talking about free market forces and the virtue of the marketplace yet, when it comes to the crunch, they never let those forces apply. They did not allow them to apply in this particular case and, once again, the people of the Northern Territory have a right to know

why. The people of the Northern Territory and the opposition have a right to know why this government will not allow the much-vaunted, free-market forces to apply.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, this evening in the adjournment debate I would like to make some comments about a recent visit that the Chief Minister and I and a party from the Northern Territory made, together with members of the United States Air Force, to Guam halfway between here and Japan. The Australian distinguished visitors' trip this year which ...

Mr Bell: Any nuclear devices on board, Col?

Mr FIRMIN: I did not ask the question; I was quite happy to travel regardless.

There were 26 people in the party from the Northern Territory this year. Some were from local industry and commerce and there was a large defence forces contingent, predominantly from the Royal Australian Air Force, with a few naval officers and army officers. The reason why I wish to talk about this visit this evening is that, as many members in this Assembly know, the American Air Force visits the Northern Territory regularly now with its strategic aircraft, the B52s and the KC135 tanker escorts coming to Darwin and the Starlifters going to Alice Springs. We also get the A6s and the A6Ws from Okinawa in Japan. Over the last couple of years, there has been a very friendly relationship between the visiting American troops and the Northern Territorians who have sought to make the visitors from the north feel welcome and have formed an Australian American Association, of which the Chief Minister and I are members. The member for Koolpinyah is a member also.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I was.

Mr FIRMIN: You were and your husband still is.

Over the years, we have met some very fine people from Guam and, this year, the Chief Minister and I had the opportunity to travel with them to have a look at the operations of the 43rd Bombardment Wing and the SAC Division of that wing. It was an extremely interesting flight. Most of us have seen the KC135 aircraft flying out of Darwin and certainly a large proportion of the population hears them going out. They are a very large 4-engine jet aircraft that carry an enormous payload of fuel for refuelling the B52s in mid-air and also strategic strike aircraft such as the AWACs, the A6 fighter bombers and the radar surveillance A6Ws. In taking off, they use a unique water-cooling thrust device to maintain maximum power with this enormous petrol capacity. As the Chief Minister and many other people on board would remember, the earplugs that were handed out prior to take off were absolutely necessary for a short time.

The flight to Guam took some 5½ hours of flying time. The aircraft obviously is not designed for passengers and there are very few facilities. We were not permitted to smoke and the Chief Minister and I suffered accordingly. Nothing much can be seen from the windows once the plane is in the air because there are only 2 clear-view windows which are in the emergency exit doors about midway over the wing. However, there is one redeeming feature to the aircraft. Being a mid-air refuelling aircraft, it has the boom for refuelling at the stern of the aircraft and 3 large clear-view windows adjacent to it. If you are comfortable with it, you can lie prone in the tail of the aircraft and look out of these 3 clear-view windows at whatever happens to be some 30 000 feet below you. You get a very clear view of what is going

on. I spent some considerable time doing that and looking at the topography of New Guinea and some of the islands on the way through to Guam.

Once we got over the islands towards Guam, we descended to 21 000 feet and a B52 did a refuelling run behind us. I think that was the highlight of that flight for everybody on board. To see a B52, enormous as it is - and I think most members have seen them at the base - coming within about 20 feet of the stern of your aircraft is a sight that has to be seen to be believed. The aircraft is so large that, when you leave the boom area, you can move back and look through the little side windows in the emergency exit doors. You can actually see the wingtips of the B52 about 30 or 40 feet beyond the angle at which you see the wingtips of the plane you are in. You cannot look out from the rear of the plane but, from the side windows, you can see the wings which enables you to appreciate the size of the aircraft that your plane is refuelling.

Apart from speaking about the trip, I wanted to say that the hospitality offered by the Americans for our distinguished visitors' party this year was almost overwhelming. The treatment that we received on arrival in Guam was magnificent. A complete marine guard of honour was provided and we were given the red carpet treatment. We were met by all of the senior personnel at the base including General Marks, Colonel Southerland, Colonel Tuttle and Colonel Badgwell. They were our hosts for the next 3½ days and showed us all the facilities.

We had several dinners with the air force personnel, some of the ground crew, other visitors, local community leaders, the Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders in Guam. That was not only very pleasant but also gave us the opportunity to meet people who were doing the same kind of work as ourselves. We were able to talk about our respective problems and try, in the words of the immortal bard, to drum up a bit of business for the Territory. In fact, we found that, because of the way in which the troops had been treated by the Australian American Association in Darwin, the Territory was becoming a very desirable destination for an off-base visit.

It is the practice in the American Air Force, as is the case with other defence forces around the world - although, unfortunately it doesn't seem to happen much with Australian forces these days - that, if personnel are able to obtain leave, they are entitled to be rostered for travel on aircraft that leave the base to visit other places. Many of the American families in Guam are queuing up now to come to the Northern Territory. On every trip made by the KC135s, apart from the crew, usually 3 to 4 families arrive here. They stay for 4 or 5 days in our hotels and visit Kakadu and other places of tourist interest. We have been encouraging that through the Australian American Association for some time. There is such a backlog of people wishing to visit the Territory that the woman in the United Services Organisation who organises the recreational activities of the 20 000-odd troops on the island has decided to start a tourist operation with Darwin as a destination. The tourists will be flown via Continental Airways to Bali and Garuda to Darwin.

Since my return, we have been organising information for the United Services Organisation in Guam and package deals for them to be able to take advantage of these trips. The person concerned, Mrs Ronnie Connelly, will be coming here in February next year to have a look at some of our tourist areas in the Top End and work out 7 and 10-day package tours. We anticipate a considerable inflow of American tourists as a result of our discussions and our visit to Guam. On a lighter note, we also won the cricket for the first time in 2 years and we have been challenged to a game of baseball when we return next year.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to speak on a situation that I feel needs to be made public and it does not augur well for the future of the Northern Territory unless something is done about it. For the last 10 years, the governments of the Northern Territory have been publicising the Northern Territory and proselytising to the most ignorant of neophytes the advantages of visiting, living and investing in the Northern Territory. There has been success in the campaign to encourage tourists to come to the Northern Territory and I believe this will continue despite the oxymoronic behaviour of the federal ALP government in its oscitations in response to the repeated requests to upgrade the Darwin Airport, do away with domestic 2-airline policy, increase Qantas flights to and from the Northern Territory and to give preferred treatment to foreign airlines which are prepared to fly to the Northern Territory, all for the greater development of the Northern Territory. The federal government complains that the Northern Territory does not pay its way but it will not get off our backs and give us a free go and let us pay our way.

The tourists are increasing in numbers, infrastructural development is occurring to cater to their retail needs at places of interest in the Northern Territory but - and I stress 'but' - these developments will have a definite cutoff point if the Northern Territory government fails in its efforts to encourage more people to come to live in the Northern Territory and more people to invest in the Northern Territory. Bodies and money are the crux of the matter - the matter being that the Northern Territory has started to roll down the hill of interest as a good place to live and a good place to invest.

The Northern Territory government cannot always present the tourist industry as a succedaneum for real, complete and consummate development of the Northern Territory. True, it has been and is a success, but it too will suffer if this Northern Territory government does not cease the vascillatory type of government and does not stop the flow of people leaving the Northern Territory and does not somehow continue to encourage investment in the Northern Territory without resorting to socialistic ventures of any more Sheraton-type deals. It is all about keeping the bodies and money in the Northern Territory.

A 100% accurate indicator of the state of the overall economy is the real estate scene where even Blind Freddy can see that, if there are increasing house vacancies, office vacancies, mortgagee sales and even 'For Sale' signs on front fences, something is wrong and something is running down. Offices are vacant and their capital investments are not bringing in returns to the investor. People are voting with their feet and leaving. I will state definitely now that all of these signs of a Northern Territory run-down are evident. I was told first and then I made it my business to drive around to see things for myself. It is true. We are losing people faster than a goanna up a gum tree and we stand to lose investors even faster if this government does not do something.

It is no good their bunging it on and objecting to my objurgations. The facts speak for themselves. ABS figures state that, from June 1986 to June 1987, the Northern Territory was the only place out of all the states that had a negative migration of private wage and salary earners. Every other state had an increase. These figures are in the thousands. New South Wales went from 1347.1 in June 1986 to 1410.7 in June 1987. Victoria went from 1114.3 in 1986 to 1139.2 in 1987. Queensland went from 551 to 563.1. South Australia went from 313.7 to 324.1. Western Australia went from 344.9 to 366.7. Tasmania went from 93.8 to 100.5. The ACT went from 45.2 to 49.6. The Northern Territory went from 36.7 to 34.8 - the only area that had a lower

migration of private salary earners. This means many things. Employers have had to lay off staff who leave for greener fields down south, employees fear they may be laid off and leave for the south to be with their relatives so that, if hard times continue, they can make a better fist of it in the extended family or, for some other reason that I do not know of, employees see no future here for their families and return to the south.

Added reasons for small employers shutting up shop in the Northern Territory and returning down south are the crippling overheads here and the lack of encouragement to small business by this government, let alone the federal government. Every week, real estate agents have an increasing number of listings of houses vacated by people leaving. When I spoke to an estate agent the week before last, he said that he had had 8 that week. Another had 10 and another 6. That is by no means an exhaustive survey but it is highly indicative of a malaise that is present and will continue in a more virulent form. We have heard of the you-beaut decentralisation idea of settlement by the development of the Tindal base at Katherine. This may be good for Katherine but what of the northern suburbs housing situation? It will mean another 200 vacant houses on the market which will deliver a body blow to the real estate industry here. Listings of leavings are increasing every week.

To turn to the question of occupancy of office space, investment in office accommodation and what is to happen here, I have been told that the apparent ignorance of certain ministers in this matter does them far more than justice. We can rely on their absolute nullibicity on this question. To give a rundown on the major office accommodation buildings, to point up my statements of concern at this government's inability to come to grips with investment encouragement in this form of real estate, I state: the CML building has major vacancies; the MLC building has major vacancies; the T & G building has major vacancies; the NML building is nearly empty; the Workers' Club is nearly empty; shops open 1 day and close a few weeks later; and the Jape Arcade building has increasing vacancies. These are only a few of the major office units in the central business district. A drive through the industrial area in Winnellie will show a similar situation. A drive around any suburb or even the rural area will show an increasing number of 'For Sale' signs on front fences. Furthermore, there is a great increase in rental arrears in the rented shops and offices.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what is this good government doing about this? I will tell you. It is building another office block after having given the okay for a land grant to build an office block even though there were already a multitude of office vacancies in the CBD. I do not know what the government has for brains; I think the lights are on but nobody is at home. A responsible government would have been aware of the increasing rate of office vacancies and would have taken counter measures to control it and to protect the investment in bricks and mortar.

A few years ago, when the capitalisation rate in Darwin was about 15% against about 7% to 8% in Melbourne or Adelaide, it was worth while to risk capital for investment here. The situation now is that the 2 rates are coming together. With the greater variables up here and a harder investment scene and when the government's concern is conspicuous by its absence, what does that mean? It means bad times. What it does is encourage a worsening of the situation, with the lotus-plan venture of the TIO to demolish the old police headquarters and build a new office block - paralogism at its worst. A wise investor who has money in bricks and mortar here had better look twice to the future and consider his and the total situation carefully. I know some have and are deploying their assets elsewhere where possible, but it not easy

to sell a near-vacant block of offices. This worsening situation cannot be stifled. It has already been bruited abroad so that any possible future real estate investors are becoming very shy.

The government members opposite may say that I am talking through my hat. 'Our crude birth rate is up. The bodies are here all right', they'll say. 'Don't you worry about that', they'll say. I say that they should look again. The crude birth rate means babies. Babies don't work, babies don't buy houses and babies don't work in offices. What we need is an increase in our net migration rate. The situation is bad now but I believe next February or March will show an even more pessimistic scene. Next March will be a time of reckoning because the particular bad dream of the scene is coupled with a less than optimistic Australian scene over which we have no control and which the Northern Territory government appears to be taking no steps to counter. The Northern Territory economy relies heavily on primary industry for its existence but, with a low Australian dollar, low prices for these export commodities and the worsening local scene, we may very well find ourselves next year up that well-known creek without a paddle.

To return to the real estate scene, there are an increasing number of Housing Commission home mortgage sales and, on the small business scene, an increasing number of liquidations and bankruptcies. The federal government is not helping much with the Department of Transport, previously the DCA, decreasing activities in the Northern Territory by pulling back to South Australia. About 100 employees up here will be affected. The federal Department of Administrative Services, mentioned previously by the Minister for Transport and Works, has pulled out of the Northern Territory to an Adelaide base. We do not have a World War II Brisbane line but an 1987 Adelaide line. How much lower can the federal government get in giving up everything to the north of Adelaide as lost or expendable?

The latest move is that Telecom is considering offering its employees the option of buying their houses at concessional rates. That would be okay for the 200 to 300 Telecom employees but would do nothing to encourage the real estate industry. All in all, it is a very bleak situation and, if the government sits back and contemplates its collective navel under the gum tree, then it is shirking its duty to administer the economy and develop the Northern Territory in a responsible way. I am not angling for more government control, government direction, government regulation or socialistic interference in the flow of market forces with regard to the real estate industry.

Mr Coulter: What are you angling for?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Hang on and I'll tell you, cloth ears! I believe at least an acknowledgement of the current bleak real estate situation should come from the government followed by a paradigm of concern, then action of the sort to consolidate the current brave investors and to encourage future investors. We do not want any more Sheraton-type deals. If investors are too shy now to come north, they must be encouraged by government investment in schemes which have sunset provisions whereby the government funds will be pulled out at some future time and replaced by private money.

To return to the previously mentioned subject of bodies and money being necessary for a reincarnation of development of the Northern Territory, I refer to investment money from private sources. Money will not come here unless there is expectation of a return which is more than that expected down south because of the greater risk here. It is the government's duty to

attract this investment money here and, when it is here, to keep faith with those investors by keeping a satisfactory climate of investment. One of the ways not to do that is by building 2 big new office blocks, one with public money, when other office blocks stand vacant.

Common sense should dictate that some of the empty office blocks should have been bought first. Once the money is invested here, either in this form of real estate or anything else, the bodies will come. The job opportunities follow from investment as night follows the day and therefore more money here means more jobs. With more people, our slack economy can be revitalised, but it is all up to the government. If this government is as clever as it thinks it is, this should be a piece of cake. Otherwise fellows, it is look out because we will all be on the skids and then I will only marvel at its nescience of the current state of the real estate industry.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to pursue an issue tonight that is of great importance to the constituents of my electorate, some more than others. It has to do with the opportunity for people to explore and take gems, minerals and gold from the land of others without any regard for the rights of the property holder. We now have a situation developing, and it has been quietly increasing over a period of years, whereby it may be important for the government to consider amendments to the legislation to take into account the rights and entitlements of people with metal detectors and their responsibilities to the landholders on whose land they explore.

The premise of our mining and exploration industry is really based on the fact that individuals or companies may become landholders under the Mining Act. They take out leases or exploration licences which give them the right to explore or to take metals on a particular block of land and, while they hold that land, other people do not have a right to go on it. In taking out the land, the title holder has certain responsibilities under the act. In fact, in one recent exploration licence that was issued in my area, the explorer was asked to put up a bond of \$10 000 to cover any damage that may have occurred as a result of unwise bulldozing or gouging from the surface. This is perhaps reasonable or unreasonable given the activities that were to occur and I will not reflect on that judgment at all. Nevertheless, the landholder does have to put up a bond.

In recent years, the proliferation of people with metal detectors and the amount of gold that they are winning with their metal detectors has become very significant. Anybody who is prepared to take the time to wander around towns like Pine Creek and Tennant Creek and talk quietly to people who spend a bit of their own time doing some metal detecting would understand that the rewards are quite good. Regrettably, many of those rewards are taken on land on which the people have no right to be. They argue that they are entitled to use their metal detectors anywhere and that anything to a depth of 3 feet is theirs. I can say that the Department of Mines and Energy office in Tennant Creek advises inquirers that they can use metal detectors and that anything to a depth of 3 feet is theirs. I believe that that advice should be offered with the rider: provided that the land belongs to the person using the detector. If we are not prepared to accept that premise, we should review the act in relation to the use of metal detectors.

I have had complaints over a long period about the behaviour of people using metal detectors. Pastoralists have complained long and hard that people who have no right on their property, in terms of a mining tenement allowing for exploration, cut fences, light fires, accidentally or on purpose, contaminate the water supply and leave taps on and gates open. As you would

know, Mr Deputy Speaker, those activities have a pretty serious impact on the control of disease on cattle properties. Cattlemen are reaching a stage where they would prefer not to see prospectors or people using metal detectors anywhere on their property because it is not worth the risk. My great concern is that people in the cattle industry may bring pressure to bear to reduce access to miners and small gougers in particular, and that would not be in the interests of the Territory as I see it. The issue will not go away. I would say to the minister that it needs addressing quickly.

Another complaint from holders of exploration licences is that people from outside the Territory in most cases make themselves at home on other peoples' exploration licences and leases. They use their metal detectors without paying any rent. They do not take responsibility for any damage or for restoring the area to a satisfactory condition after they have gone over it with the metal detectors. They drift off to other places, leaving the leaseholder to do battle with the department about his responsibilities. Finally, they pay no royalties for what they win. It has been put to me that, in the Kurinelli and Hatches Creek areas, casual prospectors with metal detectors have taken as much as 600 oz of gold from near the surface just by being patient and looking carefully. The reality, as I understand it, is that that gold belongs to the leaseholder or the exploration licence holder and not to anybody who wants to wander on to the land and use a metal detector.

We are now fast reaching a point where we need to address the issue of what we are to do with people from outside the Northern Territory who regard it as their right to stop anywhere and use their metal detectors. We also need to look at what we will do about the hundreds of people who are residents of the Territory, own metal detectors and spend their weekends and holidays pottering around looking for gold and gemstones. The situation cannot continue as it is. I would say to the minister that the situation must be faced at a meeting with industry representatives including the prospectors and gougers in small places such as Pine Creek and Tennant Creek who are now becoming very active and vociferous themselves. They want some action taken to protect their rights.

Another matter that I would like to raise today relates to an event which is really significant, has been a long time coming and is truly important to the Northern Territory. I refer, of course, to the great win that the Northern Territory baseball team chalked up against South Australia in their battle last week. It is 10 years since the Northern Territory made a submission to the Australian Baseball Council to gain entry to the Claxton Shield. There was a great deal of opposition to that from outside the Northern Territory because we were considered too small and too far away. Other people did not want to come here and believed that we would only be in the competition for 2 years or so before dropping out. We have heard it all before and it probably applies to a dozen different sports. Over the years, the standard of baseball has improved in the Northern Territory and, last week, we clocked up an enormous win over South Australia, with the team really excelling itself with about 7 home runs.

My reason for stressing the importance of the baseball team's achievement is that in big national competitions - as many members in this Chamber who are competitive sportsmen will know - there is always a psychological barrier that Territory teams have to overcome when they play against the big boys. There is no doubt that the New South Welshmen and the Victorians stand with their foot on the neck of anybody who is likely to oppose them. It does not matter where their opponents come from - they will not win unless they deserve to. South Australia has been a leading baseball state for 15 or 20 years and has

quite often won the Claxton Shield and the Northern Territory's win was quite significant in terms of breaking the psychological barrier.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the members of the team, the coach and all the people who supported it. I particularly mention the contribution made by the government in funding travel costs for players. At the end of this week, visiting teams arrive in Alice Springs to play against the Northern Territory in continuing games in the competition for the Claxton Shield. I would encourage anybody who has the time to give our Territory team the support it needs because there is no doubt, when one looks at the achievement of the team this year after the many years of drought that we have had, and when one looks at the standard of the young lads in the under-18s and the under-16s who will be representing the Northern Territory during the Christmas break in the junior Australian championships, that we will be putting some very good baseball teams into the field in the future.

One of the problems that we have had over many years - and I guess it applies to most sports - is that, when the teams go on to the field, the Territory team always looks as though it has not eaten its crusts and vegies. Its players look short and underweight. We are overcoming that barrier now. Most of the lads in the under-18 team bound for Perth this year will be over 6 feet tall, some of them 6'2" or 6'3". It is a tremendous advantage for our lads to have that sort of height and to have pace which is comparable to that of interstate players. I wanted to comment on the baseball team's achievement because it is most significant and a credit to all the people who have been involved, particularly those who have had the tenacity and the perseverance over 10 years waiting for their first win.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, tonight I would also like to add my commiserations to Myra Ah Chee and Paul on the passing of their husband and father. Fred Ah Chee was obviously a friend to many people. We have heard 2 opposition members claim considerable friendship with Fred. I too claim a friendship with him and with Myra, which I will always value. He was a thorough gentleman, a man who lived in 2 cultures. I feel that I gained a great deal of understanding of Aboriginal culture through discussions that I had with Fred. I learnt a great deal through Fred's sympathy for Aboriginal culture and understanding of that way of life.

Fred practised many aspects of Aboriginal culture but he was also thoroughly at home in the European culture. He got on well with everybody. As has been mentioned, he was a keen sportsman. He was a marksman and rifleman and was president of the rifle club. He held down a very responsible job as a plant operator at the Alice Springs power station, which was no mean achievement. He set a fine example to others, black or white, of what one can achieve by being consistent, keeping the head down and working hard.

Fred was admired as a leading citizen. The tribute paid to Fred at the funeral at the Uniting Church really indicated that he was a person who was respected by the whole community. Indeed, one would go so far as to say that a great deal of love was shown to him and earned by him because of the person that he was. We are the poorer in Alice Springs for having lost Fred Ah Chee but I believe we are greatly enriched through having known him for many years. He certainly will be greatly missed and I offer my condolences to Myra and Paul in particular.

This evening, the member for MacDonnell castigated the government for reducing these sittings of the Assembly from 6 days to 3. Mr Speaker, I would ask you to look behind me and see how many members of the opposition are here.

I think it is hypocritical of the member for MacDonnell to make a great fuss about ...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr COLLINS: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Anybody looking at the legislative program could see that there was not a great deal that could not be handled with a little energy and persistence without overtiring members. I think it was a very good move on the government's part. The member for Stuart referred, in a recent edition of the Centralian Advocate, to 'the real achievers of the Territory'. I can say here that the real achievers of the Territory appreciate that the sittings has been cut short.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to associate the Chair with the remarks made by members concerning the late Fred Ah Chee from central Australia and to extend my condolences to Mrs Ah Chee and her son Paul.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Industries and Development Portfolio

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, just over 8 months ago, the Chief Minister announced major changes to ministerial portfolios, one of which was the grouping of all industry sectors, except minerals, oil, gas and tourism, under the single Department of Industries and Development. The new department brought together primary production, fisheries, business technology and communications and was charged with the coordinated development of those areas with the aim of further diversifying the Northern Territory's narrow economic base. Before these changes were made, the development of our primary industries and secondary industrial base had been fragmented. Different departments were responsible for marketing assistance in their own areas and for the administration of their own incentives and assistance schemes. The view of the Chief Minister, a view with which I concur, was that industry development could be administered more efficiently by 1 department, and the Department of Industries and Development came into being. As members are aware, I was charged with the ministerial responsibility for that new department and, by means of this statement, I am pleased to report to the House that, after 8 months, substantial progress has been made towards achieving our aims.

I would say at the outset that such progress is necessarily incremental. In the present uncertain financial times, there are no big-ticket items to announce and no grand schemes for infrastructural development. All that has gone before. The work done by the Country Liberal Party government in the first years after self-government will be viewed by historians as a brilliant triumph, dragging the Territory into the 20th century and changing the face of this part of Australia forever. The job is now to capitalise on that hard work, to consolidate our present industrial base, to continue to encourage the diversification of our economy and actively to attract new business ventures which can take advantage of the Territory's unique assets. All of this is happening. What is more, it is happening without the direct government involvement necessary in the early years of self-government. With the exception of the grain and cropping industry, our primary and secondary sectors have reached the stage of maturity that allows them to determine their own destiny and they are now doing the job for themselves and for the Territory.

I will cover in some detail progress made in the various areas which were linked to form the Department of Industries and Development. A number of positive measures have been implemented in the past 8 months to encourage new industry into the Territory and to assist existing business and secondary industry to expand and diversify. The government has made a commitment to the Northern Territory electorate that there should be substantial moves towards privatisation of some government functions. On this side of the House, we are committed both to privatisation and to smaller government.

I am pleased to announce that, following consultation with industry, much of what was the Small Business Advisory Service is to be offered to the private sector. The basic advisory and referral services will remain within my department but the emphasis will be on referring people to experts in the private sector. Expressions of interest to provide the external services will be called for shortly to seek out those in private enterprise wishing to conduct workshops and training sessions formerly conducted by the department. Members will no doubt be delighted to hear that one of the by-products of the

decision taken to privatise the Small Business Service is that at least \$250 000 will be saved in a full year.

The review of video production units within the government has resulted in disbanding of the video production units in all departments except the Northern Territory Police Force and the Department of Education. Such video production as is required will now be handled by the private sector.

Consistent with the government's policy of privatisation, the Public Relations Unit within my department is under review. I have asked that such an exercise be undertaken having regard to both greater private sector involvement and the government's commitment to smaller government.

The government is also reviewing its activity in developing the marketing of Territory products. In the past, the government has been closely involved in the marketing of Territory products but it would now appear timely to take a broader perspective in this area. As I said earlier, the Territory's primary and secondary industries have reached the stage of maturity at which they can perhaps take on a greater role in marketing. Indeed, representatives of a number of industry bodies have made it clear that the government should take a diminishing role in the individual marketing of Territory products and services, particularly overseas. I have taken those views on board and, to this end, Nortrade, the marketing division within my department, has had some personnel redeployed to use their energy and expertise in business and industrial development.

The increasing role of the private sector in marketing Territory products and services is evident in the strategy being employed by Katherine people to obtain business from the RAAF and defence personnel stationed at Tindal. A recent seminar in Katherine, organised by the Industrial Supplies Office and the Confederation of Industry and Commerce, informed the local business community of RAAF needs and requirements and the business opportunities flowing from the establishment of the Tindal base. With the inclusion of fuel supplies, it was estimated that up to \$25m per year in business opportunities could flow from the base, its 700 airmen and the 900 family members accompanying them. The seminar also gave Katherine people the chance to meet key RAAF personnel who gave specific advice on the potential for Katherine suppliers to tap into the supply of goods and services to the RAAF and its personnel.

Another initiative designed to smooth the path for industry in the Territory is the implementation, after consultation with industry, of a revised purchasing and tendering system. The establishment of the Supply and Tender Board has greatly assisted business in the Territory. Tender and purchase procedures continue to be refined, including the introduction of the \$50 000 threshold below which Chief Executive Officers can authorise the acceptance of the lowest conforming quote. Industry representation on the board has proved encouragingly effective in providing a balanced assessment and increasing industry confidence in the board and its role.

Additional support to business is being provided by way of activities such as the Territory Enterprise Workshop for which the government provides both financial and human support. Exciting projects have resulted from this activity and it was pleasing to note the good reception given to this year's Territory winner in the national judging. Although it did not win the national award, the revolutionary wheelchair designed by Department of Health and Community Services staff was commended by the judges, and it is intended that it will go into full production in the Trade Development Zone.

The benefit of the enterprise workshop is not seen through the winning entry only. Having seen the business plans submitted by the 3 finalists, I can advise the House that there is innovative talent right here in the Territory. Any one of the finalists could have won and we will certainly be seeing further examples of viable business enterprise grow from this promising scheme. All of us have business ideas but few of us take them further than that. The enterprise workshop takes an idea, turns it into a prototype and develops a viable business plan covering everything from production to marketing. I commend the scheme to members as one which deserves our support.

Earlier this year, the government announced the establishment of a Regulation Review Committee. That committee has advertised for industry organisations, groups and individuals to prepare submissions on areas where regulation and red tape could be minimised. The secretary of my department is a member of that committee and the department is actively involved in assisting the committee. It is no secret that the government was disappointed with the response to the committee's advertisements. Stories about red tape and government interference find a ready outlet in the Territory's media yet, when it came to the crunch, only a handful of submissions were received.

Having said that, I do not take the poor public response as an indication that the situation is perfect. I wish to announce that an officer of the Business and Industrial Development Division of my department will be dedicated to steer development proposals through the system. This service will be offered both to local business people wanting to undertake significant developments and to overseas developers seeking to invest in the Territory. It is intended that the service will eliminate many of the frustrations associated with business and industrial development in the Territory. No doubt, honourable members will be aware that this is just one of many incentives and assistance packages available to industry, both primary and secondary. These incentives and assistance include the availability of interest rate subsidies, establishment grants and expansion grants and I take pleasure in advising the House that, since I was appointed Minister for Industries and Development, the large backlog of applications for such assistance has been cleared and a mechanism put in place to ensure that such a backlog does not occur again.

In closing this section on general industry, I will briefly advise members of recent developments in the area of communications and at the Trade Development Zone. As members will be aware, Imparja Television was awarded the licence to provide a commercial television service to the outback areas of the Northern Territory and South Australia. This occurred despite the government's clear position regarding its intention not to support the company while doubts remained over its financial and managerial expertise. The situation now is that Imparja is setting up its facilities in Alice Springs and hopes to be broadcasting early next year. I have visited Imparja twice recently, once at its new studio and once at the Alice Springs Expo, and I found its officers enthusiastic and keen to make a success of the project. Therefore, I asked the company to put to me a proposal whereby the government could support the services while justifying that support on normal commercial criteria and I will advise the House in due course of the results of those negotiations.

The Trade Development Zone is now operational with 4 companies using the zone's facilities. During recent months, we have seen its first export shipment, the first of many I am sure. I am equally sure that this tangible sign that the Trade Development Zone is up and running will greatly encourage those considering investment in the zone. Negotiations are continuing with

other parties both within Australia and overseas but I do not believe it would be appropriate to comment on those negotiations until they come to fruition.

I turn now to the area of primary industry. As members are well aware, the major impact on the pastoral industry in the Territory has been through the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign - BTEC. This program has fostered a close relationship between pastoralists and departmental personnel and, for my part, I do not intend that such a close relationship will be jeopardised simply because the program will shortly begin to wind down. Indeed, there are positive signs that the industry also desires that these close ties be maintained. To this end, my department has already begun to utilise available resources to work on tasks that have particular relevance and high priority for the industry.

A recent 2-day workshop within the department, attended by an industry representative, has led to a broad action plan for the transition from a pastoral industry, where BTEC has been the major thrust, to a pastoral industry post-BTEC. The pastoral industry post-BTEC will be a pastoral industry the like of which the Territory has not seen before because BTEC has had the side effect of cleaning up not only disease but poor management and inefficiency. For example, one has only to look at the magnificent development of Tipperary Station or the fact that one of Queensland's most prominent Brahman breeders, Sir Graham McCamley, now has an interest in 2 significant Territory cattle properties. Some weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting Sir Graham at his Queensland property, Tartrus, and, if what has been achieved there is any indication of what he plans to do in the Territory, I can advise that he is a very welcome addition to the Territory's pastoral industry.

To assist in planning for the cattle industry after the cessation of the BTEC program, a pastoral industry study was commissioned and the results of that study are now being considered by a working party which includes industry representatives. That study, together with proposals mooted at the AD 2000 conference recently held in Katherine, should provide the framework and directions for the industry in the Territory over and beyond the next decade. From the pastoral industry study, it is apparent that sectors other than cattle will become increasingly important in the Territory's animal production industry.

In line with this, and to facilitate the commitment the government has made to expand the buffalo industry, a trial has commenced to determine whether lot feeding will positively affect the condition of young male buffalo for the speciality meat trade. Early consumer testing of the buffalo produced in the trial indicates substantial marketing acceptability, not only for the fillet cut, with which many members will be familiar, but for an increasing range of cuts including rump, round, tenderloin, silverside, saddle, blade and topside. Current wholesale prices range from \$10 per kilo for fillet and saddle through to \$6.60 per kilo for rump and topside, down to \$3 per kilo for chuck and trim. Clearly, this is an initiative with which we will persist and further feed lot study on the conditioning of young buffalo will continue for another year with the aim of reducing feed costs in an effort to make the product an even more economic proposition.

In the Territory's dairy industry, I have witnessed the most dramatic developments in my short time as minister. The establishment of a very large dairy at Katherine has transformed the industry in the Territory. Already it is producing at a rate of well over 2 million litres a year and it is still in the early stages of development. The potential exists for far greater

production. I might add that this project has only become a reality because of the entrepreneurial and free enterprise nature of the Territory government. Nowhere else in Australia could this have taken place because of the red tape and regulation which elsewhere separates production and processing of milk as well as imposing quotas and compulsory milk marketing arrangements. Only in the Territory could an all-in-one dairy operation have been established.

I commend the Rowlands family for recognising that advantage and acting on it. The Rowlands are growing their own feed for their own feed mill, producing the milk and processing and packaging it, all on the one property. It is really a most magnificent achievement and I am sure Mr Rowlands would be pleased to arrange an inspection for any member of the House who would like to see just what can be done with imagination and the commitment to follow through.

Unfortunately, there is a cloud on the horizon for our small dairy industry in the form of the dairy levy. Much effort has been put into arguing in the Australian Agricultural Council against this imposition in the Territory. The latest estimate of the costs of the levy to the Territory's industry is just over \$30 000 but, clearly, this will escalate as the industry develops. I will continue to press for an exemption from the levy for the 2 dairy farmers until such time as milk is exported interstate. As well as pushing for an exemption to the levy, my department is providing technical advice and assistance to improve production levels at both dairies and to determine the longer-term potential of the industry in the Territory.

Another important development in animal industry is that the numbers in the Territory's goat herd are increasing rapidly, a development of which the member for Koolpinyah is well aware. Kid meat is highly sought after in many Middle Eastern countries and in certain parts of South-east Asia. As an aside, I think it will have a growing market in Australia as well. With a view to tapping this market, an extensive research project is now under way at the Coastal Plains Research Station. There is already a herd of some 750 goats and another 150 sheep on an Adelaide River property and it is quite possible that a commercially viable and substantial goat meat industry will be established in the Top End in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, the animal industry which has deservedly attracted the most publicity over recent months is the crocodile meat industry. This has come on stream recently following the provision of technical and financial advice and assistance to the crocodile farm operators and, while the meat is bridging a gap in the gourmet food market, we have seen also the first shipments of valuable crocodile skins from the Territory to Japan. The estimated value of this industry in 1988 is \$2.5m and it is anticipated that it will be worth \$20m in today's dollars by the year 2000.

I now turn to the fishing industry and the government's initiatives in this area have made it one with an exciting potential. As honourable members will be aware, the commercial fishing industry provides the Northern Territory economy with substantial revenue and total landings in 1986-87 were estimated at well over \$36m. The amalgamation of primary and secondary industry within the portfolio of Industries and Development has highlighted the potential of both the primary and secondary sectors of the fishing industry in the Territory. In other words, the fishing industry gives a good example of the tangible benefits flowing from the rationalisation of departments. Before the changes, the catching of fish was the responsibility of 1 department, yet it was more than likely that anybody setting up a business to process the catch would be dealing with another department. With the amalgamation of the

2 functions, we can more easily and clearly identify how best to develop the industry as a whole.

The major area for potential development lies not only in increasing the catch in Territory waters but, more particularly, in increasing landings in the Territory. It is an unfortunate fact that, historically, most of the value added to the Territory's catch has been done outside of the Territory. Other centres have proved more attractive, particularly in terms of facilities and because it was not possible to base vessels safely in Darwin during the wet season.

The government's initiative in providing a safe haven for fishing vessels in the new \$6m mooring basin has opened the way for the introduction of additional infrastructure designed to complement the primary fishing industry, and I am delighted to say that this initiative is already paying dividends. Recently, I had the pleasure of witnessing the first production run of the new fresh fish processing plant in Winnellie. The facility was established by Off-shore Fisheries International, a joint venture between local interests and a major Adelaide wholesaler, to take advantage of the Territory's potential as a virtually year-round home base. During that first trial run, half a tonne of fresh snapper was filleted and packed for local and interstate markets. The fresh fish formed part of a 15 t haul of fish caught north-north-east of Darwin by the fishing vessel Red Bluff. The remainder of the catch was frozen because of the lack of suitable storage facilities for fresh fish on the particular vessel.

The master of the Red Bluff said that the potential catch in the area he was fishing was some 60 t a week, and I am pleased to say that plans are advanced to bring in vessels with a larger storage capacity to take advantage of that bounty. I am also advised that, with minor modifications, prawn trawlers could work this fishery during their closed season further enhancing the prospects of the growth of a relatively major secondary fishing industry in Darwin. The new fresh fish processing plant has a potential throughout of 10 t a week. Jobs have already been created out there at Winnellie and, once the intake is built up, we can expect to see 5 full-time and up to 10 part-time jobs from the single initiative.

Further to the establishment of the fresh fish processing plant, consultations have been held with the relevant industry bodies with regard to the establishment of a fresh fish market in Darwin, a natural complement to the new plant and to the new mooring basin. The terms of reference have been finalised for a consultancy to consider a plan of action to implement the initiative and I hope to report the outcome of the consultancy to the Assembly early next year.

Further initiatives designed to boost the Territory's processing industry while utilising more of the catch commercially include a study into uses of the prawn fishery by-catch, while liaison with my department led to a local company finding a new market for a select portion of its fish by-catch in pet food manufacture. Clearly, the government's foresight in providing the mooring basin, unfairly labled a white elephant by its critics, has created the impetus for additional development of both our primary and secondary fishing industries with the new Winnellie plant a prime example of that success. I have no doubt that the processing plant will prove to be just the tip of the iceberg as there is real potential for new fisheries and a new processing industry.

Traditionally, the Northern Territory fishery has relied heavily on prawning, with minor emphasis on barramundi, salmon, mud crabs, reef fish, mackerel and a few bits and pieces. There are now exciting developments within my department which have the potential to broaden the range of products considerably with an exponential effect on the potential for our processing industry. One such initiative is a study into the establishment of a trepang industry. As members would be aware, trepang, sometimes known as beche-de-mer or simply by the attractive title of sea slug, is considered a delicacy in South-east Asia. My understanding is that it is yet another of those products which have a reputation for producing a positive effect on virility and libido, a sort of underwater rhino horn and, as such, the market in South-east Asia is enormous. They have to keep the population growing somehow, Mr Speaker.

Officers in my department are well on the way to determining what is the most appropriate trepang species for a Northern Territory fishery. A previous impediment to this proposal was a perceived reluctance on the part of Aboriginal organisations to be involved. However, I am pleased to report that, in recent discussions with staff of the Northern Land Council, I was advised that a number of communities are anxious to participate in the industry and that there are encouraging signs that this will become a reality. I am sure members on both sides of the House will join me in welcoming this development. Honourable members will be aware, of course, that much, if not most, of the Northern Territory's coastline and therefore areas suitable for harvesting of trepang fall off Aboriginal land.

Another initiative designed to broaden the fishery is a potential clam industry based on Groote Eylandt. A pilot study is being conducted into the viability of the industry and, if successful, this will mean the development of another separate fishery within the Territory.

Yet another new industry coming closer to reality is a cultured pearl industry. In this regard, I am delighted to advise the House that we appear to be a jump or two ahead of the competition. Recently, the South Australian Fishing Industry Council announced a major study into pearling in Australia. We are past that point and submissions will soon be called seeking participants in a major field trial here in the Territory. It is intended that 50 000 shells a year will be allocated between the participants and I hope to be able to advise the House of more specific details of the companies joining the trial in the middle of next year.

Among other initiatives conducted by my department are a planned oyster farming study to investigate the Territory's potential for oyster culture and the establishment of a barramundi hatchery for the conduct of further aquaculture research. Scampi is another product of which we will hear more in the future. I am also pleased to advise that, along with all of this, a resolution of negotiations with the Commonwealth is close at hand on what is known as the off-shore constitutional settlement. This agreement relates to which of the 2 governments will have jurisdiction over particular fisheries and this settlement, for example, will enable the Territory to manage the offshore reef fishery to the limit of the Australian Fishing Zone. I will advise the House when the agreement is signed and I will be able then to describe in more detail the benefits to the Territory.

As will be clear to honourable members, plenty is happening in respect of commercial fishing and related industries. Perhaps not all of it will come off, perhaps not all of it will prove to be viable but, to paraphrase the famous quote, it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried

at all. There is no doubt in my mind that the Northern Territory fishery of the 1990s will be far bigger, broader, more diversified and of greater benefit to the Territory than the fishery we have today.

I turn now to the recreational aspect of the fishing industry and honourable members will recall that, during the last sittings, I tabled a recreational fishing study. As members on both sides of the House supported the major thrust of that study, I have asked that further evaluation of that report be undertaken by my department with a view to developing strategies for the implementation of its recommendations. All fisheries management plans will be re-evaluated. The Barramundi Management Plan is already under review and clearly the recreational fishing study will have an impact on the management plan now being developed by my department and the industry.

The recreational and tourist fishing industry has been and is being promoted through such activities as: the Barra Classic, recently held at the Mary River, the Gove Game Fishing Classic and the Borroloola Fishing Classic. Ongoing assistance and advice is being provided by my department to new and existing fishing-oriented tourist operations and the various fishing associations and organisations throughout the Territory.

It will be clear from what I have just said that there has been a shift in emphasis in the way the government views the fishing resource. Given the priorities identified in the study, my department is now taking steps to restructure its internal resources to provide greater support to the recreational fishing function. Recreational fishing is now a \$60m industry employing over 700 Territorians and, in years to come, it will become even more important. The department's resources must be used to maximise benefits and, while this reallocation of priorities will doubtless offend some commercial fishermen, it is clear where those priorities must lie.

In line with the government's election commitments, several advisory councils which include industry representation have been established. The Pastoral Industry Advisory Council gives cattlemen the opportunity to have a much greater say in the priorities set within my department in relation to the cattle and buffalo industries. Another industry council is the Field Crops Advisory Committee which deals primarily with those matters relating to crops and grain. However, after the 1987-88 season, the major responsibility for grain crops will be assumed by the Grain Marketing Board which was established in July of this year. The membership of the board is the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority with the addition of 3 members elected by the Territory's grain growers.

While on the subject of grain production in the Territory, I would have to say that the viability of commercial grain-growing areas like the Douglas-Daly has not yet been established conclusively. As a result, grain growers have been actively encouraged to diversify the activities conducted on their farms. A few have already done so, some into tourist operations and others are utilising their land for the maintenance and fattening of livestock. Although there is no suggestion that the grain industry will not ultimately prosper, and while the government is committed to supporting the industry for the time being, such diversification will assist properties to become more viable economically.

In terms of assisting property owners in the immediate future, the government has instituted a range of financial incentives and assistance for the grain industry. The Fertiliser Freight Subsidy Scheme means that the cost to the grower of fertiliser, which is vital to maximise production, is far

less than it would otherwise be. Last month, 18 Territory grain producers were awarded contracts under the Crop Contract Scheme which enables growers to be assured of a certain monetary value for specialised crops grown on the contracted area. The contracts, worth almost \$500 000, cover 3000 ha and relate to crops of sorghum, rice, sesame, soybeans, mung beans and maize, but that is peanuts in relation to the overall potential of the industry. I made it clear in a statement delivered recently to this House that the government would not allow this potential to be discarded at this early stage of the industry's development. To this end, there is a continuing program on the various research stations throughout the Territory to determine the most economically viable crops.

This year, CSIRO farm trials were conducted in the Katherine area on a particular variety of chickpea. If successful, the crop could prove to be of major benefit to the Territory because a huge market exists for the product in India. There it is used to make besan, a chickpea flour used in pappadams, chapatis, parathas and other breads consumed by the Indian people in great quantities. At the moment, insufficient quantities of chickpea are grown worldwide.

As in the animal industry field, my department is addressing the question of where our resources are most needed. Given that most crops and grain in the Territory are grown in the Douglas-Daly, Katherine and Adelaide River areas, it is likely that, where vacancies occur in the Plant Industry Division, some positions will be relocated from Darwin to Katherine.

As honourable members will be aware, the horticultural industry is going ahead in leaps and bounds. The value of production has grown over 4000% since self-government and the industry is now worth some \$10m a year. But we must not rest on our laurels for there remains much to be done before we achieve our target of an industry worth \$40m by 1990. To assist in achieving this goal, and because I have been concerned for some time about the difficulty of attracting horticultural scientists to the Territory, I am pleased to announce that my department will offer 2 scholarships each year in horticulture. The value of the scholarships is \$3000 each in the first year and \$5000 each for the next 3 years. The scholarships will commence next year and will be available to students wishing to undertake graduate studies in horticulture.

In the area of horticultural marketing, the 'Territory Fresh' campaign launched a couple of months ago has made local, interstate and overseas consumers aware not only that the Territory grows melons, bananas, grapes, mangoes, capsicums, cucumbers, cabbages and many other fruits and vegetables but also that the quality of our produce is uniformly excellent. The importance of such a campaign cannot be understated. On the interstate market, not only will the campaign alert consumers to the availability of fresh Territory produce, it will alert all who see the logo to the surprising fact that the Territory has more to it than crocs and rocks. Indeed, the more we can identify Territory produce and products at a retail level, the more we will establish the reputation of the Territory as a place where things are happening and, in doing so, educate the people of the south as to what the Territory is all about.

A great deal is happening in the area of horticulture. Trials have commenced in the Alice Springs area to determine whether it is economically viable to cultivate date palms. The Point Stuart trials on the viability of cashew nut production are well advanced and the owners are considering plans for expansion into full-scale production while there are strong indications that others are also beginning to look seriously at large-scale cashew nut

plantations in the Top End. Officers of my department are continuing to provide technical assistance and advice. In addition, the department is negotiating the purchase of a small area of land near Ti Tree to carry out research on what new varieties of fruit and vegetables may be grown in central Australia. To assist growers in the marketing of horticultural products, a database on interstate market information is being compiled and will be available for the 1988-89 season.

During the 1987-88 wet season, small trials in the cultivation of kenaf will be conducted at Douglas-Daly, Berrimah Research Farm, Tipperary Station and Katherine Research Farm. During the 1988 dry season, some trials will be conducted under irrigation at Tipperary. These trials will have a twofold purpose: firstly, to determine the best location for growth of kenaf and, secondly, to increase the amount of seed available for planting. The kenaf task force set up within my department in April this year, which includes representatives from other departments and authorities as well as the CSIRO, is looking also at the prospect of manufacturing paper from kenaf pulp. Information about market specifications for pulps and papers and market size and location is being collected for analysis as is information on the most up-to-date technology for producing paper from kenaf pulp. I hope to give honourable members a further report on this project towards the end of this financial year.

In closing the section on primary industry, I cannot stress too strongly the importance I place on the input from and assistance given by industry advisory councils. I have already mentioned the Pastoral Industry Advisory Council and the Field Crops Advisory Committee. Other councils are also providing forums in which industry can have greater participation in determining research priorities. In the past, there has been criticism that often research has been carried out for the gratification of the particular scientists involved. While that may or may not be true, the advent of bodies like the Horticultural Advisory Council and the various fishery industry councils has resulted in research which is much more in line with industry priorities. There is no doubt that the establishment of these councils has been an outstanding success.

After the hard work of recent years, the Territory is quickly becoming an exporter of note both to interstate and overseas markets. Live cattle, buffalo and goats have been exported to South-east Asia, melons to Hong Kong, groceries - including locally-produced items - to Brunei and a range of horticultural products have found their way down the track to southern markets. The export of foodstuffs to Brunei has not been without some difficulty in relation to quarantine requirements, as I was forcefully advised when I visited Brunei in June. However, I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the federal Minister for Resources is acting on representations I made to him to have less stringent requirements placed on the export of food products to Brunei and to other countries which do not insist on the strict regulations imposed on our exports to satisfy the United States and major developed markets.

On the subject of the export of melons to Hong Kong, members may be aware of the real problems associated with the current limited air freight service. Continuity of the service can be assured only if there is sufficient freight of melons or other produce to warrant 1 flight per week in season. The ability of the industry to grow and to service a potentially huge South-east Asian market is totally dependent on the quality and reliability of the air freight service. I have asked my department to liaise with the industry to identify the options available to all parties to consolidate this vital link.

Whilst export is important, it is not the be-all and end-all, particularly at this stage in the growth of our small economy. There remain many items, both primary and manufactured, which are imported into the Territory in the face of perfectly acceptable local alternatives. To assist local industry in this regard, I am pleased to announce that my department will sponsor a weekly column in the Sunday Territorian entitled 'Product of the Week'. Each week, the column will feature a product grown or manufactured in the Territory. We hope that its effect will be to make Territorians aware of what is produced in their own backyard and is available through wholesale or retail outlets.

In order to achieve the commitment made by this government to all Territorians to develop the Territory to its fullest potential, we must create an environment which will enable the Territory to be promoted as an attractive and desirable investment destination. To some extent, this has been achieved, but clearly we are not yet all the way there. What I have spoken of today should go some way towards achieving that ultimate goal. Unfortunately, many Territorians do not have the same opportunity that I have to see exactly what is happening in the Territory today. They must rely on what is often the most atrocious, the most partial and, I regret to say, the most vicious media coverage, to gauge the state of our small world. They read of nothing but conflict, of doom and gloom and of depression. They hear nothing at all about the good that is happening in our Territory. I am here to tell this House and through it the people of the Northern Territory that nothing could be further from the truth than the doom and gloom that we hear about on a daily basis.

I have spent the last 8 months dealing with people who are working, not whingeing. Across the broad spectrum of my portfolio, I meet the great Territorians - Territorians with their heads down and their backsides in the air getting on with the job. Some of them are creating employment for others, some are just working to create their own dream of a small business, a small farm, something that they and they alone have built. Some do not make it and others are battling, just as small businessmen and primary producers are battling in every state in this country, but the vast majority are just getting on with the job, building their businesses and constantly on the lookout for new opportunities. I say all of this particularly to members opposite because, to a certain extent, in the past they have made a deliberate contribution to the feeling of doom and gloom.

I do not recall who it was who said that 'government is the art of the possible', but he was spot on. This government is doing everything in its power to create in the Northern Territory what we all want for this place and it is doing so with good will and dedication. Politics aside, the aim of the government and the aim of the opposition should be as one: to make the Territory an even better place to live, work and to raise a family. The Department of Industries and Development is contributing to that goal.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I wish our ministers had simpler titles. The minister in charge of all things vaguely related to primary production has given what appears to be a thoughtful analysis of what takes place in his portfolio. I must express my regret - and I am sure that this was beyond his control because normally he is most cooperative in such matters - that we did not have the opportunity to view the statement before he gave it. Its content is extensive and it would have been very useful if we had been given advance notice of it. However, we have at least had the opportunity to spend some time studying it during the lunch break.

Through the series of statements he has given to this House during the last 6 months, the minister has established that he has been working hard and has identified a number of areas within his portfolio which deserved concentrated attention and extra effort. It is interesting that some formerly favoured schemes are no longer in vogue and were not mentioned in the statement. For example, aquaculture was once touted as a technique which would give a great boost to primary production in the Northern Territory but it has now fallen from favour to such an extent that it was not mentioned in the minister's speech.

Another matter which is of concern to members on this side of the House is that, although the minister has proved beyond doubt that he is hard-working and that he has taken a considerable number of initiatives in his portfolio, those initiatives tend to take place north of Katherine. He seems a bit weak on initiatives in the horticultural and agricultural areas south of Katherine, as I believe my colleague the member for Sadadeen will tell him later in the course of this debate. 'Colleague' is a non-emotive term; it is purely descriptive.

One gets the view that the minister is hard-working but one also gets the view that he has tunnel vision. No effort has been made by the minister to relate in any of the statements he has made to this Assembly what he is doing in his portfolio area to further any broad objective that the government might have. Possibly that is not his fault. I think we will demonstrate in a discussion of a matter of public importance later that it is probable that the government does not have a broad statement of intent or a broad direction in which it wants to go. To that extent, one cannot blame the minister. Certainly, it is one of the shortcomings of his statement that he does not relate it to the broad framework of an overall context of government policy and direction. The old jobs, jobs, jobs objective is not going too well at the moment, is it? Apart from jobs, jobs, jobs for the boys.

All is not rosy within his department, particularly within the primary production area or whatever its correct title is under the new arrangements. I want to spend a couple of minutes speaking about some of the unrest in that particular division because the honourable minister may not be aware of it. There is unrest at a number of levels. The primary production people are concerned at what is happening to Berrimah Farm. We all know that there are some moves to divest the government of a significant proportion of Berrimah Farm and the people out there are concerned at what will replace some of the very valuable research functions that are undertaken at Berrimah Farm.

There is another problem with the structure of the Department of Industries and Development. None of the top 10 positions are filled by people with an expertise in the agricultural area. I understand that, to get a primary production viewpoint in management positions in the DID, the government had to increase the management group by 2. That group has now increased from 10 to 12 persons simply to enable a broad primary production view to be put at those sort of meetings. That lack of senior practising primary productionists in the upper echelon of the department is causing silly little problems that are doing a great deal to undermine the morale of people in the department.

A number of very senior departmental officers have recently been refused permission to go on interstate trips as part of a committee set up by the minister's advisory councils in various areas of primary production. As I understand it, 1 very senior primary production person, who happens to be the chairperson this year for his advisory group, was refused permission to attend

a meeting interstate which he was supposed to chair. That sort of pettiness and the failure to understand the value and importance of those trips has done morale in that department no good at all. I understand also that 1 of the 2 horticulturists employed in the department resigned recently because of his dissatisfaction with the priority given to horticulture within primary production. I think we all realise that, out of all the broad agricultural areas, horticulture is one of the most significant and important and, in that context, it is disturbing that 1 of the 2 horticulturists has become so dissatisfied with the operations of primary production in respect of horticulture that he has resigned from the department.

A concern that those people who are busy trying to rid the Northern Territory of mimosa and other weeds have had is that their purpose-built vehicle has been withdrawn from their use. This vehicle enabled them to go where normal vehicles could not go. Obviously, weeds do not grow exclusively along the side of the road. Their ability to come to grips with the weed problem has been seriously undermined as well. Those are some of the problems that have been brought to my attention which indicate that all is not as rosy within the Primary Production Division of the minister's department as the minister might have us believe.

The minister said in his statement that the government was moving out of direct marketing in the primary and secondary production areas. I am not sure that I quite agree with the stress that the minister placed on that. Perhaps he might like to expand his remarks in his response. If he is saying that Nortrade will not be undertaking any marketing and promotional exercises on behalf of primary and secondary industry in the Northern Territory, I think he is wrong. If he is saying that there is still room for Nortrade trade missions both overseas and to the rest of Australia, there is probably room for talking about the extent to which the government should assist in terms of marketing.

There is no doubt that, as a result of the assistance given to them by the government at an earlier stage, a number of Territorians are now able to market very effectively on their own. There is also no doubt that there are newer firms which want to become involved in export markets and which will need marketing assistance so that they can learn the basics. It is a highly-skilled exercise as some Territory firms have discovered to their cost. There was a feeling around some 4 or 5 years ago that all you needed to do to make a killing was to go to Brunei once, make some contacts and then write a letter saying that 100 t of grapes were on the next plane. It is not that simple. As we all know, marketing is a very complex exercise. One needs a consistent effort if one is to tap into a market, particularly an overseas market. It is a very slow process. There is a very valid role for the government to play through Nortrade in providing people with marketing expertise.

One of the other comments that disturbed me was the minister's statement that the Small Business Advisory Service would be partially privatised. Again, he might like to spell out what 'partially privatised' means. I would point out to him what has happened with the privatisation of public service management skills. There was a thriving internal public service management area until a decision was taken by the former government, on the grounds of saving money, to establish the Total Management Centre. Previously, the internal group conducted many courses for public servants free of charge. Now we have a situation where the Total Management Centre is charging public servants or their departments \$900 a week to attend what is called in the trade an 'in-service course'.

In this particular financial climate, departments will be very reluctant indeed to send public servants on courses costing \$900 a week. We have the absurd situation where basically the Total Management Centre is not being used at all. I would think that an assessment could be made now that that was a false economy. It might have resulted in some savings at the time but it certainly has not replaced the training that was available previously to public servants and it has meant that there are fewer opportunities for in-service training. My concern is that the small business training opportunities provided by the government do not go the same way. There is no point in privatising the Small Business Advisory Service if that means that the charges that will be imposed by the private operators put it out of the reach of the small business people for whom it is supposed to provide support. I think that is a particularly valid point at this time when things are so tight for so many small business people in the Territory. Again, I invite the honourable minister to expand on what his plans are in that regard.

One of the people I met on my recent trip south was Mr Brian Quinn, who is the General Manager of Coles Myer Ltd. Obviously, Coles Myer is a very important player in the retail arena in the Northern Territory. Its marketing policies and, in particular, its buying policies can have a very decided impact on a number of local industries. I put to Mr Quinn that Coles Myer had an obligation to buy as much locally as it possibly could in return for the huge amounts of money that we have put in to Coles Myer in the Territory, something in the vicinity of \$60m or \$70m. I must say I was pleased at his response. Coles Myer does have a policy of buying local produce wherever possible.

Mr Dondas: Produce or product?

Mr SMITH: Produce and product wherever possible. One of the concerns I thought he might have had was a reluctance by Coles Myer to take on local producers who could not guarantee produce all year round or for a substantial season. However, that is not the case. I have been advised by Mr Quinn and also by the local manager at Coles in Casuarina that, provided the quality is right, Coles is prepared to make spot purchases and it does so. In other words, local suppliers can go up to the tradesperson's entrance at Coles and knock on the door. They might have a tray of mushrooms to sell and, provided the quality is right, Coles will take it on. In this debate, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Coles on that attitude. It is a very responsible attitude and one that will be of enormous benefit to the agricultural and particularly the horticultural industries in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: They buy stuff and ship it south.

Mr SMITH: Who does? Coles?

Mr Perron: Coles - on its own trucks.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, and it also buys stuff and ships it south. In fact, that is one of the great advantages that Coles has. It is able to offer very cheap backloading rates on its refrigerated vans and that is another aspect that the horticultural industry may not be fully aware of. Coles is able to offer very competitive trucking rates indeed. I must say that I was encouraged by the attitude that Coles has adopted to dealing in the Territory and, as I have said, that is very helpful indeed to the developing horticultural market. In the Northern Territory, we have many quite small operators who have trouble finding markets on their own. When big retail

outlets like Coles are prepared to deal with small operators it is very helpful.

In talking about the horticultural industry, I have said on a number of occasions that probably the prime need within that industry is to look at farm-to-market services. Horticulturists that I have spoken with do not want any government involvement in actually planting and harvesting the crop - in fact, they believe that the less red tape involved with those particular aspects the better. They have also said that they do not really need all that much help in marketing. But, if you are a small producer, the cost of getting the produce from the farm to the market in prime condition can sometimes be prohibitive, particularly if refrigeration is needed. The honourable minister has not picked it up yet but, if I keep on saying it, he might at least express some comment on it. One of the ways in which the government can assist the horticultural industry is in the area of more effective and efficient farm-to-market services. Obviously, one of the most significant aspects of this is the refrigeration component.

I welcome what seems to be the government's change of heart in relation to Imparja Television, as do my colleagues who are listening with their eyes shut. They have now woken up to prove my point. That change of heart is significant enough in itself to warrant a statement instead of being buried in a much broader report. Certainly, it is welcome news that the Northern Territory government has reassessed its attitude to Imparja Television and is prepared to consider, on a commercial basis, the expenditure of some funds on the operations of Imparja. Imparja has always seen that prospect in commercial terms and I am sure that the member for Arnhem, who is a member of the Imparja board, will have much pleasure in informing the board of the government's change of heart when it meets in Alice Springs tomorrow.

To date, some aspects of the fishing industry have had something of a flavour-of-the-month status. Aquaculture was one of those in that it was the focus of attention for a while but has now been put on the back-burner while other aspects of the fishing industry are in the spotlight. I believe that slow and steady progress will be the order of the day in the fishing industry. The government has put in place much of the infrastructure necessary for the industry to develop. The acid test will come during the next few months as we wait to see how many of the prawning boats actually home-port in Darwin instead of going back to Fremantle or the east coast. That will give a significant indication of how quickly the industry will develop.

As I said earlier, the efforts of the Department of Industries and Development seem to stop at Katherine. We heard no mention of grapes or the wine made by Denis Hornsby. We heard no mention of the thriving carnation industry around Alice Springs and we only had a fleeting mention of dates. There is considerable potential for horticultural development in the Alice Springs region and hopefully that will assume a higher priority with the government as it starts to produce results. The Israelis have demonstrated what can be done in what appears at first glance to be inhospitable country and there are pioneers in the southern region who have successfully grown produce in a manner which would not have been thought possible previously.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude my comments at this point. I hope that the minister will continue to provide us with progress reports on developments he has outlined within his portfolio and that, when he does so in future, he will give us adequate time to prepare our response.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a few points in the statement that I would like to discuss. The first relates to the Industrial Supplies Office and the work that it is doing in trying to assist local businesses to become involved in the burgeoning defence industry in the Northern Territory. While I note that seminars are being conducted under the auspices of the ISO, I would like to point out to the honourable minister that I was advised by a person involved in defence procurement that, quite often, it is very small things that put people off. For example, he mentioned the difficulty that a person new to Darwin has in finding particular businesses. He mentioned the lack of street numbers on the business houses in Winnellie Road and I had a look at that myself the other day. The same can be said for Alice Springs and I am quite sure for many other roads around Darwin. It is a simple matter. If I had been looking for a particular number in Winnellie Road, I would not have been able to work out which side of the street it was on or at which end. It is extremely difficult. People like the honourable minister, who have grown up in the town, know where all the businesses are because they have spent many years here. However, for people from south, it is an added difficulty which is completely unnecessary and is something which I am sure that the honourable minister would like to take up with the new Business Advisory Council.

I would like to congratulate the government on its change of heart in respect of Imparja. People from Imparja discussed with me the meeting they had with the minister at the Alice Springs Expo. They said that he seemed to be reasonably enthusiastic after he saw how they were linking into a satellite to provide a service. I believe the Caulfield Cup was the highlight of the day at the Alice Springs Expo. I wish Imparja well. Now that the government has changed its attitude, perhaps they will be able to work together with some degree of peace and harmony for the benefit of all Territorians but, primarily, for those of us who live outside of Darwin.

I will not comment on the brief discussion of BTEC and the pastoral industry study because one of those topics is on the Notice Paper. From what the minister said at the last sittings, he intends to bring that on for debate. We have been given an advance copy of a ministerial statement on BTEC which I believe will be delivered tomorrow. Thus, we will be able to discuss those matters during that debate.

However, I would like to speak very briefly on recreational fishing. When we discussed the report on recreational fishing, I pointed out to the minister that the statement indicated that by far the largest number of currently inaccessible top grade barramundi fishing spots were on private land and leasehold land in the Top End. I would be very interested to hear what success he has had in negotiating with landowners for access to those areas on what, hopefully, would be a mutually beneficial basis both for the fisherman and for the landowner.

I was disappointed at the scant regard that was paid to the arid zone. I note that 3½ lines were given to the Ti Tree research facility and that is certainly welcome. However, I would like to point out to the minister that, when looking at development in the arid zone, it is very important not to adopt a blinkered view and simply take fruit and vegetables which are grown elsewhere and attempt to adapt the environment to fit the crop. In many instances, one is better advised, and we now have the ability to do this, to adapt the crop to fit the environment.

I am talking of the wealth of native foods which we have throughout that arid zone. We have hundreds and hundreds of species which could be

investigated to see which ones are suitable for development with the use of genetic techniques to enhance certain characteristics of those crops for usage in Australia and overseas as cash crops of the future. An example is a particular variety of bush potato which grows on a very large plant which is shaped like a starfish. It is not distributed throughout central Australia but it does grow in the area around Barrow Creek and just north of Ti Tree. Discussions I have had with people from the Australian National University tell me that that particular variety has some very close genetic links to the Papua New Guinea sweet potato. They believe that it would be a relatively simple matter to incorporate the high-yield and regular-fruited characteristics of the Papua New Guinea sweet potato with the drought-resistant qualities of that particular variety. It has a very large fruit.

My interest in it was to attempt to find a subsistence crop which would be of great benefit to Aboriginal communities and outstations. If we could develop a potential for subsistence farming in those areas, we would reduce one of the major leakages from their own internal economic system and allow very substantial upgrading in people's individual standard of living. Once it is developed as a subsistence crop, the potential is there for people to develop it further as a market crop.

It is worth remembering that all the fruit and vegetables that we consume today were bush foods somewhere at some time. It is the result of natural selection and selective breeding etc over hundreds of years that they are now in the form in which we see them. However, there is only 1 bush food of Australia which is currently used as a cash crop and this is in spite of the fact that I have been told that something like 50% of the total genetic variety of seeds and fruits in the world today are actually Australian. We have an enormous variety of species in Australia and yet only 1 has ever been utilised. Of course, that is the Queensland or macadamia nut. That was developed not by ourselves but by the Americans in Hawaii and then we had to import the technology to start growing them here in Australia. Currently, some people are doing work on some of the bush medicines and that may provide another form of economic enterprise which will assist in the drier areas without having to go to the considerable expense of attempting to change the environment artificially through extensive irrigation which can often have quite devastating effects in the long term through the build up of salts and changes in watertables etc.

I was disappointed that the grape industry was not mentioned by the minister. Recently, I was able to visit the Territory Grape Farms at Ilkarwarana and Pine Hill. The work being done there is an example to us all. It is an example of Territory achievers getting out there and getting stuck into it. The managers, Chris McColl and Michelle McGlasson have 160 acres planted and 80 acres of that is due for production this year when they hope to be able to turn off something like 15 000 cases of grapes. That will be starting about now. They hope that, next year, that will increase to some 60 000 to 80 000 cases and, in full production, they will be looking at over 100 000 cases of ...

Mr Perron: What about the member for Sadadeen? He is into it too.

Mr EDE: Don't worry, I am coming to the member for Sadadeen. He will get his.

As I said, the people I mentioned there will then be turning out over a 100 000 cases per year. Other groups are doing the same job.

Mr Perron: Are you going to acknowledge the government's help?

Mr EDE: Yes, I know that the government did do some work initially on a water resource study.

Mr Perron: What about the grape trial?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the work done in the early stages by the Dahlenburgs is something for which they really deserve a pat on the back. They did a great deal to demonstrate the viability of the industry but it is unfortunate that there are always those who come along a little later and attempt to grab some of the fame for themselves.

Over the last couple of days, since I issued a press release in relation to Territory grapes, the member for Sadadeen has been coming up to me and attempting to link himself somehow with this group of Territory achievers. There is no way in the world that I would place him in that classification. I note that, in the House last night, he talked about the real achievers in the Territory and attempted to do it again. He is not one of the real achievers of the Territory. All he has achieved is a grape farm subsidised by the taxpayers of the Northern Territory and the electors of Sadadeen. He cops his salary of \$40 000-odd a year. But does he work in the electorate of Sadadeen looking after the very real problems of his constituents? No! He is too busy growing grapes. He attempts to portray himself as the labourer in the vineyard. I can say positively that, in this case, the labourer is certainly not worthy of his hire. While he puts his pumpkins and grapes on the market, competing with honest people who have to fork into their own pockets to attempt to develop their own farms, he does it on the public purse. Mr Speaker, that is outrageous and disgusting.

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! In referring to honest people working their grape farms, the member for Stuart was insinuating that I was somehow dishonest. I believe that he should withdraw that.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I am advised by the Clerk that the member for Stuart implied that the member for Sadadeen was operating his farm at the expense of the public purse. I would ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will not only withdraw it but I will explain that I at no stage intimated that he was using government funds on the actual development. I stated that he was paid from the public purse to carry out what I believe is the full-time job of representing the electorate of Sadadeen and that he does not devote himself to that task. That is something that the electors of Sadadeen will worry about.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, as far as the remarks of the member for Stuart are concerned, I will leave it to the people of Sadadeen to judge me. They treated me rather kindly in the last election and I believe they will do the same next time. I believe that I am doing the job to their satisfaction. We will see what happens at the next election and leave it at that.

The speech writer for the Minister for Industries and Development does not seem to have a great deal of knowledge about what happens south of Katherine. I have no doubt that the minister knows what is happening there. He has visited the area many times and has travelled with his departmental secretary looking closely at the area. More as a reminder to his speech writer than to

the minister himself, I now table a box of table grapes. It probably cannot be incorporated into Hansard but possibly it could be put in the fridge for tomorrow night's party which would be an acceptable way of disposing of a perishable product. I hope it will remind the minister's speech writer that there is horticultural activity south of the Katherine line.

I would like to pay tribute to the Department of Industries and Development, particularly the officers who work in the horticultural field. One person who certainly deserves a good pat on the back is Frank McEllister. Frank has been with the department as long as I have been in Alice Springs, which is nearly 18 years, and he has dedicated himself to the job. I wish that he had more people who could work with him so that he could do an even better job. Frank has put his best foot forward for the horticultural industry. It was he who first went to Ti Tree and made some assessment of the land there. Later, the Dahlenburgs went up there and took over as the real pioneers of the grape industry in Ti Tree. As a result of their success, the government encouraged Territory Grape Farms to plant some 160 acres of grapes. They are not without their problems. As I understand it, there is a totally different soil type and water availability to that at Ti Tree. No doubt, with effort and persistence, they will overcome the problems, just as the Dahlenburgs have taken something like 13 or 14 years and are still solving some of the problems in the Ti Tree area. I give full credit to them. I am very grateful indeed to the Dahlenburgs. Arthur and Ian have never stinted on supplying information which they felt relevant to the area. I have based many of my judgments on their experiences. They really are top people to deal with.

It is interesting that, in Ti Tree today, there is a meeting between 3 of the 4 grape growers in the area. Central Australian Produce, Territory Grape Farms and the Dahlenburgs are meeting with departmental officers to discuss ways in which the department can best aid the growers through research. One of the matters which will be discussed is root stock trials to determine which nematode-resistant and salt-tolerant strains will be the best for the area. They are working in close conjunction with CSIRO and its head, Dr John Possingham, over the trials.

I feel that a more acceptable step is not simply to trial the actual root stocks but to grow some grapes on them because grapes can do some very funny things in respect of root stocks. Experience has shown that use of a new variety called Flame Seedless with the root stock called Harmony gives very scraggly bunches. It is not a marketable product with that particular root stock. What I have suggested, and it will be taken up by Mark Holt from the department and put to the meeting today, is that I would be more than willing to go into some breed stock trials but it must be done on a practical farming basis. There is nothing worse than to have 5 of 1 particular variety of grape followed up by another 5 of a different variety maturing at a different stage. You must be practical and one line must be planted with one particular type of grape. I would be very happy to cooperate with the department by putting 5 Teleke root stocks, followed by 5 Harmony, followed by something else but grafted with 1 particular variety of grape overall so that the information is related to where the market will be. It is one thing to have a good vigorous root stock but it is another thing to be sure that the grape that you graft on it is compatible and will produce decent fruit. That is one of the matters that will be discussed at Ti Tree today. No doubt, the results of the discussions will be brought to the department and hopefully some useful research will result.

Dr John Possingham is the head of CSIRO and is based in Adelaide. I had a few words with him the other day because he is developing a native Australian plant, the quandong. That is one that the member for Stuart can add to his macadamia nuts. He is seeking to improve the breed of quandongs. It is a very interesting plant in that it will not grow on its own. It must have other plants such as lucerne growing with it. There is a symbiotic relationship between the 2 plants. He is interested in supplying me with some for a small corner of my property to see how they will go in the area. He seems quite pleased about it.

As a little political aside, the Premier of South Australia, Hon John Bannon, likes to offer various quandong dishes when he entertains guests from interstate or overseas at the Festival Theatre. Thus, in future, there could be some potential economic value. I understand that they sell at about \$10 per kilogram on the market. I find it interesting and useful to be involved in such research.

At the last sittings, I mentioned the visit of Professor Wayne Sherman from Florida, the expert in low chill requirement peaches and nectarines, and paid tribute to the department for inviting him to central Australia to have a look around. He is a man who has considerable knowledge and who is very un-American in that he says very little. However, what he says really hits home. It is obvious that he really knows his subject.

I was speaking to another man involved in a low chill requirement fruit in Australia, namely Mr Lyle Wright from Wright Co Nurseries in Lismore New South Wales, who was instrumental in getting Professor Sherman across to Australia for the first low chill requirement conference a few months ago. Professor Sherman is again working with Lyle Wright at his nursery in Lismore. It is interesting to note that, while the New South Wales Department of Agriculture has done some work in Lismore on low-chill fruit, Professor Sherman chooses to deal with the private operator, Lyle Wright. He does this because he knows where the professional attitude and results are.

I was very cheered by Lyle Wright. I asked him about certain varieties which Professor Sherman said he thought would be suitable for the area and Lyle was very enthusiastic and keen to supply varieties to me later on in the year. He was very encouraging when I spoke about the variety of nectarine which I planted on 1 July this year and which produced fruit with a delicious flavour. The only problem was that it was rather small, weighing about 75 g. He said that he had varieties now which would produce about 10 times the yield. He said that he had been supplying the department in Alice Springs for several years and we actually saw those particular trees with Professor Sherman. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in Frank McEllister's day, given the number of staff he has, to thin and trim those fruit trees. Professor Sherman contends that the fruit should be at least 6 inches apart and thinned very early so that, although the number of fruit is smaller than it would otherwise have been, each piece is much bigger.

There are exciting possibilities with varieties of pear, peach, nectarine, apple, almond and plum which have low chill requirements. In fact, there is 1 variety of peach which needs as little as 75 hours below a certain temperature. I keep forgetting to ask the name of that variety but it certainly could be useful on many outstations and stations well up into the Barkly area.

Another person who is presently visiting Australia from the United States is Dr David Ramming. He is from Fresno in California where he works for the

US Department of Agriculture. I had the pleasure of spending half a day with him a couple of years ago. He develops new varieties of grapes and has some fascinating techniques in relation to seedless grapes. That might sound like a contradiction in terms. All grapes have a tiny seed but, in the so-called seedless varieties, it simply does not develop. He has crossbred various so-called seedless varieties and he has a wealth of experience in the field. He is in Merbein in Victoria at present. I have mentioned to Mr Russell Poliwka in Alice Springs that it would be very useful if Dr Ramming were able to come to the Territory to share his experience with our growers. I hope that that will be possible.

I have spent most of my time talking about horticulture in central Australia. It is an exciting area but the necessary knowledge will not be gained easily. The Dahlenburgs admit that they have made tremendous mistakes. They thought that they could keep up their price which is necessary to cover all the costs of growing in an isolated area, by growing all the varieties necessary to produce throughout the season and by producing new varieties to cater for people who want a change. They found that they just did not work. One simply must grow the varieties of grapes which will produce before the southern growers can get their first grapes on the market. The Dahlenburgs have had to rip out many of their vines, and that is learning the hard way. They have shared their experience and I will always be very grateful to them.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to mention briefly a few matters relating to small businesses which employ more people in this country than anybody else and yet government seems to try to bleed them dry. It hits them really hard, particularly in terms of taxation. There is a fair bit of red tape around but the factor that hits hardest is the level of taxation.

Mr Perron: Small business is exempt from payroll tax.

Mr COLLINS: Payroll tax? No, I am talking of the federal government and I am thinking of simple business taxation. When you start to make a profit, you are hit for provisional tax and that can often cripple small businesses. I have said in this House many times, and I intend to say it many times again, that the job for government is to create a climate in which the ordinary people out there, who are willing to put up with the flies, the heat, the dust and the uncomfortable situations that arise, can succeed. They are willing to do that work and find it worth while to get out there and put up with those things because there is a chance of some decent reward at the end of it.

A recent Australian Small Business Association News Bulletin came my way. I am a member of that particular and growing group of which governments will have to take much more notice as time goes by. The small business proprietors are becoming organised and they realise it is absolutely vital to their survival for them to do so. In that bulletin, an item appealed to me very much. It concerned something which this government cannot do much about because it is a federal matter. It was that, in the United States, whenever capital items are bought, they are permitted 100% tax deductibility in the year in which they are bought. At the moment, we are permitted to deduct 20% in the first year and 20% of the remainder the following year and so on. If the federal government had the courage to allow 100% tax deductibility on capital items in this country, which is under-capitalised in so many ways in its industries right across the board, it would stimulate a tremendous amount of business and would set us up with a structure which would do a great deal to soak up unemployment and get the country on its feet again. The logical thing seldom seems to happen. The government says it needs the money and, if it did that, it would have to forgo certain amounts.

For a change, let us look at the fact that every person who is employed is a person who is no longer dipping into the barrel of social security but is a contributor to the public purse. It is the small businesses of Australia that need the encouragement and the incentives to get this country going again. It can be done. The will is out there. We need only to get the government's greedy, grubby fingers off the throat of small business so that it has a chance, and some incentive to put in the effort. Where else do you find people who are stupid enough to spend 80 and 100 hours a week to make a living? Many of those people could have been public servants and worked 37½ hours a week for the same money. These are the real wealth creators. They are the salt of the earth and yet the federal government wants to grind them down. It is up to the federal government to wake up and create the climate that would lead to the small businesses of Australia increasing the number of people they are employing, increasing their productivity and getting the country out of the mess it is in.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this statement from the Minister for Industries and Development with some pleasure, but some perplexity. At the outset, I would like to say that I would have appreciated a longer time for consideration. The Leader of the Opposition made the same comment.

Mr Hatton: We were going to give it to you and now you want to talk to it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am speaking now and I will say what I have to say.

It seems that the honourable minister has delivered this statement as a Parthian shot during the last sittings of the year. It is more or less saying: 'We have done this, so there!' I believe that a decision would have been made in the party room to present the statement to us. Other members of the party would probably have said: 'We had better say something about this because everybody is knocking us'. The honourable minister, who is quite competent in his ministerial duties, probably volunteered and said that he could make another statement after already making statements on the pastoral industry, the fishing industry, the horticultural industry, the buffalo industry and the grain industry. All of those statements have been presented by the honourable minister and the gist of each of those previous statements has been included in this present statement. To comment on the statement presented to us today is really rehashing old news about what the minister presented in those previous statements. Nevertheless, primary industry is something I do know something about so I do not mind getting up to speak again if people do not mind listening to me.

I think the minister has to realise at the outset that the good news that he is presenting is not wholly of his making nor is it wholly of the government's making. Mainly, it is the making of the workers engaged in primary production. I will say that ...

Mr Perron: You blamed it all on government yesterday.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Hang on - you had the finger put on you to present some good news so you have presented some good news. Now be quiet while I compliment you or I won't do it.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members will address their remarks through the Chair.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, the honourable minister must never lose sight of the fact that the people who do the work are the primary producers and the people who do the hardest work are the little fellows. It has happened before, and the name has seesawed back and forwards, but I was rather concerned that, at the beginning of this government's tenure, it removed the name of the primary production portfolio and called it Industries and Development. To my way of thinking, that immediately demoted the importance of primary production in the government's consideration.

I say now that I took exception to the remarks of the member for Stuart in denigrating the work of the member for Sadadeen, not that the member for Sadadeen cannot stick up for himself. However, the member for Sadadeen is doing only what many other people do in their spare time. He has a hobby, as many of us have. We have hobbies and we are making them pay. Would the member for Stuart have us all sit on our backsides and do nothing but drink white cans? He has said that we should work for our electorates. What better way to work for our electorates than to work as other people work in their spare time?

I make no excuse for saying that, in my spare time, I keep a few goats and a few dogs. I breed cattle dogs and sell them. I sell puppies, goats and a few turkeys and chooks. Mr Speaker, you might ask why I am selling all these things. I am getting over \$40 000 a year. How dare I make any more money? That is a completely socialistic way of looking at things, as if everybody who has a bit of initiative has to be sat on. I am only doing in my spare time what other people do in theirs. By engaging in a paying hobby or part-time work in my electorate, I am only doing what any good MLA should be doing - that is, keeping completely in touch with what other people are doing in the electorate so that one knows what is going on.

I was quite amazed to hear what the member for Stuart said because his views were the same as those of my CLP preselection committee. Its members also thought that I should give 24 hours a day, not 23 hours or 8 hours, to my electorate. They were rather miffed when I said that I would not do that. Anybody who comes to my electorate office and follows me around, as somebody did with a senator in order to see how much work he did, will see that I put in more than my fair share of work for my constituents. I am not complaining about that; I do it because I like doing it. But I will not put in 24 hours a day in any job. I must have my free time and, in that time, I will do what I want to do. If I happen to make money from my hobby, so be it. I do not believe in union work. I work to finish the job.

I was rather concerned to hear the minister say that he is doing away with the Small Business Advisory Service. Here we go again: the larger businesses and developments will be helped and guided through the intricacies of government while the small business person will have to pay for any advice that he may need.

Although I disagreed violently with some of the member for Stuart's comments, I had a point of agreement in relation to quandongs even though he is a bit behind the times, as is the member for Sadadeen. I come from a little place in Western Australia called Quairading. It is about 94 miles east of Perth in the dry, wheat-belt area. When I was a kid, things were pretty tough and we used to live off the land. We used to eat what we called 'underground mutton' quite often and also we ate native fruits, among which were quandongs. It was quite a normal thing for mothers to make quandong jam and children ate it as a matter of course.

Mr Dale: Have you read the book, 'A Hundred Ways to Use a Quandong'?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know of 2 ways to use a quandong and I could suggest that some people could put quandongs where some people are not supposed to put quandongs. That might shut them up.

I am all for farming our native fauna as well as our native horticultural products. I have an interest in native fauna and perhaps, at some time in the future, I will be able actually to farm it. For honourable members' information, there are other native products. One of these is a very old product which is typically Australian and has gained world-wide acclaim. I refer to our eucalyptus oil which comes from certain varieties of eucalyptus. Recently, considerable publicity has been given to the making of ti-tree oil from ti-trees.

Mr Collins: What about goanna oil?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Goanna oil does not have goanna in it. You know that.

To return to the minister's statement, I was pleased to see that he is reviewing the Video Production Unit and also the Public Relations Unit in his department. The sort of people who perform that work are not ordinary run-of-the-mill public servants. People involved in public relations have a special flair for their job. They are not public servants and one could describe them as a type of artist. I think it is very wise of the minister to farm any such work out to private enterprise where it will be done much better.

I have to congratulate the minister on the initiative of the Territory Enterprise Workshop. It is an excellent idea and, if those workshops continue, I believe that we will see some seemingly ordinary little inventions receiving a great deal more acclaim than they otherwise would. One group of people who are well known for making things to suit their own ends are primary producers. I believe that, if the matter were studied, it would be found that, more than any other group, they have been enterprising and have produced inventions which have been used for the greater benefit of the community.

The minister talked about doing away with red tape and regulation. I have been a little lax on this subject but I have completed a letter to him or the Chief Minister setting out my views and concerns on the matter. The minister said that he had not received many letters on the subject but I wrote to him some months ago in relation to red tape problems being experienced by small business.

I was rather concerned to hear the minister say that a departmental officer will be dedicated to steer development proposals through the system. He said: 'This service will be offered both to local business people wanting to undertake significant developments and to overseas developers seeking to invest in the Northern Territory'. Where do the little people come in? Are they supposed to battle on? Don't forget that the minister said that they will have to pay for advice. It appears that they will have to pay and paddle their own canoes through the bureaucratic rapids of the public service while the 'significant' developer will get all the help he asks for. I am not against him receiving such help but what happens to the small business people? They are neglected again.

In relation to the minister's remarks about the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, I think anybody could have foretold what would happen. The eradication procedures have pointed up poor management and inefficiency of pastoral properties and, if one is to engage in the scheme, these have to be changed and better husbandry practices put in place. I am very pleased to hear that these changes have taken place, but people would have foreseen that that would happen anyway. The minister continued by saying that poor management and inefficiency had gone and all the pastoralists were doing the right thing. He gave as examples the magnificent development of Tipperary Station or the fact that one of Queensland's most prominent Brahman breeders, Sir Graham McCamley, now has an interest in 2 significant Territory cattle properties.

That is okay, but nobody wants to hear about people like that who are right off the scale of ordinary people. Those people have the money and expertise and I am not knocking them, but it would have been more to the point if the minister told us how many miles of fencing had been erected in the interests of better management and better husbandry practices, how many dollars had been spent on cattle yards, how much acreage had been put under improved pasture and how much acreage was being put to the improvement of native pastures rather than presenting such an obvious example. Everybody knows that those people have money and that, of course, they will have magnificent developments. If he had told us about the poor husbandry practices that had been improved on, it would have made much more sense. I am sure they have been improved but let the minister tell us about them, not about the obvious things.

I was pleased that the minister mentioned his concern about the dairy industry. I do not know what they are saying on the other side, Mr Speaker. I think they are trying to interrupt but I know my remarks are valid. Speak up, I cannot hear your interjections.

Mr Dale: They are not talking at you, Noel

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Oh! I see it is just chit chat.

Mr Hatton: They are trying to put some interest into this discussion.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Well, go to sleep.

Mr Hatton: I don't do that and you know it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Don't you?

The honourable minister spoke about advice and assistance. I could not help smiling a bit at this. He was talking about the dairy industry and said: 'As well as pushing for an exemption to the levy' - which is good and I am pleased he is doing that - 'my department is providing technical advice and assistance to improve production levels at both dairies and to determine the longer-term potential of the industry in the Territory'. That is all being done without a dairy advisory section in the department responsible for primary production. I do not know how it is doing it.

Mr Perron: We have 2 dairies here. How big a section do you want?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We have 2 dairies here and I reckon that the dairies themselves are doing all the things that he says his department is doing. They would obtain veterinary advice from the department but I reckon they are doing everything else by themselves.

Mr Perron: Then why am I going off interstate every 6 months fighting their levy for them?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Because you do not know much about primary production and you have to keep up with it, that is why.

Mr Hatton: And you do?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know a bit more than he does - and you too.

Mr Dale: This one has gone past your eyes, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, it has not. I have my feet firmly on the ground.

Mr Speaker, for the minister's information and just to bring him up to date, I do know a bit more about goats than he does - 4-legged as well as 2-legged. He spoke about the goats at Adelaide River and I understand from his remarks that he is talking only about 1 large property there. I do not believe it has 750 goats; I think it has closer to 500. The honourable minister did not mention another private producer of goats who, off his own bat and completely with his own resources, has built up a herd of about 400 goats as well as engaging in horticultural activities. The goat industry is even bigger than the minister thought it was.

I was pleased to read about the joint venture Offshore Fisheries International and its development of a processing plant at Winnellie. At some time in the future, I would like to pay a visit there because I am very interested in these new ventures that start up here. The honourable minister mentioned the importance of recreational fishing. The Minister for Mines and Energy went on at great length last sittings to tell me how the damming of the Daly River would not affect the breeding of the barramundi upstream and that recreational fishing interests would suffer no interference. For the information of those who do not know, particularly the Minister for Mines and Energy, I must say that, whilst I am not a piscatorial expert, I have been told that barramundi do not go up concrete stairs. I say that because the minister said concrete stairs were planned for the weir on the Daly River. However, the minister will have to find some other way to get the barramundi upstream. Salmon use stairs but barramundi do not.

The minister spoke about the establishment of a trepang industry at Groote Eylandt. I think he should talk about the re-establishment of a trepang or beche-de-mer industry. He may not be as well up with the history of this subject as I am and I know that Fred Gray, a very honourable old gentleman who lives out at the 17-mile, was actively involved in the trepang and beche-de-mer industry at Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt in the 1930s.

It would be extremely beneficial to the Northern Territory if the minister were able to go ahead with the development of an oyster farming study which led to active oyster farming here. As I like oysters a lot, I hope that the minister starts his study over at Goulburn Island where there are blacklipped oysters. If you really like oysters, Mr Speaker, those are absolutely out of this world; they are the biggest and tastiest oysters that I have ever come across.

Mr Speaker, before my time is up, I would like to comment on the remarks of the minister about the little tag 'Territory Fresh' that he wants to see put on fresh produce from the Northern Territory. He wants tags put on first-class horticultural produce and that is a pretty good idea because, if

we produce something of which we are proud, we should let everybody know that it comes from the Territory. But why does he stop at horticultural produce? Why can't he think about putting the logo on fresh meat, milk, bread and fresh anything else that is produced in the Territory? Please, don't limit it to horticultural produce. Put it on everything that is produced up here.

Berrimah Research Farm was mentioned. I would like to talk about that later because I am rather concerned about its future. The minister mentioned the kenaf task force which is investigating the market potential of kenaf. In the absence of the member for Port Darwin, I can say that I would like the minister to comment on a task force investigating the possibilities of using as fodder what he would call coffee bush. I call it leucena cephal variety cunninghamii. CSIRO has done some trials down at Katherine. That variety of leucena is extremely high in protein and, once more, I will be trying to grow a crop out at my place.

All in all, Mr Speaker, the minister's statement was a good one and I extend my compliments to him for the development that he is encouraging through his Department of Industries and Development, especially that directed at primary production.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 9

Mr Coulter

Mr Bell

Mr Dale

Mr Collins

Mr Dondas

Mr Ede

Mr Finch

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Firmin

Mr Leo

Mr Hanrahan

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Harris

Mr Smith

Mr Hatton

Mr Tipiloura

Mr McCarthy

Mr Tuxworth

Mr Manzie

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Developments in NT Equal Opportunities Program

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, as honourable members would appreciate, the Office of Equal Opportunity is now within my portfolio and I feel this is an opportune time to provide an update on progress made by the government in this critical area. From the outset, let me reaffirm this government's commitment to the concept of equal opportunity. No right thinking person could possibly argue against such a concept. After all, it is comparable with that time-honoured Australian tradition of 'a fair go'. It is in keeping with the national sense of egalitarianism on which Australians so pride themselves and, more importantly, it is basic to good management practice. It is unfortunate at this stage in

this nation's development that it is necessary to actively foster such a concept. Given the traditions of Australia, it would seem natural if the concept of equal opportunity were ingrained deeply in the national make-up. Sadly, this is not so. In fact, the opposite all too often seems to be the case.

There is little doubt that past practices have placed certain groups and individuals at a distinct disadvantage. In this lucky country of ours, barriers have been created which have prevented certain groups and individuals from fulfilling their full potential. In far too many cases, these barriers have become institutionalised. It is essential, not only for the sake of the disadvantaged but for the Territory and the country as a whole, that these barriers are torn down. I am pleased to say that positive policies have been put in place by this government to ensure that these barriers will be removed and that the disadvantaged do, in fact, get a fair go. In the long term, the Territory must benefit from such policies as they equate with development.

During the debate on the motion for a law and justice implementation review committee during the October sittings of the House, there was some discussion of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation. That debate produced a range of interpretations of the equal opportunity situation in the Territory. I would like to clarify the situation. Existing Australian legislation stems from international law embodied in United Nations declarations and international labour conventions including the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination in Employment and Occupation.

To date, the Territory has chosen not to take the legislative path. The government believes that it can achieve the same ends through consultation and persuasion. To this end, the government has designated the Northern Territory Public Service as the pacesetter in equal opportunity. If government departments and authorities are able to prove conclusively that equal opportunity can be approached in a functional and practical manner, there is no reason why the private sector should not pick up the idea and run with it as well. However, it is important to emphasise that, even though there is no separate law at the Territory level, all citizens are covered by provisions of the federal government's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act.

The idea is wide ranging and, for that reason, the CLP government believes that equal opportunity legislation at the Territory level would simply amount to unnecessary red tape. Those areas covered by the federal act are: the Convention Concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally-retarded Persons and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Provision is also made within the act for the administration of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984.

You may well ask, Mr Speaker, how this affects the citizens of the Northern Territory. As I have mentioned, the Territory has decided not to legislate in relation to equal opportunity. That is not to say that there is no legislation governing anti-discrimination in the Territory. Although there is no law covering the wider community, the Northern Territory Public Service Act obliges the Public Service Commissioner to take steps to ensure that there is no discrimination in the employment in the public service of any person on the ground of that person's race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin,

sex, marital status or political belief. This section also gives the commissioner the authority to give direction to Chief Executive Officers and prescribed authorities to ensure that there is no discrimination.

Moving away from the public service, it is interesting to note the nature of some of the inquiries and complaints received by the Office of Equal Opportunity in the past 12 months. 75% of those were from women and 25% from men. 77 of the complaints related to employment issues. I am not for a moment suggesting that all of the complaints proved to be valid but complaints and inquiries lodged serve as an indicator that all is still not well when it comes to equal opportunity in the Territory. It is important that we do not simply turn our backs on such complaints and inquiries in the hope that things will work themselves out. Let us remember that these problems continue despite both federal legislation and provisions within the Territory Public Service Act.

This lends support to the government's current position that legislation does not automatically negate discrimination. Rather, society must be educated in the ways of non-discrimination. That is the course this government has charted in relation to equal opportunity but, in the meantime, people can, and quite justifiably do, take their complaints directly to the Human Rights and Office of Equal Opportunity Commission.

One of the more popular myths surrounding the Office of Equal Opportunity is that it was established by women for women. I would like to dispel that misconception. The office handles complaints from members of both sexes. By far the majority of complaints handled by the office related to employment but there were also complaints lodged about discrimination in relation to education, accommodation, goods and services and advertising. Just to give members an idea of the grounds of the alleged discriminatory acts, they included sex, race, physical and intellectual disability, marital status, religion and sexual harassment.

In November last year, in a statement to the House, the Chief Minister outlined a range of specific initiatives in relation to equal opportunity. A number of those programs are now in place. The government's policy on non-discriminatory language is now defined and an information paper has been developed to assist in its implementation. Central to that statement was the announcement of the development of equality opportunity plans. The defining of these plans is a massive task and one which has to be handled in a thorough manner. Every government department and authority has had ample opportunity to comment on the draft general orders and guidelines in recent months. The working party is now putting the finishing touches to those orders prior to their completion. It is anticipated that the development of those plans will begin early in the new year.

The Chief Minister also referred in his statement to the International Labor Organisation Convention 156. This convention covers workers with family responsibilities. The Territory is currently assessing its position in relation to ratification of convention 156. The Territory, with its young population, has a high percentage of working men and women with children. It is because of this that this government has already given significant emphasis to child care. I believe our record in this area is worthy of note.

One of the most critical areas in the overall equal opportunity plan is undoubtedly that related to the disabled. For too long, people with physical and mental disabilities were pushed into the background and virtually ignored.

Thankfully, attitudes are changing and the disabled are being provided with increasing opportunities to fulfil their potential, but there is still much to be done in correcting community attitudes in this area. The Minister for Health and Community Services has announced the provision of additional respite and care facilities for disabled people and their families. In addition, there has been coordination of disability service in the Darwin region. This coordination will provide a sharper focus for the development of policy matters and specialist support for mainstream services as well as the overall coordination of all matters affecting the disabled.

The Minister for Health and Community Services has responsibility also for the Office of Ethnic Affairs. Given the rich mix that makes up the Territory's population, such a service is of vital importance. Of course, this diversity means not only a multicultural but also a multilingual community. It is interesting to note that, in total, more than 100 Aboriginal and other non-English languages are spoken in the Territory on a daily basis.

Every Territorian, regardless of the language he speaks, has a right to equity of and access to the full range of community services. In keeping with its commitment to equal opportunity, the government has moved to ensure access for these people through the establishment of an interpreter translation service on a cost-share basis with the Commonwealth. It should be realised by both the public and private sectors that the service is available to them if they are dealing with a person who has difficulty with English. There is no doubt that language can be a formidable barrier and, sadly, there is still evidence of discrimination by some employers against people with accents. In an effort to provide the Territory with a greater opportunity to tap the range of skills and experience of its different racial groups, the Office of Equal Opportunity can offer a course in cross-cultural understanding for both workers and employers.

Another important advance in the Territory's attempts at providing greater opportunities for the people of all racial backgrounds is the support by the government for the Ethnic Communities Council. The council, a voluntary body, acts as an umbrella organisation for the Territory's various ethnic bodies. The council is coordinating the development of a 5-year plan for ethnic affairs in the Territory. When complete, the plan will be assessed by the Minister for Health and Community Services. The positive aspect of the multicultural policy is that it is those who will be affected by the policy who have played such a vital role in its design.

There is one critical area of equal opportunity which suffers from a widely-held community misconception about its nature and that is affirmative action. Unfortunately, the term has been kicked around a good deal by various social commentators and has come out of the experience looking decidedly knocked about. The concept of affirmative action is not designed to give a range of minority groups a privileged place in our society. On the contrary, affirmative action is consistent with the concept of equal opportunity and, in fact, it could be said that it lies at the heart of the equal opportunity ideal.

Affirmative action programs are designed to ensure that existing discrimination is identified and removed so that equal opportunity becomes a reality in the workplace. Many of these barriers have become institutionalised, largely as a result of a subconscious acceptance of the status quo rather than by some sinister design. As I mentioned earlier, the success of the equal opportunity concept is heavily reliant on educating

people and this is very much the case with affirmative action. Affirmative action in the Territory is aimed at ensuring appointment to jobs through merit. This approach to promotion will lead to a broader range of career opportunities for women and, in keeping with the equal opportunity concept, it makes good economic sense to put the best person in the job.

Current Commonwealth legislation in this area applies to those firms in the private sector employing more than 100 people as well as institutions of higher education. I am pleased to say that the Darwin Institute of Technology has moved to meet its obligations under this legislation through the employment of an equal opportunity officer to implement an affirmative action program. It is pleasing to note that, in the private sector, Nabalco has taken steps to implement a similar program. It should not be forgotten that the Territory government has instituted affirmative action programs - some I have referred to earlier. Other examples are the school leavers program, the Women Today television program and the establishment of the Women's Advisory Council which reports directly to the Chief Minister.

The government's Aboriginal Development Unit is another example of an affirmative action program designed to ensure less-privileged members of the Territory community are given an opportunity to compete in the workplace on an equal footing with other Territorians. The Aboriginal Development Unit is responsible for the development of programs which will increase the level of Aboriginal employment within the public service. In fact, so successful has the unit been, that it is being used as a model for the establishment of similar units elsewhere in Australia. The Aboriginal Development Unit has been given the task of developing the Territory's response to the Miller Report which forms the basis for the Aboriginal employment development program to be put into place by the Commonwealth government. It is essential that Aboriginal communities in the Territory obtain the maximum benefit from these initiatives. The new stress on the labour aspects of my ministry allow the Aboriginal Development Unit to meet the challenge of these initiatives.

I have dwelt largely on the application of equal opportunity in employment in the Territory's public sector, but I must emphasise that the Office of Equal Opportunity has application in the private sector also. In keeping with its reliance on education to get its message across, it should be pointed out that the office has staff available to run seminars and workshops on the issues and to assist in planning programs to implement change.

The consultative approach is of the utmost importance in the implementation of equal opportunity policies and programs. Currently, the government is considering the need for a consultative mechanism which will extend the concept of equal opportunity beyond public service employment. I am confident that I have bipartisan support for this initiative and the general equal opportunity concept. As I have explained, it is not something to be feared, but rather a concept which should be welcomed, not only for the benefit it provides for certain groups and individuals within our society, but for the overall benefit it will produce for the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I ask that the Assembly take note of the statement, I would like to take the opportunity to make an announcement which is unrelated to this in some ways, but related in others. I make it now only because I have not had an opportunity to raise it earlier. I refer to the fact that the Northern Territory government has appointed Mrs Sarah Butterworth as Deputy Public Service Commissioner. That appointment takes place as of this moment. Personally, I am delighted that Mrs Butterworth has been appointed to the job.

Sarah Butterworth arrived in the Territory in 1976 with the federal Department of House and Construction and was a compulsory transferee to the Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works in 1978. Since then, she has worked in administration areas within that department. I have a great deal of confidence in the ability of Mrs Butterworth to fill the role of Deputy Public Service Commissioner and am certainly delighted with the appointment.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the government proceeds by a series of small steps in this ongoing debate on affirmative action and equal opportunity. The significant small step this time is that at least the jargon is correct. I congratulate the minister for employing advisers of sufficient ability to get the jargon correct for him. But the big problem with the Northern Territory government, when it talks about the concepts of equal opportunities and affirmative action, is putting some weight, some muscle and some action behind the jargon.

Again, I must complain about not being given an advance copy of a minister's statement. A careful analysis of the speech reveals that there is very little to it apart from a lot of resounding phrases and sentences and paragraphs. At least the jargon is correct. Let us hope that the next time the minister makes a statement on this issue, it will be backed up by some action.

We all should care about the concept of equal opportunity and we all should be aware of the problems involved in that area. The situation is that, simply because a person does not happen to be a man or does not happen to be white, that person does not receive proper and equal opportunities within our society at present. There is a growing realisation that that is the case and that it will benefit society, let alone the individuals involved, if the talents of every person are recognised, whatever his or her sex or race. We should be looking at taking some action. However, the minister in charge of the public service has given us no indication of any action to be undertaken by his government to promote the concept of equal opportunity.

Where, for example, are the sexual harassment procedures and protection for complainants? I hear the same tired groans from members opposite when I talk about sexual harassment. All I can say is that, if members opposite have not had people come to them, not necessarily from the public service, complaining about sexual harassment, there is something about the way they operate which prevents people from doing so. In my role as a member of parliament, I hear a number of complaints about sexual harassment every year. Unfortunately, there is no procedure in the Northern Territory Public Service which enables people with legitimate sexual harassment complaints to have any confidence that the system will deal with the complaints seriously, examine them in an independent fashion and arrive at a sensible solution.

We all know that there have been a number of very serious accusations made about sexual harassment within the public service. Some of those have been pursued and have been met with a very unsympathetic response from senior management. More complaints, however, are not pursued because the women - and it is mainly women who are sexually harassed, as we all know - do not have sufficient confidence in established procedures to put those complaints forward. If the proper procedures are not in place, it is a brave thing to do to proceed with such a complaint because one simply leaves oneself open to

more harassment, not necessarily sexual harassment but, certainly, official harassment. If this government were serious about the concept of equality of opportunity, it would have developed procedures which would enable people in the public service, who feel that they have been sexually harassed, to take up their concerns in a non-threatening and non-emotive environment. Unfortunately, that opportunity is not available to people in the Northern Territory Public Service.

The minister made many comments about equality of opportunity within the public service. Let us get beyond the rhetoric and look at what has happened in the public service and associated areas of government influence during the last 2 or 3 years. This year, the Darwin Institute of Technology axed its access courses. One might ask what that has to do with equality of opportunity in the public service. The access courses were designed specifically for people who had been out of the work force for an extended period so that they could either learn new skills or brush up on old skills. Being access courses, they were specifically designed for women who had been out of the work force for a period of time. As a consequence of the economy drive forced on the Darwin Institute of Technology, those access courses have been dumped. The courses offered a very practical means of providing equality of opportunity for a significant section of the work force and they were dumped by this government which has just stated, through its Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, that it believes in equality of opportunity.

Of course, many members opposite simply have not come to terms with what equal opportunity means. It does not simply mean that everybody in the public service has an equal right to apply for jobs in the public service. It means that everybody has an equal right to apply for jobs on an equal basis, given their abilities and experience. That means that, if people do not have equal opportunity because of their sex or race, affirmative action programs are needed to provide that equal opportunity. Such programs provide such things as additional training to allow people to improve their skills. If such programs do not exist to provide people with additional training and the chance to gain expertise which has been denied them because of their life situation, those people are deprived of the opportunity to compete for jobs on an equal basis.

I will give another example of the government's lack of understanding of equal opportunity. Before the Total Management Centre was given the carriage of public service in-service training, there were a number of women at work courses which were run by officers within the Office of the Public Service Commissioner. We have not seen any such courses run by the Northern Territory government in the past 2 to 3 years. They were a very positive recognition by the government of the need to provide opportunities that had not been available previously, particularly for women in the public service, to learn skills and attitudes. Those courses were dropped by this government. The end result is that we do not have equality of opportunity in the public service. In fact, there is probably less equality of opportunity in the Northern Territory Public Service now than existed 2 or 3 years ago.

Yet another example has occurred with the downgrading of the Aboriginal Development Unit by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services himself in the last 6 months. Members of another urban minority group, in this case urban Aborigines, were identified previously by the government as being in need of assistance within the public service if they were to be given equal opportunities for promotion and career advancement in the service. In

the minister's own words, the program has been scrapped. He is now putting the emphasis in Aboriginal development not on urban Aborigines, but on rural Aborigines. I agree that there is a real problem in terms of rural Aboriginal unemployment and I agree that that problem needs to be addressed. It should not, however, be addressed at the expense of urban Aborigines within the Northern Territory Public Service. That has been the result of the minister's actions.

It is also clear from the minister's statement that he is not fully aware of the situation in relation to affirmative action in Australia. We all know that the federal government has put in place affirmative action legislation. It applies, however, only to the federal public service and to companies or firms which employ more than 100 individuals. The federal legislation is quite meek and mild. It requires companies with more than 100 employees to report on a regular basis to the federal government about what action they are taking to provide equal opportunities for their employees. That is pretty meek and mild and some of us hope that, in years to come, we will see more significant action than that.

In the Northern Territory, however, there is no affirmative action legislation which covers the public service. There is no affirmative action legislation which covers the majority of employees outside the public service in the private sector either because, Mr Speaker, you can practically count on your fingers the number of companies in the Northern Territory that employ more than 100 people. The situation is not in accord with the point of view expressed in the minister's statement. The federal affirmative action legislation does not provide a safety net which covers most of the people in the Northern Territory. When one looks at it closely, the opposite is true. There are very few people indeed in the Northern Territory who are covered by the federal affirmative action legislation because it simply does not apply in the Northern Territory context.

That makes it more important, not less important, for the Northern Territory government to get beyond mouthing jargon and to start putting some concrete programs and some concrete attitudes in place that will come to grips with this problem. We all know, and the honourable minister has recognised, that many of these things have not grown out of coercion or a sense of wanting to put down particular groups within the community but through custom and attitude. It is fair to say that, with the Northern Territory being until very recently a male-dominated society and with there being a significant imbalance between men and women in the history of the Northern Territory, the need for this type of legislation is probably greater here than it is elsewhere in Australia. Despite that, we have a statement from the honourable minister opposite that does little more than mouth platitudes. I would hope that, when the minister becomes more familiar with his portfolio and the issues involved in it, he will do more than mouth platitudes and will give us some indication of concrete steps that the Northern Territory government is taking to ensure that its employees receive a fair shake and, in return, that the Northern Territory government is obtaining the best value for money from the employees whom it employs.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Noes 6

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
New Procedures and Guidelines for
Government Purchasing and Tendering

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, honourable members would remember that, in August 1986, the Chief Minister announced that the way the government awards its contracts and buys goods and services would be reviewed. The review was undertaken to identify any inefficiencies and to recommend changes to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government tendering and purchasing. The review was aimed also at maximising the promotion of secondary and tertiary industry throughout Territory government purchasing.

The initial phase of that review was completed in November last year and, at that time, the Chief Minister announced the establishment of a single Government Supply and Tender Board as part of a package of refinements to the tendering and purchasing system. One of the significant changes to the system was the very bold step taken by this government in appointing a private sector representative on the Government Supply and Tender Board. The Director of the Industrial Supplies Office was the logical choice to fill the position created by this innovative step.

The Supply and Tender Board has been established and is operating. As a result, a number of staff have been redeployed from the former General Tender Board and Capital Works Tender Board secretariats and overall staff numbers have been reduced. In November, other measures were announced such as providing government departments with the flexibility of proceeding with procurement action below \$50 000 without being obliged to use the Supply and Tender Board. I am pleased to report that the next stage of this work has now been completed, resulting in new procedures and guidelines for the Supply and Tender Board and the purchasing and procurement system. In order to provide honourable members with an overview of the changes which have been adopted, I propose to describe briefly the key aspects.

One of the most important principles which has been adopted is to devolve responsibility for purchasing and procurement to departments and authorities

to the maximum extent practicable. As a result, the role of the Supply and Tender Board is to review and concur with departmental purchasing and procurement activities. The board will also provide advice and common documentation on ways to streamline those activities.

For purchases of less than \$500, the present system of 1 single 'oral' quote will remain. For purchases between that figure and \$3000, departments will need to obtain at least 3 oral quotes. Within these broad guidelines, sole responsibility for purchasing transactions up to \$3000 rests with the Chief Executive Officer. For purchases over the \$3000 threshold, written quotations will be required. Between the \$3000 and \$50 000 levels, departments will need to advise the Supply and Tender Board where they accept a written quote other than the lowest conforming offer. Expressed another way, Chief Executive Officers will have sole responsibility for accepting conforming quotations for transactions between \$3000 and \$50 000. Departments and authorities will be required to keep the board advised of other procurement activities.

Where it is estimated a contract may exceed \$50 000, the role of the Supply and Tender Board will be to review and approve requests for quotations before they are released and to review and concur with departmental recommendations on the acceptance of the successful quotation. The pre-release review, in particular, has been designed to ensure that all major quotation documents are structured in a way that will allow local business the maximum opportunity to bid for the work. This is a very important step in ensuring that the maximum industry development advantage is derived from major government procurement activities. I am certain there will be strong support for this from industry.

Honourable members will be aware of the former certificate of inexpediency which provided for exemptions from formal public tendering procedures in certain circumstances. I am pleased to report that the new procedures provide departments with a similar facility within the overall objective of increased efficiency and flexibility. A new certificate of exemption has been established. Delegated officers and departments will be able to authorise certificates of exemption from written public quotations for procurement activities below \$50 000. Above that figure, the endorsement of the Supply and Tender Board and the approval of the Treasurer are required. Departments are required to keep the Supply and Tender Board informed of certificates of exemption which have been issued.

To ensure that industry is able to obtain the maximum advantage from government business, Supply and Tender Board approval will be required to advertise quotation requests outside of the Northern Territory and before departments and authorities use Commonwealth or state contracts such as period contracts. It is only in exceptional circumstances that such requests will be approved. The board will also be reporting to me on a regular basis indicating what approvals have been given and for what reasons.

These arrangements have been designed to allow departments to manage, to reduce the red tape involved in tendering for and winning government contracts by Territory business, to ensure an open and competitive environment for sales to government is maintained and to fully capitalise on the opportunities to promote industry development within the Northern Territory. Clearly, the procedures give appropriate extra freedom and flexibility to Chief Executive Officers and departmental managers. In addition, the procedures adopted include an appropriate element of accountability and review so that anomalies and discriminatory practices do not arise, and they have been structured to comply with the national preference provisions.

I am pleased to report to honourable members that the procedures and guidelines have been prepared with considerable input from Territory business and industry. That input has been particularly valuable and has helped to ensure that the procedures will assist industrial development in the manufacturing, retail, wholesale, building and construction and other sectors. I thank those industry representatives who have contributed their time, energy and ideas to the development of the new procedures. For that matter, I would extend thanks to all those involved.

Returning to the procedures, the secretariat of the Supply and Tender Board has a key role in coordinating the purchasing and procurement activities and is available to assist departments to implement these new arrangements smoothly and without delay. Additional work still remains in the areas of pre-qualification and pre-selection of bidders, the finalisation of standardised documentation and specialised policies such as offsets and counter trade. Pre-selection and pre-qualification will generally be utilised for quotations above the \$250 000 threshold and in specialist areas, as previously announced by the Chief Minister.

The specific changes which require amendments to the Treasury Regulations under the Financial Administration and Audit Act and Treasurer's Directions are being implemented by the Treasurer and those amendments will be completed shortly. I am pleased with the changes to the Supply and Tender Board procedures which are being implemented. They are the right changes. They will help business. They will allow departmental managers to manage. They will improve efficiency and, of course, they are very timely. I commend the new procedures to honourable members.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there is something very interesting occurring around Australia at present and that is that there is a move by all governments to devolve down the administrative chain as much authority as possible. I think that has resulted from the realisation that there is a need to run leaner governments. If you advance up the chain decisions that could well be taken at a lower level, obviously you are increasing the administrative costs in carrying out those functions.

This policy has been developed within the framework of a conscious attempt by the government to devolve downwards in a responsible manner certain tendering procedures. I certainly do not intend to nitpick over whether it should be \$45 000 rather than \$50 000. What is important both from the government's point of view and the point of view of potential contractors is that a system be put in place that is well known by all the parties concerned and is seen to be fair and appropriate and to provide everybody who wants to tender with an equal opportunity to do so. The broad concepts outlined by the government in this statement seem to meet those basic criteria. They seem to be fair, hopefully they will be well known, and they should provide roughly equal opportunity for people who wish to tender.

The concerns that have led to this major review by the government have been expressed by contractors over a long period and have been expressed by myself on a couple of occasions in here. I am not 100% convinced that we will satisfy everybody's concerns with any system we put in place. One matter of concern to people, particularly in respect of cleaning and ground maintenance, is that there has been a tendency for governments - and I am not singling out the Northern Territory government - to take the lowest price when it is clear that the lowest price is far too low and it is inevitable that, at some time

in the future, the successful tenderer will go broke. I think the government has half covered that.

The statement indicates that, for reasonably small tenders, and some of the areas I have outlined will involve reasonably small tenders, departments have the authority not to accept the lowest tender but, if they follow that course, they need to send their reasons up the line. I think that is an appropriate provision. We need to put in place a mechanism so that the lowest tender is not necessarily accepted. We do not want to do what is done in places like Canada where, by means of a complicated formula, the highest and lowest tenders are excluded and the closest tender to the average of the remainder is accepted. However, it should not be beyond the wit of the government and its individual departments to determine a system whereby the lowest realistic price is accepted. Of course, that demands probably a higher level of skill in some departments than has been exercised to date because it will involve them in attempting to make commercial decisions on exactly how much a particular piece of work is worth.

There is another point which certainly which would be appreciated by contractors who submit the lowest price and are passed over. There should be a requirement that they be called in and their tender discussed with them. They should be told why they were passed over even though they had submitted the lowest tender. If the government were able to put in place that sort of procedure many of the problems that we have experienced in that regard would be eliminated.

I am pleased that the government has attempted to come to grips in a meaningful way with the question of providing preference - although that is the wrong word these days - for local suppliers and contractors. We all know that the National State Preference Agreement has outlawed preference arrangements that most, if not all, the states and the territories had in place previously. We all know that all the states and the territories have been looking for ways of ensuring that a de facto preference system remains. It seemed to me fair and appropriate that the system as outlined by the honourable minister should be used in the Territory - that is, if I understand it correctly because the language leaves me a bit confused. It says: '... to ensure that industry is able to obtain the maximum advantage from government business, Supply and Tender Board approval will be required to advertise quotation requests outside of the Northern Territory and before departments and authorities use Commonwealth or state contracts, such as period contracts'. I understand the first part, but I do not understand what 'and before departments and authorities use Commonwealth or state contracts, such as period contracts' means.

Mr Perron: They can buy things interstate under a contract let by that state government.

Mr SMITH: All right, that makes a great deal of sense. It does not contravene the preference agreement that has been worked out at the Commonwealth and state level and it certainly allows established local operators some sort of preference. Of course, the problem has always been weighing up the need to get the lowest possible price against the sometimes higher costs that local companies have when they are putting their business together. By restricting, except with approval, advertisements for tenders to within the Northern Territory, we move towards coming to grips with that problem and I congratulate the honourable minister for that suggestion. I think it may well work.

Mr Speaker, I am not clear about what sort of overall view will be kept by the tender board on the processes. Obviously, that will be worked out over time. We certainly do not want in the Northern Territory something like the Amann controversy. The independent inquiry into the Amann controversy indicated that it was not a ministerial problem or a problem with the overall tender board at the Commonwealth level but that things had gone wrong at the departmental level. Particularly on major contracts, it is necessary to have an overall checking mechanism in place that will provide some security and guarantee that things will not go wrong in a spectacular fashion as they did with the Amann contract.

I would like to indicate to the minister that he seems to have come up with a fair and reasonable proposal. Time and unhappy potential contractors and suppliers will tell whether it stands the test of time, but it is a significant advance on the previous arrangements that were in place and I hope it will go well.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER

Commissioner of Consumer Affairs Report 1985-86

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I table the 1985-86 report of the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs which includes the 1986 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers. Mr Speaker, I move that the reports be printed.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE Government's Inability to Provide Leadership

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the honourable Leader of the Opposition:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I propose that, under standing order 94, this Assembly debate this morning as a definite matter of public importance the following: the Northern Territory government's inability to provide leadership to the business community and the public service of the Northern Territory.

Terry Smith.
25 November 1987.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, if any visitor today wanted any evidence of the truth of the subject of this matter of public importance all he needed to do was to be here during the debate on the Minister for Industries and Development's statement when not only could the government not get a speaker to support the minister but it proceeded to gag the debate. That was an indication of this government's attitude to important questions confronting the community. In our contribution to that debate, we said that the honourable minister had made a significant statement, and yet he could not get any support from his own colleagues. What an indictment of this government.

There is no doubt that we are in tough economic times, and I guess the point that came to me most clearly in my week of discussions with business leaders in Melbourne and Sydney was that confidence in government is critical if we are to ride out the world economic malaise that currently affects us. It was significant that those very prominent business leaders had confidence in the federal government. They accepted that, although the government's philosophy might differ from theirs, it had tackled the hard decisions and placed our economy in a position which would enable it to handle changing world circumstances after 19 October with a minimal need for readjustment. They also had kind things to say about the attitudes of state governments, particularly the state Labor governments. They believed that those governments were well placed with thoughtful plans to handle the changed economic circumstances.

Unfortunately, the people of the Territory do not have the same feeling of good management by government. They know that things are slipping away from this government. Ask any public servant, businessman or woman. We have done that, Mr Speaker, and that is why this debate has been brought on. Somehow, we have to change this government's thinking before community confidence disappears completely. We need that confidence if the Territory is to ride out these difficult times. Government members cannot pretend that this loss of confidence is news to them. If it is news, they have buried their heads in the sand like ostriches. We have not brought on this matter of public importance because this crisis in confidence in the government is news. It is not news.

We have raised the issue because the government has done nothing about the crisis in confidence that confronts us. Instead, it labels as whingers business people who have legitimate concerns. That is what the Chief Minister did in his column in last week's Sunday Territorian. After calling them whingers, he went on to say, and I quote: 'Unfortunately, they also happen to be the backbone of the business community'. These whingers are the people who have invested in the Territory. Understandably, recent events in the Territory have dented their confidence. They are not whingers. We know because we talk to them. We listen. What we hear is that they do not know what is going on in the Territory. They do not know where it is going and they do not know what the government's direction is. They sense a malaise in the Territory economy and they are looking for some lead from the government. They are not downing tools. They are simply saying that their job would be much easier, and the job of other people in the business community would be much easier, if the government would simply tell them where it is going.

On 5 November, the 12 peak employer groups in the Northern Territory formed a business council. Its first action was to seek talks with the Northern Territory government about the state of the economy. When that happens, you are not dealing with whingers. You have a serious problem but also you have a group of business people who are indicating to government that they are prepared to tackle the problems that exist in the Territory.

The matters that the business council raised in its letter are legitimate concerns. It has identified problems and properly sought to discuss them with the government. Typically, almost 3 weeks after its request for a meeting, the government still has not met with it. The meeting will not take place until Monday of next week. Why is that? Why hasn't the government met with it before? The reason is that, for a significant part of a whole week, both the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister were out of the country. Mr Speaker, I have never denied that overseas trips are an important part of the job but it is a bit rough, at this very crucial time in the Territory's

history, that both the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister should be out of the country at the same time and that the third-ranking member of the Cabinet refuses to take on their responsibilities.

The business people of the Territory all say the same thing about this government. There is no planning and there is no leadership. The Territory has no management. That is something that business understands very well and it would pay the government to take heed of these concerns. The business council's letter to the Northern Territory government outlined 9 concerns. The first relates to what the business council calls accountability. The Auditor-General said that government financial accountability is inadequate. He stated that, amazingly, the government's financial records are inadequate for its own internal accountability, let alone for accountability to this parliament or other groups of interested people in the community. I suspect that the underlining of the government's lack of accountability, which occurred through its decision to give outrageous pay increases to senior public servants, was the trigger for the business council's letter. The decision was taken in stealth and at the very time that the government was opposing the national wage increase sought by the ACTU. Business rightly sees such actions as revealing a double standard.

Added to this, we have the saga of bad investments such as Hungerford Refrigeration and the Block H deal at Finniess River. It is no wonder business and the rest of the community is seeking to put the brakes on the CLP gravy train. It is all summed up in the comments made by a staff member in the Chan Building. I was going to say a staff member in Chan Park.

Mr Coulter: What is wrong with Chan Park?

Mr SMITH: Nothing, but there are a few things wrong in the Chan Building.

Mr Speaker, an irate constituent rang me during the very successful campaign against pre-school fees. She had just spoken to a prominent member of a minister's staff and been told: 'We do not have to answer for our decisions to you or anyone else'. When he was reminded by her that government is accountable to the people, she received the angry response: 'We are not accountable to anyone'. That, unfortunately, seems to be the attitude of the government in general.

That brings me to the next item on the business council's list of concerns: government decision-making. A feature of the government's decision-making process is that either it makes no decision at all or it makes one which it cannot or will not implement. Either the decisions it makes are so controversial that it tries to hide them, as it did with the pay rise for CEOs, or relate to such significant matters as overseas trips for ministers. There appears to be total inertia in government at present or is it simply that its members cannot agree on any particular course of action? When occasionally they do agree, as they did in relation to the administrative changes which were introduced on 19 March, they still cannot get themselves organised to implement measures and have them operating legally 7 or 8 months later. Unfortunately, whilst the CLP has its fights and power struggles behind closed doors, the Territory is slipping inexorably into an economic abyss.

The third problem that the business council mentioned was bureaucratic interference. The government has politicised the whole public service and, in doing so, has created a rod for its own back. There is a perception in the community that government red tape is the cause of all our ills. If there is

a problem - and I think most of us accept that there is - we need to find out what it is and find solutions. Clearly, business will not tiptoe through the minefield of cronies or bring its concerns to government only to be accused of whingeing. That is not the way to encourage business people to bring their complaints to government so that they can be talked through. If the government is serious about getting rid of red tape, it will have to try a new approach. Perhaps it might consider expressing some confidence in business, listening to it on a regular basis and taking it seriously. If a poll were conducted on business confidence in government in Victoria and the Northern Territory, I know which government would come out ahead.

The fourth matter raised by the business council concerned information and information management. We raised that issue in this House recently and it is clear that business has also identified it as an issue. The value of accurate, timely, properly formulated information is recognised by everyone but the government. As we pointed out, no one can make decisions in an information vacuum. How can we plan our future, measure our successes or determine how effectively our dollars are spent if there is no accurate reporting? Equally, government by newspaper article is not acceptable. The bed tax was a fine example of that, as was the pre-school fee debacle.

The fifth area outlined in the business council's letter concerned business costs. These are a real concern in a small economy like the Territory's. Despite undertakings earlier this year that taxes and charges would not be increased, the government reneged. Business plans and projections then became so much hot air. Fuel levies, power charges and bed taxes can be allowed for in assessing the viability of a project or an enterprise if they are planned for. Marginal new businesses cannot cop such irresponsible about-turns by government. All business wants is a fair go, and it is not getting that in the Northern Territory.

I am not surprised that business confidence in the government is sinking. Couple the increased costs it faces through tax imposts with what unfortunately appears to be a shrinking population, particularly in the Darwin area, and one can understand why the business council wants an urgent conference. Unfortunately, one only has to look at the 'For Sale' signs to know that there is an exodus at present. One removalist has said that he is moving 1000 people per month from Darwin.

It is clear from the business council's letter that business clearly understands the value of tourism and defence to the north of Australia. Business people want to talk about those issues. It is curious that, when apparently tourism is booming, business wants to discuss it with government as a matter of concern along with other items. Business is concerned about maximising the amount of income that we obtain from tourism through the development of some definite strategies to do that. One of the significant messages I received in a meeting with the leading tour wholesaler in Melbourne was that the whole tourist industry in the Northern Territory is plagued by the government's inability to put in place a strategic plan for its development.

Mr Finch: All we need is a decent terminal and more international flights.

Mr SMITH: That is part of a strategic plan. For you to say that that is needed is to indicate that you are a stupid man.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member has addressed another member of the Assembly as a 'stupid man'. In referring to an honourable member, he should at least name the member and his electorate and his intelligence quotient in that order.

Mr SPEAKER: I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

It is quite clear that the Minister for Transport and Works should continue to be the Minister for Transport and Works and not the Minister for Tourism because I have rarely heard such a stupid statement as that the tourism future of the Northern Territory will be assured simply by putting in an airport and arranging for international flights. That is absolutely ridiculous. Among the things one needs to put in place for a successful tourism industry is training so that we have skilled people in the Northern Territory delivering the proper standard of service. We also need adequate accommodation and of an appropriate standard to cater for the market.

The final issue identified on the list of concerns from the business council is the Northern Territory educational structure and system. While we all know we have good schools, we also know we need real programs to equip our youth for meaningful employment and to retain people for new industries. We need to maintain open dialogue between government and industry. We need outcomes, not rhetoric. We need real training programs and labour market initiatives, not the jargon that was contained in 'Towards the 90s'.

Mr Speaker, those 9 issues - advanced not by myself but by the business council - provide an indictment of the government. The business council should not have to teach the government its job. The business council should not have to express its concern at statements made by the Treasurer along the lines of: 'We are unable to plan because we are too busy making it happen'. Unfortunately, things are not happening in the Northern Territory at present and part of the reason, though not all the reason, is that there has not been sufficient planning. We cannot escape the fact that we are in an economic downturn, not of our own making, but we can sheet home the blame when the government in the Northern Territory is not taking the appropriate steps to maximise the opportunities available to us.

Business knows, as do most governments, that to obtain the most from your assets you have to plan ahead. You have to know where you want to go and what resources you need and how to channel those resources effectively to meet your goals. That is a message that government refuses to hear, let alone act on. We will keep saying it until the government starts to act.

Mr Speaker, let me give you one quick example. As a result of the government's leapfrogging program with public servants moving from old buildings into new buildings, we are reaching a serious stage where southern investors are starting to look at their investments in the Northern Territory. Already, we have seen the MLC building sold off. We know that the T&G building is up for sale. We know that there are 1 or 2 high rise buildings that are up for sale.

Mr Hatton: A local wants to buy it.

Mr SMITH: A local wants to buy the T&G building. That is good. However, it is worrying in the extreme that major southern investors, who must be given

credit for putting basic infrastructure in place in terms of office buildings, are looking at selling their investments. That is not good and one of the prime reasons for that is that the understandings they had with government when they moved in are being broken. That is the problem.

Mr Hatton: Many locals have confidence.

Mr SMITH: I agree. I have confidence in the future of the Northern Territory too. Many people have confidence in the future of the Northern Territory. What people do not have confidence in is this government's ability to maximise that future and to put in place plans that will be effective in the Northern Territory in the next 5 to 10 years.

We keep hearing about this historic shift from a public sector economy to a private sector economy. There is no doubt that it is occurring but not as a result of any conscious decision of the government. It is a result of a whole set of circumstances. The point is that it is rhetoric. The point of this debate is that the government has not come to grips with this change. It keeps on talking about it but it has not put in place strategies or procedures that will enable it to take advantage of the changes occurring at present and, in doing so, to ensure the future of people in the Territory.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I am reminded - and this is a paraphrase of an old saying - that there is none so deaf as he who will not hear and none so blind as he who will not look or, in this case, read. We have just listened to a fairy tale concocted by the Leader of the Opposition. In all my time as a member of this House, I have never heard such a pile of unfocused drivel delivered under the guise of a matter of public importance. There was no data and no facts. It was a shopping list of unsubstantiated allegations and quotes from anonymous sources. Nor was there any forward thinking or any original alternatives. Instead, we have been treated to a flight of fancy and waffle about lack of confidence, about an economic malaise and about a lack of consultation with industry.

On the one hand, we have this piece of fiction being peddled by the opposition and, on the other hand, we have the facts. The real story is contained in statements made in this House such as that by the Minister for Industries and Development. Indeed, the real version can be found in this month's NT News report on Focus on Industry: 72 pages with the inside account of what is happening in our business community, not the unsubstantiated claims from anonymous sources which that unlikely raconteur, the Leader of the Opposition, would like us to believe.

The Minister for Industries and Development has given us the facts about primary production, fisheries, business, technology and communications. He has given this House the details of positive measures that have been put in place during the last 8 months and which are now paying dividends. He has spoken of the real achievements such as the new purchasing and tendering procedures, the work of the Industrial Supplies Office, the enterprise workshops, the establishment of the Regulatory Review Committee, the Trade Development Zone, the Darwin Harbour Mooring Basin and our export drive to South-east Asia.

As the minister said in his statement this morning, this government is doing everything in its power to create in the Territory what we all want for this place and it is doing so with good will and dedication. To mention just a few of the developments, there is the implementation of industry advisory councils such as the Horticultural Advisory Council, the Pastoral Industry

Advisory Council and the Field Crops Advisory Committee - all of which have achieved great success in opening lines of communication between industry and government and in determining future research and development priorities.

The Trade Development Zone is up and running and is diversifying our industrial base. Already, the zone is exporting goods overseas and currently employs 66 private enterprise people - and that includes a number of people working for that much-maligned company, Hungerford Refrigeration, the first Australian investor in the trade zone and the Treasurer will give more details later in this particular debate on that matter to illustrate that success despite the vicious attacks by the Leader of the Opposition over the last 6 months on that company in an attempt to kill it off for his own political advantage.

Mr Smith: How many export sales have you had?

Mr HATTON: You will get that too.

The recently-opened Industrial Supplies Office, a joint venture with the NT Confederation of Industry and Commerce and the Master Builders Association of the Northern Territory, is highlighting the capabilities of Territory manufacturers and suppliers, helping them to win a bigger slice of business conducted within the Territory. In Katherine, for instance, this means working with local business people, with government and with industry groups such as the MBA and the confederation to make certain not only that Katherine businesses are aware of the potential new transactions available from the RAAF at Tindal, but also how the RAAF expects to be serviced.

Meanwhile, we have just heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the need for this government to undertake defence force planning. What a joke! As usual, he is out of date and behind the times. We had the ludicrous situation of the Leader of the Opposition during the election campaign jumping onto the government's initiative that had been occurring for 12 months beforehand in planning for the development of the military facilities in the Northern Territory. So successful, I might say, were our processes of consultation and planning that the defence forces of Australia have adopted the model that was developed in the Northern Territory over Tindal to apply elsewhere in Australia. The member for Stuart, in his usual knocking way, may say 'nonsense', but that particular comment came from the Chief of the General Staff of the Defence Forces of Australia, not from me.

This government has completely reviewed the way it awards contracts and buys goods and services. That has been effected by restructuring the government's supply and tendering procedures which have been a bone of contention in the private sector for many years. We scooped another Australian first when we put private-sector representation on the new Supply and Tender Board. This move, combined with the work of the ISO, means a more effective use of government funds, less red tape and greater opportunities for our manufacturers, suppliers and contractors to compete when it comes to government expenditure projects. We have a couple of recent initiatives in that area also. The new guidelines say that government departments will not advertise outside the Northern Territory for government contracts without the specific approval of the Supply and Tender Board, and they may not use interstate or federal government contracting provisions without similar approval.

I might say that a specific directive has been issued to the Supply and Tender Board that it is government policy that approvals will be given only in

the rarest and most justified of circumstances. The intention is to maximise work within the Northern Territory. We are maximising the opportunities for business to do business with our government. However, it is up to business to go out there and win that business.

Earlier this year, Cabinet established a Regulatory Review Committee. The committee's major task is to initiate, through the public sector, a comprehensive review of regulatory activities and administrative procedures, particularly those that affect business. A program of action put forward by that committee was approved by Cabinet in August. The first phase, to identify priority targets for reform, has been undertaken. This was by no means an internal government exercise. We actively sought comment and advice from the business community. Direct contact was made with industry organisations, seeking their input on areas that need attention. A series of advertisements has been running in all NT newspapers since mid-August inviting the public and interested organisations to put forward submissions on those regulatory activities and administrative procedures which are perceived as unnecessary or in need of reform. The closing date for submissions was 31 October.

Mr Speaker, it has been a great disappointment that, while we hear so much about red tape through the continuous carpings of the opposition and from some members of the business community, very few business concerns came forward with areas where they wanted reform. There was a virtual non-response from the entire Territory community. While complaints are easily made, there is an alarming reticence when it comes to sitting down with government to actually overcome the alleged problems.

In his statement, the Leader of the Opposition alleged that manoeuvring through some phantom minefield of cronies, another invention of his fevered brain, is somehow causing troubles. I accept fully, and I know from my previous work within the confederation, that individual businesses are reluctant to bring individual examples of concern to them forward to government for fear of potential reprisal within the public service. That is a clear and open statement of their concerns, Mr Speaker. That is no reason why their business representative organisations cannot bring together a series of groups or procedures. We do not have to identify individual companies. They could bring those concerns forward to government. They know I want it, but they need to get off their tails and do some work if they want to work with us to address it. If they do not, we will proceed to do it but, if they do not participate in this process, I will not accept any argument from the business community that it is just a public service whitewash. We are giving them a clear opportunity to be part of it. If they are not going to be part of it, they cannot complain after the event about the results of the review that we will undertake, no matter what, over the next 2 years.

The opposition would like everyone to believe the yarn it has spun here today, that the Northern Territory is afflicted with an economic malaise and that businesses are going under. Once again, the facts indicate otherwise. For example, new business name registrations for the first 4 months of this financial year total 1148, an increase of 7% on last year. While the opposition tries to talk about doom and gloom, new businesses are getting up and running. The Minister for Industries and Development referred to a number of other developments and I would like to refer to new businesses also.

It is true that many retailers, in particular, are having difficulties. But, Mr Speaker, I know that you would be aware of the substantial expansion in the number of retail outlets in the Darwin area with the growth and

development of the expanded Casuarina area alone. I have done some work on it over the last few months as we seek to monitor the situation and I can say that some of the significant retailers in town are showing substantial increases in trade. These include places like Rite Price and Cheap Foods which have grown substantially, sometimes by 100%.

Mr Smith: Picture them over the last month to 6 weeks.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I happened to be speaking to the owner of Rite Price yesterday.

Mr Smith: His business has increased in the last few weeks, has it?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it has increased this year dramatically.

Mr Smith: Has it increased in the last few weeks?

Mr HATTON: Yes, Mr Speaker, it has increased in the last few weeks. The same applies to Cheap Foods and I spoke to the people there last weekend. It has increased its turnover by \$30 000 a week.

In Katherine, there has been a substantial expansion in retail outlets and in Alice Springs, in particular, with the dramatic building and retail development there, there has probably been a doubling of retail space. Certainly, there will be individual businesses that will find it difficult to compete in a much more competitive market and some may well go broke. However, the best will survive and, in the end, the community will be better off for that. Hopefully, businesses will become more entrepreneurial and we will not get the complaints from exit surveys of Japanese tourists that they cannot find enough things to spend their money on when they come to visit the Northern Territory. That complaint has been reported to us. Hopefully, businesses in Alice Springs will develop initiatives and catch that money from the extra 100 000 customers we have put on their doorstep this year. That is extra money that is available to the entrepreneurial businessmen.

Let us look at some of those industries referred to by the Minister for Industries and Development. The estimated value of the crocodile industry is \$2.5m in 1988 and is projected to rise to \$20m by the year 2000. In fishing, the amalgamation of the primary and secondary fishing industries in one department has highlighted the industry's potential. The government's initiative in establishing the \$6m mooring basin is already paying dividends. Trials in the offshore reef fishing market in Darwin will soon be under way and the results will be known early next year. Studies under way or planned on new fisheries include trepang, oysters, pearls and scampi. The minister hopes that the trepang fishery will include substantial Aboriginal involvement. All of that has been put before this House today and many other developments have been discussed in earlier debates in this House over the last few months.

In the horticultural industry, plans are under consideration for expansion of the Point Stuart cashew trial into full-scale production. Again, we have heard this before in the House. It was not heard by the opposition, but it was spoken about in this House and publicly on numerous occasions. An intelligence database on interstate markets for horticultural produce is being compiled and will be available for the 1988-89 season. The federal minister for resources is acting on representations made by the Minister for Industries and Development to have less stringent requirements placed on food exported to Brunei and to other countries which may not insist on current Australian

export regulations. We are working to remove artificial blockages to enable us to export Australian products out of Darwin into South-east Asia. That sounds like a directionless government, doesn't it, Mr Speaker?

We are doing things, identifying problems and solving them. The departments will liaise with industry to examine options available to consolidate the air freight link with Hong Kong. The Minister for Transport and Works and the Minister for Industries and Development are working together on that. We need the freight and transport systems to approach the markets we have identified and opened up. Let us hope we can get through the airline regulations to achieve it. The facts are that, because of the government's planning, because of its leadership and because of our consultation with industry we are well on the way to meeting our targets, targets such as the \$50m fruit, vegetable and ornamental plant industry, by 1990.

Spectacular growth is occurring in other industries. This year, mineral production will exceed \$1000m. We are on the verge of a virtual goldrush with the prospect of 20 new mines being opened. Gold production doubled in 1986 and is forecast to do so again in 1987. Meanwhile, there is a boom in offshore oil and gas exploration promising to outstrip the tenfold increase in production which has occurred in the past 2 years. A second major drilling rig has begun operating in the Jabiru Challis fields in the Bonaparte Basin and the Arafura Sea for oil and gas as a consequence of the opening up of exploration acreage. Development of the giant Petrel gasfield in the Bonaparte Gulf will be a massive project involving the establishment of a large-scale gas liquefaction storage plant. Drilling will commence at Petrel 4 by March 1988. We are really going backwards, aren't we, Mr Speaker? These new ventures will join the great manganese and bauxite mines of Groote Eylandt and Gove, the uranium mines of Nabarlek and Ranger and will further enhance the resource richness of northern Australia.

Earlier this year, the Territory's 1500 km gas pipeline was completed dispelling forever the cynicism that had labelled it as a mere pipedream. The supply of gas from the vast Amadeus Basin reserves to all our major centres is transforming the Territory into Australia's first gas-powered economy. Not only has this drastically reduced our dependence on expensive imported fuels, it has propelled us into a new era and provides a springboard for industrial expansion. In the production of liquid petroleum gas, natural gas and possibly helium, a plant to be developed in Darwin will not only power local industry but will create an export base. The helium component of central Australian gas has the potential to supply the entire national market and to make Australia one of only 3 countries in the world producing this commodity.

The Territory is pushing ahead with plans to link into a national pipeline grid facilitating sales of our abundant gas resources to southern markets. Current estimates are that the central Australian gasfields alone have the capacity to supply our needs for up to 400 years. Additionally, there are significant and unexploited known deposits in the Alligator Rivers region, locked up because of federal government policies. The collective worth of the Jabiluka and the Koongarra uranium deposits alone is estimated to be worth in excess of \$20 000m. In fact, the whole Kakadu region could contain resources totalling between \$80 000 and \$100 000m. Unfortunately, the ability to develop this varied wealth is outside our control.

The fastest growing, and no doubt best-publicised, industry in the Northern Territory today is tourism. That the Leader of the Opposition has the gall to criticise this government for its record in tourism highlights beyond doubt the paucity of his attack. While he waffles on about 'the need

for a strategic plan to ensure that we are able to cater for our tourists', with foresight and daring, the NT government long ago recognised the massive potential of the industry and invested millions of dollars in construction to get the essential infrastructure up and running. At every step of the way, it faced the carping criticism of the members opposite.

Those investments are now paying handsome dividends. They led the industry out of the wilderness into the international marketplace. Suddenly, after years of criticism from the opposition, we are treated to the rantings of the born-again Leader of the Opposition to whom the importance of tourism has just been revealed. The tourism industry is proving itself an important and growing source of foreign currency earnings. The 150% increase in the number of overseas visitors to the Northern Territory over the past 4 years speaks for itself. Already 5000 Territorians are employed in tourism and this figure will double by 1991 when we will play host to more than 1.1 million visitors. To cater for the boom, private enterprise projects worth \$300m are now getting under way.

The Leader of the Opposition had the audacity to criticise this government because of its undertakings regarding taxes and charges. May I remind the honourable member that the very first task confronting my new government was the Premiers Conference. I walked into that conference, only a few weeks after becoming Chief Minister, to find that our funding had been slashed yet again. Our most immediate challenge was to draw up a budget. In doing so, we took the deliberate decision not to increase any taxes. Instead, we pruned government spending. We began to lay the groundwork to trim the public service - groundwork which, during the first 12 months of my government, saw 400 fewer public servants working for the NT government and groundwork that saw us reduce our expenditure against the budget that was set in August 1986 by a further \$23m because of lower-than-budgeted revenue receipts. Our budget projections were made particularly difficult because of the flow-on effects of the fringe benefits tax, the entertainment tax and other Labor Party imposts.

Despite the claim that we would end up with a deficit, despite the Leader of the Opposition's allegations that we would require a mini-budget after the election, we did balance the books, we kept our promise not to introduce new taxes in the 1986-87 financial year and we managed to trim the public service by 400 people.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Chief Minister's time has expired.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, we managed to trim the public service by 400 people. On top of all that, at the end of the day, we succeeded in bringing expenditure in \$23m under our original budget. We achieved our objectives. That is fact, not fiction.

While this government was planning and achieving real budget cuts, we were subjected to endless abuse by the Leader of the Opposition for our efforts. In relation to the Premiers Conference, we heard him say, and I quote: 'I think we have got to blame the NT government for this'. That was said on Territory Extra on 26 May 1987. In August, he said: 'I suggest these revenue estimates in the 1986-87 budget will not be achieved without a mini-budget early in the new year'. He got it wrong again. When this government came to

office in 1986, 3 major areas needed attention: we had to trim government expenditure in order to bring in balanced budgets, we had to get the public service back on the rails and we had to steer the Territory economy towards a new period of development. I have already spoken about our record in the budget area.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about accountability. Once again, it seems I must remind him of the facts. On entering office, this government made immediate moves to tighten up our expenditure patterns and we removed personal government credit cards. We established the Public Accounts Committee and carried out a review of contingent liabilities, a report which I may remind honourable members opposite was presented to the House only yesterday. It demonstrated the justification of the position that has been adopted by the government and gave the lie to the malicious attacks on government financial credibility that the opposition had been promoting for the last 3 years. However, we needed to do more than this to reform and reshape government because of real economic restraints. A major restructuring of government was necessary to achieve our goals, to rationalise government activities and to reduce costs.

I need hardly remind members that, for years, there has been mounting criticism from the private sector, unions and the opposition concerning the growth of the public service, classification creep, unfair conditions of service, duplication, over-regulation and lack of consultation with business. This government has had the courage to tackle those issues and to make some hard decisions despite the short-term political costs. In the past 18 months, we have reduced the number of public servants, we have reduced the number of administrative units and we have dealt with conditions of service. The reality is that no new recruits receive air fares or drive-out time and no new single recruits receive any Territory allowance. Not only have we finally eliminated the unfair competition on recruitment between the public and private sectors, we have built long-term and significant savings into the system as a process of turnover and attrition takes its course.

These are the facts, Mr Speaker. It is interesting to note that this government is the only one in Australia which has had the intestinal fortitude to make such changes. While the Leader of the Opposition harps on about public service dissatisfaction, his cronies around Australia are busy inflating their public sectors, raising taxes and letting charges blow out. It is true that no change is quick or easy. Change is not achieved without a considerable amount of trauma and major change is almost always resisted strenuously. It is all too easy for the lotus-eaters amongst us to look back to the good old days. It is time that members opposite pulled their heads out of the sand, accepted the realities of 1987 and faced up to the future - a future that even Frank Alcorn admits is looking good. I quote:

The Territory economy is undergoing a profound transformation from a government-led economy to one driven more and more by the private sector. This is a unique historical occurrence in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, undoubtedly you have heard me say this for the last 18 months. That was actually a quote from Alcorn's foreword to the NT News Focus on Industry which I mentioned earlier. There is 72 pages of good news in there, the facts and the figures coming directly from private enterprise people who are getting on with work, not the Chicken Little cries from the knockers opposite who would like us all to believe that the sky is about to fall in.

I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition has recently become a born-again entrepreneur. I have been waiting with bated breath for him to discover the word 'entrepreneurial'. After a trip to the south to meet his ALP masters, he experienced a revelation. He began preaching the virtues of the north, attesting to our business prospects and prophesying a future in which the NT will be a regional centre of industry, technology and finance by the beginning of the 21st century. It seems that his conversion was short lived. Now he is back to the familiar rhetoric: doom and gloom. As the Leader of the Opposition himself said, everyone wants to set up, progress and build a good future. You cannot do that sitting on your hands waiting for miracles. Of all people, you would know that, Mr Speaker.

As I have been saying all along, painful though the changes that we are going through may be, they are producing the desired results. Thanks to the leadership of the NT government, we are moving towards private development and an economy driven by private enterprise. The Northern Territory government is no longer in the business of underwriting virtually every new business development. Rightly, our role is becoming that of a facilitator of private enterprise and our budgetary and structural changes are bringing about an economy where real jobs and real growth are being created by private enterprise. Existing business must become more enterprising. It must take advantage of that growth. Recently, the Minister for Mines and Energy put together a seminar to show local businesses how to benefit from the millions and millions of dollars now being invested in the mining industry. Suppliers and contractors must sharpen their pencils and chase that business.

All the indicators show that the Territory is well placed to move into the 1990s and beyond. The economic slump in the wake of the share market slide that is hitting the southern states is, if anything, highlighting the buoyancy of the NT economy. We have every reason to be confident about our future. Look at the facts rather than the fiction bandied about by the doom-and-gloom merchants opposite or by those same doubting Thomases.

Mr Speaker, did you know that, last financial year, the Territory's exports totalled \$750.5m, an amount more than twice the value of our imports? You heard that, in 1986-87, on a per capita basis, Territorians earned \$4993 for Australia as compared to the national figure of only \$2120 per capita, and that is just the beginning. Let me assure you that you will never hear about these positive developments if you listen to members of the opposition. They are too busy chanting 'woe, woe' and working to undermine business confidence, hoping they can convince the NT community that the end is nigh. Far from it; we are busy building a bright future for Territorians. However, as I have said, the Northern Territory is no longer a sheltered government workshop. Private enterprise is taking, and must continue to take, the lead. Our businesses and industries are generating our wealth, creating our jobs and taking charge of the future. The government's role in that future is to work in partnership with commerce and industry, to minimise government regulation and to let business get on with business. Our job is to keep taxation and red tape in check and to help with marketing and promotion, and that is exactly what we have been doing.

Here in the Territory there is ample proof of businesses which are competing, expanding and exporting. It is time for business to put enterprise back into private enterprise and, for anyone who has enterprise, there are plenty of opportunities. I congratulate those businesses which are now moving into the Kimberleys and the north-west of Western Australia, developing Darwin as a genuine capital city service base. They are opening up and expanding their own markets and deserve praise.

This government has been providing the leadership which is building the future. We have taken hard but necessary decisions. We have restructured the public service and reduced numbers, we are winding back government expenditure and we have cut into conditions of service of public servants. We have done all the things that the business community has been demanding for years. Yes, it will hurt in the short term and, yes, we will lose support in that area in the short term but, in the long term, there will be a more vibrant and vital public service doing a better job for the Territory, and the government will not raid taxpayers' pockets mercilessly in the way Labor state governments around Australia have. They have had a field day with taxes and charges. This is all possible because this government has proven its ability to provide leadership to the business community and the Northern Territory Public Service.

Finally, it seems appropriate for me to refer to the statement with which the Leader of the Opposition began his flight of fancy. It revealed to us that Australian business leaders told him that confidence is critical to our riding out the world economic malaise. Mr Speaker, I assure all honourable members that this government has confidence in the future and that futile attempts such as this to undermine that confidence will not succeed in destroying our growth in the future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, whilst listening to the Chief Minister's speech, I was wondering for a while where I had heard it before and then I realised that the Chief Minister is a believer in that old dictum: when you are on a good thing, stick to it. Suddenly it came to me that large slabs of his speech today were lifted from the speech that he made to the Central Council of the CLP in Katherine recently, which was quoted in the ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Were you there?

Mr Collins: He didn't invite us!

Mr EDE: We get our copies. That was described by Frank Alcorn as a 'thundering Hatton', a 'brilliant speech'. Obviously, he decided that, if it saved his bacon down in Katherine and saved him from losing his position, he would have one more go with it. All it really did was demonstrate one thing: we really are a very lucky Territory. We have very substantial natural resources in gas, oil and gold. We have unparalleled tourist attractions and I think that the minister did himself no good at all when he talked about the tourism plan that the opposition has been calling for. Each time that I have made this call in this House, honourable members opposite have said that they are doing all that. Nevertheless, we have never seen the outcome. I have said before that there is a need for a comprehensive plan to identify potential sites, to link them with the various niches in the market and the need then to identify the infrastructure requirements and to organise training to ensure that the benefits flow back to Territorians.

It was interesting to see a number of initiatives quoted by the Chief Minister. For example, there was the Industrial Supplies Office which, of course, like the TIO and the TAB, was a straight Labor Party philosophy, a project that we were often talking about. Mr Speaker, the government took it up and that is okay because we have plenty more where that came from. Basically, the only successful ones the government has are those that it has taken from us. We will just keep on putting them up for the government because we are keen to develop the Territory and that is what we are doing: providing decent policies. It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister falls flat on his face sometimes when he tries to implement them.

Mr Speaker, you have only to ask yourself one basic question in response to the Chief Minister's speech. If everything is so rosy in the garden, if everything is so marvellous, why is it that no one has any confidence in him? Why are the people leaving? Why are there empty houses all around the northern suburbs of Darwin and right through Alice Springs? Why are prices collapsing in the real estate market?

Mr Coulter: Negative gearing.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it has nothing to do with negative gearing. It has a fair amount to do with negative thinking by the Treasurer and his inability to get his act together and to realise what the Northern Territory is about.

The Chief Minister spoke about alarming reticence by business to come forward. He tried to maintain that business people were frightened of public servants. I have news for him because, unfortunately, many business people are becoming frightened to come forward to find themselves linked with this government that has the smell of death about it. That is what they are worried about. The clear, unvarnished truth is that this government does not understand where the Northern Territory is or where it is going. We all hear it talk about this private-sector-led economy and we have heard the rhetoric but we have not seen anything that leads Territorians to believe that it understands what a private-sector-led economy means and how it can be established.

Whether you describe a private-sector-led economy as a dream or a nightmare is completely irrelevant. The fact is that only 2 economies in Australia are led by the public sector: that of the Australian Capital Territory and, for a long period, ourselves. All of the states have economies that are driven by the private sector. The private sector makes up some 70% of total economic activity in Australia. As we all know, small business is Australia's largest employer by far. However, that scene is in stark contrast to the Northern Territory which only now is starting to move into what could accurately be called our post-colonial era. We have come through a long period during which government expenditure has been the powerhouse of economic activity.

There is nothing strange about that. Successive federal governments have spoken of building up the Territory's infrastructure to the stage where private economic activity can take over as the generator of wealth. Of course, we needed our roads, ports and our communication systems. It is almost impossible in this modern day to run an efficient, competitive private sector without that infrastructure in place. On both sides of the House, criticisms have been raised concerning the level of infrastructural development. We have all cried out for our railroad and for our new airports in Darwin or Alice Springs or Tennant Creek.

We will all keep pushing for those things, but we cannot sit on our hands and say that we cannot develop because they are not in place. We cannot behave like a bunch of prima donnas and turn around and say that we cannot get moving because the last block is not in place. We cannot be like some dainty bride who expects to move into a beautiful new home, find the fridge running and stocked with food, beds made, lawns mowed and everything already to take over and run. We cannot expect somehow to come on to this ready-made private sector economy and simply operate it. It has to be developed. We have to get this private-sector-led economy moving.

It astounds me when I hear these ministers try to project an image of rugged frontiersmen who like to see themselves as latterday pioneers. All I hear from them is whingeing because everything is not built and in place and ready for them to operate. We hear them knock, knock, knock at the federal government because it has not spoonfed them with absolutely everything that they would like to have. We have now to show that we can operate within the confines of the infrastructural development that has occurred. We must stop taking the easy road of blaming Canberra and stop seeing Canberra as some cow to be milked to feed our own economic activity. We have to grow up. We have to forsake the comfort and security of the womb and come out into the cold, hard world. It is not a perfect world. We do not have everything in place, but it is the only world there is. We cannot go back; we must go forward.

Our problem is that the Country Liberal Party, for all its rhetoric, has grown used to living on Canberra's largesse. It has grown comfortable in the public-sector economy. Nowhere is the government's inability to move away from the public-sector-led economy to a private-sector-led economy shown more clearly than in its relationship with the public service. It is there that the government has made a basic and fundamental error.

It is an unfortunate but fundamental truth that this government sees a move from a public-sector-led economy to a private-sector-led economy as being based on an attack on the public service. It sees the public service as being incapable, unwilling or unable to function in a private-sector-led economy. In its eyes, the public service has become the enemy. It believes that it has to destroy the public service to allow the private sector to emerge. It is like a sort of post-Keynesian nightmare vision of fiscal policy: you limit the demands of the government on the fiscal system in order to allow space for the private investor to operate. Whether that point is true or not in terms of fiscal policy - and I will not go into that now - it is absolutely ridiculous to believe that you can translate that concept across to the position that a public service takes vis-a-vis the private sector. It seems that this government believes that, by destroying the public service, somehow it will create that room.

It is a remarkable view of reality. The government denies the basic function of the public service which is the engine-room for economic development. It denies the public service's natural and proper role in a private-sector-led economy. The economy will not just naturally metamorphosise from a public-sector-led to a private-sector-led economy. The economy has to be driven, it has to be led, it has to be changed, pushed and pulled into that new world.

Who is going to do it, Mr Speaker? The Chief Minister seems to believe he can do it with rhetoric. The unfortunate fact is that he completely understands his role in the changing economy: he believes that a few fine speeches will fix everything. The fact is that change will be effected by thousands of public servants responding to a plan clearly enunciated by the government. When the government denies the public service that role and sees it as something to be squashed, bashed and screwed-around, it does itself and its ability to put that plan into place immeasurable damage.

In many ways, it misreads some of the basic points that are being brought to it by the private sector - for example, the argument about red tape. I have found that, when you delve behind the term 'red tape', you find that what people are saying is that they have found an inability within the public service to react to their demands and to do the things which will assist them to get moving. That occurs because, unfortunately, the government is unable

to use the public service. It does not know how to provide the plan nor how to ensure its implementation. It does not have a big picture. One of its previous leaders had a big picture which suffered from a lack of detail. These people can only see the little bits of detail; they cannot come anywhere near to seeing the whole picture. It is unfortunate that the government lacks the ability to act as a competent manager of the public service and that, as a result, it blames the public service for its own failures.

There are 3 basic functions of government in a private-sector economy: the social function, the regulatory function and the growth promotion function. Unfortunately, what has happened is that this government has blurred the distinctions between them. In March, it attempted to create a system which would identify those 3 areas and we supported many of the concepts embodied in that attempt. Eight months later, the government still has not been able to get its act together. It is still mucking around in the engine-room. The parts are strewn all over the floor. People are becoming very fed up and are more and more reluctant to work. The government's own dream is being destroyed. What has happened? Just the other day, we dealt with the Mines Safety Control Act which turns a regulatory function into a growth promotion function. That completely violates the original concept underlying the revised administrative arrangements. The Power and Water Authority still has no legal basis for its staffing. I do not need to quote Petronius because it has become very well-known. Every time things start to settle down, this government moves in with the changes.

My final point relates to the problems which have occurred because of the politicisation of senior positions in the public service. This is the result of legislation rammed through in 1 night in this House by the previous Chief Minister. That legislation should be repealed so that senior public servants no longer owe their jobs to their political masters and so that their security no longer depends on complying with the will of those masters. Those officers should be independent. When they once again have the ability to act as competent managers of the public service, we will have a decent private-sector-led economy in the Northern Territory.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, we have just listened to the rantings of an elected member who represents an area which is experiencing the most remarkable part of the Northern Territory's development story that can be witnessed today. He talks about housing in the Northern Territory and says that everybody is leaving. North Flinders Mine, which is the owner-operator of the Granites Mine in his electorate, is now one of the largest real estate owners in Alice Springs. It owns 64 houses. The amount of employment and capital investment that that company has generated in his electorate through the development of the Granites Mine is incredible. Recently, the Tanami Mine came into operation once again, bringing a huge influx of capital investment and confidence not only to the Northern Territory generally but, specifically, to the member for Stuart's electorate. Right at this very moment, Magellan is holding discussions with people in the Yuendumu area with a view to undertaking major exploration activity in the Ngalia Basin area. If ever there was an example of a member gone mad, we have just witnessed it. The member for Stuart has no idea of the development which is occurring on his own patch let alone across the Northern Territory. How dare he come into this Chamber without recognising the developments that are occurring in his own backyard! The ability of the member for Stuart to speak about the development of the Northern Territory is curtailed by his shortsightedness and inability to see what is happening in his own electorate.

We have been told today that there is no business confidence in the Territory and nobody knows where we are going or what is happening. A communication was delivered to me today. It is dated 25 November 1987 and it relates to the activities of Peko-Wallsend. It is a stock exchange announcement:

The directors of Peko-Wallsend Ltd announced today that Peko Mines will build a CIP plant to re-treat the accumulated tailings at Warrego near Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, at a cost of \$4.835m. The estimated mineable reserve defined by recent drilling is 4.543 million tonnes at a little over 1 g per tonne. The tailings will be reclaimed by a bucket-wheel suction dredge at a rate of 1.250 million tonnes a year, some 90 268 troy ounces.

For the benefit of honourable members, that represents about \$62.5m worth of gold at today's prices.

The existing Warrego concentrator is processing gold ore from Warrego and Argo mines. Resumption of copper mining is under consideration, based on reserves remaining at Warrego and in the flooded Gecko Mine. A study of the feasibility of rehabilitating Gecko will be completed early in 1988, based in the first instance on a proven resource within Gecko K44 ore body of 813 000 t.

That is 6.25% copper and 1.2 g of gold per tonne.

Work has begun already to de-water the mine and I know that negotiations have progressed a little further than is apparent from this stock exchange announcement. I know that negotiations are now under way with suppliers and manufacturers in the Northern Territory, including a manufacturer who has developed a worldwide reputation for side-tipping trucks. We are talking about 60 000 t of copper concentrate leaving the Northern Territory in the near future yet we have heard about a lack of direction and about nobody knowing where he is going.

This morning, I introduced the member for Nhulunbuy to a representative from Elf Aquitaine, one of the biggest multinational corporations in the world, right here in this Assembly.

Mr Ede: Are they going to invest?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, Elf Aquitaine will spend somewhere in the vicinity of \$15m in the Northern Territory by March next year. The answer is yes.

Mr Ede: Peanuts!

Mr COULTER: How can we have any sort of reasonable debate in this Assembly with that sort of response? If that is what the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would say in world business centres, I implore honourable members to do everything in their power to get them to stay at home because their help is not required. Their attitude should be condemned. One minute the Deputy Leader of the Opposition talks about investment and the next he describes a \$15m investment as 'peanuts'. We know who the peanut is!

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that reference to the member for Stuart.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Before the Leader of the Opposition had his charisma implant and his development cataracts removed, how many times did we hear him knock Hungerford? How hard was it for Hungerford to get credit in this town? Mr Speaker, let me give you the Hungerford story to date, because the opposition did not provide a single solid fact in this Assembly today. We heard the rhetoric about the temperature of wombs and the engine-room of the economy, but we did not hear one solid fact to back up the opposition's matter of public importance.

Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd established in the Trade Development Zone in April 1987 under considerable fire from the Leader of the Opposition. For several months afterwards, it was subjected to very damaging criticism under the privilege and protection provided by the Legislative Assembly. At one stage, that criticism caused credit lines to be cut and there was a drop in orders, a severe blow to the company at a very early and delicate stage of its development. This was clearly part of the Leader of the Opposition's anti-development strategy. In spite of all these problems, the company is now growing. Its initial number of employees was 18. From next Monday, the number will have reached 30, and that means an injection into the local economy of \$13 500 per week in wages and salaries alone. In addition, I am pleased to announce that the company's output has grown steadily after the early setbacks. It is now producing at the rate of \$200 000 per month and this is continuing to grow. The company's material purchases alone amount to approximately \$100 000 a month, of which \$50 000 would be sourced from within the Northern Territory economy.

There are some facts, Mr Speaker. There is some detail about development and the things that are happening in the Northern Territory. If the honourable member cannot see beyond the horizon of his own electorate, let him spend a day with me and I will put him in a harness and walk him round to some of these developments and show him so he will not make a fool of himself as he has done in this Assembly today trying to defend the Leader of the Opposition whom he is so keenly trying to knife in the back.

Mr Speaker, notice the member for Stuart's priorities when talking about what was required for a private-sector-led economy. Right at the top of his list was the word 'socialist'. The very philosophy of this motion is in fact socialist. Under socialistic economic systems, it is the governments that lead and direct the economy. He is worrying about leadership because we are not all wearing grey and we do not have some dictator in charge leading the economy. Free enterprise must lead the economy and that is something that he would not know about. Indeed, as the member for Sadadeen said, the member for Stuart has never created anything in his life.

Under free enterprise systems, the business sector itself is the main engine of development, if he wants to use rhetoric. The government provides a legislative framework, general guidance and initiative in certain key areas to help stimulate development - for example, the Trade Development Zone, tourism infrastructure and the mining industry. The Leader of the Opposition's matter of public importance would be more credible and less hypocritical if he himself did not have such an appalling track record in anti-development tactics; for example, the sabotage of the fledgling Hungerford industry and a number of others, his attempt to damage the Trade Development Zone and his criticism of the government's involvement with Yulara. I do not have time to read all of this and anyway it has all been recorded before. I ought to have it tabled and included in Hansard, but Hansard is full of his anti-development sentiments already and I for one will not have a bar of them.

There was talk about 1000 people a month leaving the Northern Territory. The ABS figures were embargoed until 11.30 am on 16 November, and I would like to know where the Deputy Leader of the Opposition got his figures from, and I challenge him ...

Mr Ede: Out of the NT News.

Mr COULTER: Here we go. Did anybody hear that? Mr Speaker, the only things reliable in the NT News are the page number and the date, and sometimes they get them wrong, but we are told here in the Assembly that that is where he got his details from. Why doesn't he try the Australian Bureau of Statistics because he will find that overseas migration to the Northern Territory was 774, interstate migration to the Territory was 500, we had 3359 births and a net growth of 3950 people, based on the electoral roll. Population surveys have been carried out in the Northern Territory since June 1986 and the population growth in the Northern Territory is 2.6%, Western Australia 2.5%, Queensland 1.9%, ACT 1.6%, New South Wales 1.3%, Victoria 1.1% and South Australia - that great socialist Labor state - 0.08%. The Northern Territory still has the largest population growth ...

Mr Ede: What period are you talking about?

Mr COULTER: ...for the year ending ...

Mr Ede: It is June 1986, isn't it. Go on, admit it.

Mr COULTER: Well, June 1986. I have the figures here. Would you like me to read out the 1987 figures or would you care to get them out of the NT News? Mr Speaker, he is still grasping at straws.

Mr Hatton: Those were June 1987 figures.

Mr COULTER: Those were June 1987 figures.

Mr Ede: Are you sure?

Mr Hatton: The figures were produced yesterday.

Mr COULTER: Recently, I was at an Australian Small Business Association meeting and the Leader of the Opposition was there. I admired him because I was guest speaker. I stood up and I admired him for his courage in attending. I noted that he sat near the door but still he did attend the meeting. He was bucketed and left early. But that is all right; he did attend. I have never seen the Deputy Leader of the Opposition at such a function.

Mr Ede: Which function?

Mr COULTER: You would not have heard of it. I will write and explain to you what sort of an organisation it is.

Here are some facts, Mr Speaker, and that is where the member for Stuart was very much lacking in his argument in the Assembly today. Let me give you some facts about development, business confidence and about what this government is doing to encourage this private-sector economy. At the suppliers' seminar recently, which I conducted in the Northern Territory, 260 people attended and more were turned away. As a result of the seminar, orders for Darwin businesses, such as meat supplies from Meneling abattoir, pallets etc, have been placed. Sedco 4X reports that it has been inundated by

business offers from Darwin suppliers in the 2 weeks following the seminar. As a result, many orders previously filled by interstate and overseas suppliers are now being met from Darwin through Mitre 10, Meneling abattoir, Medlab First Aid Supplies and others. The seminar lifted the profile of Darwin business and Sedco reports an improved standard of quotes from Darwin and much easier dealings with the Darwin business community. It is still early days and much more business with Darwin is expected.

Nabalco reports that, as a result of the seminar, the company has revised its policy and will now do more business with Darwin. Working through the Industrial Supplies Office, Nabalco has arranged a series of meetings this week in Darwin with 9 potential suppliers who attended the seminar. Gemco reports that, as a result of the seminar, it has revised its policy of purchasing supplies exclusively from Brisbane and has decided on a policy of buying from Darwin wherever possible. Recently, it negotiated a contract for the purchase of 4-wheel drive vehicles from Port Darwin Motors.

Board meetings to be held in Darwin next year include that of Santos, the giant oil and gas exploration company. It is coming to Darwin to open an office, and that shows confidence. In fact, its board meeting will be held in Darwin next year. With the Mining Expo in May next year plus associated conferences, we have bookings for 800 accommodation rooms for next May and most of the outdoor sites at the showground have already been booked. Does that illustrate lack of confidence in the Northern Territory or the Northern Territory government, or lack of planning? These are indisputable facts, Mr Speaker, not the rhetoric that we heard from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable Treasurer be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I urge the Leader of the Opposition not to bother to go to Perth for charisma implants or tune-ups, let him spend a day with me and I will do all that I can for him. I welcomed the news when I heard that the Leader of the Opposition had changed his mind. But, as I said, it did not last long; he is like an 8-day clock. It is time to wind him up again.

Mr Speaker, the Mining Expo is ready to go and it will be a giant success and a vote of confidence. We will see companies incurring considerable expenditure and bringing heavy equipment from interstate. Already TNT has offered to carry a considerable proportion of that freight. It will transport heavy machinery into the Northern Territory at a reduced rate. That illustrates businesses working together and confidence in the Territory. The other day, the Chamber of Mines gave a resounding vote of confidence in the Northern Territory's direction and development. Little things are happening also. Recently, a mining engineering company that will employ up to 14 people moved into Pine Creek. Mr Speaker, can you imagine the impact on Pine Creek of such a development? But these people cannot see and, as the Chief Minister said, there are none so blind as those that will not see. I have pointed out that the member for Stuart's own electorate is probably one of the most progressive development areas in the Northern Territory today and he cannot even see what is occurring there.

The Leader of the Opposition has offered nothing but criticism on every initiative by the government to stimulate business activity. Examples, as I

said, are the casinos, Yulara, the Beaufort - you name it. There is a whole list. I could incorporate it in Hansard but Hansard is already full of it. If time permitted, I could go on about the developments in offshore oil and gas exploration, the \$17m expansion at Yulara, the over-subscribed NT Loan No 14 and the confidence that represents.

The opposition spoke about meeting with business. The Minister for Industries and Development and I met with a wide range of Territory business people earlier this year in Alice Springs. Although I do not have it with me, I have a letter from the Australian Hotels Association, congratulating the government on the direction in which it was heading and the manner in which we were treating the industry.

Mr Ede: Was that before the bed tax?

Mr COULTER: I think it was yesterday but it could have been this morning or 2 days ago. It certainly arrived within the past week. I will have a copy delivered to the Leader of the Opposition so that he will know what a congratulatory letter looks like, as compared with a knocking letter. He might take it back to his staff and use it as an example.

It is an illustration of overseas confidence in the Northern Territory that a representative of the prestigious Euro Money Magazine, the bible for investment opportunities, is in the Territory now. It contains an article about the world's worst finance minister. I do not think it is about Peter Walsh but I will read it later. Someone from that magazine is in the Northern Territory now, encouraged by our development. We did our roadshow recently in Geneva and Zurich and right across Europe. People were very enthused about the development of the Northern Territory and some of them are here right at this very minute. They are talking about a 9-page supplement in the magazine because they believe that the Northern Territory is Australia's Alaska. If the opposition is worried about development, it has not seen anything yet. It would not know it if it saw it anyway.

Recently, the world-renowned Orion Bank published a report on the Northern Territory economy. It is interesting reading indeed in terms of how that bank sees the future development of the Northern Territory. It supports the direction of this government. It is interesting to see that the writer of the report is aware of federal government interference in our affairs. It contains a section on specific-purpose payments in relation to uranium and I will quote from it:

The current Grants Commission processes compensate the Territory for its current inability to gain revenue directly from uranium royalties. The Territory's opportunity to exploit further the uranium resource will be inhibited by the Commonwealth's external powers and their use to restrict sales.

It was a fairly smart person who wrote that. The report describes the Territory in glowing terms and that is how obvious our prospects are.

I now have a copy of the letter from the Australian Hotels Association which is dated 27 October 1987. It says:

The members of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Hotels Association have requested that I write to you to express their appreciation that licence fees were not subject to increase in your government's 1987-88 budget. ... Liquor licence fees have for many years provided an easy answer for governments.

It continues with various details and thanks the government for its contribution to the industry.

I could continue in great detail about issues which were mentioned briefly by the Chief Minister. The Territory is being recognised overseas and interest is incredibly high. The 1991 target figure of 1.1 million tourists is achievable and we will attain it. It is expected that \$560m will be invested in tourism infrastructure over the next 3 years. Does that show a lack of confidence or a lack of leadership? What nonsense we have been subjected to today by the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy! I note with interest that they are the only members of the opposition who have had the gall to speak on their matter of public importance today. None of their colleagues thinks it is of much importance. They have left the Chamber and I would congratulate them for doing so although it is not possible for me to condone any member's absence from the Chamber, even under the pressure of having to put up with the type of nonsense that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition propounded. That is where we really see a lack of leadership. One is having charisma implants while the other is trying to plant a knife in his back. It is incestuous.

This government has put major strategies in place. Today, the Minister for Industries and Development outlined a number of the initiatives that he is involved in. He talked about the partial privatisation of small business services. He talked about the revision of purchasing supply processes and the tender system with input from business representatives on the board. He talked about additional support to business through the Territory Enterprise Workshop, the Regulatory Review Committee established to cut red tape and assist the private sector, primary and secondary industry incentives and assistance packages, and the first export shipments from the Trade Development Zone. Of course, he mentioned the fish processing plant which, I understand, he opened on Monday.

Mr Speaker, I do not know whom the Leader of the Opposition has been talking to down south although a few people have rung and advised that he visited them and had a bit of a talk. They wanted to know who he was and what sort of a bloke he was. I said: 'He is not too bad. He just needs a little bit of remedial treatment and retraining. He does not really understand what the message is. Give him a chance and he might come good'. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we meet frequently with eminent business people who travel through the Northern Territory on a regular basis.

At the time that the Leader of the Opposition was down south, I was there myself. As a matter of conjecture, I believe I probably visited more federal ministers than he did when he was in Canberra on that particular occasion. Certainly, I would like to see his list - it is a bit like you show me yours and I will show you mine - of whom he visited if he is so proud of what he has done. But I am not knocking him too much. I admire him. I admired his start as he jumped out of the blocks. I said: 'Here he goes, we are in for a good time now. He has finally woken up to the fact that development is the key to the advancement of the Northern Territory and he wants to be part of it'. But it lasted a very short time - only about 7 days. As I said, he is a bit like an 8-day clock. He is wound up so tight on the first day that he does not know what he is doing and, by the time it gets to day 7, he has run out of puff and reverts back to his normal self. He is well supported by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who cannot even recognise the development that is occurring in his own electorate involving many millions of dollars and some of the most successful mining operations in Australia today.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (DEATHS IN CUSTODY) BILL
(Serial 79)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to issue a Territory commission to Mr James Henry Muirhead QC to inquire into Aboriginal deaths in custody in the Northern Territory and to provide for the issue of further commissions should this be considered to be necessary. In August this year, the Prime Minister wrote to me advising of the intention of the Commonwealth to establish a royal commission to inquire into the deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in custody. The Prime Minister invited the Territory to give consideration to the issue of letters patent in similar terms to the letters patent to be issued by the Commonwealth. On 16 October 1987, the Commonwealth issued letters patent pursuant to the Royal Commissions Act 1902, which appointed Mr Muirhead to be a commissioner to inquire into:

(a) the deaths in Australia since January 1980 of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, including any which may occur after the issue of the letters patent, whilst in police custody, imprisoned, or in any other place of detention and, (b) any subsequent action taken in respect of each of those deaths including, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the conduct of coronial, police and other inquiries and other things that were not done but ought to have been done, and to forward to the Governor-General, by not later than 31 December 1988 or such later date as is fixed, a report of his findings and to make such recommendations as he considers appropriate in the light of those findings.

Mr Speaker, the commission was formally opened in Canberra on 12 November 1987. The Northern Territory was granted leave to appear at those hearings. At the moment, there are 10 cases for investigation in the Northern Territory. Honourable members will no doubt be aware that the commission has ordered that the names of most of the deceased be suppressed in deference to the wishes of the relatives of the deceased.

It is understood that the commission will commence to travel around Australia to hear submissions and to collect evidence early next year. The commission is not expected to come to the Territory until the dry season. However, no firm dates have yet been settled.

I believe it to be essential for the Territory to be seen to be fully cooperating with the commission on an equal footing with the states in this tragic matter of national concern. It is proposed, therefore, that this legislation pass through all stages at these sittings to ensure that the Territory is not seen to be dilatory in this matter.

On 16 November 1987, I wrote to the Prime Minister advising him of the intention of the Territory government to cooperate fully in this matter and that special legislation was in contemplation to facilitate the work of the commission. I also pointed out that it would be desirable for an amendment to be made to the Commonwealth letters patent to reflect the Territory action. I have received informal advice that the Commonwealth now has action well in hand to have the letters patent amended in this regard.

On Monday 23 November 1987, I received further informal advice from the Commonwealth in relation to this matter. I understand that Mr Muirhead has written to the Commonwealth, the states and the Territory suggesting that another 2 commissioners be appointed to the inquiry. It is understood that the Commonwealth may be sympathetic to the proposal but would prefer to wait until early next year to see how things develop.

Turning now to the specific provisions of the bill, the preamble states that the object of the legislation is to appoint a commissioner or commissioners to inquire into and report and make recommendations to His Honour the Administrator on the deaths of Aboriginals in custody. The preamble goes on to recite: (1) the terms of the Commonwealth letters patents; (2) an authority for the commissioner to conduct the inquiry in combination with any similar state or Territory inquiry; (3) that the Governor-General may appoint other commissioners to the inquiry; and (4) the agreement of the Territory to facilitate the inquiry by authorising the commissioner or commissioners, under Territory legislation, to inquire into the same matters.

Clause 5 appoints Mr Muirhead as a commissioner to inquire into and report with recommendations to the Administrator on matters in question. Clause 6 provides that the Administrator may issue further commissions to persons appointed to be commissioners by the Governor-General to the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Inquiry. Clause 7 provides the commissioners with all requisite powers, privileges and protection in relation to the conduct of the inquiry and the subsequent report and recommendations to the Administrator. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 80) and the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 81) (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 80) TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 81)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of these bills is to introduce a number of stamp duty concessions, to introduce amendments to minimise the opportunities for avoidance of Territory duty and to correct some procedural matters. I will deal with each issue separately.

With regard to marine hull and freight insurance, it is apparent that much of the insurance cover for freight and for commercial shipping hulls is

written offshore in countries where stamp duty either is not levied or is levied only at an insignificant level. The Insurance Council of Australia has pointed out that the imposition of stamp duty on these contracts has disadvantaged the insurance companies which operate in Australia and it has been the subject of public comment by the Prime Minister. In conjunction with the states, we have decided that stamp duty relating to freight insurance and insurance on commercial hulls should be given concessional treatment. I believe that this move will encourage freight companies to insure with Australian companies to the benefit of Australia. The Territory will obtain its proportion of the increased insurance business and it is also expected that there will be a consequential freight cost benefit relating to the transportation of goods into the Territory.

In the last couple of years, a secondary mortgage market has been developing in the eastern states of Australia. Such a market, trading in mortgages or mortgage-related instruments, can provide a benefit to Territorians through the transfer of mortgages to such a market, thus freeing loan funds otherwise locked in mortgage financing. Whilst it is not expected that a market facility would be established in the Territory for a number of years, it is possible for Territory residents to participate in that state market and for funds to be channelled back to Territory development, particularly in the housing arena. There is a disincentive for Territory mortgages being traded in the market, and that is the imposition of a stamp duty on the transfer of a mortgage. The proposed amendment helps overcome this disincentive by limiting the duty which has to be paid on the transfer of a mortgage into the secondary mortgage market. The revenue effect of this concession is not significant as there is currently little Territory activity in this area. Duty will still be payable on the issue of primary mortgages and the greater availability of funds will encourage activity in the primary area which will offset any revenue loss.

The talisman system of registration of share transactions will facilitate dealings with Northern Territory marketable securities on the London Stock Exchange. It will also provide the means for ensuring that the Territory stamp duty in relation to those transactions is paid promptly. Similar amendments have been made already by a number of the states with the aim that this system will operate Australia-wide to the benefit of all states and the Territory. Dealings with Australian shares on the London Stock Exchange are inhibited because each transfer must be registered in Australia. Considerable delays are incurred in the registration process and these will be reduced through the talisman system. While the amount of revenue generated from these particular transactions is not very large at present, the amendment will ensure that future growth will be adequately covered.

The system involves the setting up of a nominee trustee company in Australia which will hold shares on behalf of persons trading on the London Stock Exchange. Transactions will be recorded individually and stamp duty paid in relation to each such transaction. The nominee company will be responsible for remitting the stamp duty to the Territory Commissioner of Taxes in relation to dealings that have taken place during the month.

All states and the Territory have been concerned about the loss of revenue caused by certain avoidance practices. As a consequence, the overall question of the avoidance and evasion of taxes has been considered at length by the states and the Territory. As a result of these deliberations, it was agreed by all participants to introduce legislation of a uniform nature which would improve communications between tax jurisdictions. The legislation would also facilitate the pursuit of avoidance across borders by providing reciprocal

powers to be exercised by each jurisdiction. The Commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria have introduced reciprocal powers acts and the amendment now proposed emulates that legislation. The other states are introducing similar measures. Subject to Northern Territory approval and control, the amendment will permit avoidance matters to be investigated across borders. The Territory will enjoy reciprocal rights in other jurisdictions in relation to the investigation of Territory tax matters.

Finally, the bill deals with a number of procedural and consequential matters, including an amendment which will enable the powers of the Commissioner of Taxes to be exercised by the Deputy Commissioner or an alternative appointee during the absence of the commissioner from duty or the Territory. This arrangement will facilitate the administration of the taxing acts.

Debate adjourned.

RADIOGRAPHERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 82)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Radiographers Act includes provisions for the registration of radiographers and sets out the basic qualifications necessary to gain registration as a radiographer. The current registration provisions require applicants to qualify for a diploma of qualification issued by the conjoint board of the bodies known as the Royal Australasian College of Radiologists and the Australian Institute of Radiography. On 31 December 1987, the conjoint board agreement between these organisations will cease. The conjoint board and its state committees will be dissolved. The committee of the Federal Council of the Australian Institute of Radiography entitled The Professional Accreditation and Education Board has been formed to assume the duties of the conjoint board. The formal commencement date for the transfer of responsibilities is 1 January 1988. The Professional Accreditation and Education Board will issue a statement of accreditation to those who have completed the requirements necessary to be eligible for full membership of the Australian Institute of Radiography.

An amendment to the principal act is required to enable applicants for registration who graduate from Australian institutions to be eligible for registration after 1 January 1988. The basic qualifications for registration as a radiographer should then become qualifications acceptable for full membership of the Australian Institute of Radiography. The bill before the House provides for this. It also provides for the basic qualifications for registration to be prescribed by regulation, thereby avoiding the need for the legislation to be amended in the future for purely administrative purposes. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, this evening, I would like to touch on a couple of subjects in the adjournment. Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to the Northern Territory team that represented the Territory at the recent national finals of the National Enterprise Awards in Brisbane. There has been some mention of the team from the Northern Territory that visited Brisbane recently and the innovative invention that they took with them: the modular wheelchair. The leader of the group, Lindsay Pyne, the Director of Institutions and Programs Branch of the Department of Health and Community Services, and the joint inventors, Ann Land and Chris Ogle, both departmental staff, did an exceptionally fine job, as did the rest of their team: Stephen Moo, Claire Hudson and Michael Lindfield. The team not only did us proud with their invention but were feted in the national workshop as having presented probably one of the best inventions that had appeared for some time.

It is a matter of record in this House that they did not win the national titles. However, one must understand that, in fact, an invention does not win the titles but rather that they are won through the presentation of a set of situations to judges who are expert in innovation in Australia. One was a Mr Ian Curtis from Quintrex, another was Dr Clive Coombe from the CSIRO and another was Dr Fred Gilhouse from one of the major mining companies in Australia.

The methods of presentation at the National Enterprise Workshops are based not only on the invention but particularly on the way in which one develops one's business plan and presents it to the enterprise workshop finals. The plan sets out all of the requirements of pre-marketing exercises, the research that needs to be done, the requirements and details of how the article will be manufactured and marketed and the distribution outlets both in Australia and overseas. That section of the workshop is given a certain number of points.

Additional points are allocated to the invention for its innovativeness and its novelty in terms of the market or its achievement in making an existing piece of equipment function better than it did in the past. The method of actual presentation to the workshop is worth only 25 of the 100 points that are allocated during the finals. I sat through nearly all of the presentations from each state and the Northern Territory and, to be quite honest, I thought our team presented exceptionally well. I gave it top marks for presentation, ahead of the entries from all states. During the presentation on the following Tuesday night, I asked one of the judges privately how he viewed the presentations and he concurred with my assessment. In fact, we were only about half a point apart in our totals for all presentations. However, he told me that, whilst he was extremely enamoured of the Territory invention, the team and its presentation, the business plan let the entry down somewhat. That was probably because of difficulty in obtaining background information about the number of modular wheelchairs that could be marketed as quickly as possible.

After the formal presentation, there was a question and answer session involving the panelists and the team. I thought that the most telling question related to markets. The judges themselves had been extremely busy determining their own views on what markets were available and they asked the panel specifically which of the 35 companies that currently market wheelchairs they had intended to take over immediately. The team members did a very fine job of explaining that, of the 35 companies that market wheelchairs in Australia at the moment, there were 5 which they would immediately move to take over. They said that about 20 companies would probably go out of business and would not need to be taken over because they were small concerns specialising in particular areas. The new product would take their place in the market and increase the market potential in a very short time.

Team members were extremely good ambassadors for the Territory. I congratulate them on the way in which they went about representing the Northern Territory. They had some fairly stiff competition here before they became Territory finalists. I congratulate them also on the way in which they presented themselves in Queensland. With their entry into the Trade Development Zone on the return of 2 members from America and Europe and another 2 who are currently travelling around Australia undertaking pre-marketing exercises, I have no doubt that the enterprise will have to expand very quickly to keep up with the demands of the market. I believe that we will see rapid expansion of the enterprise into a very large business within the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I would like quickly to mention another subject which relates to my electorate. I want to take a couple of moments to pay tribute to some of the senior service personnel who will be moving out of the Darwin region in the next couple of weeks. Most members would know Captain Clem Littleton and his wife Suzanne. Captain Littleton has been promoted to the position of naval attache in London and will be taking up that post early in January. Clem has played an active role in the Northern Territory community. He has been a very sensitive commander of the naval base and he has certainly been of great assistance to me in my dealings with his personnel throughout the Darwin region.

I would also like to pay tribute to Commander David Cotsell, who was the commander of the HMAS Coonawarra Base. David Cotsell and his wife Anne were here for a very short period only, following the transfer south of John Jones in about February or March of this year. From the moment he arrived here with Anne, who had previously served here as a naval officer in her own right, David fell in love with Darwin. He took an immediate interest in community affairs and assisted greatly at the Sacred Heart Primary School in my electorate at Berrimah. Previously, it was the Berrimah Primary School. He offered all forms of assistance to that school's swimming activities, making the swimming pool at the HMAS Coonawarra Naval Base available so that the children did not have to be bussed to other swimming pools. They were able to walk across the road and use the navy pool. On other occasions, he provided free buses to take children to community activities in the Darwin region. Some of his staff participated on the school board and the school committee. He has been a very great help in that area. I congratulate David on his recent upgrading. He has had a pretty meteoric rise in the navy. He arrived here from the south as a result of a promotion to the rank of commander and he will be leaving on promotion to the rank of captain. He will probably be one of the youngest captains in the Royal Australian Navy. He is being promoted to become Director of Naval Communications in Canberra and I wish him and Anne well.

Another person in my electorate from the services, who has also been particularly helpful in the local community, is Chaplain David Hill of the HMAS Coonawarra Naval Base. David was in the area for some 3 or 4 years and participated very heavily in activities in the local community, including the Sacred Heart Primary School. He was one of the first persons to be involved with the school committee and was of assistance to me in rounding up additional people to become members of that committee. He has been a very good point of contact for me in my community. I congratulate him on his move to become Chaplain at Jervis Bay. I will talk about other service transfers on another occasion.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a couple of issues which affect my electorate. Firstly, I would like to record my

congratulations to the principal and staff of Milingimbi School, particularly Greg Jarvis and Kay Thurlow, on the organisation of the school fete which was held about 2 weeks ago. It was an interesting event. People came from all over Arnhem Land and appreciated the chance to come to a central place to meet people and enjoy the activities of the school. At one stage, I expected that the Minister for Education might turn up, but he did not. He had other commitments. After paying bills and expenses, the fete made a profit of about \$5000, an amount which will certainly benefit the school. I would like to record my appreciation of the work of the students and school staff in ensuring that the communities around Milingimbi enjoyed an event which was certainly worth while.

I would like to pay tribute to a person whom I have known since my election in 1983, when I became the member for Arnhem, and that is Mr Trevor Tennant who used to be the General Manager at Groote Eylandt for Gemco. Recently, he left Groote Eylandt and went to Perth to take up matters which are of importance to him. He is a man whom I respect. He did his utmost in terms of the company's policies working out of an area like Groote Eylandt, small though it may be, having social difficulties and having to live on a mining lease. He ran a very tight ship. I would like to put on record my appreciation of the work that he did, and not only for the people at Alyangula. He helped my people at Nguru and Umbakumba considerably by trying to do his utmost to ensure that people living alongside, especially in the mining township, did get along well with each other. He had difficulties in terms of implementing the policies of the company but, as a man, I appreciated his assistance whenever I went to Groote Eylandt and I want to ensure that my thanks to Mr Trevor Tennant are on record.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister expressed concern in respect of a statement made by the Northern Land Council. I believe there was a meeting at the South Alligator Motor Inn over the weekend involving the Kimberley Land Council, the Northern Land Council and the Tiwi Land Council. On page 3 of today's NT News, the Chief Minister has accused the land councils of not responding to this government's program to encourage organisations in the Northern Territory, especially Aboriginal organisations, to come to grips with the concept of local government for their communities.

I would like to advise the Chief Minister that, however attractive the scheme may be, there are organisations and communities out there that are very reluctant to express their views and needs to this government. We have quite often said to this government that communication works both ways. Mr Speaker, this side of the House has often expressed that view. I support local government where it is warranted on the basis that, in the end, it will benefit those communities.

I attended a Local Government Association Conference in Tennant Creek where I said that the Northern Territory government needs to sit down and to be able to work out some of the problems and the difficulties that we have with this legislation. At the moment, there seems to be a conflict of interests. Landowners are running around seeking advice from the Northern Land Council or the council that represents them. There are departmental officers based in the southern or northern regions who are saying that this legislation is best for the people and, at the same time, hanging a carrot over the heads of the communities saying that they will get such-and-such an amount of money from the Grants Commission if they take this on board.

We have real difficulties in resolving that sort of situation. I have had many approaches from my constituents seeking advice because there seems to be

this conflict of interests. The landowners are seeking advice from the Northern Land Council or the land council that they are represented by. Government departments are saying to these organisations: 'You have now been operating for so-and-so long and we would rather you take on board this role of government'. That may be quite all right in political terms, but the fact is that there are people who are physically and emotionally disturbed by whatever decision an elected council takes. It certainly is worrying to some landowners whom I know personally, specifically those from the area from which I come. Because a delegation of the regional department in Nhulunbuy has said that the best thing that the council can do is to take this scheme on board, the council is considering that option. The landowners have now shifted out to Maningrida which will certainly cause conflict in terms of whether a local government council would benefit the community as a whole or specific people.

I would like to indicate that some landowners agree with the policy of this government in terms of developing local government councils. However, there are some still who are worried that they will be left out and they have this difference of opinion in terms of whom they will trust, whether it is the Northern Territory government or the federal government, whether they will remain under the Council and Associations Act as they always have or whether they will take on board the local government scheme which has been thrust on those communities out there. It is worrying because they have their specific land to lose and I believe that the former Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bob Collins, expressed that concern when legislation was being considered by this Assembly to establish local government in the communities out there.

While some people enjoy benefits through being under this scheme, others still experience difficulties in accepting the idea behind it. They are concerned about whether it is this government's intention to take away the rights that the landowners have to that specific land where a council has responsibility. It is a major concern in my electorate. The more this government tries to impose local government on my people, the further they will move away from this government's intention and back to the good old Commonwealth government again. It does not encourage Aboriginal people, especially in my electorate, to say to them, 'Look, we have this legislation. We would rather that you operate under this legislation and forget about the federal government'.

For a long time, we have heard people out there crying out about the needs of developing outstations in terms of schools, airstrips, bores etc. I believe it will be an ongoing problem, certainly in my electorate. People there are still trying to survive by getting away from those councils that have been incorporated - not only through the Northern Territory legislation but under federal legislation - and setting up their own outstations. I would urge the Northern Territory government to consider looking at the communities that are operating now under the Northern Territory's Local Government Act. Some have achieved it, some are certainly in the process of getting there, but there are a hell of a lot who are concerned and worried because they see that legislation as hindering their personal aspirations in terms of setting up outstations where they can live on their own and make decisions without being tied in terms of development.

I was amazed that the Chief Minister expressed opposition to the stance of the 3 land councils in respect of the type of legislation which the government is trying to impose on people. From the NLC's point of view, it seems like another case where the Northern Territory government is opposed to Aboriginal people. I expressed the view that consultation is needed. That certainly

will not happen if the Chief Minister says that he has given people enough time and now wants this and that. All the land councils are asking for is a 5-year moratorium to ensure that people's views are considered. Some people want local government and some do not. People are not going to fight and get up in arms about it, but they will sit down and have a chat. They will talk with some officers of the Department of Health and Community Services, and I commend those officers for the work that they are doing. The policies of this government do not help the relations of those officers with the people with whom they work. I am concerned about that, Mr Speaker.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, in tonight's adjournment, I wish to clarify a matter raised in debate in this House yesterday. That matter was the 11th hour refusal by the federal Minister for Community Services and Health to agree to the declaration of the Darwin Private Hospital under the Health Insurance Act of 1973. His refusal meant that patients in the private hospital would not have been entitled to health insurance benefits to cover their medical bills.

I am delighted to be able to inform honourable members that, by 1 pm today, the federal minister had been touched by the light of sweet reason. At that time, he advised me that he had reversed his original decision as announced on Friday evening and had agreed to declare the hospital under the act. In a facsimile of a letter bearing his signature, received in my office early this afternoon, the federal minister told me he had discussed the agreement between this government and the Darwin Private Hospital. Based on those discussions and the helpful cooperation of my officers and those of Health and Life Care, the federal minister advised me that he did not seek any amendments to the agreement. This puts the lie to various claims and allegations that have been made in the last few days about the nature of that agreement. The receipt of this delightful news also puts an end to the confusion and worry caused to Territorians who might prefer private hospital care.

Mr Speaker, earlier today, the Trades and Labor Council called on the federal government to undertake a full and extensive inquiry into the provision of health services in the Northern Territory. I wish to issue both an invitation and a challenge to the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council. I have been condemned by the council for secretly arranging the privatisation of 2 wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital. In case there is any doubt, those are the same 2 wards which I announced publicly on 21 July would be privatised this year. The Trades and Labor Council said today that it does not know what is happening in respect of Territory health matters. Hear, hear! That acknowledgement seems to qualify as a prime understatement in the light of its allegation about secrecy. Its public statement goes on to say that it has to obtain its advice on what is happening to health services in the Territory from the federal Minister for Community Services and Health. That is a sorry state of affairs and reflects the Trades and Labor Council's lack of ability in its representation of its members in the Territory. It is not even able to read the papers and it is certainly unable to pick up a telephone and talk to me.

Today, the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council called for an inquiry into matters which extend through the health area of my portfolio. I can deal with them one by one but, bearing in mind his apparent lack of knowledge of such public documents as newspapers or Hansard, it would probably be better for Mr Crossin, the Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, to contact my office to arrange a time for a briefing. Members of this House well know that I am always ready to talk. I certainly make myself available

for discussions with union representatives on matters which are of importance to their members.

During the period leading up to and immediately following the announcement of the budget reductions in my portfolio in July, I had discussions with representatives of the 2 unions which have particularly large memberships in the health area of my portfolio - the Royal Australian Nursing Federation and the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union. I talked to the RANF at that time about the completely false and malicious rumours which were spread in the Katherine region and elsewhere about alleged downgrading of community health services in that area. The rubbish that was being spread at that time, and which I was able to discuss with the RANF, is similar in style and substance to that which we now see being spread about the situation at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Perhaps the same people are at it again. I will come back to that matter in a moment.

In my discussions with the FMWU earlier this year, the matters which had been announced in the budget reductions relating to their members were addressed. The organisers for the FMWU were particularly interested - quite legitimately - on behalf of their members in the proposal to privatise cleaning services at the hospital. I had very useful discussions with Mr Tullgren and we were able to agree to appoint a joint management union committee to establish whether savings could be made without privatisation. I expect to announce the result of that review very soon.

I have always been ready to talk to the unions. I am quite sure that, if Mr Crossin avails himself of the opportunity to be briefed on what is happening in relation to health services, he will be able, for the very first time, to represent the interests of his members properly. Unfortunately for its members, the inefficiency of the TLC is exemplified by its call today for an inquiry into health services. In fact, it was 24 hours too late. The climax of this orchestrated campaign was intended to occur yesterday. It was all cooked up between the Labor opposition here, the Northern Territory member of the House of Representatives, the federal Minister for Community Services and Health and, of course, the unions. It was intended that pressure would be exerted on the Northern Territory government by the action of the federal minister in failing to declare the Darwin Private Hospital pursuant to the Health Insurance Act. He did his job on Friday afternoon and, as we all know, held out until 1 pm today, when he sent a letter saying that he could now declare the private hospital ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Minister for Health and Community Services is reflecting on the motives of a federal minister, and I believe that is in contravention of standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would advise the minister that, under standing order No 62, no member shall use offensive or unbecoming words against the Assembly or any member of the Assembly or against any member of another Australian parliament.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, that certainly was not my intention, nor would it ever be.

Had the federal minister asked for the same assurances several weeks ago or at any time over the last few months, he could have had them. The opposition almost got there. It intended to run a matter of public importance discussion in this House yesterday morning. Somebody was a little slow in getting out of bed that day and the opposition had to run a censure motion

instead. It still did its bit. The Trades and Labor Council, on the other hand, issued its call for an inquiry, which was clearly intended to be part of the same campaign, today - a day late. It has asked Dr Blewett for an inquiry into a range of matters. For instance, it wants him to look at the threatened closure of health centres in a variety of Northern Territory urban and rural locations. This was precisely the subject of my discussions with the RANF representatives some 4 months ago. The same scare campaign was used during the lead-up to the last federal election. The allegations were just as false then. The closure of wards at the Royal Darwin Hospital is another subject for the requested inquiry. This subject was well and truly aired yesterday. The opposition had the opportunity to make whatever allegations it thought could be made. Its allegations were all completely refuted. There is nothing for an inquiry to investigate.

Yet another issue proposed for investigation in the inquiry sought by the TLC is the 'unprecedented gazettal of a private hospital within the confines of the existing public hospital'. As I said yesterday, there are private wards in other hospitals in Australia, none of which, to the best of my knowledge, has led to the attempted censure of a minister or to the degree of concern shown by the federal minister in the case of the Darwin Private Hospital. We are special in the Territory. One could be forgiven for believing that, this time, we have been well and truly singled out.

I will not go through all of the rather ridiculous items which Mr Crossin has raised as subjects to be addressed by his proposed inquiry, but I repeat my invitation to him to contact my office to arrange a briefing on the provision of health services in the Northern Territory. I hope that the members of the opposition can gather their very small team of followers behind them and help the Labor Party membership in unions and any other areas to understand that we are running our affairs very efficiently indeed. If they care to pick up a telephone and ring any one of the ministers of this government, they will always receive the information they require. They certainly will not obtain it by going through the back door to Canberra and trying to white-out what is occurring in the Northern Territory.

The private hospital is yet another example of development in the Northern Territory. It is a \$26m project. I do not have the opportunity in my portfolio to speak about many financial initiatives in terms of development but this is certainly one and I intend to protect it for the betterment of health services to all Northern Territorians.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest to the minister's comments. Regrettably, yesterday's debate on the health situation and the private hospital at Royal Darwin Hospital was cut short. I did not have the opportunity to raise some of the issues that I thought were particularly relevant and therefore I will take the opportunity to do so now.

Listening to claims in yesterday's debate about where the fault lay in relation to the registration problem brought back fond memories of my period as Minister for Health. It seems to me that nothing has changed in the federal system. The bureaucracy is well and truly in charge. Ministers find out about what is happening well after the bureaucracy has acted and this is a classic example. If the minister feels aggrieved at the treatment he received from the federal minister, I can tell him that there are former Ministers for Health in this House who know what that is like. Federal ministers like Ralph Hunt, Michael MacKellar and Jim Carlton were just as difficult, impossible and unreasonable as it seems the Labor minister has been on this occasion.

The reality is that the issue of licences for hospital and nursing home beds is a very touchy one. It is a matter for the Commonwealth which guards its power very closely. On all occasions that I am aware of, these licences have been very hard to obtain. This has been the case with the extensions to the Old Timers' Home in Alice Springs, the creation of the nursing home in Tennant Creek, the new one at Casuarina and other hospital beds in the Territory. The Commonwealth has guarded its prerogative in this area very closely because it is very loath to set precedents. Such precedents might work very well in our community and might save a lot of money here but, applied on an equal basis in the big cities in the states, they could cost the Commonwealth \$10m to \$100m.

That is why I was a little surprised to hear yesterday that the Territory minister had proceeded without a licence from the Commonwealth. Knowing the way it operates, one can never be sure that one will receive one. If the federal minister had not issued a licence today, we could have been in a very difficult position. I was going to raise for discussion - and the minister might like to comment on this at some later time - the possibility that the fun is really just beginning and that the issue of the licence is not the end of the matter at all. I asked the minister this morning whether any special undertakings have been received from the Commonwealth in relation to continued funding for the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services as a result of the agreement for the private hospital to operate in the Royal Darwin Hospital. The reality is that the federal minister, as has happened before, is in a position to say that we have been funded for a hospital of more than 300 beds but are operating only 250 or 300 beds and that our funding should therefore be reduced. That can be done at the whim of the federal minister. We can bite and scratch as hard as we like but, at the end of the day, there is not very much we can do about it. That applies to the states as well as to the Northern Territory.

The reason that I raise this is that, if the federal minister wants to be extremely difficult with the Northern Territory, he can come back to us in 6 months and say he is not particularly happy that we have been operating 60 beds less and that the Commonwealth agreed to pay us \$300 a day and therefore it will deduct that amount from our next cheque. I am not sure whether the minister has taken that possible deduction into account in terms of his departmental budget and, if he has not, it is quite likely that we could be in for a rude shock. I do not blame the minister if that should happen. I think that sort of treatment by the Commonwealth would be unconscionable, but it is capable of behaving unconscionably towards the Northern Territory and it would do it again if it had half a chance. I simply point out the need for the Territory to be on its guard. The matter is not yet over in terms of the licence being issued. It could well be that the Commonwealth, in determining our future payments or in renegotiating the hospital agreement, could make life more difficult still.

Mr Speaker, I am sorry I did not get a chance to raise those issues yesterday. It would have allowed an opportunity for the minister to reply to some of those points this morning. I support the concept of the private hospital going into the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is a concept that has been examined often over the years, and it is something that it was always believed could work. Now the licence has been issued, I hope the exercise of running the private hospital in the Royal Darwin Hospital facilities can proceed and benefit the community in the way that everybody wants. However, I surely hope that we do not get another knife slipped between our ribs by the Commonwealth government in the way that has occurred in the past.

I would like to raise another matter for the benefit of the Minister for Industries and Development. It relates to primary production and the services that the department provides in my electorate. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, I have some 40-odd cattle stations in my electorate and most of them are fairly large. The majority of them are very productive and contribute tremendously to the turn-off of the Northern Territory's beef industry. The difficulty that I am raising with the minister is really one of operating in remote areas and many departmental people involved with primary production are feeling a little left out because they have been tucked into a large department. Most of the people at the senior levels of the department have little knowledge or understanding of the beef industry, and they feel things are not being tackled as well as they should.

I refer here to a recent edict saying that all senior members of the department, such as veterinarians and stock inspectors in remote areas, will have their home telephone removed and, in future, they will take care of that themselves. In some cases, other officers have to remove answering machines that they use because they are not always at home when the calls come. That may be practical in Darwin or Alice Springs but the reality in the remote areas is that most of the communication between veterinarians, senior managers of the department and stock inspectors takes place after dark, when everybody gets home for the day. They settle down to have their dinner and then spend 2 or 3 hours on the phone organising the next day. For people who are still on the radio telephone the best time, and probably often the only time to make calls to stock inspectors etc if you want to move animals, is after dark when the pressure is less on the radio telephone system. During the day, it is almost impossible to make a call.

I believe that the minister should examine this matter and intervene if he believes that the removal of the home telephones will prejudice either the effectiveness of the officers in the department or the work of the people on the stations who are trying to turn off cattle. It is not a big deal. I can understand that the department is looking for savings and is trying to cut back in each area, but you can reach a point where you cut off your nose to spite your face and I believe that this particular circumstance is an example of it.

I would also raise with the minister his fervour and determination to reduce the number of vehicles in the department. It has been a concern for a long time. There must be 1 vehicle in the department for every 2 employees. That used to be more or less the case and that is a pretty astonishing ratio. We may find that, when the season arrives when everyone is supposed to be in the field, the vehicles will not be there and we will have to pay enormous amounts to hire vehicles. That may not be the best result either.

I put in a plea for the people in the remote areas who have a very close liaison with officers of the minister's department, particularly in respect of primary production where there are people who believe that they will be disadvantaged by the possibility that they may not be able to contact their local vets, stock inspectors and senior officers of the department when they need to because of the home telephone restrictions. They are saying: 'What about a fair go for us. We don't make many calls on the government, but we would like to receive a fair hearing on this occasion'.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, I touched this morning on a matter that I think bears going into this evening and that is the article that was placed in the Sunday Territorian by the Secretary of the ACOA, Mr Rod Ellis. Unfortunately, Mr Ellis' column contained a number of inaccuracies and I would like to draw the attention of the House to those.

The inaccuracies contained in the column are disturbing enough, but what is of greater concern to me is that Mr Ellis used these figures in a most simplistic way in an effort to prove his assertion that there are dark days ahead for the Northern Territory Public Service. Perhaps Mr Ellis can be forgiven for getting his figures wrong but it seems that, in his new role as newspaper columnist, Mr Ellis has fallen into the all too familiar trap for new players in the media game, that of factual inaccuracy through failure to address all of the pertinent facts. It makes one wonder whether or not Mr Ellis received a few hints from the Sunday Territorian on what it expects from its columnists.

Mr Ellis stated that, in 1986-87, \$443.57m was allocated for wages. This was incorrect. The actual allocation was some \$10m less. It was \$433m. The wages allocation for last financial year, according to Mr Ellis, had paid the way for 15 697 employees. Wrong again, Mr Speaker! The average number of people employed by the government during 1986-87 was in fact 15 136 or some 561 fewer employees than Mr Ellis claimed were on the payroll. Obviously, Mr Ellis is confused by the difference between departmental establishments and the actual number of employees on the payroll.

Mr Ellis then went on to assert that the budget allocation for salaries this financial year was \$459 065m and he was wrong again. The actual allocation is almost \$9m less at \$450.1m. Let's put things into perspective. This year we will be reducing the number of employees in the NTPS to 15 064 but, perhaps more importantly, our wages bill will increase by a mere 4.4%. What should be pointed out is that that 4.4% increase is just over half of the federal Treasurer's estimated inflation rate for the financial year of between 7% and 8%. In other words, our successful efforts at reducing the size of the public sector have allowed us to keep the increase in our wages bill well below the inflation rate.

It is worth examining some of the areas where that additional \$17m in wages for 1987-88 is being spent. As members on both sides of the House would realise, the government faces a significant increase in the wages bill for nurses following the decision of the Full Bench of the Arbitration Commission in March this year. Naturally, the government has also had to take into account those wage increases looming on the horizon. For instance, the budget has had to allow for the potential of a 1.5% first tier national wage increase for the second half of 1987. The ACTU is seeking a \$7 a week flat increase while the federal government has argued that the Arbitration Commission should award an increase of \$6.50 per week. The commission has reserved its decision in that case but, either way, the Territory government is facing the possibility of having to pay an additional \$5m over the full year as the result of the latest national wage case. Of course, we have to allow for that. The reason for the increase in the size of our wages bill is obvious, but these are the facts which Mr Ellis chose not to cover. I wonder what Mr Ellis' reaction would have been had another columnist misreported by omission a union demand for increased wages or improved conditions.

The government is reducing the size of the public service. The policy put in place by the Chief Minister in July of last year for a reduction of 400 through natural attrition has been achieved. Despite what Mr Ellis claimed in his column, the administrative arrangements put in place in March this year are taking effect. There is no doubt that the amalgamation of departments has resulted in efficiencies in the delivery of services to the community.

Another area touched on by Mr Ellis was that of the increase since 1980 in a number of positions in the executive levels. Let me make it clear that the

government is concerned about the correct classification of people within the NTPS and it recognises that the service has suffered from so-called 'classification creep'. That is why the government has recently completed a review of the senior executive levels and has now initiated a review of positions below the E4 level. In fact, in his role as ACOA representative, Mr Ellis is the union representative on the review committee. Despite public service utterances, the fact that Mr Ellis is on the review committee indicates that the union movement agrees with the need for such a review. Mr Ellis has indicated that to me himself. There is no doubt the government will correct some anomalies in classifications of positions which have crept in over the last 9 years.

While I do not want to pre-empt the findings of the review, I want to stress that, should it be decided that a position has to be downgraded, it will not mean that the officer in the job will suffer financially. The review is looking at the classification of positions and is definitely not out to put people's pay packets at a lower level than they are now. It is also not about reducing numbers of staff. That exercise was completed prior to the budget this year. This review is about equity, not about numbers - that is, ensuring that jobs of similar responsibility and complexity across the public service are classified at the same level.

Mr Speaker, it is also my intention to examine the feasibility of putting in place a dynamic classification review system. This will be in the form of an ongoing process of job classification which would do away with the need for reviews such as the current review which is, after all, the first in the history of the NTPS - that is, the first since 1979. There is no way any large organisation, in either the private or public sectors, can be allowed to grow without reference to any established benchmarks and that is what the review is about: a revamping of the reclassification criteria and the creation of additional benchmarks to encompass the range of work now performed. This is only good management practice and not some voodoo witch-hunt as the media would have the public service and the people of the Northern Territory believe.

I have taken the time of the House to address this particular topic because I believe there have been too many instances of people attempting to talk down the activities, professionalism and morale of the public service. Clearly, Mr Ellis has political motives for doing so. One can only hope that, should Mr Ellis' bleak view of the public service lead to an increase in the membership of the ACOA, he will be a little more careful in his calculation of his new membership than he was last Sunday with his figures relating to the public service. Despite the efforts of the likes of Mr Ellis to talk up a union's membership by talking down the public service, I am confident the government is heading in the right direction with its initiatives. With the finetuning that the current review of classifications will bring, we will have a public service fully equipped to face the challenges of the 1990s.

It is absolutely essential that those incorrect statements made by the Secretary of the ACOA be put in perspective and the lie put to the figures that were placed before people last Sunday. Unfortunately, many people read the Sunday Territorian and many people would have read that column which was factually and totally incorrect. Equally unfortunately, the things that I have said here tonight to refute the figures and the quotes that Mr Ellis used will probably not receive the same wide distribution because I do not think the Sunday Territorian will bother to pick them up. In fact, it has all been said before. It has all been put down in many press releases. Clearly, it has not been picked up, but it will now be recorded in Hansard and I trust

that people who have a real interest in the facts will read Hansard to acquaint themselves with the real story.

While I am on my feet tonight, I would like to pay tribute to a few people who won awards in the Territory Tidy Towns Competition this year in my electorate. Unfortunately, I could not be there because I was asked to be in Perth to represent the Minister for Conservation at a meeting. It is the first time for many years that I have missed the Territory Tidy Towns Awards night. It is also the first time that the numbers of winners in my electorate have been down. We are down to only 5 this year, compared to about 13 to 16 over the last couple of years. I would like to indicate that Nauiyu Nambiyu, the community at Daly River Mission, won third prize in category A and Pine Creek had a special effort award in that category. Both of those places are to be commended for their efforts. The best business project joint winners were Bima Wear on Bathurst Island - and the member for Arafura no doubt has noted that - and the Kalkaringi Service Station and Caravan Park at Wave Hill. The magnificent effort put in by Dennis and Shirley Watson at Kalkaringi in improving that particular facility is very notable. It is like an oasis in the desert.

Police stations throughout the Territory do a great job in keeping their grounds and places tidy. I commend the Pine Creek Police Station for taking out the special effort award in category A for best government department. The Pine Creek Primary School took out the special effort award in the best school project. I commend government or semi-government bodies which do such a great job in maintaining their facilities throughout the Territory.

I would like to highlight a point raised by Mr Bob Woodward in a letter to the editor in yesterday's NT News in respect of people who were not invited to the awards this year. Mr Woodward stated that there are many people who put in a lot of effort every year in the Territory Tidy Towns Awards competition. Whether or not they win a prize, they would like to be invited to that function. In past years, they have been invited to attend but this year only the winners of an award were invited. Batchelor, which received first prize in the small towns award last year, did not receive an invitation this year. Also, Peppimenarti, on whose behalf Bob Woodward was writing, did not receive an invitation. It was very disappointing.

I warn the Territory Tidy Towns Committee that, if it does not invite those communities to the awards nights, it will see a dramatic fall in the support for the Territory Tidy Towns Competition around the Northern Territory. That would be a shame because the competition has done a great job over the last few years and those efforts have been put in by people around the Territory and not only by the committee. Effort has been put in by people in communities, in small towns and in facilities around the Territory who have improved their environs. They should be recognised by being invited to those awards nights. Not all can attend, but there are many who want to attend and should be allowed to do so. I hope that the committee will take note of what I have said tonight and of Mr Woodward's letter and invite all people who take part in the Territory Tidy Towns work throughout the year to that function at the end of the year.

In closing, I would like to say a few words about the comments of the member for Arnhem tonight with regard to local government and the request for a moratorium. While I do not intend to go into that tonight, it is a matter that I would like the opportunity to speak to the honourable member about at some time. While I think his comments tonight were reasonable and balanced, and he is to be commended for the way he represents the feelings of his

electorate, there is much to counter his comments. It would be a shame if he supported the call for a moratorium for community government in the communities which he represents. If Aboriginal people truly want to represent themselves, the only way to do it is through that medium, certainly not through the medium of land councils which are too large and which do not give them a fair go and a fair say. The area of community government is one that will give them the ability to look after their own affairs at their home level, and it would be a shame if the member for Arnhem and others did not recognise that and support it.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, there are several matters I would like to raise briefly this evening in the adjournment. One particular matter has concerned me over the last few weeks and I refer to what seems to be a growing activity around the community during this period and that is the adhering of advertising posters for rock concerts on public property. In my electorate, along the major arterial roads, I see posters stuck on to Power and Water Authority light poles and pad-mounted transformers or switchboards and I find that very ugly.

Mr Ede: Paul Everingham used to stick them up there himself.

Mr SETTER: Mr Everingham may have done that but when I see entrepreneurs, and I am talking about people who are promoting these various rock concerts, coming around slapping up posters all over light poles and other public property, including bus shelters ...

Mr Bell: You do it at election time, don't you?

Mr SETTER: No! Not at all. I certainly do not do it at election time. You might do it at election time, maybe in central Australia that is the norm, but I can assure you that, in the northern suburbs of Darwin, it is not on. Our election posters are placed on separately mounted placards on private property, and they are removed the day following polling. I certainly raise an objection when I see the promoters of rock concerts or any similar activity, where people are making considerable dollars out of something, defacing public property and creating an ugly environment in the community by sticking their posters all over the place. I have noticed it particularly. It happened with the Stevie Wonder concert 3 or 4 weeks ago. It happened more recently when the Swamp Jockeys were in town. I am afraid that I did not go along to watch either concert. A few days ago, I noticed another poster stuck over the rest of them. We see them on the fences that surround things like demolition sites and I suppose we will see the same thing occurring very shortly across the road here. Of course, that is only short term because those fences come down but, when I see them in my electorate on public property, I certainly object.

Most of them are being adhered to Power and Water Authority property and I will be taking that matter up with the minister and asking him what the Power and Water Authority will do about it because I believe it has the right to prosecute people who deface its equipment. I might even send a copy of my comments to the Darwin City Council because it is starting to have a problem too with bus shelters that have ugly posters stuck all over them.

Another matter concerns an area of particular interest to me and that is the Jingili water gardens. It is a very attractive area that is used by literally hundreds of families in this community every week, mostly on the weekends when families take their children there. It is a beautiful area and I am very pleased to report that, since the rains started, it is as green as

it ever was and looking very attractive. I recall that concern was raised in the Assembly by the Leader of the Opposition about what he perceived to be a decline in the standard of maintenance of the water gardens. I can assure him that the situation is back to normal and the water gardens are looking as attractive as ever, except for a problem that has arisen in the last week.

It happens to be a fact of life that there are a number of Aboriginal people who camp along Rapid Creek and I think that that is a very sad thing. Nevertheless, they do. From time to time, I have seen those folk there and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would have seen them as well, because Rapid Creek adjoins his electorate also. In fact, it is the boundary between our 2 electorates. Those people camp along Rapid Creek and, because of the nature of the area, the overgrowth and the undergrowth, and the fact that private property abuts the creek and there are mangroves and so on, those folk are obscured from view.

However, recently, since we have started to have thunderstorms, obviously those people do not like to sleep in the rain and they have moved over into the water gardens and are camping under the rotundas that are provided for picnickers. Unfortunately, the fact that they are located there and that a number of people have become involved with alcoholism has led to problems. There have been fights, rubbish has been strewn around and those things have caused some problems in the last week or so in my electorate. We have raised the matter with the Conservation Commission because, as I pointed out at the last sittings, the Conservation Commission is now responsible for that area. I thought that I would raise the matter this evening because it is of public concern that these people apparently live along Rapid Creek. I believe that their needs and welfare need to be addressed and attended to. My office will certainly be taking that matter up with the appropriate authorities to see if some assistance can be given to those people so that they are not placed in the situation of having to camp along Rapid Creek. I can understand why they have moved into the rotundas in the water gardens, but it is an inappropriate place for anybody to camp and I hope that this matter can be successfully attended to.

Whilst on the subject of the water gardens, in the adjacent area - and it is a very popular area - another problem has arisen recently. It concerns a disputation which has occurred between the Darwin City Council and horse owners. There are a number of 5-acre rural blocks which abut Freshwater Road and, at the rear, Rapid Creek. A number of these blocks are used by people for training or keeping their horses. Of course, they do not simply keep them on the blocks, they want to go riding up and down the creek or wherever. It has been common practice over the last several years for those folk to ride along the nature strip on Freshwater Road.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What is wrong with that, provided their horses are under control?

Mr SETTER: That is a very interesting question because I attended a public meeting at the Nightcliff High School a week or so ago called by the Darwin City Council. The council insists that it is in contravention of the by-laws if horses or bicycles, perambulators or any other velocipede travels on the nature strip. That happens to be a fact. It is there, written in black and white in the Darwin City Council by-laws.

When it received the odd complaint from local residents about the dust, the noise and perhaps the smell of horses being ridden along the nature strips, the Darwin City Council wrote to all of the horse owners. It

instructed them that they should not ride on the nature strip but on the road, for the reasons I have mentioned. The situation is, therefore, that the council is telling these young people who ride their horses quite safely on the nature strip that they should ride on a busy road where there are hundreds of cars whizzing along continually. I was a bit taken aback when I found out that the lives of these young people were being put at risk when they were quite safe on the nature strip.

Mind you, Mr Speaker, if you have a look at the rural blocks along the western side of Freshwater Road, you will find that there is only 1 block which has a reasonably well-kept nature strip. The rest of the nature strip is overgrown. In fact, the Jingili Territory Tidy Towns committee mowed the length of that nature strip on 2 occasions and it took us about 3 hours each time. Nevertheless, the situation is as I have described it. I attended the public meeting and, as a result of the discussions between the Darwin City Council officers, the horse owners, their supporters and myself, a committee was formed. The committee has yet to be convened but it has been established to examine the matter. Perhaps it can come up with recommendations to the council which may solve the problem.

One of the recommendations that was made by the council in its letter to the horse owners was that they should use a strip of land which runs along the back of the rural blocks next to Rapid Creek. It runs between the existing water gardens and McMillans Road. The boundaries of the blocks are crooked because they tend to follow the line of the creek. I have walked in the area and there is a strip of land which varies in width from about 7 m to about 40 m. The letter from the council suggested to the horse owners that they should use that path. Some of it actually runs over private property because some of the blocks do not have back fences. It goes up and down through gullies and around rocks and trees and so forth. I had a letter from the mother of a young person who was thrown off a horse when it shied or tripped. As a result, I have written to the Minister for Conservation and I am going to see him on Friday. I suggest to him that the strip of land be upgraded as a walking or riding path for folk who might like to use what is, in fact, quite an attractive area. If it were cleaned up and the weeds were removed, with a properly-constructed path installed, it would be a very attractive area for horse riders, walkers and joggers, although I hasten to point out to the minister that we certainly do not want trail bike riders roaring up and down there, creating havoc and destroying the environment.

Mr Speaker, I thought I should bring the matter to the attention of this House because it concerns not only the constituents of my electorate but most people who live in the northern suburbs. They could all avail themselves of what would be a very attractive facility if it were ever developed. I will be advocating to the minister that the area should become the responsibility of the Conservation Commission and be upgraded accordingly. At the moment, it happens to be a strip of vacant Crown land. Indeed, I would describe it as no-man's land. It is a strip that nobody cares about, nobody wants to know anything about it and there it lies. There are about 8 property owners involved and they are all very happy about the possibility that the area will be upgraded because it has created a problem for them in the past. It becomes overgrown during the wet season and, when the dry season arrives, somebody drops a match and away it goes. In some cases, it has caused fires on the properties of those landowners. I believe the area could be upgraded very nicely and become a considerable asset to the community of Darwin. I will certainly be pushing that point of view with the Minister for Conservation when I see him on Friday.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, the only aspect of the reduction in the length of these sittings which upsets me a little is that we do not have the chance to ask so many questions. Tonight, I will raise a few matters of concern in my electorate and to people in Alice Springs.

The first relates to anaesthetists at the Alice Springs Hospital. A few weeks ago, there was an article by an anaesthetist in the local paper. It said that there was a shortage of anaesthetists at the hospital and that the existing anaesthetists were overworked and becoming tired in their work. Of course, the job is a very important one. Anaesthetists sometimes react to the chemicals they use to anaesthetise patients. They have to be on the ball to keep patients alive and some dangers are involved. I ask the Minister for Health and Community Services to advise me in relation to the current situation and whether his department has been able to recruit at least 1 more anaesthetist to relieve the problem.

The second matter was brought to my attention by some of the operators at the Alice Springs Power Station. According to them, operators at the Channel Island Power Station in Darwin had been given some considerable increases in pay because they were operating new technology, including gas turbines. The Alice Springs workers felt rather aggrieved because they had been operating dual gas and diesel units for 4 years. From my own experience in the area, these machines are considerably more difficult to operate than gas turbines. In fact, I understand that considerable savings could be made by the Power and Water Authority if the gas turbines were operated by computer using very few operators. However, the Alice Springs workers heard that there had been pay increases in Darwin. They feel aggrieved because they believe that their workload is greater than that of the Darwin workers. I raised these matters with the Minister for Mines and Energy and he gave me detailed answers for which I thank him. I have passed them on to the workers at the Alice Springs Power Station.

Mr Bell: What were they?

Mr COLLINS: There were many different questions. I would need a copy of the telex to give the honourable member that information. The workers are considering the minister's response. They did not necessarily want more money but they wanted parity with the workers in Darwin. They felt that the pay rise had been made without really good reason.

Seat belts in taxis is a matter I raised at the last Assembly sittings. Since then, some taxi drivers in Darwin have raised the same matter with me. The proposal that I put to the minister was that it should be optional for a taxi driver to wear a seat belt if he felt that he was in some danger of being attacked by a passenger. There is also concern about this in Alice Springs. Such situations generally occur at night. Drivers do not feel in danger while they are travelling along at 60 km per hour but rather when they slow down prior to stopping. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that whether it is legal or not, if I felt that the person in the back seat would attack me when I stopped, I would certainly slip my seat belt off. I believe that some drivers actually do that in order more easily to fend off any would-be attacker. I am sure that most drivers would like that to be made legal. The wearing of seat belts should be optional for them.

I am sure that most of them fully appreciate that a seat belt can be very useful in saving them from injury in the case of an accident, but I think they have a point and that some common sense should prevail. They should receive the message that it is all right to unclip their seat belts if they feel in

danger. Hopefully, taxi drivers would simply not pick up people who are in an inebriated state. Some people, though, can put on a good act and seem as though they are reasonably sober until they enter the cab and head for their destination. I look forward with interest to the minister's decision.

It was brought to my attention that the chaplain at the Royal Darwin Hospital is to be paid by the government. I am sure that chaplains do a great job with hospital patients. If the chaplain at the Royal Darwin Hospital is to be paid, I would like to think that the woman who has had the role on a purely voluntary basis in the Alice Springs Hospital, Mrs Brenda McDonald, might also be considered for payment. She has done excellent work without payment over the last 4 years. She meets with all sorts of people and does a great job in helping to solve people's problems and calm them in the often difficult situations which arise in hospitals. The Minister for Health and Community Services should take the attitude that, if it is good enough for Darwin, it is jolly well good enough for Alice Springs - if, indeed, it is the case.

Another matter of concern relates to drains in the Territory. Since 1978, when self-government came to the Territory, the Commonwealth has been handing over control of drains which formerly it controlled. There are a number in my electorate in Alice Springs. Some are next to the railway line and they have been a continual problem. As I understand it, they were not built particularly well. There is often about 200 m between 1 concrete wall and the next and the fall over that distance is no more than a couple of inches. It does not take too much for kids to dig holes and for water to accumulate, creating mosquito problems. The growth of grass in the drains makes them a fire hazard in summer. They are generally very untidy. In earlier years, when money was a little more plentiful, the Department of Transport and Works kept them in fairly good shape. Nowadays, the drains are usually pretty unsightly. They are a concern to people who live near them, particularly because of the fire hazard.

I understand that a number of departments are involved. The Department of Transport and Works has been involved in trying to keep them in reasonable shape. Apparently, the Department of Lands and Housing is the owner of the drains. Local governments have also become involved in Alice Springs and in other towns which apparently have similar problems. The councils are prepared to take over maintenance but only on the condition that the drains are upgraded to a standard where they function properly. The councils are asking the government to get them into an acceptable state before they take them over. I understand that the cost of that would be quite large: something like \$12m for the Territory. Nobody seems to be keen to bite the bullet. I suggest to the Minister for Lands and Housing, who is probably the prime mover initially, that he initiate a staged program tackling the worst drains to begin with and gradually upgrade all of the drains to a standard which is acceptable to the local councils which can then take over control and maintenance. We have to start somewhere. The problem has been with us since 1978 and it is time something was done about it.

The last matter that I wish to raise tonight concerns the Minister for Lands and Housing. I am sorry he is not here because it relates to his electorate. Aranda Terrace is what might be called a stretch of ancient road which runs past Pitchi Ritchi, a well-known tourist destination for visitors wanting to see the artifacts of the pioneering days and the sculpture of William Ricketts. It is quite a popular place to visit. Recently, however, the name of the road in that area has been changed to Palm Circuit. The fact that you cannot actually get from what was formerly Aranda Terrace to the Date

Garden does not seem to have deterred the place names people, and the name has been changed to Palm Circuit now. One would not have thought that this was a great problem except that the operator of Pitchi Ritchi has circulated literature all over the country and overseas, bearing his address as Aranda Terrace. It has cost him a considerable amount of money. He tells me that he showed the minister that the 2 roads do not actually connect in any sensible way. In fact, vehicles trying to get through have become bogged and had to be dragged out. He is concerned that the name has been changed. Really, he will have to change his literature and that will cost him a lot of money. He will have to withdraw the old material and circulate new literature with the changed address.

I would ask the minister if he would consider reimbursing the operator of Pitchi Ritchi for the cost that this change has brought on him. There are other legal matters. He has 3 businesses associated with the Pitchi Ritchi Sanctuary and he feels that the names will have to be changed and almost certainly there will be costs involved. I would ask the minister to examine that matter and see if he cannot come to the party and reimburse any costs that may be incurred as a result of this change to which he has agreed. The operator of Pitchi Ritchi tells me that he felt that the minister fully understood the problems that the name change would create and yet, somewhat to his surprise, he nevertheless went ahead and agreed to the change.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall in this morning's question time that, once again, I asked the Minister for Lands and Housing about the possibility of the appointment of a second plumbing inspector in Alice Springs. As the shadow minister, representations have been made to me in this regard by the Master Builders Association of the Northern Territory, particularly the central Australian division thereof. I have been forced to ask this question twice of the minister, and I was pleased that his answer this time around was rather more fulsome than it was last time.

On Thursday 29 October I asked him whether he would appoint a second plumbing inspector in Alice Springs and I pointed out that building approvals in Alice Springs had been severely limited because of the failure to appoint a second plumbing inspector. The minister became quite critical and said that my information was inaccurate. He then went on to suggest that I was, in fact, quite correct because 'some concern has been expressed that there are delays due to the large number of applications and some of the large developments taking place in Alice Springs'. That suggested to me that building approvals had been limited. At that stage, the minister gave no undertakings.

This morning, he was rather more fulsome in that he referred to 2 options that were being proposed. One was to employ a retired or a part-time plumber, and a second was that one of the staff classifications within the department in the southern region would allow for a joint role of building inspector and plumbing inspector. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not sure how well acquainted you are with these arrangements. I dare say that, in your home town of Katherine, with the expenditure that the federal government has carried out on behalf of the Australian people with the establishment of the Tindal Air Force Base, there would have been considerable concerns in the construction industry over the question of approvals. I know that there have been concerns in other areas where construction growth has mushroomed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Alice Springs is about a third of the size of Darwin. It has been growing over the last few years rather more rapidly than Darwin, I believe. I do not have the actual figures at my fingertips, but I notice that

the member for Fannie Bay is nodding his head to affirm that, for a number of years, Alice Springs has been growing more quickly than Darwin. Quite obviously, therefore, the need for these building inspection services and plumbing inspection services has been proportionally greater for that reason.

It is my understanding that 6 such inspectors are available in Darwin. I appreciate that, in these straitened times, there are considerable demands on government in one way or another but, quite obviously, in a part of Australia that is growing fairly rapidly, it is appropriate that these services be provided. I presume that the Northern Territory government, in its submissions to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, makes allowances for these facts. I find it very difficult to accept that a further position cannot be created in Alice Springs to meet this need. I know it is a matter of concern to people in the building industry there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you will appreciate that it is important to the public that plumbing inspection services, like building inspection services, be carried out at a particularly high level. You may very well have had drawn to your attention, as I have had drawn to my attention, difficulties that have occurred where these plumbing and building inspections have not necessarily been carried out appropriately, and I am sure that many honourable members will recall examples of that sort. I hope that, instead of pussyfooting around on this issue, the Minister for Lands and Housing and the government will be able to come good in this regard. Let me conclude by pointing out that this issue is of considerable concern to people who are providing important services in Alice Springs, and I think it is about time that the government acted.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Industrial - what do you call yourself?

Mr Perron: Industries and Development. Do try harder, please!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Primary Production was so easy! The minister delivered a very extensive statement today on his department. He has delivered other statements on different aspects of primary production recently but in the statements that he has made, conspicuous by its absence, was any note made of particular new endeavours planned by the Primary Production Division. I would have thought that the honourable minister's Primary Production Division would have given him some notes on something that is very topical in the beef cattle industry at the moment.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to quote from The Australian about a certain breed of cattle which may revolutionise the cattle industry in the north of Australia, in a similar way that a revolution in the cattle industry was caused by the introduction of Brahman cattle. I am talking about one of the biggest hopes on the horizon: Boran cattle. This is a new breed of South African cattle which not only gains weight rapidly and shows particular docility, but can go for 3 days without water.

That immediately conjures up certain confusing situations. If this breed is so exemplary in its performance, coming as it does from South Africa, I am wondering if the federal government will allow any genetic material to be imported into Australia. If it does not, it will be a completely retrograde step for the beef industry. The newspaper article said: 'CSIRO has been anxious to find a complementary outcross for Brahmans for a number of years and scientists believe that the genetic advances to be derived from the Boran will lead to substantially increased profits'.

As the Northern Territory government has said, and rightly so, that it has been in the forefront of new initiatives, I would like to see the honourable minister take up with his department the possibility of importing genetic material of this particular breed of cattle. The Territory, more than perhaps Queensland or Western Australia, would be an ideal place for this breed to be introduced into Australia. The particular characteristic that caught my eye was the fact that it can go for 3 days without water. One of the advantages of that is that cattle would be able to travel further away from watering points and not return to watering points each day and, as a result, the erosion at these important points would not be as extensive as it is now. If we are not careful, other states in Australia will be importing this genetic material before we do and that would be a great shame.

I made a similar suggestion to the honourable minister when I was commenting on his statement in respect of the buffalo industry. I still hold to that despite the letter that the minister wrote to me giving the reasons for not introducing new genetic material in respect of buffalo. I believe we have to be out in front all the time and keep ahead of our competitors because, if we do not, we will be bypassed by them in primary industry very quickly.

Another matter that I wish to touch on tonight is the demolition of the old police headquarters. I do not know the conditions of the demolition contract but, no doubt, the persons undertaking the job have rights to all salvage on the block. I would hesitate to describe them as vandals. However, I have a deep regard for conservation in a practical way. There were a couple of nice trees on that block and it would not be inappropriate to refer to the destruction of the flora on those 2 blocks as vandalism. With a little imagination, the trees could have been saved instead of completely wrecked as they have been. If any building is planned on the block, it would have been to the betterment of the development to plan the building around the trees. It has been done before and it would not have cost much more. We would still have the lovely trees that have taken years to grow.

It is also of concern to me that the building appears to be being demolished simply because a new building will be built on the site without regard being had to any scrap material that can be salvaged from that building. As I said, I am not aware of the conditions of the demolition contract but, walking around the building at lunchtime today, I saw that there were many glass windows in good condition. Why these could not have been salvaged before the place was wrecked, I do not know.

Mr Perron interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For the information of the honourable minister, certain conditions could be put on such salvage. It could be salvaged at the people's own risk.

I would like to touch on a matter of great importance in the rural area. I refer to the subject of dams. I do not know how well the Power and Water Authority people can organise themselves but I have my doubts that they are very good organisers. I fully believe that the people in the rural area can organise themselves much better. A meeting organised by certain interested people in the rural area, namely the Litchfield Shire Council and myself, was attended by close to a thousand people. I have proof of that because I asked people to sign papers to indicate that they had been in attendance and they willingly did that. We organised that meeting to hear representatives of the Power and Water Authority try to deal with the proposal to licence and meter

bores in the rural area. I will not go into the details of that because I have discussed it before.

The next meeting was organised by the Power and Water Authority. This was a meeting at Batchelor at which the subject of dams in the Batchelor area and the rural area was first discussed. It was organised by the Power and Water Authority for 1 pm on a Wednesday, a most inappropriate time except for public servants. It was a most inappropriate time for those people, especially farmers, who have to work to earn their living and those people in my electorate who had to travel to Batchelor to hear what was being said about the proposal to build dams in their area. I do not believe this meeting was as well attended as it might have been with better organisation on the part of the Power and Water Authority. It should have been held at night which would have been a more appropriate time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we come now to a meeting that was arranged to take place at Berry Springs recently. Unfortunately, the 2 arms of the Power and Water Authority could not get their act together that night because there was a severe blackout in the rural area. No doubt, that was due to certain shortcomings in the power side of the authority. Nevertheless, this meeting was not organised very well, as I will demonstrate. Not many people turned up because one does not leave one's house in a blackout, especially if one has young children. One has to stay there and look after them, and no one knows when the power will come on again. There are a number of things that one does not know in such circumstances. The final point of interest was that the Power and Water Authority thought that it had done the right thing. What do we see in the NT News of Friday 20 November? An advertisement asking people in the rural area to attend a public meeting at Berry Springs on Wednesday 18 November! Again, it could not get its act together. It advertised the meeting 2 days after it was scheduled to be held! I don't know when the authority will get its act together, but I think it should take a lesson out of our book. If it wants a meeting organised in the rural area, it is best to get us to organise it.

In relation to the dams issue, even though the minister gave us assurances that the 2 possible dam sites in my electorate, namely at Acacia Gap and on the Blackmore at Tumbling Waters, are low down on the list of priorities with regard to the building of dams, I believe that we can never afford to be complacent on these matters. Certainly, I will not be and I have encouraged all the people living in those areas not to take that for gospel because ministers can change their minds and make other decisions, and so can governments. However, for the information of certain people in the Power and Water Authority, rather than stirring us all up by talking of compulsory acquisition in connection with the building of dams, which is like waving a red rag at a bull, I think it could go ahead with exploring the possibilities of damming the Elizabeth River at its mouth. This was proposed in the Darwin Rural Strategy Plan even though it was not given much importance. If this river were dammed at its mouth, that would cause less inconvenience to landowners in the area. I think too that it would provide a much bigger dam than either the Acacia Gap or Tumbling Waters sites taken separately.

An even better idea was proposed about 15 years ago by an engineer in the Water Resources Branch. I think he floated it only as an idea at the time. I do not think it was considered as a possibility then because the population of Darwin was not large enough to warrant such a dam. The idea was to dam Haycock's Reach, the much larger mouth of the Blackmore River. That would mean building a dam between the western side of Channel Island and the mainland opposite, thus damming all that part of the Blackmore River in

Haycock's Reach. It might be said that that would create a worse situation down the Blackmore where the Tumbling Waters dam was suggested, but I do not think so because there is a much larger area than there is downstream of the Tumbling Waters site. It would be a very expensive dam to build but I think that, if the population of Darwin increases as we have been told it will, it would be well worth somebody's time to investigate those 2 locations.

It might be said that both sites are across the mouths of rivers and we would have saline intrusion into the dams. I have been assured by engineers who know more about the matter than I do that, once the dams were built, and with the implementation of proper engineering practices, the saline content of the water held behind the dam would gradually flow out after a couple of years to leave non-saline water which could be applied for urban purposes or recreational use, whichever the Power and Water Authority thinks would be suitable. If the location of the dams was considered in those areas, it would relieve many of the hassles that people are having in the rural area and other places about dams and catchment areas over their properties necessitating compulsory acquisition.

Mr Perron: It doesn't have to be compulsory acquisition.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is what the Power and Water Authority representative said.

Mr Perron: It is only compulsory if they refuse.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there is an initial point that I would like to raise in the debate tonight. Actually, I did not intend to raise it because I thought it would die of its own accord but it was raised again tonight in this debate by the Minister for Health and Community Services. I think the record should be set straight. I refer to the rather strange idea that somehow the censure debate that we ran yesterday was initially to be proposed for discussion as a matter of public importance. I would like to assure the House that it was definitely a motion of censure. The nature of the subject matter raised in that debate was such that, had it been proposed for discussion as a matter of public importance, it would have been quite within the rights of the government to take it as a censure because that was the only way that that subject matter could be treated. The further point was made that the reason for this was that somehow the MPI document was not delivered in time. That has been linked back to myself, which is rather strange because I left my vehicle in the carpark beside the Nelson Building well before 8 am and collected the Notice Paper from the Legislative Assembly staff at that time. In those circumstances, if I had wanted to drop off an MPI, I would have had ample opportunity to do so.

The strangest point, and one that did not occur to the members opposite when they were running that line, was that the matter did not relate to my shadow portfolio responsibilities. There was no way in the world that I would have responsibility to initiate an MPI on that subject. It is rather incredible. I would not have raised it because it did not mean a great deal. Nevertheless, it was raised again and therefore I thought that, if honourable members opposite are labouring under some misapprehension that we were going to run it as a matter of public importance and decided to change it to a censure, they should be corrected. Very obviously, it was a matter that required censure and it was run as such.

There is another matter which falls within the ambit of the Department of Health and Community Services which I wish to raise, but first I will go

through a couple of other points that follow on from my discussion last night on the problems that we have in my electorate with regard to water supplies.

Mr Poole: Oh no, not Soapy Bore again!

Mr EDE: Yes, I will discuss Soapy Bore because, Mr Speaker, Soapy Bore still does not have a tank positioned to service the community. I am very grateful to the minister for putting in a Mono pump in that area but a Mono pump does not improve the head of water. A Mono pump can pump water up to a tank but the tank needs to be above the community because water will not run up hill. Unfortunately, that is the problem at Soapy Bore where the community is above the water tank, as is the school built by the Northern Territory government. One would have thought that the Northern Territory government, between its various departments, could get its act together to the extent that it would provide water to the school. But no, it still has not put in a tank above the community so that water can be reticulated to the school and to the houses in that area. It needs to be done, and I hope that it will be done very soon.

Boundary Bore, Mr Speaker, as you know, is another example where there is a very small windmill and a community of some 70 to 80 people. That area is subject to wind drought and the windmill is inadequate to provide sufficient water for the 70 to 80 people that live at Boundary Bore. I believe that problem should be addressed fairly rapidly. Even when the wind is blowing and the windmill is going full steam, because it has an old, single-action pump on the bore, you only obtain something like 1 litre per second.

A further one is an area that is known to yourself, Mr Speaker. In fact you and Senator Kilgariff are continually mentioned when I go out to Irrultja. People have paid tribute to the fact that you were one of the persons who assisted in having Irrultja established. That is something which does you credit, Mr Speaker. Obviously, it required considerable work considering that people are still discussing the fact of your involvement. Unfortunately, the water supply system out there also is completely inadequate. I believe you were instrumental in organising the water pipes near the clinic. We organised another tank later at the other end of the community but, in the process, the contractors messed up the reticulation system completely. Water is unable to be distributed throughout the community at the moment and it requires assistance urgently.

I would like to discuss the clinic at Lajamanu. Originally, there were 3 sisters and 4 health workers at the clinic. As a matter of policy, the government decided - and I concurred with this at the time - that it would replace one of the sister positions with 2 extra health workers so that there would be 2 sisters and 6 health workers. The idea was that there would be a larger pool of health workers in the area and this would result in a more efficient service delivery system.

For some time now, the department has placed an embargo on the additional 2 health worker positions and there are only 4 health workers and the 2 sisters. As part of the process of giving the health workers experience of being in control of the clinic, whenever there is in-service training for sisters, both sisters are removed at the one time. Thus, when the sisters go on in-service training, instead of having the 8 staff that were assessed to be the correct number of staff required to provide that health service, there are 4 staff to man the service. That puts incredible strain on those health workers because they have not only to look after the clinic themselves, but also to work with the school and do the outstation round. All the preventive

health programs come to a complete halt. It is impossible for the health workers to gain experience in running the clinic as it should be run because of the artificial lowering of the staffing levels.

Unfortunately, because of the reduction in staff levels, recently the store has had to discontinue what was a very good initiative. The local store set up a section to provide food specifically for diabetics. This was staffed by 1 of the health workers from the clinic who explained to the diabetics which type of food they should be eating and educated them in good dietary practice. Because of the loss of the 2 health worker positions, that service has been discontinued. The store has had to change its layout and use the section for other purposes because it was not economical to maintain the service without the assistance of a health worker.

Lajamanu clinic has over 11 000 visitations per year. I am advised that it is certainly the largest of all the rural communities in the Katherine region and is 1 of the largest in central Australia. It is an area where people have very specific and grave health problems. One assessment that was done about 2 years ago indicated that between 90% and 95% of the students at that school had hearing impairment to a degree that was educationally significant. Because there is such a high incidence of hearing impairment there, they do not use individual FM radio-type earphones. They have to boost the teacher's voice by means of an amplifier because only a very small minority are not hearing impaired. The health workers attempted to identify middle ear infections at the school at a very early stage so that something could be done. Because of the cutback in the numbers of health workers at that community, they are no longer able to do that.

Another community I visited last week is Atartinga, a relatively new outstation. It has only been there for a couple of years and it results from the movement of people from places like Ali Curung, Murray Downs, Elkedra and Canteen Creek, back to their traditional country. It is in an area that you would know, Mr Speaker. Those people had considerable problems finding water in the area. Eventually, a water source was found which complied with the various standards. Unfortunately, the people who were assessing the size of the community did not believe our predictions of the number of people who would want to return to that area. They allowed for a community of some 40 to 50 people and there are already real problems arising there. The windmill was completely inadequate and a Mono pump was installed. It has to run for 12 to 15 hours a day to supply water to the community. Another bore and a larger tank are required to cope with the needs of that expanding community. There is quite a large hill just behind the community which is accessible and would be an ideal site for a tank. It would avoid the quite substantial problem of erecting a tank stand.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to speak for a very short time about the Darwin Institute of Technology's entry in the Pentax World Solar Challenge. Honourable members could not have avoided hearing of the success of the Desert Rose in the solar challenge.

I hear the member for Stuart commenting on the expense involved. He has just been speaking about problems with pumping equipment, windmills and tanks in terms of obtaining water in the desert. It is likely that some of the solutions to these problems lie in the development of solar technology. It is through projects like the DIT's entry in the solar challenge that new technologies are developed which can help to provide equipment for outback communities.

I would like to place on record my admiration for the fine job the DIT team did in the solar challenge, not only in the race itself but also in the design and construction of the Desert Rose. I can remember that there was a certain degree of scepticism when the DIT first floated the idea of entering the world solar challenge. I also remember when Dr Dean Patterson, Kevin Davis and also Alex Monaghan first came to see me about the project. They certainly put a very convincing case about the DIT's ability to compete successfully. Their initial cost estimates for the project were somewhat optimistic but, as it turned out, nearly everything else was spot-on. The Desert Rose came fifth out of 25 entries from around the world and I think that achievement speaks volumes for the dedication, ability and enthusiasm of the the DIT team which designed, built and eventually drove the Desert Rose the 3004 km to Adelaide.

General Motors' entry, the Sunraycer, as one would expect from an entry backed by such resources, blitzed the field to finish in 44 hours and 54 minutes at an average speed of nearly 67 km per hour. The Ford entry, the Model S, was second. The Swiss entry, the Spirit of Biel from the University of Biel, came next, followed by the Australian Geographic entry, Marsupial, and then the Desert Rose. According to Dr Patterson, the DIT team began with the philosophy that its first aim was to make it to the starting line. Next on its list of priorities was reaching the finishing line. Its third aim was to go as fast as possible on a tiny amount of power. It succeeded admirably in achieving all 3 aims.

In the end, team members' efforts were confounded not by human limitations but by that great leveller, the weather. In bright sunshine, the Desert Rose generated a little over 1 hp and was averaging 47 km per hour. Unfortunately, the team experienced only 1.5 days of sunshine in 10 days of driving, and its overall speed was reduced as a consequence. I believe the GM Sunraycer stayed in the sun the whole time. In heavily overcast conditions, the Desert Rose's output was reduced to about 0.33 hp and its speed came down to 22 km per hour. In steady rain, its output was less than 0.125 hp with a speed of only 12 km per hour. This had the overall affect of reducing the value of the Desert Rose's exceptional aerodynamic design and increasing the importance of wheels and tyres. Honourable members may wish to consider the irony of a solar car race which was decided largely by the ability of the entries to cope in cloudy conditions.

One of the features of the Desert Rose was the quality of its construction. It was generally agreed that the Desert Rose was the third-best constructed car in the race, after Sunraycer and the Spirit of Biel, but ahead of the Ford Model S and the Marsupial. I took the opportunity of inspecting the Desert Rose on a number of occasions and I can state without qualification that the workmanship was excellent. As it turned out, workmanship was very much a major issue in the race. The simple fact that the Desert Rose finished the race automatically put it into the top 11 out of 25 entries. It is also interesting to note that none of the Japanese entries beat the Desert Rose which I thought was rather significant.

Mr Leo: Why? What is significant about it?

Mr MANZIE: To answer that query, I think that most people believe that the Japanese are world leaders in a number of areas of technology, including electrical technology. The fact that the solar car that the DIT designed and built in Darwin was able to compete successfully against people who are respected as world leaders in electrical technology is certainly significant. I think we should be proud of that in this country and not just make throwaway

comments which suggest a derogatory attitude. I certainly hope that is not what was meant by the comment from the other side of the House and I do not think it was.

Dr Patterson informs me that Dr Chester Kyle, a world expert in lightweight vehicle aerodynamics who was covering the race for Scientific American, said that the DIT's aerodynamic design was second only to the General Motors' design. I am sure that honourable members will agree that it is unfortunate that the weather did not permit the Desert Rose to run on its merits. I believe that the Desert Rose's success is a great triumph for the DIT and the Territory and I heartily congratulate the DIT on its remarkable effort. One result of that effort might possibly be some research funding from the major companies for the development of solar technology for domestic purposes or for supplying equipment for community purposes in outback areas.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, as the Minister for Education has said, it is a matter of some pride to people in the Northern Territory that the Darwin Institute of Technology entrant in the solar-powered vehicle race did so well. The DIT certainly has my congratulations for its achievements.

I want to mention 2 matters tonight. The first concerns what I consider to be the rather miserly attitude of the Northern Territory government to some quite exciting events that the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council is planning as its contribution to the bicentennial in 1988. The Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council has been quite successful in obtaining funding from a number of bodies - the Australia Council, the Music Board, the Literary Board and the ACTU - for the functions that it wants to perform in 1988 as part of the bicentennial, and I would like to read what it is planning: first, production of up to 4 issues of a trade union newspaper in the Northern Territory; secondly, publication of a book outlining the contribution of the trade union movement to the history of the Northern Territory, with particular emphasis on the contributions of meatworkers and waterside workers ...

Members laughing.

Mr SMITH: I am glad that you people can laugh. In World War II, the waterside workers bore the brunt of the Japanese bombing. A number of waterside workers died in the Japanese bombings in 1942 and you people sit here and laugh at that. I think you have forgotten your history of the Northern Territory. The waterside workers have played a significant role in the development of the Northern Territory. Members may not have liked their role completely and at all times, but they have played a significant role and it is appropriate that that role be recognised during the bicentennial.

It is also proposed during the course of the bicentennial that there be a re-enactment of the Gilruth march. Of course, the Gilruth march, for any of us who have any knowledge of Northern Territory history, was a significant event in bringing democracy into the Northern Territory.

Mr Dale: There will be a re-enactment of the dumb barge.

Mr SMITH: There are none so dumb as those opposite, I would think is an appropriate comment at present.

The Gilruth march indicated that, even in an isolated outpost like the Northern Territory in 1917, it was possible for the voice of the people to be

heard and for autocratic and unpopular people in authority to be given the message that, as they could not effectively govern the people of the Northern Territory, they should go

As well as that, poster and banner making activities are planned by the Trades and Labor Council for the development of a permanent mural depicting the contribution of workers to Northern Territory society and culture, a travelling art exhibition to visit all major Northern Territory centres and a theatre production on issues affecting Territory workers.

I heard the comment opposite and, yes, Jamie Robertson has had a lot to do with it. I think Jamie Robertson deserves a vote of commendation from a number of people in the Northern Territory. At last count, Jamie Robertson was an active member of 27 separate committees in the Northern Territory, and that is certainly a record that anyone should be proud of.

The point is that significant funding ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Significant funding has been provided by national groups and the Trades and Labor Council applied to the Northern Territory government for additional funding. Essentially, that additional funding was sought for the purpose of training local people, obviously people with a union background, in specific skills - either in the production of newspapers, banners, murals or other specific ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I am serious and I would like to continue without members' interruptions if I may?

They would be trained in those or other skills that would be of ongoing use and assistance to the broader community. I think what people in the trade union movement find particularly offensive about the Northern Territory government's failure to provide any money - and the movement is not asking for a large sum of money - is that the Northern Territory government is prepared to make major contributions to bicentenary functions like Droving Australia. No one denies the value of Droving Australia. I think it is a very worthwhile activity indeed. But the point is that Droving Australia reflects an important, but fairly limited, part of the Northern Territory's history and it cannot be denied that the trade union movement reflects a very important part of the Northern Territory's history also.

Whether members opposite like the contribution that has been made by the trade union movement or not, it is a fact that the trade union movement has made a very significant contribution to the development of the Northern Territory and it is unfortunate, to put it mildly, that the Northern Territory government has not seen it as desirable in the bicentennial year to make a contribution to the celebration of that achievement. Unfortunately, it is a reflection of the attitude of the Country Liberal Party towards the trade union movement in general in the Northern Territory.

Members interjecting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is very difficult to continue speaking with this constant chatter. I would appreciate it if you could assist me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: The second thing that I wanted to talk about tonight was some problems that have become more obvious in respect of tourism, particularly in the Top End of Australia and, Mr Deputy Speaker, this will have particular meaning for yourself. I guess it is an age-old problem and it is that of unqualified tour guides. In the last 5 or 6 weeks, I have had 2 particular examples brought to my attention of inadequately trained tour operators and the damage that they are doing to the Northern Territory.

One example appeared on page 3 of the Weekend Australian 3 weeks ago and was reprinted in the last edition of the Sunday Territorian. In that case, a group of extremely significant people - American travel writers - came to Darwin and went on the normal guided day tour. They received the basic message that, for the sake of their health, they should leave Darwin as quickly as possible: it is too hot, there are too many mosquitoes and a buffalo might attack them at any moment. I do not know who the tour guide was. I would like to find out and put him on the first boat out of the place. Those American travel writers had an appalling experience and it is only thanks to the people from the member for Arafura's electorate that they will probably go away with a good impression of the Northern Territory rather than a bad one.

A less well-known example involved an announcer from Radio 3CR in Melbourne. Under her own steam, completely unsponsored, she came to the Northern Territory to have a look around. She strolled down the mall in Darwin one day and saw an advertisement on a notice board which said: 'Any person interested in sharing a vehicle to visit Kakadu should contact ...'. A telephone number followed. It turned out that a fly-by-night tourist operator was trying to lure people into his net by offering very cheap rates. She made contact with this person and discovered, to her dismay, that she was not sharing a car but was on a guided bus tour into Kakadu. She got on the bus and soon discovered, along with everybody else, that the tour operator had been in Australia and Darwin for 3½ weeks, and that his previous port of call was London. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that you would agree that that is just not on in our developing tourist industry. Fortunately for the Northern Territory, one of the reputable tour operators in Darwin, Terra Tours, heard about this story and offered the lady a 2-day or 3-day tour of Kakadu at its expense. She went back and presented a positive story on Radio 3CR rather than a negative one.

These incidents raise the question of how to control the activities of tour operators and, obviously, we need to address our minds to that. I do not have any magic solution. In my view, there is no point in attempting to license every individual tour guide because that will not work. It may, however, be an appropriate time for the regional tourist associations to sit down and think seriously about setting their own standards and approval procedures. I am reminded of the situation in Hong Kong where, as I understand it, the Hong Kong Tourist Association offers accreditation to approved operators in the various areas of the Hong Kong tourist market. That accreditation is only gained after the Hong Kong Tourist Association is satisfied that the particular applicants have met the required standards. Tourists who visit Hong Kong have a firm guarantee from the tourist association that, if they deal with those accredited companies, they will be given quality service and will not be ripped off.

I believe that self-regulation is the obvious thing to try. I would suggest to the regional tourist associations that they should start considering it seriously because irresponsible operators are doing an enormous amount of damage to the industry and to the Territory. In particular, I would suggest that the Alice Springs Tourist Association might like to consider it first because it has a longer history and seems to be better organised at present than other regional tourist associations.

With our tourist industry booming and predictions of 1.1 million tourists visiting in 1991, we really must address the need to provide our tourists with reputable contacts so that they can come here knowing that they will be able to deal with reputable people, people who will not rip them off, people who have as much interest as members of this Assembly in ensuring that they have a good time and return to spread the message, encouraging their friends and relatives to visit the Territory. In the end, word of mouth is as important as anything else in keeping the tourists coming to the Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS

Accommodation in Alice Springs for Psychiatrically-disturbed Persons in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 178 citizens of Alice Springs requesting that more accommodation be found for psychiatrically-disturbed people. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, we the undersigned residents of Alice Springs wish to voice our objection to the housing of psychiatrically-disturbed people with a history of violence in residential areas. We fear for the safety of our children in particular and request that more suitable accommodation be found for these people, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 33)

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 46 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Assembly reject the Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 33). The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth their concern that the passing of the Police Amendment Act 1987, which allows police to detain people for 48 hours, is wrong and could be misused by police. The petitioners believe that such a law is not in keeping with the Australian way of justice and personal freedom, that such a law is not heard of in any Australian state or any democratic country and that the number of deaths in custody will increase with such an extension of the detention period introduced by this law. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly reject the bill for an act to amend the Police Administration Act 1987 and that the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BTEC Progress in Northern Territory

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on BTEC in the Northern Territory.

As many members would be aware, tuberculin testing in the Northern Territory dates back to 1934, although extensive eradication testing did not commence until the mid-1970s. In about 1969, survey testing was undertaken for both tuberculosis and brucellosis. This provided base information of

disease prevalence in various areas. During the 1970s, there were active voluntary brucellosis and tuberculosis programs on properties in the Alice Springs and Barkly Tableland districts, and on brucellosis-infected properties in the Katherine and Darwin districts. Good progress was achieved on properties where good cattle control was possible.

In 1982, the provision of compensation for destocking and proposals for additional assistance accelerated the program to eradicate both diseases and a plan for eradication over a 10-year period was announced. The interim objective in the timetable required a high level of destocking or destruction of diseased cattle, and the industry viewed this with misgivings. Despite industry fears, however, significant progress has been achieved. The Territory is now entering the last stage of the campaign.

The northern region of the Northern Territory was declared provisionally free of brucellosis in 1976, and the southern region achieved this status in 1985. All of the Territory is now provisionally free of brucellosis. The whole of Australia has since been declared an area provisionally free of brucellosis for the first time. There are now very few herds infected with brucellosis. Additionally, the area to the south of a line drawn east-west through Alice Springs was declared a provisionally free area for tuberculosis on 15 October 1985. The remainder of the Territory was declared an eradication area for tuberculosis.

Over the last 2 years, there have been major changes to our approach, management structure and personnel, most particularly in the areas of responsibilities and job functions in the Northern Territory campaign. These changes have been made in response to administrative problems experienced in 1982-83 and have been aimed at improving the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the campaign, reducing destocking and minimising the unfavourable economic impact of some eradication methods on marginal cattle producers. A strategic approach is now used in setting annual campaign objectives consistent with national targets. The objectives are geared towards progressive area declarations of impending freedom and set out tasks required each year to achieve interim targets together with other proposed activities and milestones.

The plan uses approved property programs which provide forecasts of property disease status. The pattern indicated by these programs allows the plan to be modified in the light of judgments about the overall feasibility of different options for speed of progress and geographical pattern of progress. It also takes account of market considerations which are primarily determined by proposed progress in other states and intended movement restrictions associated with that progress.

With that background in mind, I would now like to focus on the current situation. The Australian Agricultural Council is expected to endorse the following proposals with respect to disease status for the following areas commencing 1 January 1988. Firstly, that the area south of Alice Springs be declared free of brucellosis and impending free of tuberculosis, 'impending free' meaning that, while no known infected herds exist, some breakdowns may occur because of the sometimes slow nature of tuberculosis. Secondly, that the area north of Alice Springs and around Daly Waters be declared provisionally free of tuberculosis. In the longer term, our targets are freedom from brucellosis in December 1988 and impending freedom from tuberculosis in 1992.

I mentioned earlier the need to take account of market considerations. The proposal to make the area declarations has enabled continued movement of Territory cattle to South Australia and Queensland under certain conditions. These conditions were negotiated by the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and my department and will ensure vital market access for Territory cattle.

In any campaign of this nature, a key to its success is our work in the field. Currently, field activity in 1987 is slightly down on projections and, as a result, expenditure is also under initial projections. The good progress in the south and the Barkly region is reflected in the area declarations. In the north, progress is less visible because much of the effort is being directed into putting in necessary property infrastructure, such as fences, yards and bores, and the mustering of bush cattle.

With regard to our future direction, there is a need for greater input into the eradication programs. This is particularly so with segregation of young stock from older, potentially diseased cattle, and testing of the young stock at least twice a year while they remain infected. The department is aware that this will create difficulties for some pastoralists and that it will require a high degree of organisation and commitment to be successful. Naturally, the campaign in the Territory has and will be very expensive. Large sums of money are required to pay for the administration and staffing of the campaign, to provide compensation to pastoralists where stock has been destroyed and to fund the assistance measures introduced to help pastoralists eradicate disease. This is in addition to the private costs incurred by the pastoralists. The finance to cover these costs comes partly from the Australian taxpayer through the Commonwealth and Territory governments and partly from the cattle industry by way of the slaughter levy collected from abattoirs and held in the National Cattle Disease Eradication Trust Account. This trust account is administered by the Commonwealth government.

In 1987-88, the campaign in the Territory is expected to cost about \$16.8m. The estimated expenditure for 1987-92 is \$54.6m of which the Territory will contribute about \$18.2m. An agreement between the Territory and the Commonwealth, drawn up in 1984, establishes the basis for the way funds will be provided, the conditions under which funds may be spent and requirements to be fulfilled to maintain funding. The Territory government funds 30% of operational expenditure, 25% of compensation payments and 50% of additional assistance measures. The cattle industry provides 70% of operational expenditure and the Commonwealth government provides the remaining funds.

The direction of the Territory campaign and the progress to be achieved have to be carefully mapped out to justify the expenditure of such large sums of money. Funding arrangements are being reviewed continually. One recent change is that compensation for unmusterable stock is now paid out of operational expenses rather than the compensation fund. This means that the cattle industry is contributing 70% of the cost of destruction of unmusterable cattle. The Northern Territory government contributes 30%.

I mentioned earlier that the Territory is entering the last stage of the campaign. This stage is commonly referred to as the wind down of BTEC. This wind down requires readjustments within my department. Any new BTEC staff employed are being engaged on a contract basis to ensure flexibility in future years. While BTEC activity will continue until 1992 and beyond, the peak activity occurred in 1986-87. Funding and activity will wind down progressively over the next few years. However, BTEC will remain the largest

program managed by my department for some years to come. By the end of the program, BTEC will have cost \$100m in the Territory and \$900m throughout Australia.

Two major issues confronting BTEC in the Territory in the immediate future are funding and destocking. Funding is of concern because cost estimates to complete BTEC are increasing due both to inflation and to actual increases associated with increased numbers of animals requiring destocking. This increase is due in part to breeding up of the feral animals and in part to better estimating techniques which have evolved over recent years.

The Commonwealth has indicated that its contribution is fixed at the level agreed to in 1986 based on estimates provided by the states and the Territory in October 1986. The Territory is committed to the successful completion of BTEC but current financial constraint imposes difficulties in funding any shortfalls. The cattle industry, which has been a major contributor to campaign costs, has access to substantial funds. However, the industry needs to be satisfied that the money is being spent appropriately. Therefore, if industry is to inject additional funding, it would need to be convinced of the appropriateness of the expenditure proposed. An undesirable consequence of possible funding constraints is that the introduction of additional financial assistance moneys, such as mustering subsidies and increased flexibility in the use of concessional loans, will most likely have to be delayed or cancelled. As this funding issue is of concern to Queensland and Western Australia as well as the Northern Territory, I intend initiating a meeting with my counterparts in those 2 states to address this and other important BTEC issues of mutual concern. This meeting will complement meetings of operational managers, the first of which took place in July this year.

Destocking, the removal of potentially diseased cattle and buffalo from large tracts of uncontrolled areas, is a daunting task. If I may digress slightly at this stage, one positive and often overlooked aspect of the removal of diseased buffalo from the Top End is the reduction in damage to the flood plain environment. In many areas of the Top End where buffalo numbers have built up without control, severe environmental damage has occurred. Overgrazing has allowed weeds to invade the fertile flood plains. In the case of mimosa, which has invaded and decimated thousands of hectares of flood plains, buffalo assist in carrying seeds to new areas. The other serious effect of buffalo on the flood plain environment is the damage to natural levy banks caused by the buffalo's habit of making water channels. As a result, the sea has encroached on large areas of flood plain causing the death of thousands of trees. Fortunately, the effects of overgrazing and levy damage can be reversed after removal of buffalo. The mimosa problem regrettably remains, but is under constant supervision by my department.

In terms of destocking, options available to those involved include live capture, pet meat and shooting to waste. Criticisms have been levelled at my department about perceived excess shooting to waste in some situations. While I have been assured that shooting to waste of large numbers of animals is a necessary component of the BTEC program, I intend to modify procedures to encourage greater commercial utilisation of destocked animals. Most pastoralists have accepted their responsibilities under the BTEC program and have made good progress in eradicating the diseases. However, in some cases, owners have been reluctant to destock, resulting in requests for extensions of the destocking orders. This has led to a number of cases in which the program is falling well behind schedule and in which destocking is barely, if at all, keeping pace with the natural rate of stock increase. In other words, subsidised harvesting is occurring rather than destocking. Such situations

are clearly a waste of limited BTEC funds and are ineffective in achieving eradication objectives, which will be compromised if the practice is allowed to continue. If these properties are allowed to fall further behind schedule, even more shooting to waste will be necessary to catch up and the government may be forced to intervene in the process to ensure that the Territory is free of these diseases at the earliest possible date. Therefore, the government is considering a reduction in compensation on unmusterable animals shot to waste, with consequent savings used to encourage greater commercial utilisation of destocked animals.

Another measure under consideration is the assumption by my department of the responsibility for final destocking, where an owner declares that he has mustered all stock possible. Under this scenario, during 1988, the owner will be compensated at the unmusterable rate. A third possibility under consideration is one which my department sees as a last resort if destocking remains a problem at the end of 1988. That option is for the department to manage all remaining destocking programs after 1 January 1989, with no compensation payable to owners who have not completed their own programs in time. I stress that these measures are under early consideration only and will not be implemented without the full views of the industry being taken into account.

As I said earlier, most pastoralists have accepted their responsibilities under the BTEC program and are on schedule to wipe out the diseases by 1992. This government, however, is not prepared to jeopardise the hard work and commitment of the pastoralists who have cooperated and the hard work and commitment of its own officers. Those who have fallen behind schedule must accept that, if they cannot finish the job within the next 13 months, the government may have to finish it for them. Forewarned is forearmed. The bottom line is that the pastoral industry is vital to the economic well-being of the Territory, and the government is totally committed to the successful completion of BTEC.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, shadowing the Minister for Industries and Development is hard work. Again, I welcome the minister's statement.

An astronomical amount of \$900m has been spent within Australia on eradicating the scourges of brucellosis and tuberculosis. Quite clearly, it is necessary to spend such an amount. Brucellosis and tuberculosis have had an adverse effect on the development of the pastoral industry, particularly in the north of Australia, and have slowed down the penetration which cattle from the north of Australia might otherwise have had into overseas markets. It has certainly been a necessary exercise for both the federal and Northern Territory governments.

The minister commented briefly on a number of initial problems in getting the program under way. It is certainly pleasing to see that they have been ironed out, that there is a significant level of cooperation between the Commonwealth government and the Territory government and that the program has been worked out scientifically and is adjusted from time to time to meet changing circumstances.

I note the 2 problems which the minister referred to. One is that present funding levels have been found to be inadequate, basically for 2 reasons: the increased costs associated with the program and the increased numbers of

animals to be destroyed. In this day and age, there is no other option but to go back to the cattlemen and ask them for a greater contribution. I do not think that the Northern Territory government has the capacity to make a bigger contribution and the Commonwealth government faces similar financial restrictions. I hope that the meeting the minister is organising with the Western Australian and Queensland ministers will come up with a way of ensuring that the problems caused by lack of funds can be resolved.

In terms of the destocking problem, I am pleased to see that the minister is no longer a member of the Harry Butler fan club. Last year, Harry Butler talked about clapped-out buffalo country in stage 2 of Kakadu. Clearly, clapped-out buffalo country recovers very quickly, as the minister has recognised. An outstanding example of that is the country between Obiri Rock and Cannon Hill. Buffalo have been cleared from that area for only 4 or 5 years but the change that has occurred in that time is simply magnificent. The country has recovered very well indeed.

Mr Coulter: Woolner Station is a good example.

Mr SMITH: I do not know Woolner Station but, having been to Obiri Rock 6 or 7 years ago and having seen the same country recently, the change is absolutely magnificent. It shows that, when buffalo are removed, the country recovers very quickly indeed.

Buffalo can cause devastating damage. During my trip into Arnhem Land 2 or 3 months ago, I saw for the first time the real extent of the damage they can do. An area that previously was quite outstanding for its beauty had been wrecked. It had been turned into a series of salt flats. The buffalo channels that the minister referred to were obvious there. Trees that were there just 100 or 200 years ago were gone and there was nothing there at all. Obviously, buffalo do an enormous amount of damage to the country and it is important ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They are good doers.

Mr SMITH: They are good doers all right, and it is important that we get the buffalo problem under control as quickly as possible so that we give the country a chance to regenerate, as it demonstrably can do very quickly.

Whilst we are talking about brucellosis and tuberculosis, I will seize the opportunity to raise again something which worries me. It is the increasing trend among pastoralists to take their cattle out of the Northern Territory for processing. I do not have the figures with me but, certainly during the last few years, the trend has been for a smaller and smaller proportion of cattle raised in the Northern Territory to be slaughtered within the Territory. Of course, if we finally get rid of the scourges of brucellosis and tuberculosis, that trend may well accelerate as pastoral owners find it easier to get into the southern markets.

That means that we are getting back to a situation where very little of the value-added work in the pastoral industry is being done in the Northern Territory, and I think that that should be a matter of concern to everybody here. There is not much point letting those beasts eat our grass if we are getting very little of the value-added processing work. I accept that there are no magic solutions that will reverse that trend. However, we should be concerned about it and I would hope that the minister will address himself to the issue.

I know that the private enterprise government we have at present is reluctant to interfere in the free-market decisions of pastoral operators, but I think there may well be some room to talk to pastoral owners, to identify their problems and to see whether those can be addressed so that we can have some meatworks operating in the Northern Territory and generating value-added work here instead of sending it interstate.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: If we had more Mudginberri, we would be all right.

Mr SMITH: That would not really help. The whole Mudginberri exercise has turned out to be a great farce. The point that Jay Pendarvis was trying to make has been lost on the rest of us. The bottom line of the Mudginberri dispute is that we have a Northern Territory award which is less generous than the tally system in Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales, and yet we still have the problem of pastoralists choosing not to have their cattle killed under the Northern Territory award but to take them interstate.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is their choice! It is a business choice.

Mr SMITH: Of course it is a business choice. The point I am trying to make is that the Mudginberri exercise has not in any way succeeded in addressing the problems that are present in the industry in the Territory and which discourage pastoralists from killing in the Territory.

Mr Coulter: You know that there are now no buffalo in the Obiri Rock area which is where Mudginberri is. That is one of the reasons why Mudginberri is not doing too well at the moment: there are no buffalo. It is pretty simple.

Mr SMITH: You have a great command of the cattle and buffalo industry, I must say. I take my hat off to you! You are brilliant.

I conclude by asking the minister to look at that problem again. In other industries in the Northern Territory, both primary and secondary, we are working towards additional value-added components. In one sense, the pastoral industry is going against the trend that has been established in those industries. I have often referred to the colonial mentality of pastoral owners. They come in here, rip off our natural resources and take their profits elsewhere. I do not think that anybody on either side of the House should be prepared to put up with that situation, and we should be taking positive steps, talking to pastoralists and making sure that we get as much production as possible from the stock that eat our grass.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to yet another statement made by the Minister for Industries and Development, I may repeat some remarks I made yesterday about another of his statements.

Nobody would denigrate the efforts of the Commonwealth government, the Northern Territory government and the pastoralists in trying to free the country of brucellosis and tuberculosis. It has been a mammoth job and it has cost a squillion but, in 1992, I think that we will all say that a good job has been done and wonder why we did not start it much earlier.

It could be said that brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication was forced on the Australian meat industry by requirements for meat exported to the United States and Canada. The agriculture lobby over there exerted pressure on certain politicians who, in turn, placed import restrictions on our meat. In 1992, if we have a meat industry free of tuberculosis and brucellosis, we will probably be able to say that all is well that ends well.

It is interesting to go back into the history of the Northern Territory and see that a Director of Animal Industry made a statement in the late 1950s or early 1960s advocating complete eradication of all buffalo in the Top End. If my memory serves me correctly, that was Colonel Rose. At that time he did not receive much sympathy from people who were making a dollar from the skins. Pet meat did not come until much later, and human consumption of buffalo meat came even later still. Nobody paid any attention to him in those days, probably because his suggestion seemed too drastic. If it had been acted upon, however, our BTEC program would have been much less costly.

As I said yesterday, and as the minister said in this statement as well as in his statement yesterday on primary industry, the positive results of BTEC have not only been in disease eradication. The necessity of adhering to certain standards set by the campaign has led to better farming practices in some cases. One of these is the greater use of subdivisional fencing. More yards, more traps and more grids have been put in and there is better farm management overall. The pastoralist has a better knowledge of his property so that he can differentiate his good country from his bad country. He knows much more about his property and can farm it as well as use it for pastoral purposes. That is all to the betterment of not only individual properties but the development of the Northern Territory as a whole.

In considering better farming practices, one also considers better management of stock because, if properties are subdivided within themselves, the stock are moved from paddock to paddock and become more amenable to movement. They become much more placid, which eases the movement of stock from the property to abattoirs. One has a better product to sell to the abattoirs and, in moving stock, one becomes more readily aware of any disease problems which need to be combated.

The minister mentioned that *mimosa pigra* has probably been spread by buffalo in the fertile flood plains. I do not think anybody would disagree with that. I must say that I have a soft spot for buffalo. I rather like them. I would also acknowledge that they, together with goats and donkeys, are good scavengers. They will always find feed when cattle and horses will not. I believe that, before we destroy any species of animal, we should recognise its strong points in terms of survival. I know that the Department of Industries and Development worked initially on chemical control of *mimosa* and, more recently, on biological control through the use of insects. Could I suggest to the minister that some investigations be carried out into caprine biological control? Goats may eat *mimosa*. If so, it would be a very easy solution to the problem. They may not eat *mimosa* but I do not think anybody has tried them on it yet.

While we are talking about brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication in the Territory generally, I would like to touch on the issue in relation to the Darwin rural area. Stock inspectors and veterinary officers have been to different properties testing animals and, unfortunately, in some cases have had to destroy infected animals. I have said to those people and other officers in the Department of Industries and Development that, in the interests of disease control, I believe the days have gone when officers can go onto properties and act in a rather overbearing way. I believe a lot more attention has to be paid to good PR by officers of the department. People should be encouraged rather than forced to have their animals tested. I believe in the carrot, not the stick. The people in the rural area are not ordinary pastoralists. Many are not full-time farmers. They keep stock such as cattle or buffalo as a part-time paying hobby, for the information of the member for Stuart. Nevertheless, they are farmers. If their stock are

diseased, I believe they should still be dealt with under the BTEC program. I also believe that it is very important to recognise that their situation is a little different from that of the pastoralists in the rest of the Territory and that they should be handled accordingly. They are individualists and they think for themselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in concluding my remarks on this statement, I wonder when the minister will issue his next statement and what the subject will be. Perhaps it will be the poultry industry, the pig industry or the goat industry. I look forward to each statement from the minister. They have proved very interesting to date and I am sure they will be interesting in the future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, after everybody has said what a great report it is, I am afraid there is an aspect of it that I am not happy with, and that is the absence of a table detailing the numbers of herds that fall within the various categories of restricted, provisionally clear, monitored negative, tested negative and confirmed free. That would have given us a much clearer understanding of the situation on a region-by-region basis, from the north to the south. It worries me that, while the BTEC program seems to be proceeding well in the Top End and while the area south of Alice Springs now has confirmed-free status, brucellosis has the capacity to stay in the lymph glands of cattle for many years. During pregnancy, it can enter the foetus and cause abortion, and the problem can blow out again. We certainly do not want that to occur.

Mr Perron: What do we do about it?

Mr EDE: The minister's comments about shooting to waste were very relevant, although it has been a major concern to pastoralists and people in the meat processing industry. They feel that it needs to be minimised so that as much meat as possible can be turned into value.

I want to pick up the point made by the Leader of the Opposition when he talked about how we have lost the ability to add value to our beef through the closure of abattoirs in the Northern Territory. Certainly, the closure of the Tennant Creek meatworks was a real blow to the town's economy and the failure of the Alice Springs abattoir to open for quite some time now is another most disappointing saga. I believe we should have paid more attention to developing the by-products of the industry rather than allowing it to decline in the way it has.

There are enormous numbers of by-products which can be produced. The hides are one source of them and there has never been any real hide industry here in the Northern Territory. I believe they were all just lumped onto trucks and sent south after being salted. That is an area where a significant number of jobs could be provided. The horns and hooves can all be utilised, together with blood and bone. It is unfortunate that we did not move to establish a cannery. A large proportion of our cattle are suitable for the canning trade and that would have been a very substantial way of adding value, rather than allowing the abattoirs to decline to the extent that they have closed and we are now moving live cattle interstate for slaughter.

The minister said: 'The proposal to make the area declarations has enabled continued movement of Territory cattle to South Australia and Queensland under certain conditions'. I will be very interested to hear in the minister's reply about what those conditions are. They certainly have pastoralists in a flap. Everybody is worried about the possibility that the

conditions will be so draconian that they will lose much of their ability to move cattle and will have to ensure that all of them are slaughtered in the Territory. While I have stated that there are some advantages in that, I do not think that we can maintain a disease-free pool as a way of ensuring that we have local kills. I would like to hear from the minister about what the conditions are and how they will be put into place.

I am glad that both the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and the Minister for Health and Community Services are here because brucellosis and tuberculosis are not confined to animals. It is very difficult to detect these diseases through testing of humans and the Northern Territory does not have a very good record of dealing with them. In New South Wales, for example, if somebody presents with the symptoms of brucellosis or Q fever, he is immediately put on workers' compensation while more exhaustive tests are undertaken to establish whether he has the disease. In effect, the onus of proof is taken off the worker. It is accepted that the testing for brucellosis and Q fever is extremely difficult and can take quite some time.

Bovine TB is another disease which presents particular problems. I believe that there are a couple of people in the Northern Territory who were receiving no compensation as a result of contracting bovine TB. I heard today - and possibly the minister can advise me if it is the case - that bovine TB is not on the schedule of diseases in the Northern Territory. That is worrying. I would not like the minister to take the view that, because the BTEC program is coming to an end, the diseases will not be a problem and that, therefore, he should not worry about placing them on the schedule and working out some means of paying compensation to people. If he wishes to look at the issue in financial terms, he could say that not many people will be affected in future and therefore we should do our best for them. Not only meatworkers but also people in the trucking industry are liable to contract those diseases.

Mr Speaker, I have a problem with the way that reactors are treated when they are brought to the abattoirs. Generally, in other states, reactors are tagged and kept separate from the other cattle. After the normal run is completed, the workers don special protective clothing while they put the reactors through. The process is slow because they are checked for lesions and various tests have to be made to confirm whether they have TB. There are about 20 reactors for every beast that actually has TB. If the reactors are put through with the other cattle and the workers are not advised that they are slaughtering reactors, the risks of catching the diseases are increased. It would appear to me to be fair and reasonable that the abattoirs should be required to put the reactors through on a separate run, that workers be given protective clothing and that any other means of reducing the possibility of their contracting the diseases be adopted.

In conclusion, I thank the honourable minister for his statement. If agreement can be reached with the industry on the various points indicated, the Territory may be free of these diseases at the earliest possible date. The minister has identified where particular problems arise and what may be necessary to overcome them.

A point that was raised with me was the problem of neighbours. That is another issue that the minister will have to take up. If a station is clear, it can obtain provisionally clear status but it cannot be confirmed free if its neighbours have dirty cattle. That is something that I find particularly galling. For example, Mt Allan has done an enormous amount of work making whole areas of that station clear. However, it cannot gain clear status for

any paddocks that abut any of the neighbouring stations' paddocks because they are not clear. It is pretty rough if one station is doing the job and another is slack. All the effort and money put in by the diligent station owner is wasted. The problem is whether we can require the neighbouring stations to actually withdraw their dirty herds from the boundary fence and put in clean herds rather than requiring the station that is doing the hard yakka to withdraw its cattle from the parts of its property which abut onto the boundary. There may be a way of changing the balance of responsibility so that the clean station can have full use of its total area.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my comments. I am glad to see that the minister is tackling this major problem and that, hopefully, within a few years we can overcome it.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I shall be brief in speaking to the minister's statement this morning on brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication in our cattle herd. As with any disease control program, the first 10 years is the easy part and spending the first 50% of the funds, which wipes out 90% of the diseases, is also the easy part. We are now spending the same amount of money, probably over the same period of time, getting rid of the last 10% of the diseases in our herds. Given the terrain of the Territory and the isolation that cattlemen have to work in, that will not be easy. There will need to be a fair amount of flexibility for us to be able to survive and keep our costs to a minimum. In this context, I would like to touch on 2 matters which need addressing because they affect cattlemen in my area. They relate to the flexibility in the approach shown by officers, and indeed the minister, in dealing with the problem.

It is quite easy to develop a policy of paying so much a head for a shoot-out or compensation at the abattoirs or, in fact, not paying anything at all. However, applying that policy on every station right across the Northern Territory can become farcical as it did in the case of a property in my area where a cattleman was told that he would not receive compensation for a shoot-out. The government had decided that the cattle were worth something and wanted them all to be trucked into the abattoirs. A great deal of time, effort and money was spent by the cattleman, the department and those people paying the compensation to get the animals into trucks. Of the 39 beasts which were put into the first truck, 32 arrived dead at the abattoir. A shoot-out would have been a very cheap option for everybody concerned, but the policy that prevailed at the time did not allow that to occur. What I am saying is that if the minister, his officers and the cattlemen themselves - who pay a large amount of money to this program - have the flexibility to use their brains and adopt whatever policy they think is most appropriate from station to station and region to region, we could save a lot of money.

Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a matter that I have raised before. I did not get a response from the Minister for Industries and Development - not that I expected one. I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Works about it. He wrote back saying: 'Do not call me; we will call you. You might, however, try the Primary Industry Division'. I refer to the provision of fencing along the main arteries which are used to truck cattle in and out of the Territory. Cattlemen in my area, particularly on the Barkly Tablelands, are now saying that there is a need to ensure that the roads are fenced on either side so that, if a truck with a load of 30 cattle rolls over, the animals cannot escape onto the clean properties on each side of the road thereby destroying the results of programs which have been in place for about 10 years.

I appreciate - and I have said this in the House before - that these are very tight times financially and that paying for these fences may not seem like a terribly good option to spend money on. However, if there is a roll-over on the Barkly Highway and 30 cattle escape onto adjoining properties, we will see tens of millions of dollars go down the drain because that is what it has cost over the last 10 to 15 years to eradicate the disease from these herds. The difficulty is that there are nearly 400 km of open road with barely a tree on either side. Cattle which get out of damaged trucks on that road could well be off into the bush for days before anybody found them, even if their markings could be identified from the air. Quite often, dirty cattle are painted so that they can be identified if they get loose.

It is a very real problem. I raise it again today for the benefit of the Minister for Transport and Works and the Minister for Industries and Development. It is time for us to consider putting fences along the Stuart and Barkly Highways where the main transportation of cattle in and out of the Territory occurs. If dirty cattle escape from trucks along the highway and infect the clean herds, we will be back to square one, and the Northern Territory and the properties concerned will lose their status as clean areas.

The last issue that I would like to touch on is the Tennant Creek abattoir. It was mentioned today by several speakers and it is appropriate that I comment on it again myself because we have the benefit today of the presence of Mr Surplice, an official of the AMIEU. The Tennant Creek abattoir was always in a difficult position because it was not ideally located in relation to the catchment area of cattle. Other abattoirs at Katherine and in the Kimberleys have a much greater catchment area for the supply of cattle, as does Mt Isa and perhaps Alice Springs.

Tennant Creek abattoir could have been a very good works if work practices and standards there had enabled it to compete from day 1. The reality was that the industrial situation in that works was never satisfactory to any of the owners and, in the end, it was in their interest to walk away and forget about it. As much as I liked to see the works operating and as much as it brought great benefit to my town, it is very difficult to tell people who are losing a fortune not to close their doors when they are paying for terms and conditions of employment that are not reasonable under the circumstances and probably cannot be justified.

I raise the matter today because I have had many discussions with Mr Surplice over the years about what happens in Northern Territory abattoirs when, as the bottom line, operators just cannot afford to pay the going rate. Should operators walk away because they cannot pay the going rate or should terms and conditions be settled at a level which men are prepared to work for and which the operators can afford? I put it to all members that we have now reached a stage where we can no longer afford to continue to hang on to all the luxurious terms and conditions of employment which have existed in some industries in the past. It may sometimes be in our interests to have terms and conditions of employment in some industries which enable them to survive so that communities can benefit.

The result of the closure of the Tennant Creek meatworks was very simple. We transported a couple of hundred jobs to Rockhampton, Brisbane or elsewhere. The cattle are still being killed and the farmers are probably not getting as much as they received from the Tennant works. We have lost the employment and the flow-on benefits in our community, because we were so inflexible in the way we dealt with existing wage rates and conditions. Other members have reflected that it was a pity that the Tennant Creek meatworks closed. It was

a damn shame that it closed, but it was our collective fault because we were not prepared to change what needed to be changed to enable it to survive.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the minister's comments and I would like to applaud the efforts of all of those people in the department and the industry who have shown terrific persistence with this program for some 10 years. It is starting to reap benefits and it will bring further benefits to us in the future. It will give us an opportunity to ensure that our cattle industry is very viable for another 100 years.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, before I speak to the substance of the report, I think it is probably worth picking up a couple of the final comments the member for Barkly made in relation to the costs of meatworks and the provision of employment in meatworks. He seemed to be saying that it was desirable that meat industry employees should accept reduced pay and conditions in the Northern Territory in order to ensure that slaughtering of cattle continues in the Territory. It seems to me that the whole point of Mudginberri has been to reduce labour costs in that way so that people employed in the meat industry in the Northern Territory get ...

Member interjecting.

Mr BELL: That is exactly what I am coming to. Was that the Attorney-General? He is not prepared to own up to it. Yes, it was the Attorney-General. If he had been listening carefully to what the member for Barkly said, he would have worked out that that is precisely what is not happening, and it is precisely his heroes who are knocking off jobs and knocking off conditions. There is no demonstrable connection between the amount of slaughtering activity in the Northern Territory and the wages that are paid to the people who do it. It is about time that these blokes opposite, along with their mates in the National Farmers Federation and its local equivalent, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, worked out that they are not improving conditions for employees in the Northern Territory meat industry and they are not getting better prices for people who are trying to produce cattle, certainly not around my electorate. I challenge the Minister for Industries and Development or any of the frontbenchers who are interjecting now to provide me with one scintilla of evidence that the reduction in pay and conditions led to more cattle being sold in the Northern Territory. Let us be under no illusion that Mudginberri was a victory for the meat industry in the Northern Territory, whether for employees or employers.

To return to the subject of BTEC, it is an issue on which there is essentially bipartisan support between the government and the opposition. It is worth remarking that there are probably more cattle properties in the Northern Territory in opposition electorates than there are in the electorates of government members. I see the member for Victoria River is about to make a contribution on this issue and I believe the member for Katherine will do so too. I am under no illusion about the voting patterns of my constituents who live on pastoral properties. On the basis of the postal votes, which give a fair indication, I think they run about 1 to 3 against me.

The reason I make a contribution to a debate such as this is because I take seriously the question of the future of the pastoral industry within my electorate, within the Territory and in northern Australia. As report after report has found, in comparison with cattle production in southern Australia, the enterprise is more marginal here. However, the demise of the cattle industry in northern Australia would not only have enormous economic ramifications but enormous social and cultural ramifications, particularly for

Aboriginal people. As well as my concern to represent cattle producers in my electorate, I believe that it is an important social objective to maintain the cattle industry. That is one source of the opposition's support for a bipartisan approach to the industry, together with our belief that, in economic matters, the opposition has as great a responsibility as does the government to maximise the financial return from our assets. In his previous statement to the House, the Minister for Industries and Development referred to the Territory's narrow economic base. Translated into layman's terms, that means we do not have much going for us economically and we have to make the best of what we have. Suffice it to say that, when issues such as the BTEC program come up for consideration, in our customary incisive and percipient fashion, we will appropriately support or constructively criticise the government.

The most chilling aspect of the minister's statement came towards the end and will be of concern to producers in my electorate. In the last couple of pages of his statement, the minister strongly implied that there may be questions of viability in relation to certain pastoral leases if they fail to comply with the program. That will obviously be a matter for concern to the people and companies involved. The issue was raised in a recent edition of the Northern Territory Rural News magazine produced by the minister's department. An article discussed BTEC and I quote from it:

Despite the light appearing at the end of the tunnel and the fact that impending freedom from TB is possible by 1992, there is a lot of work and more heartbreak to be encountered along the road. Some owners of marginally viable pastoral leases will feel they cannot manage the BTEC and, if they cannot find alternative ways of managing, they will move on.

That is the dark side of this particular statement. The positive side is that progress is being made and there is light at the end of the tunnel, as the article says. Obviously, there will be concerns, possibly not so much in my electorate as in the electorate of the member for Victoria River.

I noticed in the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry Study, carried out by GRM International Pty Ltd, that 2 main areas were noted in which the effects of BTEC are likely to cause a problem. The first is in 'the more marginal areas of the Top End and the Victoria River district where the quality of the land resource is not capable of sustaining the improvements and changes in herd management which BTEC requires'. The second area is 'the recently-announced movement restrictions which appear to be unnecessarily harsh on pastoralists who have achieved substantial progress in disease elimination'.

The report goes on further to say that, as some of the strategies involved in those marginal lands are incompatible with BTEC, 'it can be postulated that BTEC will precipitate the end of some enterprises that would otherwise have survived'. It goes on to corroborate the point I made earlier: 'The significance of this is not great in terms of the NT economy but little attention appears to have been given to either the future use and management of such lands or to society's obligations, if any, to those so displaced'. I might say, parenthetically, that the way this statement has been introduced rather inhibits the debate. The Minister for Industries and Development will be aware that the Pastoral Industry Study is order of the day No 12 on today's Notice Paper. It is a shame that we are not proceeding through these issues in a coherent fashion.

The government's interest in statements seems to be more in terms of publicity than in ordered debate. I point out for the benefit of the honourable minister that this is the third statement to which the question of BTEC is relevant. Honourable members will recall the adjourned statement on the Industries and Development portfolio which now appears as order of the day No 24 and then we have the Pastoral Industry Study. I think it would assist the business of this House if statements could be dealt with in the manner that the opposition suggested. Except for urgent matters such as the cane toad in Kulaluk, the opposition could be given statements before they are delivered - as occurred with this one and I thank the minister for that - and they could be debated and disposed of sensibly instead of clogging up the Notice Paper and preventing ordered debate. The minister will be well aware of the constraints of standing orders in that regard.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart spoke about the difficulties of excess shooting to waste. That is something that is dear to my heart. There are 2 properties in my electorate where it has caused problems: Haasts Bluff and Andado. The Chief Minister will be well aware of the difficulties caused by shooting to waste at Andado. He will recall the representations that I made to him in that regard prior to the sale of that particular property recently. Similarly, the shooting to waste at Haasts Bluff has caused considerable and unnecessary hardship in the redevelopment of cattle enterprises in that area. I do not know how BTEC funds are being applied in the case of Haasts Bluff but it is worth while referring to the basic principle underlying BTEC, which is referred to on page 119 of the GRM report: 'It is believed that the national campaign should be based on the principle that disadvantaged producers ought to be compensated so that they are neither worse off nor better off than producers without disease problems'. I would indeed be interested to see the way that that works out in practice. I hope to obtain a briefing from the minister's department about the operation of the campaign in my electorate so that I can be kept informed for the reasons I have already referred to.

On page 9 of his statement, the minister referred to the application of funds allocated for BTEC eradication, particularly the practice of rolling back destocking orders. He quite rightly said that it clearly was a waste of limited BTEC funds and ineffective in achieving eradication objectives which 'will be compromised if the practice is allowed to continue'. I have no hesitation in endorsing that.

In conclusion, with those caveats and concerns arising from my understanding of the way the campaign is working in my electorate, I endorse the minister's statement to the Assembly and reassure him that whatever support may be necessary in my electorate in that regard will be forthcoming.

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, I will not go into any great detail this afternoon on the BTEC statement. I appreciate the fact that most of the points of interest have been raised over the last couple of hours. The early shaky days of the BTEC program were overcome a couple of years ago. I well remember the days when the Territory abounded with reports of cattle without ears and with various other afflictions. Although they were jokes, I know such stories circulated.

The problems were overcome very early and the program has been on line during the last few years. The problem of shooting to waste, which has been raised by several members today, has been very difficult to deal with. In fact, in a number of areas that I am aware of, where shooting has been carried out under the BTEC program, it has been almost impossible to know the numbers that were there until such time as the shooting started. Estimates from

people who have been in a particular area for years would indicate that numbers were fairly low and that the majority of clearing had been done but, when the shooters went in, they found that the numbers were much greater than expected. Buffalo move about quite a lot and numbers can change from week to week. There have often been problems where clean properties are next to properties with unclean cattle. Often shoot-outs have been conducted because of problems with dirty cattle or buffalo getting into clean areas. Of course, the owner of a property always has to give his consent before a shoot-out commences.

Efforts to eradicate feral buffalo during the last few years have concerned me. I have a special feeling for the old buffalo and I have always been of the opinion that it is a resource that the Territory could well make very good use of in time. We are seeing some signs of that now with the buffalo feed lots that are appearing and the interest that is shown in the better meat from young buffalo. For the tourist industry, an area needs to be set aside where buffalo can roam reasonably freely whilst there is a buffer zone to protect areas that have been cleared. Of course, such buffalo would have to be monitored negative.

The improved control of stock on properties, which has come about through BTEC, will have resounding effects on the cattle industry in the Northern Territory. In the past, cattle have roamed over very large areas and have been essentially out of control. Many beasts have become semi-feral and have only shown up in occasional musters. Under BTEC, with fenced areas and water in the right places, there has been an increased ability to control cattle and obtain the best value for the resource. I believe that, over a number of years, cattle properties in the Northern Territory will diminish in size and become more intensive as a result of BTEC.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned earlier that there are some marginal areas in the Victoria River electorate. There are marginal areas in the Victoria River electorate and there are marginal areas in other parts of the Territory as well. In time, these areas may be better put to some other use but it is also possible that, with some development, they can be adequately run, whilst in some areas which have a better land resource, the size of properties can be brought down quite dramatically. In some of the better areas, properties reduced to 500 km² or even 100 km² could run enough cattle to provide a reasonable living for a family and I believe that, in time, that will come about. It will probably take a fair amount of time but I think it will happen.

The member for Stuart raised the problem of bovine tuberculosis and the chance of people contracting bovine TB. I understand that can be a problem. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to check out the ramifications of that problem in terms of the Work Health Act, but I will take the point up and find out just where we stand in that regard.

Mr Ede: Will you let me know?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I will let the member for Stuart know.

Mr Speaker, much has been said about abattoirs in the Northern Territory and the ability of the Northern Territory to process its own resource. I am very firmly of the belief that, if we have efficient and well-run facilities in the Northern Territory and offer the right price, people will bring their cattle to us. Some abattoirs are operating in the Northern Territory under the Northern Territory award and doing extremely well. Those that have

operated under a tally system have not operated so effectively and are not doing very well at all. The abattoir at Meneling is looking at the installation of a meatmeal plant and other processing that will add to the value of the resource. Those sorts of things will happen over time, but only if an abattoir is running efficiently enough and economically enough to enable them to happen. They will not happen where an abattoir is being driven into the ground by high wage payments. The average of \$1000 per week which is paid under the Territory award is not a bad living for the average meatworker.

Some reference was made to buffalo spreading mimosa, which I should have covered when I was talking about buffalo. In my view, buffalo have not been the major spreaders of mimosa in the Top End. It has occurred through flooding. Members may recall that, a few years ago, when hundreds of buffalo were wandering over the flood plains around Beatrice Hill, there was very little mimosa in the area. However, 5 or 6 years ago, after the buffalo had been shot out and after flooding of the area, mimosa spread quite dramatically. I believe the buffalo has been much maligned in this respect and that flooding has spread the problem.

Mr Speaker, most things have already been said in relation to BTEC today. I believe that the BTEC program in the Northern Territory has been not only one of the most successful BTEC programs in Australia, but in the world. The United States has been struggling with the problem of brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication for many years and has, in fact, set standards for us which it has not been able to meet itself. I believe that we are in front. Considering that we started from way behind the 8-ball, we have come a long way. That is due in no small measure to the officers responsible for handling the program in the former Department of Primary Production, now the Department of Industries and Development, and the cattle owners themselves. The property owners have cooperated extremely well. There will always be some who find it difficult to cooperate, for whatever reason, and that necessitates controls which involve expense not only to government but to the property owner. The outcome of the program will be a much better cattle resource here in the Northern Territory which will be easier to handle, cheaper to muster and control, and which will make money for Territorians.

The BTEC program has been very successful. It is drawing to a close. It has been costly but I believe it will be very worthwhile in the long run and we will see a great deal of benefit from it. I support the statement.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I would also like to speak to the minister's statement on the BTEC program. Much of what I have to say has already been said, so I will be fairly brief.

The costs of the program have been well illustrated here and elsewhere but I believe that it will be some time before the full benefits of the program are recognised. Some benefits will be felt in the industry for many years to come. These will include improved management of herds throughout the Territory and enhanced pasture management, which will lead to an improvement of pastures, better erosion control and prevention of soil loss. I think the turn-off rate will become more predictable and that increased weight and productivity will also occur through the introduction of improved blood lines. Most importantly, the provision of disease-free herds will put us in a position where we will be able to maintain our status as a beef exporter and retain our international markets.

It is important that we do not overlook the considerable cost of the program, not only from the direct industry and government viewpoint but,

indirectly, to the whole community. Any government cost is a contribution from the community. In the eyes of some, funds may be better spent on such things as schools and hospitals. I am not suggesting that that should be the case but I believe it is a consideration which is occasionally overlooked by some people in the industry.

I applaud the minister's comments in relation to the minimisation of waste and the reduction, where possible, in the shooting of animals. The member for Victoria River has already outlined other aspects of that. In agreeing with him, I think that there is a need to recognise the practicalities of the situation. It is very difficult to assess the numbers of animals in some areas, particularly in some of the more heavily-vegetated parts of the Top End. Anyone who has been involved in such operations, as I have, would realise that. Estimates deriving from surveys of some areas can be very low, indicating that it would be totally unprofitable to attempt to clear animals for commercial utilisation. It is not until shooting out is decided upon and proceeded with that the actual numbers in the area become evident. It is too late by then and the results can be disturbing to some people. The more radical environmentalists need to be watched in this regard. There is potential there for an argument to be used against shoot-outs and that would be deleterious to the overall success of the program.

In relation to buffalo and environmental damage, I do not think there is any denying the damage which has occurred from large numbers of buffalo. There is a need to look at the problem in terms of population densities and the concentration of large numbers of animals in some areas, particularly the wetlands and the coastal plains to the east of Darwin. Much of the damage in that area is purely the result of a high density of buffalo population. There is an argument that the animal should be shot out in certain areas. There is also an environmental argument for the complete elimination of the feral buffalo in the Territory, which would be to the detriment of the future of the buffalo industry. I do not see the problem as being related only to the buffalo as a species but to population densities and the concentration of a large number of animals in a small area. I think the future potential of the industry can be realised and sustained without causing environmental damage, provided that reasonable management practices are employed.

I also differ to some extent with the member for Victoria River in relation to his comments about the spread of mimosa. Buffalo contribute to the spread of the plant, but not directly. I believe it occurs as an indirect result of buffalo. Perhaps one of the major reasons for that is that buffalo in large concentrations have the ability to denude large areas of land, to remove all vegetation and, through trampling the ground, to create considerable surface disturbance. The lack of competition from other plants facilitates the spread of mimosa.

I would like to address a couple of comments made by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in relation to the movement of animals interstate. The issues have been raised before by members of the opposition and have been addressed in this House. I do not think that it would be right to let some of those comments pass without a response.

I do not argue with the fact that as many animals as possible that are raised in the Territory should be put through local meatworks or that there should be production of by-products. However, we should look at some of the reasons why that is not occurring now. One could cite the closures of meatworks, particularly those at Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. It was interesting to hear comments from the member for MacDonnell concerning the

opposition's support for such bodies as the AMIEU. We know why those meatworks are closed. The unreasonable work conditions and the salaries which had to be paid to employees under previous regimes bore no relation to the value of the product ...

Mr Ede: What have you got against workers? Why are you always knocking them?

Mr REED: I have nothing against workers. I would like to see as many of them employed as possible but, under the work practices employed by many unions, that cannot occur.

Employees' demands made it unprofitable to operate the meatworks, and I believe that that is clearly illustrated by the small number of them that are operating in the Territory today.

It is incredible that the members of the opposition continually raise this issue and even more so that they continue to support the stand of the AMIEU. In recent years, that union has conducted a dreadful campaign against the operators of the Mudginberri and Victoria Valley abattoirs and did everything possible to close them down. It was supported by the members opposite. Fortunately, Mudginberri and the Victoria Valley abattoirs are operating and have been doing so throughout this year, providing employment for Territorians and anyone else who wants to work.

Similar circumstances arose in Katherine earlier this year, and it is interesting to look at some of the news items that related to the activities at that time. I quote from the Katherine Times of 25 May in which a statement by the Leader of the Opposition reads as follows:

The Territory government, including the local member, Mr Reed, are apparently content to see Katherine dole queues swell in tune with the finances of New South Wales and Queensland. Mr Smith said the Country Liberal Party's attitude towards the beef industry was incomprehensible. Territory cattle raised on Territory land, fed by Territory grass, will be slaughtered by outsiders with little economic benefit felt here.

Under those circumstances, it is surprising that any abattoirs are operating at all, employing anybody or putting through local cattle. The new operator at the Katherine meatworks had every obstacle placed in his way by the AMIEU and members opposite when he was attempting to get the meatworks operating again this year. Perhaps that is best illustrated by remarks by the Secretary of the Queensland Branch of the AMIEU, Mr Les Day, published in the Katherine Advertiser on 20 May:

The Australian Meat Industry Employees Union has threatened to seek an injunction to stop the Katherine meatworks from operating until a dispute about interstate labour is resolved. The secretary of the union's Queensland and NT Branch, Les Day, said yesterday morning that the management of the meatworks, Fred Paul Merrylands, had refused to carry out the Northern Territory meat processing award.

That was totally incorrect. It is just another example of the extent to which unions will go to stop companies operating effectively and providing employment to anyone who wants a job.

It is interesting that, on page 23 of the same edition of the Katherine Advertiser, an article says:

The Katherine Meatworks has bought its first consignment of cattle this season at a sale conducted by Dalgety Bennetts Farmers ... Cattle sold had been mustered at Elsey, Moroak, Kildurk, Billengarra, Manbulloo, Calvert Hills and Delamere stations. Cows had averaged \$153, bulls \$266 and oxen \$268. Top cows had made up to \$250, top bulls up to \$410 and top oxen up to \$395.

Despite this, the Leader of the Opposition stood up here today and told us that cattle are grazing on Territory grass and wearing out Territory soil while we receive no benefits. The facts are different. I have just quoted the results of the year's first sale and those results have been repeated continuously through the year. I do not think the abattoir in Katherine lost an hour through any strike or other industrial action this year. It was a screaming success, much to the disappointment of the AMIEU, I dare say. Everyone who wanted a job got one and good prices were paid to the industry. If the opposition and the AMIEU had their way, there would not have been a single abattoir operating in the Northern Territory this year.

Mr Speaker, in closing I would like to pay tribute to the staff of the Department of Industries and Development, particularly the stock inspectors and vets. Those people operate under very difficult circumstances. They are required to test animals before shipment and this can involve travelling long distances at any time of the day or night. Indeed, I know it is the case at times that, following long-distance travel to a station to test animals, it is then necessary for a staff member to travel another considerable distance to the next station to conduct more tests in order to provide a service that enables the industry to keep moving and to minimise any inconvenience which might be experienced in relation to the program. Those members of staff have done a magnificent job and, in dealing with the occasional request from pastoralists in relation to the program or some difficulties that they may be experiencing, I know that it is just a matter of contacting the staff. They are always ready to talk to the person concerned. They always seem to be willing to help, without creating any inconvenience to adjoining land holders if possible or putting in jeopardy any aspect of the program.

Mr Speaker, I support the minister's statement.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the comments of honourable members supporting the work of officers of my department in regard to this complicated and long campaign.

I will be advising the House further on the subject of abattoirs during subsequent sittings. The government intends to look at some of the economics of abattoir operations, particularly in central Australia where there are no export abattoir operations at present. A few still operate in the Top End. We will look at things like the economics of processing by-products and holding offal cuts, which currently are just disposed of. If cattle are processed in a big coastal abattoir, the throughput is such that kidneys, livers and so forth are kept as a valuable product, whereas in central Australia these products have no value. The same applies to hides. I believe the difference between a processed and semi-processed hide can be \$60 or more. That has a significant bearing on what an abattoir can pay for cattle.

The bottom line always boils down to economics. There is no point in the Leader of the Opposition saying that it is the government's fault that more

animals are not processed in the Northern Territory. It is purely a matter of economics. We can try to improve the economics if there are ways of doing that without writing out cheques to abattoirs. The Territory government is not in that line of business or, at least, I hope we are not in that line of business any more. I would have thought that the unions would rather see their members employed on \$600 a week rather than unemployed because they want \$1000 a week. Members opposite say that we expect the workers to work for nothing or under slave conditions but that is not the case; I believe there is a middle ground.

Honourable members are obviously aware that destocking is a sad process when it comes to shooting to waste. I can advise members and place on record that every attempt is made to salvage animals for some economic purpose. Buffalo may be caught and moved to properties or taken to abattoirs. As a last resort, pet meaters may be sent in to kill in the field so as to obtain some economic benefit. Notwithstanding those efforts, much of the Northern Territory's buffalo country, such as Arnhem Land, is so inaccessible and harsh that it is absolutely uneconomic to try to catch buffalo in many cases and many thousands of animals have to be shot to waste. I am sure honourable members are aware that we encourage ...

Mr Ede: Game shooting.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, we do encourage safari operators to come to arrangements with landowners to take economic advantage of animals in that regard. This government encourages that on an unrestricted basis. I advise honourable members that the government will take every step to try to eliminate shooting to waste where that is possible.

The subject of movement conditions raised some interest among members opposite. Mr Speaker, I table a document entitled 'New Cattle Movement Conditions'. It is a complicated document setting out 8 categories of status of cattle on properties in the Northern Territory. There are 3 different zones of status as far as the land is concerned. Given that cattle might be sent interstate either as store cattle or slaughter cattle, it makes for a very complicated equation. However, late last month, agreement from all parties was reached to send Northern Territory cattle to South Australia. The situation in Queensland is not yet finalised but arrangements are close to being finalised. Those arrangements will be basically similar to internal Northern Territory movement restrictions if they come into place as is currently envisaged. I understand that the Northern Territory authorities have no problem in that regard.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 23 February 1988 at 10 am or such other time and or date which may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SETTER (Jingili)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the debate on the Appropriation Bill on 17 December, I responded to remarks made by the

Leader of the Opposition and, in particular, to his reference to research relating to expenditure by mining companies within the Northern Territory. He referred to research undertaken by a Dr Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh of NARU. In my response, I asked who this person was and indicated that I had never heard of him. Although I have previously met Dr O'Faircheallaigh, because of the poor pronunciation of his name by the Leader of the Opposition, I did not connect the person to whom the Leader of the Opposition referred with Dr O'Faircheallaigh. Although the Leader of the Opposition referred to NARU, he did not elaborate and clarify that he was referring to the North Australia Research Unit, which only served to cloud the matter further. Mr Speaker, I wish to place on record that in no way did I wish to reflect on the excellent work done by Dr O'Faircheallaigh nor on his credentials.

LAW OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 78)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

As honourable members are aware, Mr Tom Pauling QC, a distinguished practitioner in the Northern Territory and senior member of the Bar is to be appointed as Solicitor General. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Law Officers Act to provide that the qualification for Solicitor General be 5 years admission as a practitioner in any Australian jurisdiction. This bill is not related to Mr Pauling's appointment.

Appointment of the Solicitor General is made by the Administrator under section 13(1) of the Law Officers Act. The Law Officers Act presently provides in section 13(2) that the qualification for appointment as Solicitor General is admission as a legal practitioner of 5 years standing. The effect of section 18 of the Interpretation Act and the Legal Practitioners Act is that the term 'legal practitioner' means that only a person who has practised in the Northern Territory for 5 years is eligible for appointment whilst section 32(1)(b) of the Supreme Court Act provides that the qualification for appointment to the Supreme Court is 10 years admission in any Australian jurisdiction.

Section 13(2) was added in 1986 when the office of Solicitor General was made independent of the public service. Prior to that, the relevant provision merely provided that the Solicitor General had to be a person who was admitted or qualified to be admitted as a legal practitioner. There was no standing requirement. At the time of the 1986 amendment, no policy decision was taken to confine appointments to persons of 5 years standing in the Northern Territory although this is now the effect. In my second-reading speech, when introducing the 1986 amendment, I pointed out that the terms and conditions applicable to the office of Solicitor General were substantially the same as those applicable to judicial appointments. It is in this context that the government proposes the amendment. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) Bill (Serial 79) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (DEATHS IN CUSTODY) BILL
(Serial 79)

Continued from 25 November 1987.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this legislation. I notice that there has been a request by Mr Justice Muirhead for provision to be made for the possibility of additional commissioners. The legislation is framed to allow the Administrator to appoint 2 other commissioners should that be necessary. It is unfortunate that the problem is so large that it may indeed be necessary for 2 extra commissioners to be appointed. The number of deaths that are being examined seems to climb regularly. It was 100 at the last count but there is no particular cut-off time in respect of the number of deaths to be reported on. If further deaths occur after the issue of letters patent, they will be the subject of the inquiry. I hope that we will get a clearer indication from the Chief Minister on the assistance which the Territory government will be providing to the operation of the commission. Quite possibly, he may not be able to provide us with that until next year.

In the meantime, there is a point that I would like to comment on. Mr Justice Muirhead requested that governments not wait for the inquiry's finding but take action immediately to prevent further deaths in custody. If conditions can be changed or if legislative or administrative steps can be put in train to reduce occurrences of deaths, they should be taken. I acknowledge that some things have been done in the Northern Territory which will hopefully allow that to happen. I refer, of course, to legislation which was brought in recently relating to the extension of community service orders and the possibility of people being able to serve their sentences of detention at home. Those are positive moves and we hope that, if they are put into practice, they will have a very practical effect.

The other day, I heard that there was a shortage of people on community service orders, and this has worried me. Community groups looking for people to work in an old peoples' home in Darwin were unable to find anybody who was on a community service order to undertake what was basically a painting job, or something similar. That is worrying. If it indicated that the prisons were emptying, I would have no problem with it, but I have heard that that is not the case and that, in fact, our prisons are still overfull. Whether it indicates that some magistrates are unwilling to use community service orders, I am not quite sure. Members on this side of the House will continue to keep an eye on the situation to ensure that the legislation is being used to its maximum effect.

However, there are examples where it is unfortunate that this government has not taken action which could in some way be seen to ameliorate the occurrence of deaths in custody. In fact, it could be seen to be working for the reverse. I refer to the very unfortunate legislation that was introduced earlier this year, the Police Administration Amendment Bill, the Bail Amendment Bill and the Criminal Code Amendment Bill. I am glad to hear that we are not proceeding with that legislation at this stage. I think it was most unfortunate that the government even considered going ahead with legislation of that nature at the very time when Justice Muirhead is setting up his inquiry. It is the very type of draconian legislation which is causing the tragic problems which have been occurring around Australia.

I would hope that, in the spirit of this present legislation and to support the inquiry, this government will withdraw that legislation now so that a completely new form of legislation can be considered by the people and brought before the House next year. I would ask the Chief Minister to table in this House today the draft amendments that are being circulated. I do not ask that he introduce them or anything like that, but simply that he table them so that all members of this Assembly can have a look at them. That would enable us to discuss them with community groups and people in our electorates over the Christmas break. I hope he will address that requirement in his reply. I see that he is shaking his head, which is rather disgusting.

Mr Hatton: Oh, come off it. There are procedures to follow, you fool.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I object!

Mr Hatton: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw that remark. I don't like being too complimentary.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, for the information of the Chief Minister, who was not here at the time, the whole of the Criminal Code was tabled whilst in the process of being drafted.

Mr Hatton: You weren't here either.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not here at the time but I have taken the trouble to take a look at what has gone on in this House in the past so that I could rely on the wisdom and knowledge of those that went before me. It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister has not done the same thing. He could follow the precedent which was set with that piece of legislation. That legislation was widely discussed and ...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We have allowed the honourable member considerable latitude but he is speaking a mile off the subject. This debate is about a bill for specific legislation in respect of a Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The honourable member is talking about an amendment proposed to totally separate legislation that is on the Notice Paper. It has nothing to do with this particular subject.

Mr EDE: It concerns custody, and custody is what I am talking about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member's remarks must relate to this bill.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, death in custody is a tragic occurrence, whether it is the death of an Aboriginal or a non-Aboriginal. There have been such deaths here and we are attempting to ensure that there will be no more such deaths in the future. That is why, on this side of the House, we will do all in our power to scrutinise legislation that is put forward. I have given an example by seeking the tabling of amendments to the Police Administration Amendment Bill so that the community can consider them. I cannot see why the Chief Minister is objecting to that request. He must have something to hide in the legislation. We will have to have another look at it. We must see if we can get a copy from somewhere else.

Mr Hatton: You have to wait until it is drafted first.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, that interjection shows that the Chief Minister is obviously not keeping a close eye on that particular piece of

legislation. Copies of it are floating around the community. They are drafted amendments and I am hoping to be able to get a copy from that source. The unfortunate thing is that I had hoped that due procedure could be followed and the Chief Minister would table a copy here so that we could all look at it. He cannot denigrate us for not following due procedure when he will not follow it himself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that 10% of the total number of deaths being investigated occurred in the Northern Territory. In my electorate, this issue generates a very considerable degree of feeling. Emotion becomes almost uncontrollable when something of this nature occurs. It is something which rends the community. That comes about because of the way information is spread, the way people take sides and the difficulty of bringing the threads together and getting people to discuss them in a rational way. It is extremely difficult. I am sure that my colleagues the members for Arafura and Arnhem have had the same experience in their bush electorates. They will be familiar with the way the whole community erupts in grief and anger when something of this nature occurs.

The inquiry will not investigate only the actual deaths. I hope that it will look rather more broadly at the system and I will back up some remarks made about this by the Minister for Health and Community Services. I thought he was quite correct when he stated that a broad inquiry was required rather than a narrow one. I can understand that people were worried that it might become non-directional or unfocused through attempting to cover a broad area, but I think that is what needs to be done.

The problem of imprisonment overall is a massive one. We need to look at the disproportionate imprisonment rate of Aboriginal people, not just from the point of view of the judicial system but in terms of the community processes which lead to the problem. If the federal government is unable to act in that matter, I would hope that this government might be able to assist so that we can do something about the high imprisonment rate as well as to address the reasons for this high death rate in police custody.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to make some brief comments in relation to this particular bill. It is obviously a subject of great concern to me and to Aboriginal people in my electorate.

People who were members of this Assembly before 1983 may recall that I raised a case which will come within the ambit of this inquiry. It concerned the death of Johnny Pick Tjapangarti and it received some publicity at the time. He was arrested in Alice Springs under protective custody legislation. As I recall it, the police did not detect that he had a subdural haematoma which, in layman's terms is a bad knock on the head, and he died in custody. I think that the publicity I gave in this Assembly to that incident may have contributed to the establishment of the shelter in Schwarz Crescent. I know that it was a relief to the police no longer to have to have to deal with people in cells under those circumstances.

That particular case was obviously different in nature from the deaths that have occurred elsewhere and which may appear to be suicides. Clearly, it is not appropriate to pre-empt the operation of the inquiry by speculating on such issues and I simply wish to place on record my support for the inquiry and my appreciation of the government's cooperation with it.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in support of the bill introduced by the Chief Minister.

The issue has been an emotive one in Aboriginal communities, not only in the Northern Territory but in Australia as a whole. I believe that the announcement was appreciated by the Aboriginal community throughout Australia. At a time when we are trying to celebrate 200 years of European settlement, the Commonwealth government's decision to hold such an inquiry is welcome.

I do not personally know the families of people who have died in custody. I can certainly appreciate the emotional stress they experience when they lose somebody, especially in custody, whether the death be alcohol-related or as a result of fights or whatever. Aboriginal people take a very emotional view of deaths in their families, especially where an investigation is conducted over a long period and the body is not available for ceremonial purposes.

I am pleased to give my support to the bill. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, we will do whatever we can on this side of the House to give Justice Muirhead our support in trying to rectify a situation which is very worrying to the whole community. I believe that, at the same time, we need to look at the whole penal system in terms of what we can do in our correctional system to rehabilitate people. I certainly commend the bill.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of this legislation and their assistance in allowing it to pass through all stages during the course of these sittings. It is important that we take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that this inquiry can commence and carry out its tasks as soon as possible.

I would like to make a couple of brief comments in response to some of the points that were made by members opposite. I do not want to detract in any way from the seriousness and importance which my government places upon this inquiry, nor do I want to stray too far from the topic. However, I feel compelled to make some comments in response to the member for Stuart.

I refer particularly to the tabling of proposed amendments to legislation before the House. That has been done in this House on a number of occasions. The proposed Work Health Act was tabled in the House for consideration by members, as was the Criminal Code, and I believe it has also occurred from time to time with other complex legislation. In each of those cases, Cabinet approved the tabling of the legislation in the Legislative Assembly. A proper procedure is adopted so that what is brought forward is a government view rather than draft documentation which may have no imprimatur whatsoever.

I would urge the member for Stuart, when he goes to his sources to pick up the documentation, to be particularly careful about what he does. I can advise him that the drafts which he has are the initial drafts resulting from discussions with the legal fraternity, the police and the Department of Law. They are initial drafts and I can advise him that there has been considerable further drafting, through our legislative draftsmen, to ensure that the bills are properly constructed to express the intent of those discussions. They will be processed by way of a submission to Cabinet for approval, prior to any further action. I will not table a document in this House that is not in a form that can be properly considered by members. If members opposite want to run around in the community, they would be wise to obtain some decent briefings beforehand so that they do not make fools of themselves or cause unnecessary stress or heartache among the people they are talking with.

Members opposite would be wiser to trust the judgment of people in the community who have been involved in negotiations with government officials. These include employees of Aboriginal legal aid services, and members of the Association of Criminal Lawyers and the Law Society.

Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of this legislation. Whilst I recognise the stress and concern that is created by the apparently inordinately large number of Aboriginal deaths in custody, particularly in some parts of Australia, we should work towards the elimination of deaths in custody, irrespective of whether the person is an Aboriginal or a non-Aboriginal. I have been amazed that very few people have sought to address that broader issue. It is a shame that the federal government did not try to attack the problem of what is causing people to end up in prison rather than trying to shut the gate after the horse has bolted. The reasons why Aboriginal people commit crimes and find themselves in detention should be addressed.

We are not prepared to tell magistrates what they can or cannot do. It is the role of the legislature to provide options for the judiciary to determine the nature of correction or punishment arising from crimes or misdemeanours. It is not the role of the legislature to determine the nature of specific penalties that are imposed by the judicial system. I would urge honourable members opposite not to pervert the triumvirate of the democratic process by seeking to impose that. We had enough of that difficulty over the last several years with people trying to politicise a very complex judicial case in respect of the Chamberlain inquiry. Even though this may not be in that league, it is not the role of the legislature to become the judiciary.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

 JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL
 (Serial 75)

Continued from 28 October 1987.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I advise that the opposition will oppose certain parts of the bill. We have concerns in respect of the boards of management and the input of people on the boards. We believe that the boards do not allow for any input from people other than those who are either directly or indirectly responsible to the minister. We ask the minister to consider having board members not only from within government departments but from across the community as a whole. In this way, there would be a range of people who would be able to advise the minister in respect of his conduct relating to matters concerning juveniles.

We believe that flexible treatment of juvenile offenders and maximum input from the community and relevant authorities are essential if we are to break the crime cycle. Clause 10 of the bill significantly reduces the powers and functions of the new boards. The existing section 10 of the act empowers the committee to initiate or collect data and statistics in relation to juvenile offenders. It also gives it the authority to initiate studies and research into matters under the act, to monitor and evaluate the administration and operation of the act and to invite and consider written and oral submissions on matters relating to the act and other things which may be authorised by the minister. However, the new clause deletes almost all of those functions and confines the boards to examining, evaluating and observing before reporting to the minister. The minister should be the person responsible for authorising his officers to correlate information in respect of juvenile offenders. In the end, the responsibility should be with the minister.

We believe that the boards should have meetings not only in Darwin but throughout the Northern Territory so that people in other communities will be able to see them in action and so that they will take into account the feelings and the aspirations of communities outside Darwin.

We will be opposing clause 14 of the bill which amends section 21 of the principal act. There is a requirement that juvenile courts be conducted in the same area as adult court hearings. The opposition opposes that because we believe that, if you put children into the same courts as adults, you create a certain mentality. We would not like to see children in the same courts as adults. Concerns have been expressed to us about kids who are probably a bit embarrassed and nervous to stand in a courtroom in which an adult case has previously been heard. I believe that it would be found that many people in the community support a system where the 2 courts operate independently of each other. Financial aspects would have to be taken into account but it is our view that the children should be kept out of the courtrooms where adult cases are being heard.

We are opposing clause 17 which would permit police officers to take fingerprints and other identifying material relating to a juvenile where he or she may be in lawful custody. We understand that, at the moment, that is not being done. However clause 17 of the amending legislation permits that. We would not like under-age children to be fingerprinted or for any personal data to be collected from them without the aid of a parent or legal guardian. To follow such a course would surely bring the government into conflict with people concerned about the protection of civil liberties. We have a concern. We believe that once a child is in lawful custody, whenever possible there should be a parent present to assist in answering queries or if fingerprints are being taken.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, as stated by the member for Arnhem, we will be opposing some aspects of this bill. We are not opposing the whole bill because there are some points which are not objectionable.

I was looking at a newspaper report of 29 October 1987 which bears all the hallmarks of a government press release simply inserted without any adaptation. It was quite strange to look at the various points that were raised in it. All the non-contentious points were highlighted in the newspaper and none of the contentious amendments were covered. Right at the end, there was some mention of them but they were not explained. Consequently, Mr Speaker, I will read from the article and you will know which points we are not opposing.

The first is an 'increase in the penalty for absconding from detention from 28 days to 90 days'. We agree with that. The next is the 'power of the courts to be able to cancel a juvenile's driver's licence if they consider the person is not suitable to hold one'. We agree with that. We think that that is quite a powerful penalty for 16 and 17-year-olds. I think sometimes that they value their drivers' licences above their liberty. They certainly seem to value them above their life at some stages, if the way some of the younger people drive around late at night with too much alcohol in their veins is any indication. Again, the idea that police officers should be able to lay complaints against juveniles is acceptable to us. The article also says that 'the laws governing juvenile detention centres will undergo several changes' and that children in detention centres will be able to leave under supervision. We have agreed to that, but there are related issues that we do not agree with. The article covered the areas of the bill that we more or less agree with.

I will briefly cover the points made by the member for Arnhem in relation to the areas that we are opposing. We will address these in more detail in the committee stage. The major point relates to the replacement of the Juvenile Justice Review Committee with boards of management. I feel quite strongly on this issue. I feel that the old Juvenile Justice Review Committee had a composition which allowed broad community input. Whether it always ended up with broad community input or not is beside the point; the legislative framework allowed for a broad input.

As I recall, it comprised: the Chief Magistrate; nominees of the Attorney-General, the Minister for Education, the Commissioner of Police and the Minister for Health and Community Services; and 5 other members who were appointed by the minister. The minister had quite significant representation on that committee in that he could nominate 6 people. The fact that the Commissioner of Police, the Minister for Education and the Attorney-General were also able to nominate a representative gave the committee a breadth of view which, I believe, was quite essential. The powers of the committee were quite broad-ranging. Now that committee is to be replaced by 2 boards of management.

The boards of management will consist of the minister's nominees only. Mr Speaker, I object to that. Given the amount of criticism there has been, I think there is a real danger in it. I have a few headlines here: 'Magistrate Slams Poor Security', 'Freed From Prison', 'NT Youth Service Is A Dog's Dinner', 'Magistrate Slams Dale On Report' and 'Magistrate Still Critical'. This kind of headline appears again and again in Australian newspapers. Even if one concentrates only on the NT News there are many examples of people who are not directly under the minister's control being critical of the juvenile justice system in the Northern Territory. That is why I am suspicious when I see the minister replacing the Juvenile Justice Review Committee with boards of management comprising only his own nominees. I ask myself why he is doing that. What was wrong with the other people? Were they being rather critical? Were they attempting to solve situations in a way that the minister did not agree with? Is that why he has decided that he needs to have his own nominees in such positions?

It is an area which needs the broadest community involvement. If there were to be changes, I would have liked to have seen some of the community organisations that are involved in juvenile work being entitled to nominate one of the 5 members the minister is able to nominate currently. If the legislation needed amending, it was to ensure more community involvement. Instead, we have this boards of management proposal which allows for no such broad community input. They will be comprised of public servants from within the department responsible for administration of the Juvenile Justice Act, plus 4 members appointed by the minister. That is a retrograde step. It is quite contrary to the trend in juvenile justice legislation in other jurisdictions around Australia, which is to involve more community organisations. Organisations which are involved in day-to-day contact with matters involving juveniles are being included in these types of boards elsewhere but, unfortunately, that is not happening here and we object to that.

We are worried about the changes in powers and functions which flow from the change from a review committee to boards of management. The reduction in the powers and functions of the new boards as compared to the old committee is most unfortunate. The committee was empowered to initiate the collection of data and statistics in relation to offenders and had the power to institute research studies. All that is gone. The new boards do not have those powers.

They are confined to examining, evaluating, observing and reporting to the minister. The whole process will be in-house and very much under the finger of the minister. They will be paper tigers, mere ciphers. What we had before was a move in the right direction. We are now going backwards and this is most unfortunate.

I do not know how the groups will examine and evaluate programs without the power to collect data, make studies and obtain submissions from outside organisations. I am extremely worried that, because of their lack of powers to do such things, the new boards of management will have to rely simply on departmental reports. That is most unfortunate. I do not know what the government is attempting to hide by abolishing the independent committee but the answer may lie in the highly critical reports that we have read in the newspapers recently.

The opposition also objects most strongly to the deletion of the existing requirements that juvenile courts be conducted in a separate building or at a separate time from adult magistrate courts. If they are not in a separate building, juvenile proceedings should be conducted at a separate time. The government will argue that this is a purely practical matter, but I was most upset to discover that the government had been breaking the law for quite some considerable time.

Mr Manzie: That must have really upset you.

Mr EDE: It did upset me, Mr Speaker. The government creates legislation.

Mr Dale: Okay, we will fix it.

Mr EDE: That is not the way you should go about things. The legislation was there for a particular purpose. It is not appropriate for the government to break the law and, after it has been doing so for some time, to turn around and say that it will change the law to fit in with the situation. The original legislation was quite good and there were very good reasons for it. It is not a matter of changing the legislation. It is a matter of obeying the law. If this government will not obey its own laws, how can it turn around with a straight face and demand that people in the community obey the law? The government should have a bit more respect for its own legislation.

There are very good reasons for separating juvenile court proceedings from adult court proceedings and they are understood around the world. The same reasons apply in keeping juveniles and adults in separate detention centres. The purpose is to stop young people from associating with old crims and getting the idea that crime is an accepted part of life. Members who have spent time around the courts at various times to give character evidence or something of that nature will have seen that it is not uncommon for some of the more experienced offenders to joke about what they are up for this time. Such byplay often occurs outside the courtroom. It happens frequently in the foyer in Alice Springs. What is the effect of that on a juvenile who is waiting for his court case to come up in the same building? A juvenile offender may hear such comments as: 'How are you going Bill? I haven't seen you since the last time you did a couple of months. What do you reckon you will get this time?' The kid is probably feeling quite ashamed at first and ready to be dealt with by the courts in a reasonable manner. He then sees the old-timers making a big joke of the situation. The kid will tend to think that things are not so serious and, in emulating his elders, may fall into the pattern of modelling himself on criminals. That can be the start of a life of crime.

The government should have complied with its own legislation. The minister might ask what should happen in an outback community when the magistrate comes in and things are very busy and only 1 court building is available. The example simply supports my point. In that sort of situation, the best thing the magistrate can do is leave the courthouse and hold juvenile hearings in the council chamber or the community hall or some other setting that belongs to the community. The message to the community will be: 'This is your responsibility. You are part of this. The family has to be strengthened, the community has to be strengthened and the community has to assist with this child'. The child should not be taken to the police station or the courtroom.

Not only in Australia but around the world, juvenile offenders are being kept from the possibility of being initiated into the criminal world through exposure to adult offenders. It is most unfortunate that this government is going backwards in that area.

The police will now be the only authorised people in terms of apprehension and remand. That is fair enough. Other people were previously involved but it may have been found that only police have sufficient training to carry out arrests and lay charges. If that is the case, we are quite happy with the change.

The fingerprinting situation is ridiculous. It will now be the case that a kid can be fingerprinted for pinching a packet of chewing gum from Coles and those fingerprints may stay on record for the rest of the person's life. If there is a real need for fingerprinting, scope was available under the old act. Under that act, the onus was on the authorities to justify the keeping of fingerprints and they were destroyed unless certain procedures were instituted. The situation has been reversed. Everybody will be fingerprinted and the fingerprints will be kept unless certain action is taken to try to have them removed. That is a backward step and we will resist it.

In respect of official visitors, during the years when I had control of a correctional institution, I must admit that I was rather fearful of the visiting judges. They delved deeply into individual cases and the institution itself. They did an excellent job and brought to it an aura of authority and a belief in the rule of law and its place in society. The older I have become, the more respect I have for that. It is unfortunate that here we have a move away from the judiciary's rights and obligations to act as visiting justices to the juvenile detention centres and their replacement with what would appear to be public servants. It worries me that, even if the minister acts in the very best manner and if those people are all people of good will, people at the other end of the system will perceive it as a means by which the minister will be able to choke off criticism and muzzle any opposition which might develop in juvenile detention centres.

Mr Speaker, the provisions regarding medical treatment and the rights of people to be informed are most praiseworthy. I believe that they are excellent provisions. We had considerable discussion regarding the compulsory testing for AIDS. We have supported it in relation to adults but it took some discussion before we eventually decided that the disease is so serious that the test should also be applied to juveniles. However, we felt that, if it were to be applied, there must be substantial confidentiality provisions. Our amendments will ensure confidentiality and that the rights of the individual are protected.

As I said, the bill is a mixture of good and bad. It is unfortunate that, in some areas, the legislation seems to be moving against the trend elsewhere in Australia where people are doing their best to obtain decent juvenile legislation. However, on the other hand, there are some areas where it seems to have moved forward.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, after listening to the member for Stuart for the last 20 minutes, it is quite obvious to me that he has very little idea of what this bill is all about. I do not think he understands what goes on in the real world. To hear him speak, the sort of young people who come before the courts are 5 year-olds who have taken 20¢ out of Sunday school collection plates. The reality is that many young people who come before the courts are quite experienced criminals. They are people who have been before the courts on a number of occasions. One only has to talk to police officers, juvenile justice officers and magistrates to discover that some young people have been cycled through those courts over and over again.

Because of that particular problem, the Juvenile Justice Act was introduced about 4 years ago in an attempt to address the juvenile crime that had developed, particularly in our urban areas. Subsequently, the Juvenile Crime Task Force was established some 3 years ago and did a considerable amount of excellent work. It identified and addressed a number of the problem issues that abounded in our urban areas. A number of my constituents have complained over and over again about how their homes were being busted up.

Mr Ede: The concrete jungle. The wilds of the Jingili Water Gardens.

Mr SETTER: You go out there today. Quite obviously, you have little idea. You talk to the school principals about the vandalism that occurs almost every weekend in their schools.

Mr Ede: You hate kids, don't you?

Mr SETTER: Not at all. I certainly do not hate children. I have 3 of my own and 2 grandchildren. That is one thing I certainly would not admit to. I can assure you that you do not know what is going on. You should talk to school principals in my electorate and learn about the rooms that are broken into and defaced and the computer, audio and video equipment that is stolen.

Mr Ede: Things in my electorate are different.

Mr SETTER: If they are, you are fortunate. What I am saying to you is that these amendments will be further addressing the problem that we have had to live with for quite a long time.

Mr Speaker, when the Juvenile Justice Act was introduced 4 years ago, the government gave a guarantee that it would be reviewed and revised after a reasonable period. The workings of every piece of legislation should be reviewed and, if it is necessary and the community is pushing for it, appropriate amendment should be carried out. This is exactly what has happened with this legislation.

To fulfil its commitment to review the legislation, the government established a review committee headed by the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, Sally Thomas. A number of eminent people were members of that committee and it spent considerable time reviewing the act and producing the recommendations which we see before us today as amendments. There was a considerable amount of community consultation and that is very important. When one reviews any

legislation, one needs to find out what the community is thinking and that is what the Juvenile Task Force did several years ago. The committee had discussions with the magistrates, the police, legal aid and education people, and lawyers and officers from the juvenile justice area, because all of those people are involved with the issues and they all relate in some way to the young people who unfortunately appear in our courts every day of the week.

I heard a comment from the member for Stuart earlier about how somebody who stole a 20c piece of chewing gum from Coles could find himself being fingerprinted. That may well be so, but it might be interesting to note that those very fingerprints might identify that person as being the one who burgled 20 or 30 homes in previous months. It is quite common that an offender is apprehended on some minor offence and, after questioning by the police, admits to having committed quite a number of break and enters. In my opinion, if fingerprinting aids the police in identifying persons responsible for break and enters or any other crime, then it is a small price to pay.

Mr Speaker, this bill increases the powers of the juvenile courts which, in the past, have been fairly limited in their activities. It guarantees young people similar rights to adults while they are under investigation and that is very important. They should certainly not have any lesser rights than adults have in similar circumstances. It provides for a much broader range of penalties and that has been shown to be appropriate by the work of the review committee.

It has strengthened a number of penalties and I will run through several of them. For example, if a young person is in charge of a motor vehicle while committing an offence, then it is quite possible that that person will lose his driving licence. Another amendment increases the maximum detention period to 12 months. There are also increased penalties for absconding. We have heard on a number of occasions about young people who have absconded from the Wildman River Wilderness Camp and Malak House and I think it is fair and reasonable that, if people abscond from lawful detention, they should pay the appropriate penalty.

Community service orders have been strengthened. They have made a considerable contribution to taking the pressure off institutions of detention such as Giles House and Malak House. Community service orders enable offenders to be penalised without the trauma of being detained in an institution. I had the opportunity to visit Giles House about 2½ years ago and I was very impressed with the way it was run. It was a very well laid-out, clean and efficient-looking institution. I was disappointed, though, by its very limited capacity. There appeared to be overcrowding. At that time, we could not cope with the number of offenders being sentenced to detention in Giles House. The community service order program has taken an enormous amount of pressure off such institutions.

Another important amendment allows magistrates to take other offences into consideration when they are handing down judgments on juvenile offenders. I understand that, in the past, this has just not been possible and magistrates could consider only the substance of the charge before them even though the offender might have been before the court on a dozen previous occasions for similar or worse offences. Magistrates were simply not allowed to consider those previous matters, but that is now possible. I would assume that it would follow that appropriate penalties would be applied, taking into consideration an offender's past record.

It will be possible for a young person to be required to undertake a medical examination. That may be necessary on certain occasions, particularly where there has been abuse of some kind. The person may have been subjected to physical abuse or may have perpetrated such abuse on other people. It may well be that some medical evidence may come to light after an examination.

Another amendment will mean that court orders will continue to apply after the age of 17. I believe that, in the past, court orders were terminated when a person reached the age of 17 because, at that age, they were considered to be adult. Perhaps the minister could clarify later whether that is the case.

Another matter addressed in this bill is replacement of the Juvenile Justice Review Committee by 2 boards of management, 1 in Darwin and 1 in Alice Springs. I believe that is very appropriate. The 2 boards of management will be able to consider matters which relate specifically to the Top End and the southern region. Issues vary from place to place and it is appropriate to involve people who come from the area where particular offences occur and are considered.

Clause 15 authorises police officers in charge of stations to lay complaints. In the past we have had the problem that only first-class sergeants and ranks above that have been able to lay such complaints. As we all know, in the Northern Territory we have quite a number of remote police stations where the officer in charge is below the rank of first-class sergeant. That has led to delays in the laying of charges or complaints against individuals who have allegedly committed offences. The new clause is certainly appropriate because, in my opinion, if an officer is responsible enough to be in charge of a station, he or she should be responsible enough to lay such complaints.

There are a number of other amendments in this particular bill. I will not go through them individually because they will all be considered a little later in the committee stage. It is very important to note, however, that we are streamlining the act to recognise changing needs in the community, having identified and addressed problem areas which have arisen in the past few years. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, firstly I thank honourable members for their contributions in the debate on this vital legislation which relates to problems in the management of juvenile offenders in the Northern Territory. It must be remembered that the act came into force some 3½ years ago and a review committee was provided for under the act with the specific role of reviewing the legislation as it was implemented. Many people have contributed to the review process, as I said in my second-reading speech, including people who work in the courts, in legal aid services, the police, community organisations working with young people, departmental staff involved in administering the act and juvenile justice staff throughout the Territory who deal directly with young offenders. Those people have a wealth of knowledge and I believe that the review committee has done an excellent job in pulling together the various threads to tighten up the act.

Mr Speaker, the opposition intends to propose a number of amendments in the committee stage. We will be opposing those amendments. For that reason, I do not intend at this stage to respond to each of them and the arguments put forward by the 2 members of the opposition. I am sure that we will go through it all again at some length in the committee stage and I would rather reply then. I will say to members of the opposition that I have taken notes of the

points they have made in relation to their proposed amendments and there is no need for them to go on at great length about them. I am quite happy to respond.

I thank the people who served on the review committee and all other people who have assisted in the review of this act. There are a number of other issues that I want to address. For example, section 89 of the act covers the destruction of records of convictions etc. That is a matter which I certainly have an interest in reviewing at some later stage. It must be remembered, however, that the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General is also looking at this issue at a national level. All jurisdictions have an interest in this matter and it is imperative that we achieve uniformity right across Australia. I think it would be farcical if various jurisdictions had differing requirements in this area. I look forward to the committee stage of this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 22.1 and 22.2.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 14:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clauses 5 to 14.

Mr Chairman, the changes announced by the minister effectively place the boards of management directly within the control of the minister whereas the review committee allows broad input by bodies having the most direct contact with the operations of juvenile justice legislation such as the Chief Magistrate, police and education authorities. The new boards of management will allow for no such input. As I said in my second-reading speech, they are constituted by a public servant within the department responsible for administration of the Juvenile Justice Act, together with up to 4 appointees of the minister responsible. We would like to see an increase in input from organisations having direct or indirect relations with the administration of the act, especially when those people have some responsibility in the day-to-day conduct of juvenile matters.

Mr Chairman, a sympathetic and flexible treatment of juvenile offenders, with maximum input from the community and relevant authorities, is essential if we are going to succeed in trying not to make thieves of kids at that age.

Clause 10 of the bill significantly reduces the powers and functions of the new boards as opposed to the old committee. Section 10 of the existing act empowers the committee to initiate collection of data and statistics in relation to juvenile offenders. It also initiates studies and research into matters under the act. Clause 10 also deletes most of those functions and confines the boards to examining, evaluating, observing and reporting directly to the minister. The committee is very much an independent monitoring

organisation, having an important practical role in supervising the operations of the juvenile justice system. It is impossible to examine and evaluate programs without having the power to collect data, carry out studies and obtain submissions from persons affected by the operation of the act.

The opposition opposes clause 14 of the bill which amends section 21 of the principal act, by deleting the requirement that juvenile courts be conducted in separate buildings from the ordinary adult magistrates courts and, if that is not possible, that a separate time for adult criminal proceedings be provided. We accept that hearings may be conducted in the same court. We believe that there is a strong argument for keeping juvenile courts separate from adult courts, just as juvenile offenders should be held separate from adult offenders, rather than in the same area. The member for Stuart explained why there should be separate courts for juvenile offenders and adult offenders.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, as I foreshadowed earlier, we oppose these amendments.

It really was not considered appropriate that the committee should continue to exist forever. It was quite established in the original act to do a specific job. That job was carried out and now there are different functions that need to be performed. I cannot understand the comments of the honourable members opposite when they say the new boards will be made up of public servants. The review committee was made up of a nominee of the Attorney-General, who presumably would be a public servant, and a nominee of the minister, who presumably would also be a public servant. Never let it be said that I said a policeman was a public servant, but somebody appointed by the Commissioner of Police was also on the committee, as was somebody appointed by the minister primarily responsible for the administration of education. I really do not take the point that the boards of management will be different because they will be comprised of public servants.

The proposal is that one member of a board of management will be an employee within the meaning of the Public Service Act - 1 person. The other 4 people, by the way, may well be the same people who were previously on the review committee. They could well be a policeman, somebody from the Attorney-General's area and somebody from the Department of Education. There is absolutely nothing to prevent the structure of the new boards being exactly that of the committee. The amendment simply gives wider scope so that we can get what we did not have, with respect, on the review committee: practical input from people in the community who are actually feeling the results of offences being committed by juveniles.

One other point, Mr Chairman, is that this is not a Berrimah-line or Katherine-line scenario. There will be a board in Alice Springs and one in Darwin, so the northern and southern regions will be looked after.

The functions of the boards will be more specific than those of the committee in that they can examine programs, custodial and conditional liberty, both in institutions and in the community. Boards of management can still perform other tasks at the direction of the minister. I believe that the thrust of this legislation will be served in a more appropriate way by the boards than through the previous review committee. That committee was there to do a specific job. It has done it, and I believe the boards will provide what we now require.

The opposition's second point in relation to clause 14 concerned the location of children's courts. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke of the location of the various courts. He should be aware of what happens in places like Angurugu, where court hearings are held in an old school building. My information comes from the gazettal of the various courts, which was published on 28 October 1987. The Borroloola court is in the school building, Elliott's is in the local council building, Galiwinku's is in the local council building, Oenpelli's is in the local council building, Yulara's is in the community centre and Yirrkala's is in the TAFE centre. I take his point that we need to use other buildings.

The amendments to this act do not really envisage young people lining up in the corridors outside a court along with older offenders. That is not what we envisage at all. The amendments will create some flexibility so we can do precisely what the opposition is asking us to do. There will be flexibility to allow the proper management of the hearing of cases, particularly in the rural areas.

Mr Chairman, under the Community Justice Program, magistrates go out and hear cases in the rural areas where elders from the community sit on the bench with the magistrate. This is invaluable in reaching appropriate decisions in those courts and I believe that the flexibility that clause 14 will provide will only enhance that scheme.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, our point about the composition of the committee was not that the people nominated by the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police, the Minister for Education and so forth were public servants. It was that they provided an important broader view into the various areas.

I can see the Minister for Education screwing up his nose. That is rather unfortunate because I thought that he would have wished to maintain an interest in this area and input through his nominee to ensure that the interests of the people in his keeping were looked after. That is extremely unfortunate. We do need that broad view. We need people to look at the issues from an educational point of view, a legal point of view and a law-enforcement point of view in order to ensure that the system is managed in a fair and reasonable way. It was very worrying to hear the minister indicate that people who needed to be appointed were those who had felt the results of juvenile crime. That was most strange because it certainly shows how he interprets this legislation. Perhaps it was a slip. It is particularly worrying because the bill actually states that a person will not be appointed unless he has an interest in the needs of young persons, particularly those young persons likely to have been affected by the juvenile system. It also refers to ...

Mr Dale: I was talking about helping the community.

Mr EDE: ... 'special skills' and 'experience in the needs and treatment of juvenile offenders'. Perhaps the minister sees people's experience in terms of having run foul of juvenile crime as being relevant.

That is precisely why we want this bill to be broadened. The danger is that a minister who thinks in that way can use his power of appointment to the boards to ensure that they reflect that line of thought. That is what we are trying to avoid. That is why we want broader representation. Even though we knew the thoughts of the minister in relation to the breaking of arms and people who are feeling the results of juvenile crime, we hoped that could be countered by reasonable members on the board and perhaps his replacement by

the Minister for Education, who is a little more reasonable. We hoped to counter some of the problems which occur when a particular minister has a very narrow concept in terms of appointments to boards of this nature.

Mr Chairman, the minister's reading of clause 14 is obviously incorrect and I hope that somebody can slip him a note indicating that he should change it because the effect of the amendment is not such as to allow the courts to go into community buildings in places like Angurugu, Yuendumu and so on. Its effect is that juvenile hearings will not have to be held in a different place or at a different time from adult hearings. That is the effect of the legislation. If the effect was as the minister has just described, we would have no problem with it. Obviously, he has misread his own legislation and, on the basis of that, will now be prepared to support our amendment so that he can do what he said he was trying to do.

MR MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I must make some comments. I was wrinkling up my nose and I suppose it was because something was getting up it. I am appalled that the member for Stuart has not read the amendments and has not looked at them in the context in which they are written. We are talking about the appointment of boards to replace a review committee. The review committee - as has been quite plainly stated - was put in place to look at and review, as its name suggests, the operation of the Juvenile Justice Act. That role has been carried out and this legislation now provides for the appointment of boards of management.

Mr Speaker, proposed new section 6(2) says that a board shall be constituted by 'an employee within the meaning of the Public Service Act, employed in the department for the time being, principally responsible under the minister for the administration of this act; and ... not more than 4 other members, appointed by the minister'. It does not talk about public servants or nominate any particular group. Nevertheless, the member for Stuart refers constantly to a board made up of public servants. It is obvious that the review committee had a majority of public servants but one of the reasons for the way in which boards are to be constituted is to ensure that there will not be a majority of public servants on them. We are talking about more than 1 board and we are talking about having the ability to regionalise the input.

If the member for Stuart read what was being proposed, he would realise that the tack he has been taking is totally incorrect. It is appalling that, even though the act has been in operation for 3 years, he does not realise how it works and he does not have the ability to understand the legislation that is now before the House. He talks about the board being dominated by the minister. Ministers or their nominees were on the review committee. I would refer the member for Stuart to section 6 of the act so that he knows what he is talking about. His performance today has been abysmal. What he has said does not make sense because it does not relate to the legislation before the House.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, it is rather degrading when the minister finds that he does not have an argument and descends to personal abuse.

Mr Manzie: You read the act.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the old act says 'the minister or his nominee'. The minister may have wished at some time to be on the board but, most likely, he would have put in his nominee.

Mr Chairman, I did not say that the new nominees would all be public servants; I said that they were all under the control of the minister because he was the person who would nominate them. Hansard will bear that out. The point that I am making has not been addressed by either minister. Broad community input is what is needed. As legislators, we need to ensure that there will be breadth of representation. All around Australia the move is towards community involvement in dealing with juvenile crime.

I am not saying that it is not possible under this legislation. I am saying that we are not certain that it will happen under this legislation. Under this amending legislation, it is possible that all board members could be public servants. I am not saying that they will be, but that it is possible. What we are attempting to do, through our amendments, is to ensure that there is a breadth of community involvement, and I cannot see why the minister should be frightened of that.

The Attorney-General did not even address clause 14 and I believe my original argument still stands in respect of it.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the government is of one mind in terms of what we wish the boards of management to achieve. I believe that we are going about it in the appropriate way and the opposition's proposal is inappropriate.

Mr Chairman, in relation to clause 14, I read out the names of the buildings being used in various communities. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had any knowledge of those communities, he would understand that the buildings that are available are being used. We need this amendment so that both courts can use the 1 building. Perhaps he understands that now.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I object to juvenile courts being held at the same time and place as adult courts. I object to that whether it occurs in Yuendumu, Darwin, Alice Springs or elsewhere. I have a fundamental objection to it. I am surprised and disappointed that the minister does not have enough understanding of the principles involved in juvenile justice to share my concerns. Even though it is possible under his amendments for the courts to be held at the same time and place, I hope he will give some assurance that that will not occur. Perhaps he could make a departmental order to the effect that, unless there are absolutely peculiar situations, the separation will continue so that the community will have some degree of comfort and not feel that the principle has been lost.

Clauses 5 to 14 agreed to.

Clauses 15 and 16 agreed to.

Clause 17:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, the opposition invites defeat of this clause. The clause amends section 31 of the existing act which currently permits police officers to take fingerprints and to obtain other records of a juvenile only if he or she is in legal custody in respect of an offence that is punishable by imprisonment for 12 months. This clause deletes this requirement so that identifying material can be taken in respect of any juvenile in custody, irrespective of the offence.

We cannot support these amendments. It was pointed out earlier that, under the amended legislation, children could be fingerprinted for very trivial offences. I can imagine children lining up on a daily basis for

fingerprinting at police stations throughout the Northern Territory. Many children do commit trivial offences and we are concerned about the possibilities. Already, existing section 31(2)(d) gives police the power to seek the approval of a magistrate to take identifying material in particular cases. We believe the law is adequate in that respect and, therefore, we see no need to change the existing legislation. As I said in my second-reading speech, the opposition would prefer to see existing procedures retained.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, clause 17 first of all removes the qualifications in section 31(2A) relating to age and the seriousness of the offence. Some anomalies exist because of the way the section was drafted. Firstly, it makes no reference whatsoever to people under the age of 14 years of age. That could be interpreted to mean that people of that age may be fingerprinted or have other identifying material taken from them. The section also referred to 'an offence which, if committed by an adult, is punishable by imprisonment for 12 months or longer'. It did not refer to offences which might be punishable by a penalty of less than 12 months, which made it very difficult to understand.

The new section will require a magistrate's approval on every occasion when identifying material is taken from a juvenile's body. However, it will allow for the fingerprinting or photographing of juveniles who appear to be 14 years of age or older and are in lawful custody in respect of offences. This will be a far more appropriate way for police to administer the legislation.

In relation to the principle of fingerprinting juvenile offenders, offences committed by juveniles have exactly the same impact on the community as offences committed by older people. Police are only too readily criticised for not conducting inquiries which lead to the detention of offenders in a great number of crimes which are committed around the place. Fingerprinting assists in the identification of offenders, particularly in relation to housebreaking. Anybody who has looked at the statistics on housebreakings around the Northern Territory will understand that a very large number of those serious crimes are committed by juveniles.

Mr Chairman, I believe that this clause is appropriate and clears up some problems in the drafting of the original act.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I believe that clause 17 is objectionable. It significantly amends section 31 of the existing act. That section only permitted police to take fingerprints and other records of a juvenile where he or she is in lawful custody in respect of an offence which, if committed by an adult, would be punishable by imprisonment for 12 months or longer. Fingerprints could only be taken for serious offences and that will no longer be the case under the new section. Fingerprints will be able to be taken from any juvenile in lawful custody irrespective of the offence and no matter how trivial it is. Why does this government want to fingerprint a 10-year-old kid who has lifted a packet of chewing gum? What is it trying to achieve by not placing some restriction on fingerprinting in terms of the seriousness of the crime?

Mr Chairman, it is true that section 51 gives the court some power to order the destruction of identifying material which has been obtained. This amendment to section 31 will virtually require a legal representative of a juvenile charged with an offence to make an application for destruction of identifying material under section 51. There seems to be no justification for the power to take fingerprints in very trivial cases, especially in the case

of first offenders. If there were a case, under section 31(2B), the police already have the power to seek the approval of a magistrate for that course of action. The right to take fingerprints has not been automatic. In the case of serious offences, police could apply to a magistrate, perhaps arguing that fingerprints from the scene of the crime gave them 90% of the proof they needed to incriminate a suspect, and that fingerprinting the suspect would absolutely confirm guilt or innocence one way or the other. In this situation, the magistrate would normally agree to the fingerprinting. Subsequently, if the juvenile were not convicted of the offence, the fingerprint information would be destroyed. Under the amended legislation, even if the suspect were found innocent, the information would be kept unless a specific application was made in court by a legal practitioner.

Mr Collins: If you are not guilty, why worry?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the member for Sadadeen obviously wants to contribute to this debate. I have made my point so I will sit down and allow him to make his. This is a matter of the civil liberties of the young and we believe that there is no reason why their fingerprints should be held in the system when they have committed no crime or if a crime that they have committed is trivial or is only a first offence. We believe that such fingerprint records should not be made or kept unless a specific application is made.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, obviously we will have to agree to disagree on the philosophy behind fingerprinting juveniles. It is a vital part of police inquiries to have resources available to them to identify offenders.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is presupposing that, when the little cherub steals chewing gum from the store, it is the first time that he has ever offended. He may well have broken into 30 houses around the area during the previous few days. The police may have fingerprints from the windows and doors of those particular homes and, lo and behold, when they happen to apprehend this little cherub as he comes out of the supermarket, they then fingerprint him for that offence and can identify an offender who has committed 30 housebreakings over the previous few days. As far as I am concerned, there is a great deal of sound logic and reason to justify the taking of fingerprints from juvenile offenders.

In relation to the destruction of records, I said previously that this was an extremely complex matter and was being addressed by the Attorneys-General at a national level. If members opposite would read section 147 of the Police Administration Act they would find that those records can be destroyed now.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I rise to query, more than anything else, that last statement concerning sections 146 and 147. I have no problems with a case where a juvenile has had his fingerprints taken or whatever and is found to be innocent. I have a concern where a juvenile has his fingerprints taken and is found to be guilty and I cannot find anything in section 147 that deals with the destruction of fingerprints of people who are found to be guilty.

Mr Dale: That is what is being addressed by the Attorneys-General.

Mr SMITH: There may well be a philosophical position that, if you are an adult and you are guilty of a crime, the evidence should be kept, but I think there is an equally strong philosophical principle, in the case of a juvenile found guilty of a crime, that at some time in the future the identifying material could well be disposed of. The problem I have with section 147 of

the Police Administration Act is that it does not allow for that possibility. My reading of section 147 is that, if a 15-year-old is caught shop-lifting and the police decide to fingerprint him and he is subsequently convicted, the fingerprint evidence is stored or kept for life. If that is correct - and I am not absolutely sure that it is - it is a bit harsh. One's youthful indiscretions should not be able to be brought up at any time. I would think that probably some amongst us here committed indiscretions in our youth and that we would feel they would be of no relevance 30 or 40 years later if, perchance, we got into some more trouble.

Mr Dale: In some cases they are, you know.

Mr SMITH: I am sorry?

Mr Dale: In some cases they are. Say a 15-year-old has been molesting little kids and, when he is 19, he ...

Mr SMITH: I am not saying that it ought to be an automatic condition. What I am saying is that ...

Mr Dale: Now you can see why the Attorneys-General are looking at it.

Mr SMITH: ... as I understand it, section 147 of the Police Administration Act does not even provide for the possibility that that sort of evidence can be destroyed. Now that the matter has come to my attention, I will certainly pursue it because it does disturb me.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I will beg your indulgence in this matter. As I understand it, if our amendment is not accepted, we will be moving immediately to clause 18. I believe that we ought to make very clear what we were attempting to put into the legislation is in addition to the clauses contained in the bill. Our proposed subsection (6) states that the identifying material - which we agree can be obtained under certain circumstances - should be destroyed if no legal proceedings for an offence in relation to which the identifying material was taken are commenced within a period of 28 days or as soon as practicable after the expiration of that period or, if legal proceedings for such an offence are taken within that period, as soon as practicable after the expiry of any time allowed for an appeal against the decision of the court.

I cannot understand a government which, in this House, passed a motion to the effect that it objected to people being required to carry a piece of card with a photograph on it which was directed at welfare cheats and tax cheats. That piece of card would have been used only a couple of times a year. The government was so noble and so strong on civil liberty issues at that time; concern simply oozed from government members in the course of that debate. Yet these same members are quite happy to take and keep the fingerprints of juveniles who are shown by court proceedings not to have been guilty of crimes. Where are all the civil libertarians on the other side now, the ones who were so upset about the Australia Card? I would like them to get to their feet and contribute to this debate. I would like to hear the Chief Minister tell us how this legislation sits with his stand in the Australia Card debate.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I will be very brief in saying what I said earlier regarding section 89 of the Juvenile Justice Act, concerning records of convictions to be destroyed. It says that the Commissioner of Police or other persons having the custody of such records shall destroy those records 'as soon as practicable after the expiration of (a) 3 years after the date on

which a conviction was recorded against a juvenile, whether or not it was recorded before or after the commencement of the act; or (b) 5 years after the expiration of any order of the court associated with that conviction ...'.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 24 agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 28:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, as I said in my second-reading speech, we thought it would be reasonable to seek some explanation from the minister about the appointment of official visitors to detention centres. As the legislation now stands, magistrates may be appointed by the minister as official visitors. We have reason to believe that the fact that most magistrates have been very critical of detention centres in the Northern Territory is the reason they are not to be permitted to visit detention centres as official visitors. We are concerned about that. Magistrates need to know what is happening in detention centres and we would like a commitment from the minister that, as occurs under existing legislation, magistrates will be able to make official visits to detention centres. If the department was operating well, there would be no public criticism from magistrates in relation to the operations of detention centres. A number of magistrates, in both Darwin and Alice Springs, have expressed grave concern about some of the centres. The opposition would certainly like to ensure that magistrates continue to be able to make official visits.

Mr DALE: I have never denied magistrates the right to say whatever they think fit in their courts, nor have I ever sought to instruct them in any way over their deliberations. I do, however, take their advice. These changes have, in fact, been made on the advice of the magistracy. With their extremely heavy workload, they have found that they simply do not have sufficient time to make visits to the various centres. In any case, such visits will be part of the task of board members in their vital role of assessing the various matters that we have already discussed today. The change has been made at the request of the magistracy and I believe it is a commonsense move.

I might add that it is envisaged that Aboriginal people will be represented on the boards. Aboriginal youth comprises a high proportion of the detention centre population and the Aboriginal board members will be in a position to observe and comment on the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal juveniles in detention. I think that is extremely important, Mr Chairman.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I welcome that. It is certainly something which we were very keen to see. We hoped that Aboriginal membership of the boards would be a fixed requirement rather than something which happened through the minister's good grace but nevertheless I thank him for his good grace and hope that the measure is a success.

If the workload of magistrates is the problem in relation to official visits to detention centres, that is a clear message to the minister that he needs to look at preventative steps so that the system works to stop junior offenders becoming senior and adult offenders. That will reduce the future workload of magistrates.

Obviously the minister will not agree to our amendment as it stands. However, I would like him to consider whether he would agree to a dual system

under which board members would make official visits whilst maintaining the right of magistrates to do so as well. There are specific conceptual reasons for ensuring that members of the judiciary have those rights and obligations. We have spelt those out and I will not repeat them now. It is important, in our view, that members of the judiciary have the right to visit juvenile detention centres and see their operations.

Clauses 25 to 28 agreed to.

Clause 29:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 22.4. The opposition is in basic agreement with the proposed new part which relates to the medical treatment of juvenile detainees. We believe that it will provide commendable safeguards to the rights of juvenile detainees in respect of medical treatment. Our amendment would add a new section 74EA which relates to the confidentiality of results of AIDS tests carried out on juveniles. Given the seriousness of the AIDS epidemic, we have no problem with the government legislating for compulsory AIDS testing of juvenile offenders, but we have noted that the amendment contains no provision guaranteeing the confidentiality of the results of such testing. For this reason, we are proposing that an additional section 74EA be added, making it an offence for a person to disclose any information acquired through such tests without the approval of the juvenile or his legal guardian.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, new section 74A will provide for a juvenile detainee to be given access to a doctor, on request, for the purposes of consultation and treatment. New section 74B will oblige detention centre superintendents to comply with a doctor's directions in relation to the health of a juvenile inmate. Under new section 74C, in the event of illness, a juvenile under detention can be moved to hospital by the order of the Director of Correctional Services, a medical practitioner or the Juvenile Court. Section 74D will provide for the secure custody and lawful detention of juveniles moved to hospital and their return to the detention centre to complete their sentences on discharge from hospital.

New section 74E has 3 subsections. One requires the detainee to submit to a medical examination or treatment where his or her life is endangered or health is seriously affected by refusing examination or treatment. The requirement also applies where the life or health of any other person is endangered or likely to be seriously affected by refusal. A detainee subject to this requirement has the right to a second medical opinion where practicable. Subsection 74E(2) requires a juvenile received at a detention centre to submit to blood tests and other tests for the purposes of determining his or her medical condition. Subsection (3) states that such force as is reasonably necessary may be used on a juvenile for the purpose of taking blood or bodily secretion for testing and that no action, civil or criminal, may be taken against the person taking blood or other samples.

Now section 74F requires the Director of Correctional Services to notify the next of kin, a close relative, legal representative or other person identified by the juvenile, if the juvenile is in a detention centre and becomes seriously ill or dies. New section 74G is concerned with notifying the coroner in the event of the death of a juvenile detainee. Everything that occurs in relation to a juvenile in a detention centre is confidential, especially medical records.

Mr Smith: Where does it say that in the bill?

Mr DALE: If you listen you will learn. AIDS information, in particular, is confidential and it is imperative that it remain so. There is no need to legislate to protect the confidentiality of medical information on detainees in view of the fact that medical and health workers are all under a professional obligation not to divulge medical information. Furthermore, detention centre staff sign a confidentiality undertaking not to divulge information on juvenile detainees.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the new section has our complete support. We said that before. We think that the provisions in relation to medical treatment are eminently supportable. It might be said that the procedures are already followed and that, if a juvenile in detention becomes sick, he is taken to a doctor or to hospital. The fact is, however, that these procedures have now been written into legislation and that is excellent. We simply want the right to confidentiality written into the legislation. That is what our amendment is about. It is quite reasonable, quite practical and it should be supported.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 29 agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as whole and agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill passed remaining stage without debate.

PETITION

Use of Manton Dam for Water Sports

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1402 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Northern Territory government allow Manton Dam to be used for water sports. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it has only been delivered to me this afternoon and does not conform with standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

Mr Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that the facilities for the use of inland water sports enthusiasts are inadequate in the Top End. Seasonal and local conditions necessitate an alternative to ocean waters but the growing popularity of water sports stretches the presently available facilities beyond normal water-safety standards. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory government allow Manton Dam to be used for inland water sports and cater for the sporting interests of those who go windsurfing, sailing, canoeing, water skiing, parasailing and jet skiing. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute tonight to a man for whom I have the highest personal regard and to wish him well in a very important task which he is to undertake next year. Both as an administrator and policeman, there are few who can match the talents of Peter McAulay. As honourable members will be aware, he has been offered and has accepted a position as Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police in Canberra. His appointment to the highest police post in Australia is both a recognition of the talents of the man and an acknowledgement of the professionalism and integrity of the Northern Territory Police Force.

I have known Peter McAulay closely for only 2 years, in my period as minister responsible for police but, in that time, I have come to regard him as one of the best departmental administrators in the Territory. I agree wholeheartedly with the comments of the federal Justice Minister, Senator Michael Tate who, when announcing the appointment this week, said: 'Commissioner McAulay has given outstanding leadership to the NT Police Force ... He has the confidence of all Police Commissioners throughout Australia ... and he already enjoys high regard in international police circles from his time as Commanding Officer of the multinational force in Cyprus'.

Peter McAulay began his police career as a junior constable in the South Australian Police Force in January 1951. He graduated from the South Australia Police Academy in 1953 and, in 1962, he was appointed officer-in-charge of the newly-established CIB unit at Christies Beach in South Australia. He was promoted to the rank of inspector in 1966 and at the time he was the youngest officer ever commissioned in the South Australian Police Force. In 1968, while he was officer-in-charge of the far northern division of the South Australian Police Force, he was seconded to the Commonwealth Police to serve as an officer in the Australian police contingent of the United Nations forces on Cyprus. At the invitation of the Secretary-General to the United Nations, he returned to Cyprus in February 1970 as police adviser.

In this capacity, he commanded a multinational police force which was responsible for policing the no-man's land, generally known as the green line, between the warring Turkish and Greek Cypriots. According to my informants, on one occasion, armed only with a baton, Peter McAulay walked into the middle of a fire fight on the green line and broke it up. As he walked between the opposing forces waving his baton, the shooting stopped. It seems that even the Turks and Greeks, who have apparently been at war for thousands of years, know when they are outgunned. During his time on Cyprus, he was appointed to several advisory positions including that of Deputy Chairman of the Political Liaison Committee, which was responsible for settling serious intercommunal conflicts. He also provided high-level advice to the United Nations Commander on political, economic and legal matters.

In 1972, he returned to the South Australian Police Force, only to be lured away 6 years later to become Commissioner for the Northern Territory Police Force. His career in the Northern Territory has been a distinguished one. During his stewardship, the NT Police Force has developed and matured to become far and away the best in Australia. Morale is high, equipment and facilities are good, policemen and policewomen are held in high regard in the community and their crime clear-up rates are the best in the country, particularly for major crime. Additionally, the Northern Territory Police Force is one of the most, if not the most, sophisticated in Australia in regard to computer and communications technology.

During his time as the Territory's 'top cop', Commissioner McAulay has been responsible for the introduction of some novel and often unique initiatives including the successful Aboriginal police aide scheme, school-based community policing and junior police rangers. Under the auspices of the Police and Citizens' Youth Club, he has been extremely active in the promotion of youth programs. Peter McAulay will be missed but I believe we will all feel a little less sad about his loss in the knowledge that he is going on to a new, exciting and rewarding opportunity as head of the Australian Federal Police Force. I would like to wish Peter and his wife Avril well for the future and I know honourable members will agree that the Territory's loss is the nation's gain.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HATTON: On another matter, I would like to speak about an enterprising young Territorian, Dimitri Andropov, who lives just along the street from me. He is a matriculation student at Darwin High School and has been making quite a name for himself as an innovator. Recently, he was Territory finalist for the Beyond 2000 Young Inventor's Award. He also won the Young Inventor's Award sponsored by the Australian Financial Review and he is an entrant for the BHP awards to be judged in February next year. I understand that the Beyond 2000 program has a Young Inventor's Award and, on NTD Channel 8 next Wednesday night, Dimitri's entry will be included in the program.

Dimitri's entry for these awards was a device which measures dissolved oxygen in an organic sample to a very fine degree. That in itself might not sound very exciting or practical to some honourable members but I ask them to bear with me for a moment. The aim of this project was to study the best environmental conditions for marine algae which are fed to prawn larvae. As all honourable members would be aware, commercial prawn farming is an emerging industry in the Northern Territory. Prawns are grown from larvae so finding the optimum conditions for the growth of algae, including the oxygen level needed to keep them growing at the optimum rate, has very real practical application in the Northern Territory.

Dimitri's innovative efforts to date should have the support of all honourable members. What is doubly encouraging is that he is a product of the Territory government's education system. He went to Millner Preschool, Rapid Creek Primary School, Nightcliff High School and now Darwin High School. I would also like to believe that his innovative spirit is a product of the unique Territory environment. Dimitri has received assistance and encouragement with his project from Darwin High School, CIG, the Fisheries Division of the Department of Industries and Development, the Departments of Electronics and Biology at the Darwin Institute of Technology, Mike Guinea from DIT, the Dean of the Faculty of Science at DIT, Paul Gregory, his father Simon, who is a lecturer at DIT and Dr Laungvan from the University College of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, honourable members may also have noted recent press articles about ongoing concerns in relation to traffic difficulties in the vicinity of Progress Drive and Dick Ward Drive near the Nightcliff Shopping Centre. I am very pleased to say that, after some 4 years of attacking this problem, a solution is within reach. When I first joined this Assembly, I took the matter up with the then Minister for Lands, now the Minister for Industries and Development, seeking a traffic planning study and a structure plan for the area. Finding a solution to the problems has been a long and sometimes tortuous process. Following a series of public meetings at the Nightcliff Shopping Centre this year, I am pleased to advise that the situation now is

that the local member, the Darwin City Council and, most importantly, the Nightcliff community, including the businesses in the Nightcliff Shopping Centre, are all supportive of a proposal. I now look forward to the urgent allocation of some funding, particularly from the Darwin City Council, for the completion of measures to solve the problem.

I have to say there is still one other significant traffic concern in my electorate which really needs to be addressed. We have heard quite a lot about buses in the Casuarina Shopping Square but anybody who has tried to drive through the area where Bagot Road, Trower Road, Nightcliff Road and Progress Drive meet will know what an absolute horror stretch it is, particularly in the peak hours in the mornings and afternoons. It is about time that some solutions were found for that problem. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Transport and Works is now directing his attention to that task quite urgently and I look forward to an early resolution of that very difficult problem. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition, as the member for Millner, would support me in my wish to have that long-standing problem rectified as soon as possible and to improve traffic movement in the area.

Another measure which I am keenly promoting to assist traffic movement in my area is the provision of a diversion road from Dick Ward Drive to the seaward end of Progress Drive, through the old drive-in site. This will be particularly important in the overall traffic management of the area. It will eventually divert traffic away from streets in the central residential area such as Bougainvillea Street and Eugenia Street. The member for Jingili will appreciate it if I can solve the traffic problems in Eugenia Street because, Mr Speaker, I can assure you that residents are quite concerned about the noise and the risk to children caused by vehicles travelling through the area. Traffic could be quite successfully diverted to the seaward end of Progress Drive and along Banksia Street to enter the residential areas from the outskirts rather than driving, and often speeding, through the centre of my electorate. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I will be pressing that matter and I would just remind the Minister for Lands and Housing to hold discussions with the local member before he takes any action in my electorate.

Mr Speaker, this being the last day of sittings for the Assembly this year and, having completed all the substantive business for the year, I would like to take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to you for your diligence, impartiality and, at times, patience during the course of the year. I also express my thanks to the Chairmen of Committees and the staff of the Assembly including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, the Hansard staff - who have to deal with quite difficult situations at times - and the attendants and others who attend to the House's business. I wish all Assembly staff well for the Christmas period and I look forward to attending their Christmas party on Christmas Eve, as is usual. I would like to express my appreciation for their fine efforts throughout the course of this year and I am sure honourable members will joint me in so doing.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity very briefly to endorse the comments of the Chief Minister and to compliment the Clerk, all Assembly and Hansard staff, and to wish all honourable members, including those opposite, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I would like to join the Chief Minister in congratulating Peter McAulay on becoming head of the Australian Federal Police and also to thank him, on behalf of the opposition, for his time as Police Commissioner in the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister has detailed his background and I will not repeat it.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to hear Peter McAulay give an address to a meeting of the Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration, during which he outlined his policing philosophy. That made me start think about about his contribution to the Northern Territory Police Force. It is a credit to him that, after 9 years of his stewardship, we certainly have the most honest police force in Australia. There is no hint of corruption in any element of the Northern Territory Police Force. In this day and age, with the pressures placed on police and the temptations available, that is certainly a compliment to Peter McAulay and, of course, to the members of the police force themselves.

Peter has brought our police force into the 20th century with a big bang. He has ushered in an era of professionalism which enables our police force to rank very highly in Australia. He has placed an emphasis on training that is probably the envy of most other police forces. He has emphasised the importance of getting better-qualified recruits into the force and he has emphasised particularly the recruitment of tertiary-educated men and women. The benefits of that are starting to appear. That is particularly the case in the forensic area. The controversy about forensic investigation in the Chamberlain case probably assisted his efforts to improve that area and there is no doubt that there has been a substantial improvement in the quality of forensic work in the Northern Territory Police Force. It is just one of the areas in which there has been a significant improvement in the quality of police work and in the training of personnel involved. I wish Peter McAulay well, as I do his successor, Mick Palmer. I expect that Mick Palmer will be able to maintain the extremely high standard that Peter McAulay has set.

Mr Speaker, 27 November 1987 is a significant date for Don and Patricia Bonson because tomorrow they celebrate 50 years of married life. I have spoken previously in this Assembly about Don Bonson. He certainly is one of the Territory's characters and his family history tells the story of much that has happened in the Territory and how far we have come. Don is famous in his own right because he is one of the people who helped to get rid of the stupid law that prevented people of his extraction from drinking. We have all heard the story of Don's involvement in that campaign.

Tonight, however, I want to talk about Don and Patricia. Don was born locally whilst Patricia came from the Torres Strait Islands. She was an Ah Mat, of Malay and Filipino extraction. Her father was a diver on a pearl lugger and, later, a charcoal manufacturer in Coconut Grove. After drinking a bottle of beer, Don was classed as an honorary white. That created problems because Patricia was classed as coloured and they were harassed because the white community did not approve of their liaison. When they were courting they used to stroll down to the Daly Street Bridge and, on more than 1 occasion, the police made them move on. They had 3 children before they could obtain the legal right to marry. That is pretty staggering, isn't it? Only 50 years ago, because of the mores of the time, Don and Patricia Bonson were not allowed to marry. They had had 3 children before they were allowed to do so. They were married in the Darwin Registry Office on 27 November 1937. They have 12 children, 5 boys and 7 girls.

They have lived most of their lives in the Northern Territory, leaving only for a short time after the bombing of Darwin when they were evacuated to Merbein in Victoria. They are now both quite elderly and Patricia, who is a diabetic, is recovering from serious surgery. I am sure that we all wish her well and I am sure that we would all like to congratulate Don and Patricia on an achievement that not too many people manage.

A related issue concerns Don's mother, Dolly Bonson, who is famous as Bet Bet, the Little Black Princess in Mrs Aeneas Gunn's book. Dolly is 93 or 94 years old and she has a problem which illustrates a serious shortcoming in services in Darwin. She is an occupant of the Royal Darwin Hospital, not being able to look after herself. For quite legitimate reasons, the hospital has said that it is not a proper place for her to be and I accept that. A public hospital like the Royal Darwin Hospital is not a fit and proper place for her to be. Unfortunately, there is nowhere else in Darwin where such people can go. Obviously, her children are reaching the age where they themselves are too old to be able to afford to care for her properly and, in any case, they should not have that responsibility thrust upon them. However, there is nowhere else in Darwin at present for extremely elderly people who are dependent on full-time care to go. Certainly, I do not have a magic answer but the matter needs to be investigated to determine what can be done. With our population ageing rapidly, it is something that we will need to address with some urgency.

Mr Speaker, I too would like to thank yourself and the staff of the Assembly for the work that they have done during the year. The last 12 months has been a pretty busy time with Territory and federal elections and the Barkly by-election, to name some of the more public highlights. We will be pleased to wind down a bit over Christmas. I would like to thank the staff of the Assembly for the efficient way that they have gone about making our life more comfortable, and I would like to apologise to them for the odd times when, as a House, we have probably been a little less considerate than we should have been.

I think we owe a particular debt of gratitude to the Clerk who, through means that I probably do not want to know about, has managed to achieve quite significant improvements in the conditions under which we operate in the Assembly. The acquisition of the Nelson Building and the provision of the library facility, plus the changes that have been made within this building will make the life of parliamentarians much easier and much more effective.

There is 1 other group of people that I would like to take the opportunity of thanking and I refer to the government car drivers. They also have an unenviable job at times when they are often forced to keep long hours. I have always found the government car drivers to be courteous at all hours of the day and night and willing to go beyond the call of duty when it is occasionally asked of them. I know that my life and, I am sure, the lives of members opposite are made much easier by the attitude that the drivers have taken to their job. They certainly do not see it as a means of doing the least amount of work possible. They see it as being the means of providing the maximum assistance possible to the members who are lucky enough to have the use of their services. It is certainly appreciated by me. I thank them for their efforts and wish them a merry Christmas as well.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, the subject that I wish to address this evening relates to higher education and, in particular, the University College. Members would be aware that, at present, the Commonwealth government is looking at altering the higher education system. The Commonwealth

government calls this 'development' of the higher education system. No one is denying that the system needs to be reviewed from time to time. In fact, we are doing that with our education system. Circumstances change and there may be a need to alter the direction of education so that the demands of society can be met. However, in respect of higher education, the government must realise that perceptions play a big part in our society and care must be taken to ensure that the high academic standards that are achieved both at institutes of technology and universities are not put at risk.

Over the coming year, there will be a great deal of debate on this matter. I would suggest that that debate will be bitter indeed, particularly at the academic level. I say that because of remarks made by Hon John Dawkins on 22 September. Members would be aware that he is the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training. He spoke about the challenge for higher education in Australia. I quote from a statement made by him when he was talking about the government being strongly committed to further development of our national higher education system. He said: 'Attitudes and some traditional arrangements will need to be changed'. Mr Speaker, might I suggest that that sort of comment will send shivers down the spines of people in the university sector in particular. It is no secret that, for some time now, there has been an effort to link TAFE, advanced education and the university sector.

It is interesting to note that John Dawkins is talking about improving the opportunities for participation by disadvantaged groups in higher education - and I mention this as an aside because people who are isolated are at a disadvantage and Territorians are in that category - whilst he is at the same time advocating reducing access by Territorians to a range of higher education opportunities that exist in other states.

That brings me to the matter of the University College of the Northern Territory. Once again, we see that the opposition has a complete lack of understanding of the government's decision to establish a university college in the Northern Territory. Honourable members would be aware of Mr Warren Snowdon's comments recently about the University College. I might say that Mr Snowdon should be directed to read all the comments recorded in the Northern Territory Hansard in relation to the establishment of our university. He might then understand what it is all about. I refer him to my original statement, as Minister for Education, on the establishment of a Northern Territory university. It was made on Wednesday 28 August 1985.

The opposition in this Assembly also has a complete lack of understanding of what it was all about. I commented again in response to the Leader of the Opposition on 19 November 1986. I will read quickly from that response:

Before doing that, I would like to comment in relation to the University College because I believe that the opposition has no understanding of the reason why the Northern Territory government has not supported the move to establish a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology. To people who read the debates and listen to the comments made by the opposition, it is very clear that it has no understanding of why the Northern Territory government has not supported that suggestion.

The Minister for Education has stressed the problems of lack of space and the numbers of students that would be allowed to attend the university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology. The main reason that the government has not supported that move relates to

credibility. I have mentioned this on another occasion, but it needs to be mentioned again. It is disappointing to see that the opposition is not here to listen to what I am about to say in relation to the credibility of the University College.

Might I say that, on many occasions, the opposition is not here in the Chamber to listen to meaningful comments that are made on a number of issues which are of particular importance to people of the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: There are not too many of your members here.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, that issue has been made clear. The opposition have continually knocked our efforts to try to help people in the Northern Territory, and I really cannot understand what it is on about. I do not know why it does not stand up for Territorians. It is almost as if, because there is an ALP government in Canberra, this opposition feels that it has to stick up for what it is proposing. That is nonsense. When I was a minister, I attended a number of ministerial conferences and, at those conferences, the Labor states would fight the federal government concerning issues that related to people in their states. They would fight for their people. I am really surprised that the opposition continually tries to knock our direction in making university undergraduate courses available here in the Northern Territory. It is incredible.

I would like to reiterate some of the facts. Every state or territory has a university except the Northern Territory. The cost of setting up a university is extremely high - we all know that. The average cost per student at the university, in the initial years, is approximately \$20 000. There are reasons why the cost in the states is lower. Enrolments are higher to start with and there are institutes or universities in the regions which can share ...

Mr Ede: Every other capital city is built on a river. Why can't we have a capital city built on a river?

Mr HARRIS: There we go again. We are not talking about rivers; we are talking about Territory people.

Mr Ede: You don't understand what we are on about, do you?

Mr HARRIS: No, and you don't understand what we are on about, and you should. You will stay in opposition forever and a day unless you start to address the issues that relate directly to people in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the cost per student at the University College will decrease as the number of students enrolled increases, and that is a fact of life. The turn-off of students from our schools is growing every year. The number of Territorians proceeding interstate has reduced because of the University College. Surveys were carried out in relation to this, and opposition members must acknowledge that the people of the Territory saw the university as a major concern and a major requirement. One of our goals in education was to enable Territory students to have access to all levels of education in the Territory, from preschool to university.

The government pursued the establishment of a university because we believed that it was our right to do so. We shifted ground because the Commonwealth government was not in favour of the direction we were taking. We did shift ground. We gave in to the Commonwealth government's wishes, but we

were still very concerned about the credibility aspect. If there had been an acceptable alternative to the one we took, we would have taken it. If it had been possible to establish a university alongside a TAFE college, we would have done so. The Darwin Institute of Technology is a TAFE college. It offers good courses in advanced education and no one denies that. No one denies its credibility nor the good work done by its staff and students, but the real issue is how that is accepted at the academic level. Decisions have to be taken in relation to that and there has to be acceptance in academic terms.

I have nothing against the Commonwealth proposal. On the last occasion on which I responded on this issue to the Leader of the Opposition, I said that perhaps the linking of the 3 tertiary education sectors might work. I do not know whether it will, but the Northern Territory is not the place to experiment. If the Commonwealth government wants to try out the idea, let it put a TAFE college with the University of Sydney and see how it goes. If that is accepted, we do not have a problem.

Our other concern was that no established university was prepared to link in with the Darwin Institute of Technology. I do not know whether that is still the case, but such an arrangement was not possible then. We need that link because we needed the credibility that comes with it. Unless existing universities accept proposals of links like that, we must continue with the arrangements that we have. When we are talking about university degrees, we must be careful not to put at risk the integrity of those degrees. Let us remember that we are not only talking about national recognition; we are talking about international recognition.

Members of the opposition continually push this issue of the Darwin Institute of Technology. I reiterate that it involves a problem with credibility. I wish that they would get their act together and approach the federal government and say that there are concerns in the Northern Territory in relation to siting the University College at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The issue will be debated during the coming year. As I said, most states realise that changes must be made, but the problem is how those changes will be implemented. I believe that debate at the academic level will be very bitter indeed. The key to acceptable change in this area is the academics, and I emphasise that. Another point I emphasise is that we must not reduce the standards of our education in order to meet the goals that are set by any government. Those standards must remain high whatever happens. We must ensure that the quality of educational standards remains high.

I emphasise again that we are not second-rate citizens in the Northern Territory. We have to be concerned about credibility. It is a major concern and the opposition has to realise that. I would suggest that the federal member for the Northern Territory gets right across the issue before he starts making comments of this kind down south, because he is not doing what his constituents want him to do. He has to lift his game and start to look at their concerns and start to read through the debates that have taken place here on a wide range of issues, because we are concerned about our Territory people and we are going to continue to pursue that.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make some comments in relation to the cyclone season. Unfortunately, I was not able to ask a question on the matter this morning during question time. I think members will remember that, last year, there was a great deal of confusion on one occasion when suddenly all the

government offices closed down, the schools closed and we did not know what was going on. The question I would have liked the Chief Minister to answer was: what procedures are to be followed in the event of a cyclone threat to the Darwin and Palmerston areas? It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister is not here because he has the opportunity to reply in this adjournment debate and I think that it is very important that the procedures be spelt out. I would ask that the Chief Minister do that for us.

Before closing, I join with other members in wishing you, Mr Speaker, the Clerk and the staff of the Legislative Assembly well over the Christmas and New Year period. They must find it hard putting up with us on occasions. We place considerable demands upon them and I wish them well for the coming year.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, may I just endorse the sentiments and comments that have been expressed here this evening in relation to yourself, the Clerk and the drivers. I thought the praise of the drivers was well-deserved. They work long hours, usually outside the normal working hours of 8 to 4.21, and I wish them well for the new year and a very safe, prosperous and happy Christmas.

Mr Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate in the spirit of this final sittings of the Legislative Assembly for 1987. It is fitting that an end-of-year summary be offered for the benefit of honourable members and for future readers of the Parliamentary Record who will seek to place an historical perspective upon these times. Somebody has to do it and I say, with my customary humility, that it might as well be me. With the same degree of humility, I recognise my limitations. I would not presume to pass judgment on the workings of my colleagues, whether they be ministers or the hard-working and dedicated backbenchers who diligently carry out their duties on this side of the House. Therefore, according to my limitations, I must do what I know I can do and what I have experience in doing: that is, to urge members opposite to consider the error of their ways. I hasten to add that I intend to do this constructively.

My mission will be to tell honourable members opposite what they are doing wrong, in the hope that they will do better in 1988. Thus, I must turn firstly to an old theme. It is old from my viewpoint because I have spoken often about it. From the opposition's viewpoint it is brand new because its members have never once mentioned the subject. I am talking about a mining policy and the fact that the opposition does not have one. It has a policy on almost everything in the dictionary except mining. If I recall correctly, it even has an official policy on bees and beekeeping ...

Mr Ede: We have a mining policy too.

Mr COULTER: ... but not on mining, the biggest industry in the Territory by a long way and the biggest industry we are likely to have in the future despite spectacular growth in tourism. This startling lack has always puzzled me. The only reason I can come up with for the absence of an opposition mining policy is that nobody in the Labor Party knows anything about it or is interested in it in any way - not even the current spokesman on mining matters, the member for Nhulunbuy, whose livelihood depends indirectly on bauxite mining in Gove. If there were no Nabalco, there would be no Nhulunbuy and the honourable member would be somewhere else.

To give the member for Nhulunbuy some credit, however, it must be said that he has made a more significant contribution to mining matters in this House than his predecessor as spokesman, the member for Stuart. The member

for Nhulunbuy seems merely to be apathetic about mining. The member for Stuart seems actively to hate the industry. His infrequent contributions in this House to debate on mining were almost solely to express opposition to any kind of mining activity at all. To the member for Stuart, mining means cyanide spills or perils in the gold room or horror stories about leaking water pipes at Ranger.

My constructive suggestion is, therefore, that in 1988 the Labor Party should prepare and adopt a mining policy so that we can all see what it stands for. It may well be that it has to search for a person connected with the mining industry who is prepared to join and to help. That person will have to be searched for. I know it will not be easy but it is necessary that an effort be made. If all else fails, I would be happy to assist by approaching people in the mining industry to help out on a secondment basis so that, after the unpleasant task is performed, that person could return to his rightful position in society. He could be a de facto member of the Labor Party for a short time. I am anxious to assist the Labor Party in this important matter. Recently, I personally extended an offer of assistance to the federal member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, in carrying out his announced intention to compile a paper on uranium and land rights for next year's national ALP conference. I sincerely offered the assistance of experts from the Territory Department of Mines and Energy and he received that offer courteously. I hope for similar courtesy from the Labor opposition here today.

The opportunity must be taken to commend the Leader of the Opposition for his newly-discovered concern for the business community of the Territory. He should be commended also for his perseverance. As I said yesterday, a couple of months ago, he attended a dinner organised by the Small Business Association, at which I was privileged to be a guest speaker. The Leader of the Opposition had a few buckets tipped on him, not by me but by more than half of the people present. I should add that he also received a very strong round of applause for having the courage to attend that meeting. Perhaps that is what sparked his short-lived development profile, which came to a grinding end in the Assembly this week. Perhaps also that experience influenced his surprising recent attempts to present himself as a credible spokesman for business and a promoter of business opportunities. His past attitudes toward business opportunities in the Territory may not, however, sit too well with his new image. I wonder how well he will fare when he presents his enthusiasm for business to Rupert Hungerford or to the operators of the Sheraton Hotels in the Territory or the 2 casinos. I wonder how he will be accepted by the private hospital operator or by the students at the University College seeking to acquire skills for business application. The member for Port Darwin has eloquently exposed the weakness of the Labor Party in that regard. What about his reception in the boardrooms of uranium-mining companies like ERA and Queensland Mines or potential uranium miners like Pancontinental and Denison?

I am prepared to put aside my cynicism, which would otherwise rise automatically, to give the Leader of the Opposition the chance to prove himself in 1988. He will, however, need more than the occasional burst of rhetoric such as that which we heard from him and his deputy in yesterday's discussion of a matter of public importance. He needs to demonstrate in practical terms to the business community of the Territory that he does not represent minority groups, self-interested lobby groups and the trade union movement, but the wider interests of the business community and, indeed, the advancement of all Northern Territorians. He has a long way to go before he reaches anything approaching credibility but I wish him well.

His recent trip south, which he publicised highly and during which he met a number of prominent business people, may well have put him on the right path. He has not publicised his appointment list but he has to understand that I have a fairly close relationship with most of the people he visited. Naturally, his movements were known to me. I was on a similar trip at the time and, as I said yesterday, our paths crossed at Parliament House in Canberra. As I said, I believe that I would have visited at least as many ministers as the Leader of the Opposition. However, the matter does not rest there.

Hansard is full of examples of the opposition's negative attitude in 1987. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Stuart and other members of the opposition have all contributed. I thought I would use this occasion to give a few examples. The award of the year would have to go to the member for Nhulunbuy. Historians reading Hansard will see his contribution to developing an atmosphere conducive to employment opportunities in the Northern Territory. Let us hear what he had to say about conditions of service at the new Crab Claw Island resort. On page 251 of the Parliamentary Record for Thursday 30 April 1987 he said, in relation to workers there:

Unfortunately for them, generally they have no family in the Territory and very little in the way of other support and therefore they are obliged to take whatever comes along, including employment with a Mr Cantwell. The area, I am reliably informed, is infested by crocodiles and sharks and other beasts that roam the wild in the Northern Territory. As I understand it, the infestation is so heavy that it has caused quite some alarm for the employees there.

That is great stuff when we are talking about the development of tourism in the Northern Territory! Fortunately for us, the wildlife is what a great many people come to the Northern Territory for in the first place and that is why such a development has been built in that particular region.

The member for Stuart has told us of cyanide spills and of plastic bottles being delivered to people. He gave a new meaning to the term 'poison letters'.

Mr Ede: It is all true.

Mr COULTER: He talked about dead cows and motorbikes and a whole range of things. During the course of the year, he was given a new nickname: Cyanide Sam. It was not just cyanide spills that brought him notoriety. We all remember Calamity Jane and Cyanide Sam storming the gates of Tennant Creek because tins of cyanide were allegedly stored there, only to find that it was not true. We all remember the stories about pipelines which were going to blow up in the faces of Alice Springs residents and the details he gave about that supposed danger. His anti-development campaign in 1987 will go down in the annals of history, along with the member for Nhulunbuy's attempt to rubbish employment conditions in a tourist industry which we are promoting around the world and whose main attractions are the wildlife and crocodiles which he was so upset about. It goes on and on and on.

Mr Ede: So do you.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I think I am starting to hit the mark because the member for Stuart is now becoming very sensitive. Remember that I am leaving it to historians to tell the story of 1987 and the opposition's contribution to development. They will have a very boring time indeed because the opposition's knocking attitude is exposed in Hansard again and again.

The member for MacDonnell featured prominently also. Members will recall his speeches on peace and the high quality of his contributions to MPIs and censure motions. They will also recall a very simple piece of legislation, the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act. We wanted simply to be able to compel truck drivers to wash their trucks before they left the mine site at Ranger. Mr Bell went on for about an hour about radioactivity, the nuclear fuel cycle, low radioactivity and world markets for uranium while we were simply passing a bill which would require people to have their trucks washed before they left the mine site. It is interesting reading indeed, and anti-development. I believe that next year, when the Leader of the Opposition - whoever he may be - returns to this Chamber, he should adopt a more positive attitude to the development of the Northern Territory.

Even in the dying stages of the 1987 parliamentary year, we have seen the opposition raising an MPI and a censure motion. We have heard the rhetoric and the lack of substance in the opposition's contribution to those debates, which was nothing short of a disgrace. I believe that was intentional and that the opposition's strategy in the dying stages of 1987 was to provide this Assembly with the very worst that it could offer. I believe that was deliberately done so that, as we enter into 1988, it will be able to show us just how clever it is by contributing to the development of the sixth of Australia that we on this side of the House love so very much and call home: the Northern Territory of Australia.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, as this is our last sitting day for the year, I would like to wish all honourable members and Assembly staff a happy Christmas. I hope their Christmas will be as happy as I trust my family's will be.

I have particularly enjoyed working as a member of the Legislative Assembly this year. I probably should have gone independent much earlier. I have enjoyed my independent days especially and look forward - God willing - to another interesting year as an independent member.

As other honourable members have done this afternoon, I note with regret the resignation of the Police Commissioner, Mr McAulay, to take up a position down south. One can only speak about people as one finds them, and he has been of great help to me in my electorate duties when I have had to call upon members of the police force for help or advice. They have come to see me about different matters or I have had things made easy for me when I have had to go to police headquarters to see them about certain matters. As do other honourable members, I think his departure from the Northern Territory scene will leave a great hole in the police force, but no doubt the incoming commissioner will, in his own way, fill the position very well.

I am sorry the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services is leaving the House at the moment. A situation was drawn to my attention in relation to public servants obtaining a doctor's certificate to say that they needed a certain amount of sick leave. Whilst the minister cannot do anything about it, I would just like it made known - and perhaps he knows already - that it is a very well-known fact that there are 4 doctors in town who will give sick leave recommendations to persons for any length of time they seek, whether they are very sick or not. This situation is to be greatly deprecated. I know the names of 3 of the doctors, as they are very well-known, but I do not know the name of the fourth. I believe these doctors are working against their own profession. They are certainly working against the patients' well-being and against the Northern Territory. If there were some way that I could make this known more publicly and have something done about it, I would

like to do it. Perhaps there is something that can be done and perhaps there is not; I don't know. Perhaps it is only the tip of the iceberg and perhaps it happens in other states. I am not saying that a sick worker should not take sick leave for an appropriate length of time, but I believe many people who take sick leave - and this applies as much to people working in private enterprise as it does in the public service - do swing the lead a bit. They often use sick leave as an excuse to do things not connected with being sick at all.

Finally, I would like to speak briefly about the passing of a certain group of people - and I am not using 'passing' to mean dying - from a certain government department in the Northern Territory. I refer to the dissolution of the old Water Resources Branch as a result of the organisation of the new Power and Water Authority. I did have a certain connection with the old Water Resources Branch as my husband worked as an engineer there when we first came to Darwin. In his time with the Water Resources Branch and subsequently as Director of Mines, when he had control of the Mines Branch and Water Resources, I came to know the staff very well, both the office staff and the field staff. I would like to say that there were some very good people in the Water Resources Branch. They were very unusual people and probably their way of working would no longer be tolerated because they used to bend the rules at times, and I will note a few instances.

When we came up here, the Water Resources Branch used to work in an unlined Sidney Williams hut in Cavenagh Street next to the Welfare Branch and the Mines Branch. It was completely unlined and the doors and the windows were open all day. There were not many women on the staff. Fans were the only means available for cooling the air. In those days, it was not unusual to take your dog to work with you. Everybody else took their dogs with them and the dogs just sat under the desks or mooched around. In those days, you could probably have held a dog show in the grounds because of all the dogs that were there. At that time, the gentleman who subsequently became Mayor of Darwin lived next door and I refer to the late Harry Chan and his wife Lilyan. Often, their Pekingese dogs would go next door into the Water Resources building and provide a bit of variety among the canine population there.

I remember the work of the Water Resources staff at the Winnellie workshops. They were known to bend the rules on occasions. I must say their craftsmanship in making different articles was second to none. I can say this now because it happened so long ago. Because of the organisation I happened to belong to, I had need of a collapsible flagpole. I think I still have it at home at the back of a cupboard somewhere. This was the most magnificent collapsible flagpole I have ever seen. It was varnished and it had brass ends. It was finished off in a very craftsmanlike way. I have to say that they probably did bend the rules in making it in the government's time.

When our children were younger, we used to take them to the Christmas parties put on by Water Resources. Probably to children these days, helicopters are pretty boring because there are so many but, about 15 years ago, helicopters were pretty rare around Darwin. I recall the time Santa Claus came to a Christmas party for the children of Water Resources staff in a helicopter. It was certainly an event to remember.

The workshop staff at Winnellie were noted for their happy hours. These happy hours gained some notoriety amongst happy hours of other government departments, both for their conviviality and for the number of people who used to wangle an invitation to attend. With the passing of the years, heavier fines for drink-driving, much more and faster traffic and a decision of a

certain senior public servant, who has since left Darwin, the happy hours faded out and the staff had to make do with other forms of recreation on Friday afternoons.

At home, I have a memento of the work of the Water Resources staff. It is in the form of a magnificent sheet steel fountain which was made by the staff for one of the branch's exhibits at the Darwin Show many years ago. Although I have no great liking for modern art, as soon as I saw the fountain at the Darwin Show I thought it stood out on its own in terms of artistic achievement. My husband would not let me angle for it because he said it was government property so this beautiful fountain stayed in the yards out at the workshop at Winnellie for some years with a collection of junk until, one day, the chaps did a spring-clean and somebody remembered that I liked it. It ended up with us and holds pride of place in our front garden.

In those days, the conditions for people out bush and working in the field were much harsher than they are now and I think, probably because the men worked under harder conditions, they had greater strength of character and they were really the top in getting work done. When men went out to gauge creeks and rivers, they went out at the beginning of the Wet. Because of the rising of the creeks and rivers during the Wet and the condition of the roads, many of which were not bituminised, once they were out on site they stayed there throughout the Wet. They took dry rations with them but they had to live off the land. They stayed there until the end of the Wet when they finished gauging, and then they came in. They did indulge in a bit of hunting, shooting and fishing and possibly bent the rules a little in doing that but, in those days, many other people who went out bush did so also.

I will not mention any names but, unfortunately, many of those people are no longer with the Water Resources Branch. Those who went out bush were expert bushmen. They were crack shots and they knew where the fish were biting. If you wanted to go fishing in a creek somewhere, you always asked the blokes who had been out bush to tell you where the best spots were. They were very familiar with bush lore. They got on very well with the Aborigines and probably learnt bush lore from them. They could live off the land and they knew every inch of every watercourse in the Northern Territory. If any of those staff of Water Resources is retiring in the Northern Territory - and I know some of them will be - the Power and Water Authority could do much worse than engage them from time to time as consultants, because their knowledge of the watercourses in the Northern Territory is encyclopaedic.

On one occasion, one of the field staff was sent to Humpty Doo in the late 1950s to do some work in relation to the rice project there. He did not have any transport but, somehow or other, he travelled overland to Point Stuart, borrowed 6 horses, came back to Humpty Doo, finished the job and then, on his own initiative, went down to Tortilla where there was more river gauging in progress because of the rice project there. He finished his gauging at Tortilla before the end of the Wet and returned the horses to Point Stuart.

I think it does us good from time to time to remember the little incidents that make up the history of the Northern Territory. It is a pity that such individualism will be lost in the new organisation of the Power and Water Authority. Whilst we need to look to the future and to proper reorganisation of government departments, nevertheless I hope that somewhere the spirit of the old Water Resources Division still continues.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to comment on the so-called proposal to amalgamate the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology. I raised a number of issues relating to the matter during question time this morning and the member for Port Darwin has spoken on the same subject this evening. I would like to draw honourable members' attention to a serious problem which has been exposed by the performance of the federal member for the Northern Territory, Mr Snowdon, on this matter. In particular, I am concerned about Mr Snowdon's failure to represent the needs of Territorians with regard to educational issues. This is not a charge that I make lightly but I was appalled at Mr Snowdon's behaviour in relation to the matter. Honourable members would be aware that Mr Snowdon made great play of calling on the government to consider a proposal from the federal government which we are still yet to receive and which he admits has not been accepted and evaluated by the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

This call came in the midst of a speech to federal parliament in which Mr Snowdon took the opportunity to castigate the Northern Territory for establishing the University College at the old Darwin Hospital site. He actually described the college as a 'white elephant'. Unfortunately, he made no mention of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's refusal to offer more than 20 university places a year within the existing DIT facilities, nor did he offer any explanation for the fact that this so-called white elephant has attracted more than 200 students in its first year.

I really must express my disappointment that Mr Snowdon appears to believe that it is more important to make public statements and political comments about alleged proposals - which may or may not exist - concerning the University College, in preference to raising the very real issues in respect of Territory education which I have contacted him about. Since Mr Snowdon was elected as the Territory's federal member, I have written to ask that he take up a number of issues on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory. I think that that is a role that he has been elected by the people of the Northern Territory to perform.

I have asked Mr Snowdon to take up the federal government's decision to cease funding of the home loan video scheme from the end of this year, the decision not to recognise a commitment from the former federal Minister for Education to fund the Associate Diploma in Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) at the advanced education level and the decision not to recognise another commitment from the former minister to provide funds for the establishment of an annexe of Batchelor College in Alice Springs to enable the Remote Area Teacher Education program to be extended to Alice Springs.

I have also sent Mr Snowdon a copy of a letter to the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training in which I raised a number of issues of concern to the Northern Territory, including no less than 7 more matters in addition to those I have already mentioned. I have asked the federal member to pursue these issues on behalf of Territorians. It is extremely disappointing that the only thing that Territorians have heard from Mr Snowdon is talk about some up-in-the-air proposal to amalgamate the University College and the DIT. The question really must be asked: what is he doing for Territorians? He cannot claim not to have received details of the issues I have mentioned here. He has acknowledged the letters I have sent to him on these issues. What do Territorians hear, Mr Speaker? Another Labor Party politician attempting to justify federal government intransigence over the University College.

There is 1 other point I would like to raise in relation to Mr Snowdon's comments about the University College. He has made much of the fact that the present cost per student at the University College is very high in relation to costs in other Australian universities. This typifies the way in which he has tried to use selective information to attack the establishment of the University College. Of course the costs are high this year. The vast majority of students are only in the first year of their studies. Next year, there will be an intake in the first and second years and, in 1989, we will have students in all 3 years of their degrees. Then, and only then, will we be able to make some meaningful judgments about the costs per student and, at that point, they will be very much lower than they are now. If Mr Snowdon is so fond of figures, I would ask him to consider the following information.

Next year, with students in the first 2 years of their courses, the cost per student at the University College will almost certainly drop well below \$20 000. The Australian National University, which is an established institution with students in all tiers of its degree courses, now has a cost per student in excess of \$20 000 a year. The federal member may like to suggest to his federal colleagues that they close the ANU because, from next year, it will be costing more per student than the University College. I bet that he will not do that.

The federal member appears to believe that, if a university college had been established at the DIT, the cost per student would now be about \$8000 per year. That may well be true for 20 students a year, but it is certainly not true for 200 students a year, which is the level which we are now operating at. Honourable members would have heard me point out in this House on a number of occasions that the capital cost of establishing the University College at the DIT to cater for more than 200 students would have been in excess of what we paid at the old Darwin Hospital site. There would have been a minimum cost of \$5m for laboratories, another \$1m minimum for temporary accommodation - for the first year, not for the second or third years - while the federally-funded \$7m administration block was being built and the library, which is already under pressure, would have needed substantial expansion. Meanwhile, for \$6m, the Northern Territory now has a university facility worth \$35 to \$40m. That is a fact, not fallacy or fiction. That facility will cater for our needs for up to the next 10 years.

As I said this morning, I would be very pleased to consider any reasonable proposal the federal government may put to this government on the University College or on any aspect of tertiary education. However, I reiterate that it is unfortunate that the federal member for the Northern Territory has chosen to make statements, which are premature at best, in preference to taking up the issues which are affecting Territorians now. I urge the federal member to start carrying out the role which he was elected by Territorians to fulfil: to represent Territorians in Canberra, not to represent Canberrans in the Northern Territory.

There are some other matters that I would like to comment on. The first is to wish Commissioner McAulay all the very best in his new position as Commissioner of Federal Police and to congratulate him on the 9 years that he spent as Commissioner of the Northern Territory Police Force. I heartily endorse the comments of other members this evening in singing the praises of Commissioner McAulay and I certainly wish him and his family well for the future. I would also like to welcome the new Commissioner of the Northern Territory Police Force, Commissioner Mick Palmer, and wish him all the success that is possible for him and the Northern Territory Police Force in future years.

Before sitting down, I would like to thank the Clerk and his staff, and the staff of Hansard, for the work and effort that they have put in during the year, and I would like to second the comments of other members in singing the praises of our drivers who certainly do a magnificent job at all hours of the day and night, regardless of what day of the week it is. They do it most pleasantly and punctually and sometimes well beyond the call of duty. I would like to close by wishing all members the compliments of the season.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to express some considerable anger and frustration because, originally, another week of sittings was scheduled, during which I had hoped that we would be able to tease out a number of the issues which are being raised tonight.

At the commencement of these sittings, there were 18 items on the Notice Paper. Today, 3 days later, the only change is that there are now 23 items on the Notice Paper. We have disposed of 3 items and added considerably more. They are matters of grave importance to the Northern Territory and we have not had the ability to debate them fully.

The way in which the statement from the Minister for Education has been handled is disgusting. I had my chance to speak on it - although at considerably less length than the minister - but all my colleagues would like the opportunity to speak on it. I am sure that the member for Port Darwin would like to discuss it also.

Mr Harris: I will be speaking on it.

Mr EDE: What happened? On Tuesday, it was the third item on the Notice Paper and I thought that we would have the opportunity to discuss it. It was the first item on Wednesday's Notice Paper. I thought we would finally have the chance to debate it on Thursday but where was it on that day's Notice Paper? It had dropped down to eleventh and it was clear that there was no way in the world that we would have the chance to discuss it. I was extremely disturbed about that particular item but, Mr Speaker, look at some of the others! They include the Public Accounts Committee report and the report of the Pastoral Industry Study Group, which the Minister for Industries and Development said in the last sittings would be brought on for debate. It has been on the Notice Paper since June. We have not even heard the minister speak on that report, which is a very important one. He has simply tabled the paper and said he would speak on it. He has had plenty of opportunities but nothing has happened.

Other matters on the Notice Paper which we have not had the chance to debate include road safety, statehood, health promotion, work health and women living in remote areas. We were told that we were to debate that last matter also, but nothing has happened. I would have liked some more time to debate the statement on equal opportunities legislation.

Another paper was tabled this week concerning services provided for Aborigines. We adjourned debate on that matter because of a letter which the member for Arnhem received from the minister and I now table that letter. I will refer to it because it shows how the Minister for Health and Community Services has abused the spirit in which matters are handled in this House. The letter included a copy of the minister's statement. It said that the minister intended to table the statement on Tuesday and that he believed debate would ensue on Thursday. We allowed the paper to be tabled and incorporated into Hansard. We did not ask him to read it. To save the time of this House, we agreed to adjourn it. We did that rather than debating it

immediately because we relied on the word of the Minister for Health and Community Services. It did not come within cooe of being debated today. There appeared to be no intention of debating it; it was well down the Notice Paper at No 14. How can we rely on ministers opposite when they write letters like that, knowing full well that we may take them on trust and decide not to debate matters immediately?

There are many matters which could have been debated thoroughly in a 2-week sittings. It would have been timely to debate matters relating to the University College, not restricting our debate to comments made by the federal member for the Northern Territory. Past events, comments of the member for Darwin and comments by the minister are all worthy of debate. Now is a very important time in higher education. A Green Paper is about to be tabled in the federal parliament and it would have been timely for us to have debated higher education here and forwarded the record of the debate to the federal minister, Mr Dawkins, so that he could receive Northern Territory input on the subject. It is an extremely important matter but the government did not take the opportunity to contribute.

The situation at Darwin High School could have been debated also. I have written to the minister regarding the possibility of crowding at Darwin High School as a result of his proposal to bring in overseas students. My letter contains a series of questions on the operation of the program and its effects on other parts of the education system. People associated with the Ludmilla Primary School are very upset about students' inability to enter Darwin High School because of overcrowding. I have also spoken here about the problems of overcrowding at Casuarina Secondary College. I wanted to receive some assurances that overseas students would not be taking places meant for local students.

I wanted to debate the major difficulty at Anningie. On my last visit there, I filled a plastic container with a litre of water which came from the spear pump in the river. I have been driving around with the container in my car and I am sorry that I did not bring it in tonight. I meant to table it, in order to demonstrate to honourable members what fine quality water comes from Anningie Creek. I thought that, if I tabled it, the minister might be persuaded to drink it and would realise that it is quite safe. I have been drinking it myself throughout the past week and it is good quality water.

Despite the way he has carried on here tonight, at one stage, the Treasurer and previous Minister for Community Development was willing to listen to some ideas about establishing water supplies in Aboriginal communities. I know that he has been bitten by a rabid dog but he is still clear and lucid at times. I hope that, in one of those moods, he might at least let me see the report which says that it is not possible to have a Mexican Dam at Anningie. Everybody I talk to who knows anything about the subject says it is the ideal spot. They ask what the ground water is like in the area. I tell them that the problem is that it is completely different to the surface water and that, if there were a ground water aquifer, we would be able to use it. They say that there probably is impermeable rock underneath the creek, which solves the first problem, and that all that is needed is the plastic sheet. The previous minister said that he had a consultant's report saying that it could not be done and I was willing to believe that until I heard other experts say that it could be done. If he has any proof for his point of view, I would like to be shown it.

People are now being forced to leave the area despite the fact that fences and shelters have been erected and a radio installed at considerable

government expense. The government should think before it throws away about \$250 000 which has been spent on developing Anningie. It has become pig-headed and decided that it will not go ahead with the Mexican Dam proposal because it comes from this side of the Assembly. It will not even show us the report. I am starting to doubt whether there is a report; I think the government is acting out of pure, arrogant pig-headedness.

Mr Speaker, my last point concerns the construction of an amphitheatre at the Gray Neighbourhood Centre. I have a little note here which says that the Administrator waived the \$1300 Distribution System Extension Policy contribution for this job on the basis of the application from the Gray Primary School on 13 October 1987. Good luck to those involved: it is a public building. I believe that the member for Palmerston was very involved in getting the waiver through. My question is: why was a similar application, made by Humpty Doo Primary School in the electorate of the member for Koolpinyah, rejected out of hand? We do not have the chance to obtain answers on these questions until February next year and that makes me feel angry and frustrated.

It is very difficult but I will try to control myself long enough to wish you, Mr Speaker, the compliments of the season and to extend those also to my colleagues on this side of the House and to members on the crossbenches. In the true spirit of Christmas, I extend them also to those opposite. I can scarcely continue after that, except to offer my thanks and best wishes to the Clerk and all the staff of the Assembly who have done a great job during the year. It is unfortunate that we keep them up late at night and make their lives so miserable on so many occasions but, unfortunately, when we cannot get enough sitting days, that is all we can do if we are to carry out our job.

Mr MCCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of matters I would like to raise briefly tonight. The first is the Apprentice of the Year Awards which were held last week. I was very happy to have been invited to the presentation of those awards. It was an honour for me to have been there in the presence of 8 fine young Australians who had achieved the honour of being selected to represent their state or territory as a finalist in the Apprentice of the Year Award. On the Tuesday prior to the official presentation dinner, the judges, chosen from government, industry and the union movement, certainly had a difficult task in selecting first, second and third placegetters from those 8 very skilled young finalists. I would have been very hard pressed to pick the winner or second or third from among those 8 young people. They were really top class.

The winner of the Apprentice of the Year Award for 1987 was Mr Wayne Cattach from Western Australia who had just completed his apprenticeship as a machinist. Wayne was a very popular choice. I am told that, as part of his presentation to the selection panel, he demonstrated a working model of an external combustion hot air engine. I do not profess to have any knowledge of such machines but I am assured by engineering people who were involved in the selection process that the machining tolerances involved in the construction of such an engine are so fine as to exact an extremely high level of workmanship from its creator. Second place went to Mr Michael Pallier who is an apprentice motor mechanic from New South Wales. He is employed by the York Motors Company in its prestige car repair facility. Michael is apparently somewhat of an expert on Rolls Royce and was pleased to discover that, even in the Territory, we boast some Rolls Royce cars. Third place went to Mr Tony Wright who is an apprentice electrical fitter-mechanic with the South Australia Electricity Trust.

Mr Speaker, too often, we read or we hear about the wayward nature of youth in Australia but it is very pleasing and gratifying to be in the company of and meet young people in their late teens and early twenties who are obviously the leaders of the future in industry and the community. These are young people with a high level of skill and initiative and Australia can be proud of them.

Another very pleasing feature was that this was the first time that the Territory had had the pleasure of hosting this prestigious event and I might mention Rohan Schallmeiner who was the Northern Territory representative. Rohan works for Rotor Services and was the Territory winner of the Apprentice of the Year. Rohan was a very fine contender and I would have thought that the judges would have been hard pressed to have found anybody who could beat him but, in fact they did. I have no doubt that that was done in the genuine belief that the others were better but, in my view, it would have been very hard to have beaten a person such as Rohan who was really outstanding in every respect.

I must also mention the support and the contribution from the AMP Society which has put money into this for 3 years now and will do so again next year. The fact that a company such as AMP is involved in this area is a wonderful thing for Australia.

I would also like to make a couple of very brief comments with regard to remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday regarding harassment. An article in tonight's newspaper headed 'Harassment Cases Go Unanswered' says that:

Fat cats in the NT Public Service are often unsympathetic about reports of sexual harassment, according to the Opposition Leader, Mr Terry Smith. He said yesterday there were a number of serious sexual harassment accusations which had gone unanswered in the public service because of the attitude of senior management.

I find that a disgraceful statement from a Leader of the Opposition who would perhaps have aspirations to government at some stage. I find that it unconscionable on his part to make those sorts of statements. 10 cases of sexual harassment were reported this year and all of those cases were fully investigated.

In fact, I cannot accept the comment of the Leader of the Opposition that sexual harassment cases or harassment cases of any kind are left unanswered because that is not true. The idea that people are afraid to come forward for any reason because they think they will be harassed even further is not borne out by the facts. The fact is that no person who came forward in relation to any harassment case this year has lost his or her job. For the Leader of the Opposition to make such unsubstantiated comments is quite unconscionable.

The member for Koolpinyah spoke of people working whilst on sick leave. If that is happening in the public service and it is reported, it will be investigated. If those persons were working elsewhere, without the authority of the public service, they would be asked to account for their activities or be brought to account.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to add my very best wishes to all honourable members, to the Clerk, to all Assembly staff either in this building or across in the Nelson Building and to all of those people who have put themselves out to support us throughout the year in providing services

during sittings and at other times. I would also like to add my best wishes to Commissioner McAulay in his new position and to the new Commissioner of the Northern Territory Police Force, Mick Palmer. I wish the best for Christmas and the New Year to all.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, despite provocation and because of the lateness of the hour, I will not respond to the comments of the Treasurer other than to say that it took me a number of years to convince his predecessor as Treasurer, the member for Fannie Bay, that honest criticism and honest questioning should not amount to treason. I believe that at least he is convinced of that and I hope that, over a number of years, I will be able to convince the present Treasurer that logic should have some part to play in politics.

I have a number of questions that I will briefly ask of him. Basically, they relate to the Power and Water Authority. It has come to my notice that the Power and Water Authority is suffering from very real personnel deficiency difficulties. In respect of the supply of electricity in Katherine, personnel are expected to do jobs for which they have not been trained. That is extremely unfortunate. I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, the Power and Water Authority will be able to equip people sufficiently for the task that they are supposed to perform for the community. It is precisely the same problem that we experienced at the opening of the Channel Island Power Station. It is not new. I had the faint hope that the experience at Channel Island might have provided a little knowledge.

The other matter relates to the recent collapse of the water treatment plant and the subsequent alternative supplies of water that were found for the Katherine area. The normal supply of water to Katherine was not curtailed because there were dead fish in the river. All water going into a community supply has to be treated. The problem at Katherine occurred because an unskilled person replaced the qualified hydrologist who operated the water treatment plant. He was completely unqualified. That is no criticism of the individual, a person undertaking a task under a great deal of stress. Unfortunately, the water treatment plant was unable to function and, as a consequence, Katherine had to go on bore water. Once again, it is an example of very poor planning in terms of personnel training, and I would hope that, in the not-too-distant future the Northern Territory will no longer be plagued with these continuous problems of very poor planning, particularly when it can affect the livelihood and, in some cases, the lives of citizens of the Northern Territory.

Another matter has come to my notice that I would like to raise for the benefit of the Minister for Mines and Energy in his capacity as the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority. In the past, my information has been reasonably accurate and, though I stand to be corrected by the minister, I am led to believe that up to \$4m has been forgone by the Power and Water Authority because there has been inadequate inspectorial capacity within the Power Directorate of the Power and Water Authority. Simply put, apparently 1 inspector is supposed to inspect some 40 000 electricity meters. It is an impossible task and obviously he cannot do it. Of course, most of the ordinary domestic meters are checked regularly by the person who reads meters on a quarterly basis and by the people responsible for the accounts of what was NTEC. I am reliably informed that, in a number of cases, the heavier consumers of electricity, the people who do not have the normal 240-volt supply, have not paid electricity bills or, if they have paid, on a number of those bills the shortfall has been up to \$40 000 and \$50 000 resulting in an accumulated deficit of some \$4m. Obviously, because we are charged under the

user-pays principle now, that is passed on to domestic consumers who have to make up the shortfall. I would hope that, in the not-too-distant future, the minister can pursue that matter, not for my sake nor for this House's sake, but for the sake of the ordinary domestic consumer in the Northern Territory.

In closing, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Commissioner of Police, Mr Peter McAulay. I came into this House as a very raw recruit at the age of 30, and my experience with police and their activities was extremely limited. I come from a blue-collar background and my background dictated that, if somebody did you dirty, you could do almost anything to them but you didn't turn them in to a copper. In the face of all that, I had a big learning curve to follow and in much of that I was assisted by Peter McAulay. I would like to think that I had a personal rapport with Peter McAulay. Certainly, he assisted me on domestic electorate matters and a great deal of difficulty was saved, simply because I was able to talk to the man on a personal level. Because these things are surveyed I know that, in the Northern Territory, the acceptance of the police is the highest in Australia. After studying police work for some time I know that, unless a police force has community acceptance, its task is many times more difficult. I believe that Peter McAulay's activities in promoting the work of the police within the Northern Territory has been largely responsible for the very high degree of community acceptance that exists. The method of promoting policemen and policewomen within the communities that has been adopted in the Northern Territory, the placement of police personnel in high schools, the very high profile of police in community activities in my electorate and, I would assume, in all other electorates, has certainly allowed them to enjoy a greater degree of community acceptance than is extended to the police in other parts of Australia.

Like other members, I extend my thanks to the staff of the Legislative Assembly. There is no point in repeating all that has been said before. For 7 years, I have enjoyed the support of the staff here; I have enjoyed it again this year and I do hope that they have a safe and very happy Christmas.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have 2 tasks in this evening's adjournment debate, one pleasant and one less so. I think I will get over the less pleasant one first and as quickly as possible.

In the Assembly on 2 June, the member for Koolpinyah asked of the member for Sanderson, who was standing in for the Minister for Transport and Works, why the government allows and, in fact, encourages free bus travel on private buses contracted to operate on government bus routes in contrast to the user-pays system of payment on government buses. On that particular day, the member for Koolpinyah dilated on this subject and complained bitterly that people had to pay on government buses and did not have to pay on private buses. Apparently, agreement had been reached between herself and the Attorney-General that the chief reason for this was the dastardly unions.

I think it is about time that a little honesty was brought to bear in this particular debate. The fact is that the member for Koolpinyah, though she can be excused perhaps, the member for Sanderson and the Minister for Transport and Works ought to be far better informed. In answer to her question, the minister said: 'Since the buses are private, the driver is not permitted under the Transport Workers Passenger Vehicle Award of 1984, as defined by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, to collect a fare'. The plain fact of the matter is that that is false. The Transport Workers Passenger Vehicle Award of 1984 makes no reference to the collection of fares, and it does not say that the drivers are not permitted to collect fares. With respect to that

award, bus drivers, be they working for the Darwin Bus Service or be they working for private bus companies, are operating in a situation in vacuo: the award says nothing about it so they are not prohibited from doing so and, presumably, if employers request that they do it, it can be done.

The Attorney-General also said, and I am quoting here from the minister's answer, 'only members of the Transport Workers Union working in the public transport organisation, in this case the Darwin Bus Service, are permitted to collect fares'. That is completely wrong, as I have said. The fact is that fares are able to be collected by bus drivers, regardless of whether they are working for a government or a private bus line. It is done at the employer's discretion. There may be particular problems and, quite appropriately, the member for Koolpinyah drew attention to administrative problems which resulted in people getting free lifts on a bus operated by a contractor who was being paid by the government. She was being conscientious in drawing that matter to the attention of the Assembly but for her or, more viciously, the Minister for Transport and Works or the member for Sanderson who took responsibility at that time for the minister's portfolio, to argue that such problems are the fault of the Transport Workers Union or its members is grossly unfair and patently false. The results of those sorts of statements and the anti-worker positions adopted by this government are beginning to bite in the community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you yourself made reference to the member for the Northern Territory. The plain fact of the matter is, as you well know, that one of the chief factors in the House of Representatives election was the perception in the Northern Territory electorate that the Country Liberal Party is anti-worker. We have had an example of that, arising from sheer ignorance on the part of the minister. He has numerous staff to provide him with decent information but he cannot get it right because he cannot resist the temptation to bash unions. I suppose I should shut up about it and just leave the Australian Labor Party to reap the electoral rewards from the community's perception that the CLP government is anti-worker. The chickens are coming home to roost.

A more pleasant task which I have this evening relates to my position as the plenipotentiary for the Society for the Prevention of Injury to the English Language or as the self-appointed chairperson of SPIEL. This year, unfortunately, I am at a disadvantage. I had collected a vast number of annotations of entries, many of them of a high quality, in this year's SPIEL competition. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you and all members will be deeply concerned that that particular file has been lost to humanity.

Mr Harris: What? Who took it?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Port Darwin. I believe it will be a serious lacuna in the Northern Territory's archival records.

Be that as it may, SPIEL has managed to make good the deficiency. We have received some quality late entries and entries have been submitted from various quarters around the Legislative Assembly. I think that honourable members will generally be fairly happy with the awards this year. We have approached the Administrator to be patron of SPIEL but at this stage correspondence in that regard is inchoate. However, knowing how eagerly the Administrator reads Hansard, I am sure that, having heard my concern in this regard, he will act forthwith.

Mr Speaker, let us commence with the general section before we move on to the TTT competition which is not the Territory Tidy Towns competition but the Territory Tautological Tournament. I will come to that last of all. First, let me commence with the general section in which we have had quality entries, certainly in those from the honourable Treasurer. In fact, the Treasurer's entries have led to the coining a new word: 'Coulterisms'. We had such entries as 'augurs well', rendered by the Treasurer as 'all goes well' and 'arterial roads' which he referred to as 'artillery roads'. At one stage, Mr Speaker, he sought your leave by saying, 'With your condolence, Mr Speaker, I will refer to such and such'. I presume he meant 'with your indulgence'. A good quality, solid entry, Mr Speaker. Likewise, he managed to refer to a 'condensed version' when he meant, in fact, a 'consolidated version'. Likewise, the Minister for Health and Community Services came out with 'definitional' when, in fact, general usage has it as 'differential'.

Before I move away from the Treasurer, I should hand him an actual accolade for a high quality entry distinguished with great wit when he referred to presumably his own backbench - I doubt whether he would have been so coarse as to refer to the opposition in such terms - as 'financially colour-blind'. I presume that means that he infers that people are unable to tell the difference between the red and the black. That is quite an accolade for the Treasurer to give. Good quality entries, Mr Speaker.

I would like briefly to pass on my concerns - I have not been able to retain examples because they were among the pile that has been lost - about the frequent use of 'relative to' by the Leader of the House, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health and Community Services. They say, 'This particular issue is relative to my portfolio', when in fact they mean 'relevant to my portfolio'. Unfortunately, I had a dive through Hansard and was not able to find one but this is a good quality entry. Customary usage would require 'this issue is relevant to my department' but their consistent, solid performance on insisting on 'this issue is relative to my department' is deserving of the highest commendation.

Mr Poole: Almost as good as 'an actual accolade'.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, we had a quality entry from the Chief Minister. On 22 September, when he was referring to the 2 young boys who passed away in the desert and what remedial action should be taken, he said: '... and we should have reporting points so that searches can be initiated as soon as possible to minimise the risk of life'. That sounds very contraceptive to me, Mr Speaker. I would have thought that minimising the risk of life would be something that the Right to Life Organisation would take exception to. I presume the Chief Minister meant: 'to minimise the risk to life'. A good, quality, solid entry, Mr Speaker.

Equally, my colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, referred to a particular issue being 'an abject lesson' for the government. This is a pretty good entry. I presume he meant 'an object lesson' but it may very well have been an abject lesson for the government because it may have been abject in its refusal to accept the object.

The member for Koolpinyah threw in a quality entry on 23 September when she referred to the 'initial death' of Azaria Chamberlain. I know that there have been labyrinthine considerations in the Chamberlain case but it is a whole new ball game when we talk about a variety of deaths of a victim. I presume that, rather than meaning the 'initial' death of Azaria, the member for Koolpinyah meant 'from the initial time of the death of Azaria

Chamberlain'. However, that is a good, solid, quality entry. It was good stuff.

Yesterday, we had a good entry from the member for Fannie Bay. He referred to 'continuaty' instead of 'continuity'. Another good quality entry came from the Chief Minister when he placed the emphasis on the second syllable of rhetoric, which is also a favourite pronunciation of the word by my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The member for Jingili took the cake in the phonetic section with his 'veehemenent'. Hitherto that has been unattested to anywhere and that has to rate as a high quality entry.

Lest I be regarded as merely picking fault, I have submitted 2 entries of my own. I have made reference in this Assembly to 'appo-stasy' and I thank the Clerk for drawing to my attention the quality of this entry. The word is 'apostasy'. However, I did far better than that when I referred to the far-flung nature of my electorate and the importance of 'garnishing views' from constituents about legislation. There are 2 words, of course: 'garnish' and 'garner'. One garnishes a meal with parsley or garnishes views which, presumably, means to add to them somehow. I did honestly mean 'garnering' views, and I do thank the Editor of Debates for drawing my attention to that quality entry on my part. However, in this section, the handsomest entry came from the Treasurer when he referred yesterday to a question requiring a 'more fuller response'. A good, solid, dual comparative, which definitely won the general section.

Now we come to the tautological section, which is the high point of the awards. Members will recall that, last year, the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition ran neck and neck. The Leader of the Opposition just won out with a good, solid, vintage tautology: 'a progressive step forward'. We had a good try this morning from the Minister for Health and Community Services when he referred to 'private entrepreneurs'. I think that all entrepreneurs are private by definition. It is a beautiful entry but the winning entry in the Territory Tautological Tournament in 1987 came from the member for Fannie Bay and I will just display his award. It is a bottle of 'bubbly' champagne, which is an appropriate award. The member for Fannie Bay won this on 30 April when he said that the 'government's position on the Remote Commercial Television Service has been consistent throughout the duration of the issue and remains unchanged'.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, that is indeed a hard act to follow, particularly as it reflects upon my education. I expect that members may wonder how ministers manage to get themselves into such difficulties at times. I will give an example of how the support we receive sometimes leads us into problems. Let me quote a short phrase from a briefing paper that I have for this sittings: 'Due to our recent move of office, the BTEC file on Cobourg is temporarily misplaced and also, due to the non-contactability of Dr Thompson, DVO Arnhem, the source of most of this information is officers' memories rather than facts'. It then goes on to give 2½ pages of material I can use in the Assembly - if I am game! Fortunately, no one asked me a question on the eradication program on Cobourg, and it is too late now.

Mr Speaker, I rise today principally to put the record straight in Hansard. During the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill at the October sittings, having misunderstood a question from the Leader of the Opposition, I inadvertently informed him that 4 of the 12 companies which had originally made commitments to the Trade Development Zone had subsequently set up in the zone. The correct position is that 3 of the 4 companies now in the zone had

not signed agreements as at November 1986. I wanted to get that matter corrected on the record so that people pursuing what I have said in the future and trying to make it rebound on me will find it that little bit more difficult.

I wish to put on the record a brief response to a question asked of me by the member for Koolpinyah in regard to whether or not I knew about proposals to establish a deer farm in the Northern Territory. In response, I can advise her, and I guess she already knows anyway, that developments in relation to a deer farm are occurring on Tipperary Station, which is in the process of applying for the issue of a Class B high-security zoo licence for designated areas of the property. In relation to deer, this licence covers fencing standards as developed by the Feral Animals Committee and the Australian Deer Breeders Association to ensure overall security. These standards have been met and close contact has been maintained with senior officers of the Department of Industries and Development and Commonwealth authorities in regard to proposed importation of base breeding stock from Australian states and from overseas. As the developments are of a private nature, my department's involvement is to ensure that regulatory procedures are met. These are to ensure that health and security aspects are in line with national standards and do not jeopardise other livestock industries in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, in closing, may I also offer my congratulations to Police Commissioner McAulay for the very great honour, as I would see it and I am sure he does, of being chosen to head up the Australian Federal Police. I wish him well. I am sure that, for the rest of his life, he will carry fond memories of his stay in the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I would pass on my compliments of the season to yourself, honourable members of the House and the staff of the Assembly.

Members: Hear! Hear!

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, before putting the question, there are a couple of points I would like to make. The first is to congratulate the member for MacDonnell on his annual awards. I suppose modesty prevented him from awarding himself one but I distinctly remember him this morning pronouncing a word which is spelt s-c-i-n-t-i-l-l-a-t-i-n-g. I did not get a very good education, but to my mind that is pronounced 'scintillating'. However, on 2 occasions the honourable member pronounced it as 'skintillating', so I guess maybe next year we will give him an award.

Honourable members, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your assistance and perseverance during the past year and I would also like to place on record my appreciation to all members of the Legislative Assembly staff for their invaluable advice and assistance during the past 12 months. I take this opportunity of wishing all members and the staff of the Legislative Assembly the compliments of the season.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal -

communities, local government 2306
outstations, water supply 2225, 2326, 2395

ACOA, article by Secretary in Sunday Territorian 2314

ADMA, buffalo meat purchased from Mudginberri 2225

Advertising posters on public property 2316

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2222, 2226, 2236, 2237

Alice Springs -

Hospital, anaesthetists 2319

plumbing inspections 2321

Power Station, grievances of operators 2319

ALP, mining policy 2386

Andropov, Dimitri, award for invention 2379

Apprentice of the Year Award 1987 2396

Aranda Terrace, Alice Springs, name change 2320

Atartinga, water supply 2327

Baseball, success by NT team 2235

Beef industry, new cattle breed 2322

Bonson, Don and Patricia 2381

Boundary Bore, water supply 2326

Buses, free travel 2399

Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2378

2381, 2389, 2393, 2398, 2399, 2403

Cotsell, David, Commander of HMAS Coonawarra 2305

Dam sites 2324

Darwin Private Hospital 2308, 2310

Drains, upgrading and maintenance 2320

Department of Industries and Development, services to outback 2312

Elderly persons, lack of suitable facilities in Darwin 2382

Electricity accounts, alleged shortfall in collection 2398

Ellis, Rod, article on public service 2312

Freshwater Road, use of nature strip by horse riders 2317

Gray Neighbourhood Centre, amphitheatre 2396

Guam, visit to US air base by party from NT 2229

Hill, David, chaplain at HMAS Coonawarra 2305

Horse riders, use of nature strip on Freshwater Road 2317

Jingili water gardens, use of rotundas by Aboriginal campers 2317

Katherine, water supply problems 2398

Land sale, lot 2315 2228

Lajamanu health clinic, staff shortage 2326

Leader of the Opposition -

business community 2387

remarks on sexual harassment 2397

Legislative Assembly -

adjournment time 2228

sitting days 2227, 2236, 2394

Littleton, Clem 2305

Local government for Aboriginal communities 2306, 2315

McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2378, 2381, 2389, 2393, 2398, 2399, 2403

Medical certificates, behaviour of certain doctors 2389, 2397

Metal detectors, illegal use on exploration leases 2234

Milingimbi, school fete 2306

Mines Safety Control Act, administration 2224

Minister for Health and Community Services, censure motion 2325

Mulga Bore, water supply 2225

National Enterprise Awards 1987 2304

Nightcliff, traffic problems and solutions 2379

Northern Land Council, attitude to local government 2306
 Northern Territory -
 economy 2231
 government -
 office accommodation 2232
 attitude to TLC projects 2329
 Public Service, review 2313
 November sittings of Legislative Assembly, cancellation of
 second week 2227, 2236, 2394
 Opposition members -
 negative attitudes 2388
 performance in 1987 2386
 Paspaley Properties Pty Ltd, purchase of block 2228
 Pentax World Solar Challenge, DIT entry 2327
 Police headquarters, demolition of old building 2323
 Power and Water Authority -
 consultation with rural residents on dam sites 2324
 inspection of meters 2398
 Real estate scene, indicator of Territory economy 2231
 Royal Darwin Hospital -
 payment of chaplain 2320
 private hospital 2308, 2310
 Seasons greetings 2380, 2382, 2386, 2389, 2393, 2396, 2397, 2399, 2403
 Seat belt laws, exemption for taxi drivers 2319
 Secretary of Department of Chief Minister 2224
 Sexual harassment, remarks by Opposition Leader 2397
 Snowdon, Warren, comments on University College 2383, 2392
 Soapy Bore, water supply 2326
 Solar-powered vehicle, DIT entry in Pentax World Solar Challenge 2327, 2329
 SPIEL awards 2400, 2402
 Telecom, sale of houses to employees 2233
 Tennant, Trevor 2306
 Territory Tidy Towns competition, awards 2315
 Tertiary education, developments in NT 2382
 Tourist industry, control of unqualified operators 2331
 Trade Development Zone, company commitments 2403
 Trades and Labor Council -
 bicentennial projects 2329
 call for inquiry into health services 2308
 Trade union movement, contribution to Territory history 2329
 Transport Workers Passenger Vehicle Award 2399
 United States Air Force, visit to Guam base by party from NT 2229
 University College of the Northern Territory 2382, 2392
 Water Resources Branch, former employees 2390
 Yulara tourist complex, staff quarters 2224

BILLS

Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) (Serial 79) 2300, 2355
 Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 75) 2359
 Law Officers Amendment (Serial 78) 2354
 Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 76) 2216
 Radiographers Amendment (Serial 82) 2303
 Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 80) 2301
 Superannuation Amendment (Serial 71) 2219
 Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 81) 2301

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Mr Manzie 2147

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
NT government's inability to provide leadership 2277

MOTIONS

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2150
Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and
Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2194
Noting statements -
BTEC, progress in NT 2337
developments in NT equal opportunities program 2270
Industries and Development portfolio 2249
new procedures and guidelines for government purchasing
and tendering 2275
services to Aboriginals in NT 2174

PERSONAL EXPLANATION
Mr Setter 2353

PETITIONS

Accommodation for psychiatrically-disturbed persons in Alice Springs 2333
Emily Creek, recreation lake 2147
Manton Dam, use for water sports 2377
Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 33) 2333
Recreation lake for Alice Springs 2147

STATEMENTS

BTEC, progress in NT 2333
Developments in NT equal opportunities program 2265
Industries and Development portfolio 2239
New procedures and guidelines for government purchasing and tendering 2273
Services to Aboriginals in NT 2175

TABLED PAPERS

Letter from Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 2174
Letter from Special Minister of State 2174
Ministerial statement on services to Aboriginals in NT 2174
Report of Commissioner of Consumer Affairs 1985-86 2277
Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and Contingent
Liabilities of NT Government 2194

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2226
Alice Springs, plumbing inspections 2321
Buses, free travel 2399
Land sale, lot 2315 2228
Legislative Assembly -
 adjournment time 2228
 sitting days 2227
November sittings of Legislative Assembly, cancellation of
 second week 2227
Paspaley Properties Pty Ltd, purchase of block 2228
SPIEL awards 2400
Transport Workers Passenger Vehicle Award 2399

BILLS

Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) (Serial 79) 2357
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 76) 2217

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual
 and Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2214
Noting statement, BTEC, progress in NT 2345, 2352

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2236
Alice Springs -
 Hospital, anaesthetists 2319
 Power Station, grievances of operators 2319
Aranda Terrace, Alice Springs, name change 2320
Drains, upgrading and maintenance 2320
Legislative Assembly, sitting days 2236
Royal Darwin Hospital, payment of chaplain 2320
Seat belt laws, exemption for taxi drivers 2319

MOTION

Noting statement, Industries and Development portfolio 2256

PETITION

Accommodation for psychiatrically-disturbed persons in Alice Springs 2333

COULTER B.F.

ADJOURNMENT

ALP, mining policy 2386
Leader of the Opposition, business community 2387
Opposition members -
 negative attitudes 2388
 performance in 1987 2386
Seasons greetings 2386

BILLS

Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 80) 2301
Superannuation Amendment (Serial 71) 2221
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 81) 2301

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government's inability to provide leadership 2293

PETITION

Manton Dam, use for water sports 2377

DALE D.F.

ADJOURNMENT

Darwin Private Hospital 2308

Royal Darwin Hospital, private hospital 2308

Trades and Labor Council, call for inquiry into health services 2308

BILLS

Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 75) 2366

Radiographers Amendment (Serial 82) 2303

MOTIONS

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2157

Noting statement, services to Aborigines in NT 2174

STATEMENT

Services to Aborigines in NT 2175

TABLED PAPERS

Ministerial statement on services to Aborigines in NT 2174

Report of Commissioner of Consumer Affairs 1985-86 2277

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal outstations, water supply 2225, 2326

ADMA, buffalo meat purchased from Mudginberri 2225

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2226

Atartinga, water supply 2327

Boundary Bore, water supply 2326

Gray Neighbourhood Centre, amphitheatre 2396

Lajamanu health clinic, staff shortage 2326

Legislative Assembly, sitting days 2394

Minister for Health and Community Services, censure motion 2325

Mulga Bore, water supply 2225

November sittings of Legislative Assembly, cancellation of
second week 2394

Soapy Bore, water supply 2326

BILLS

Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) (Serial 79) 2355

Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 75) 2360

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government's inability to provide leadership 2290

MOTIONS

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2171

Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and

Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2201

Noting statements -

BTEC, progress in NT 2341

Industries and Development portfolio 2254

PETITION

Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 33) 2333

FIRMIN C.C.

ADJOURNMENT

Cotsell, David, Commander of HMAS Coonawarra 2305

Guam, visit to US air base by party from NT 2229

Hill, David, chaplain at HMAS Coonawarra 2305

Littleton, Clem 2305

National Enterprise Awards 1987 2304

United States Air Force, visit to Guam base by party from NT 2229

BILL

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 76) 2218

FINCH F.A.

BILL

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 76) 2218

HANRAHAN R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Seasons greetings 2380

MOTION

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2172

HARRIS T.

ADJOURNMENT

Seasons greetings 2386

Snowdon, Warren, comments on University College 2383

Tertiary education, developments in NT 2382

University College of the Northern Territory 2382

MOTION

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2168

HATTON S.P.

ADJOURNMENT

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2222

Andropov, Dimitri, award for invention 2379

Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2378

McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2378

Nightcliff, traffic problems and solutions 2379

Seasons greetings 2380

BILL

Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) (Serial 79) 2300, 2358

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government's inability to provide leadership 2282

LANHUPUY W.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal communities, local government 2306
Local government for Aboriginal communities 2306
Milingimbi, school fete 2306
Northern Land Council, attitude to local government 2306
Tennant, Trevor 2306

BILLS

Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) (Serial 79) 2357
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 75) 2359

MOTION

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2163

LEO D.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2399
Electricity accounts, alleged shortfall in collection 2398
Katherine, water supply problems 2398
McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2399
Mines Safety Control Act, administration 2224
Power and Water Authority, inspection of meters 2398
Seasons greetings 2399
Secretary of Department of Chief Minister 2224
Yulara tourist complex, staff quarters 2224

MOTION

Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and
Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2199

McCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

ACOA, article by Secretary in Sunday Territorian 2314
Apprentice of the Year Award 1987 2396
Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2398
Ellis, Rod, article on public service 2312
Leader of the Opposition, remarks on sexual harassment 2397
Local government for Aboriginal communities 2315
McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2398
Northern Territory Public Service, review 2313
Seasons greetings 2397
Sexual harassment, remarks by Opposition Leader 2397
Territory Tidy Towns competition, awards 2315

MOTIONS

Noting statements -
BTEC, progress in NT 2347
developments in NT equal opportunities program 2270

STATEMENTS

Developments in NT equal opportunities program 2265

MANZIE D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2393
McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2393
Pentax World Solar Challenge, DIT entry 2327
Seasons greetings 2393
Snowdon, Warren, comments on University College 2392
Solar-powered vehicle, DIT entry in Pentax World Solar Challenge 2327
University College of the Northern Territory 2392

BILL

Law Officers Amendment (Serial 78) 2354

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Beef industry, new cattle breed 2322
Commissioner of Northern Territory Police, new appointment 2389
Dam sites 2324
McAulay, Peter, new appointment 2389
Medical certificates, behaviour of certain doctors 2389
Northern Territory -
 economy 2231
 government, office accommodation 2232
Police headquarters, demolition of old building 2323
Power and Water Authority, consultation with rural residents
 on dam sites 2324
Real estate scene, indicator of Territory economy 2231
Seasons greetings 2389
Telecom, sale of houses to employees 2233
Water Resources Branch, former employees 2390

MOTIONS

Noting statements -
 BTEC, progress in NT 2337
 Industries and Development portfolio 2260

PALMER M.J.

MOTION

Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and
 Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2194

TABLED PAPER

Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and Contingent
 Liabilities of NT Government 2194

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

Seasons greetings 2403
SPIEL awards 2402
Trade Development Zone, company commitments 2403

Trades and Labor Council, bicentennial projects 2329
Trade union movement, contribution to Territory history 2329

BILL

Superannuation Amendment (Serial 71) 2219

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government's inability to provide leadership 2277

MOTIONS

Censure of Minister for Health and Community Services 2150
Noting paper, Report of Public Accounts Committee on Actual and
Contingent Liabilities of NT Government 2207
Noting statements -
BTEC, progress in NT 2337
developments in NT equal opportunities program 2270
Industries and Development portfolio 2249
new procedures and guidelines for government purchasing and
tendering 2275

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADJOURNMENT

Baseball, success by NT team 2235
Darwin Private Hospital 2310
Department of Industries and Development, services to outback 2312
Metal detectors, illegal use on exploration leases 2234
Royal Darwin Hospital, private hospital 2310

MOTION

Noting statement, BTEC, progress in NT 2343

VALE R.W.S.

ADJOURNMENT

Ah Chee, Fred, death 2237
Seasons greetings 2403

TABLED PAPERS

Letter from Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 2174
Letter from Special Minister of State 2174

