

PART II

THE QUESTION PAPER

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

Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.

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

20 October 1987

3. Aboriginal Employment

Mr EDE to MINISTER for LABOUR and ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

In view of the Northern Territory Government's stated commitment to improving Aboriginal employment and in the light of recent reports indicating a decline in Aboriginal employment levels, what are the numbers of unfilled positions in each of the following categories:

- (a) Police aides;
- (b) Trackers;
- (c) Health workers;
- (d) Assistant teachers in Aboriginal schools on Aboriginal communities; and
- (e) Teacher aides in Aboriginal schools on Aboriginal communities?

5. Skywest - Aero-medical Services

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

What are the details of the cost to the Northern Territory government of the financial, legal and other arrangements made with the Skywest Company to finalise negotiations allowing Skywest to begin the aero-medical services in the Northern Territory?

23 February 1988

15. School Cleaning and Maintenance

Mr EDE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What were the amounts paid out during 1987 for contracts to provide:

- (a) ground maintenance; and
- (b) cleaning

for each primary and secondary school in the Northern Territory?

19. Northern Territory Land Management

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

1. How many grants of land have been made to the Northern Territory Land Corporation (NTLC) since its inception in 1986?
2. How was each grant valued and what was the valuation in each case?
3. For what purpose was each grant of land?
4. Which parcels of land were so granted?
5. When was each grant made?
6. Was each decision to grant land discussed at Cabinet level? If not, which grants were not discussed?
7. How many grants of land were made to its predecessors, the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation (NTDLC) and the Northern Territory Conservation Land Corporation (NTCLC)?
8. How was each grant valued and what was the valuation in each case?
9. For what purpose was each grant of land?
10. Which parcels of land were so granted?
11. When was each grant made?
12. Was each decision to grant land discussed at Cabinet level? If not, which grants were not discussed?
13. Which parcels of land have been purchased by the NTLC, the NTDLC and NTCLC?
14. What was the purchase price of each such parcel?
15. For what purpose was each such parcel purchased?
16. When was each such purchase effected?
17. Was each decision to purchase land discussed at Cabinet level? If not, which purchases were not so discussed?
18. Of which parcels of land has the NTLC, the NTDLC or the NTCLC divested itself by way of sale, grant, gift, or any other process?
19. For what reasons were the transactions referred to in question 18 above carried out?
20. When was each transaction referred to in question 18 above carried out?

21. How was the value of each grant, sale gift or other divestment of land valued and what was the valuation in each case?
22. Was each transaction referred to in question 18 above discussed at Cabinet level? If not, which such transaction were not so discussed?

Reference: Notice of Determination in respect of Gregory National Park (Northern Territory Portion 3124) to the Northern Territory Land Corporation - Northern Territory Government Gazette No G32 of 12 August 1987, page 3.

20. Staffing of Giles House

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. How many staff are employed at Giles House?
2. In which categories are these staff employed?
3. How many people have held the position of Superintendent at Giles House during -
 - (a) 1984;
 - (b) 1985;
 - (c) 1986; and
 - (d) 1987?
4. Of the other staff employed at Giles House, how many changes have there been in each category of staff in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987?

21. Parks and Reserves - Tourists

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TOURISM

What was the number of visitors to each of the following parks, reserves or lands managed by the Conservation Commission in 1985, 1986 and 1987:

Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve;
Arltunga Historical Reserve;
Finke Gorge National Park;
Glen Helen Gorge Nature Park;

Berry Springs Nature Park;
Butterfly Gorge Nature Park;
Daly River Nature Park;
Douglas Hot Springs Nature Park;
Holmes Jungle Nature Park;
Howard Springs Nature Park;
Imbrawarra Gorge Nature Park;

Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park;
Katherine Gorge National Park;
Keep River National Park; and
Mataranka Pool Nature Park?

22. Macassan Prau Project

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

1. How much has the Macassan prau re-enactment cost the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences?
2. What is the estimated cost of construction of a second prau?
3. What is the anticipated cost of getting a second prau to the Yirrkala museum?

23. Advertising - Channel Eight, Darwin

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

1. How much did government departments and authorities spend on advertising on Channel 8, Darwin in 1987?
2. What was the breakdown of that amount by department and authority?

24. Helicopter Charters - Minister for Tourism

Mr SMITH to MINISTER FOR TOURISM

1. What is the total cost of helicopter charters undertaken by the Minister for Tourism in 1987?
2. What was the take-off point and the destination for each journey?
3. Who were the passengers, if any, on each of these trips?

25 June 1987

2. **University College of the Northern Territory
Enrolments**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

1. How many full-time students are enrolled at the University College of the Northern Territory?
2. How many part-time students are enrolled?
3. How many students who completed Year 12 at Northern Territory schools are:
 - (a) full-time; and
 - (b) part-timestudents at the University College?
4. How many:
 - (a) full-time; and
 - (b) part-timestudents are in the Arts faculty?
5. How many:
 - (a) full-time; and
 - (b) part-timestudents are in the Science faculty?

ANSWER

1. 67 full-time students (plus 11 additional full-time enrolments for semester 2 approved to date).
2. 144 part-time students.
3. (a) 18 full-time students (10 in Science faculty; 8 in Arts faculty).
(b) 1 part-time student (Arts faculty).
4. (a) 45 full-time students.
(b) 119 part-time students.
5. (a) 22 full-time students.
(b) 25 part-time students.

Total enrolment (including 9 external students) = 220.

23 February 1988

6. Darwin Private Hospital Staffing

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

1. How many staff members at the Darwin Private Hospital are on leave from the Royal Darwin Hospital?
2. Are those staff covered for superannuation by virtue of the arrangements related to their leave of absence, rather than proper employer-employee provisions which would be the case in a private hospital established under normal conditions?

ANSWER

1. There are currently 22 employees of the Department of Health and Community Services working at the Darwin Private Hospital. All have applied for and been granted 12 months leave without pay from the department, including approval to engage in outside employment with DPH during the 12-month period.
2. Superannuation arrangements for the employees concerned is a matter of personal choice. As members of either the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme or Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme they may choose to continue their contributions, thereby retaining entitlements, to either scheme during their period of leave without pay. Alternatively, they may be able to negotiate superannuation coverage arrangements with Darwin Private Hospital but that is a matter between individual employees and DPH.

7. Royal Darwin Hospital and Darwin Private Hospital Integration and Disease Control

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

1. What are the details of the integration of Darwin Private Hospital and the Royal Darwin Hospital in respect of facilities such as theatres, bearing in mind the stringent controls needed for control of infectious disease, in a way that is compatible with the infectious diseases policy of the Royal Darwin Hospital?
2. Have actions circumventing the fly prevention measures introduced at the Royal Darwin Hospital several years ago taken place at the Darwin Private Hospital?
3. Did any formal liaison take place between the Health Department and the Darwin Private Hospital as far as the integration and liaison of infectious disease control within the Royal Darwin Hospital building is concerned? If not,
 - (a) why was the decision not to consult made; and

(b) was it made with the minister's knowledge?

ANSWER

1. Darwin Private Hospital accepts the need to comply with RDH procedures to maximise disease control.

The advice of the RDH Infection Control Sister has been sought to ensure that infection control guidelines are uniform throughout the hospital. Weekly discussions between the Chief Executive Officers of the 2 hospitals routinely address the question of infection control.

2. Yes - with the exception of prohibiting pot plants. In 1983, the cause of a fly problem was traced.

As part of the measures introduced at that time, all pot plants were removed from the hospital even though they were not found to be a source of the problem. Advice from entomologists involved in fly control is that pot plants should not be a source of breeding for flies providing that care is taken in selection of soil and regular cleaning of the pot is carried out to prevent discarded food rotting in pots.

RDH will not be re-introducing pot plants because of the work involved in keeping the soil clean. DPH have elected to use pot plants and have agreed to maintain them adequately.

3. Yes. Written into the lease agreement are clauses requiring DPH to take reasonable steps to ensure that its activities do not interfere with RDH, including causing illness to patients in RDH. The Territory has the right to inspect DPH for the purpose of infection control.

All cleaning and processing of linen and instruments used in surgery is either carried out in RDH or in a manner that is required of RDH staff.

**8. Royal Darwin Hospital
Relocation of Wards**

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

1. Were maternity patients and paediatric patients placed in close proximity on the seventh floor of the Royal Darwin Hospital because of overcrowding while the Darwin Private Hospital was being established, in the contravention of proper procedures with a view to the prevention of cross infection and at risk to those patients.
2. Has this practice and any other similar practices, ceased? If so, why were such practices, to quote the Minister's colleague, the Member for Port Darwin, regarded as 'acceptable inconveniences and a price for the establishment of a private hospital'?

ANSWER

1. Prior to handing over the third floor to Darwin Private Hospital on 11 November 1987, statistics showed 50% of all deliveries over a 12-month period were private.

Midwifery bedstate at that time was 46 beds.

Unpredictable fluctuations in numbers required that any patients in excess of the designated maternity beds be accommodated in general wards. It was judged that a substantial proportion of maternity patients would seek admission to the private hospital and so reducing the demand for maternity beds in the public hospital. However, the the 2 weeks following the opening of the private hospital, up to 46 maternity beds were maintained depending on demand.

Ten of these beds were initially located on the seventh floor and were used as an interim measure only. These beds were reserved for ante-natal patients only and were strictly segregated from the paediatric patients. Although this is well within infection control standards, the arrangement was restrictive to these ante-natal patients. Consequently, wards 5B and 6B were expanded by utilising vacant areas to accommodate maternity admissions in lieu of the seventh floor.

From 9 December 1987 midwifery bed numbers were reduced to 23 with an expandable capacity of up to 30. This reflects actual demand.

2. The practice ceased within 2 weeks when the Private Hospital became fully operational and attracted maternity admissions.

**9. Royal Darwin Hospital and
Darwin Private Hospital**

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

Is the Royal Darwin Hospital acting as a purchasing agent for the Darwin Private Hospital's supplies, including pharmaceutical supplies? If so,

- (a) what is the cost to the taxpayer of such a service;
- (b) what fee, if any, has been established for that service; and
- (c) in what way does this reflect a thorough estimate of the costs to the taxpayer of the public hospital's overall purchase of goods?

ANSWER

Under the agreement with Darwin Private Hospital, the Royal Darwin Hospital supplies medical sundries and pharmaceuticals to the private hospital at purchase cost plus 10%. It has been

assessed by the Chief Pharmacist that the actual cost to the Royal Darwin Hospital of handling and issuing these goods equates to a 10% on cost.

Products that attract federal sales tax are not supplied by the Royal Darwin Hospital.

There is a nil net cost to the public moneys.

10. Work Health - Hospitalisation

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

1. Has a policy been adopted by the Work Health Authority and its adjunct in the Department of Mines and Energy vis-a-vis the type of hospitalisation of workers suffering injuries or illness? If so, will such patients be placed in the Royal Darwin Hospital as private patients or will they be placed in the Darwin Private Hospital?
2. What would be the cost if such patients were to be exclusively placed in the Darwin Private Hospital, given studies of previous hospitalisation of work-related injury and illness cases?

ANSWER

1. There has been no change to the admission policy of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Patients have the right to be admitted with a doctor of their choice (private) or as public patients. Territorians now have a third choice - to be admitted to a private hospital.

The question of respective insurance coverage is a matter between patients and their insurers. Following advice from TIO, patients admitting as motor vehicle accident victims are advised that TIO does not cover private admission charges.

2. The Work Health Authority may be able to answer this question.

**11. Royal Darwin Hospital
Availability of Beds**

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH

1. Did the minister say, in the Legislative Assembly on 22 October 1987, that private patients would be encouraged to place themselves in the Darwin Private Hospital? If so, how is this undertaking by the minister reconciled with the assurances he gave the Federal Health Minister on 24 November 1987?
2. Did the Royal Darwin Hospital have 46 public maternity beds available prior to the establishment of the Darwin Private Hospital and does the public hospital now have only 22 beds

available to public patients or private patients who seek a bed in the public sector hospital with a doctor of their own choice? If not, what are the reductions in public bed numbers?

3. Will the minister provide an undertaking that no patient will be encouraged or forced to a maternity bed outside the public wards of the Royal Darwin Hospital because of maternity ward cutbacks?
4. In emergency circumstances, will the Department of Health rent or lease back from the Darwin Private Hospital beds for public use?

ANSWER

1. No. However, on 29 October 1987, I stated that, 'It is expected that most people who are privately insured will use the Darwin Private Hospital. They certainly will be encouraged by the Royal Darwin Hospital to do so'.

Hansard of that same day also clearly records my statement that: 'It is not intended that privately insured people who for one reason or another might still wish to use the Royal Darwin Hospital will be prevented from doing so'. This is in line with the assurances given to the Federal Health Minister.

2. The Royal Darwin Hospital did have 46 designated maternity beds and now has 23 so designated. The demand for maternity beds has reduced from an average of 32 prior to the private hospital opening to 22 now. Such a reduction was expected as 50% of maternity patients had previously elected to be admitted as private patients. A significant percentage of patients seeking private admissions have chosen to seek admission to the private hospital. The maternity ward is accommodating all patients seeking admission to the Royal Darwin Hospital.
3. Demand for maternity beds fluctuates and it is standard practice to accommodate overflows in other wards within RDH. This practice will continue.
4. Provision has been made in the agreement to lease back staffed beds from the Darwin Private Hospital should the need arise.

12.

**Commissioner of Taxes
Unpaid Tax**

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

The Northern Territory Treasury Annual Report 1986-87 on page 17 has the following table:

	Number of Inspections	Unpaid Tax Detected	Tax Collected
1981-82 (9/12)	146	380 221	380 221
1982-83	148	846 213	655 888
1983-84	206	873 135	801 725
1984-85	176	595 505	437 224
1985-86	195	1 779 757	512 892
1986-87	128	1 422 155	642 504

1. Why is there a discrepancy between the unpaid tax detected and tax collected in each year since 1982-83?
2. What action is being taken to reduce or remove this discrepancy?

ANSWER

1. Specific details relating to individual tax payers cannot be given as these may breach the confidentiality provisions of the tax legislation. However, the discrepancy between unpaid tax detected and tax collected during the relevant years is accounted for by a number of factors.
 - (a) In many instances although the tax is identified in a particular year, arrangements may be entered into which provide for the tax to be paid over a period of time extending beyond that year. This is accepted practice and a number of such arrangements have in fact been entered into. The tax collected will progressively be credited to the relevant year, which will narrow the gap between unpaid tax detected and tax collected over time.
 - (b) Tax identified as unpaid may be subject to dispute. Taxpayers have the right to challenge an assessment. This may proceed through objection, to appeal to the Supreme Court with a consequent delay in collection. If the assessment is varied, or overturned, the total tax outstanding for the relevant year is adjusted accordingly.
 - (c) Tax identified through inspection may relate to a company that was in, or has subsequently gone into liquidation. The amount of tax ultimately paid after liquidation processes have been completed depends on the amount available for distribution to creditors. The amount rarely equals the identified tax liability and it may take some years to finalise payment.

- (d) In 1985-86 community councils were assessable for pay-roll tax as they did not fall within any of the recognised exemption heads. Since then these organisations have, by an amendment to the act, been accorded local governing status and entitled to exemption from the tax.

Steps are now being taken to reduce the outstanding tax by the amount previously assessed for these organisations.

- (e) There will always be some degree of lag between the identification of tax and its collection and this may cross financial years.
2. Apart from some \$200 000 in disputed assessments yet to be settled and the adjustment for community councils of some \$1.1m, action to reduce the balance of tax outstanding is being taken through normal recovery processes by arrangements, recovery action by the Department of Law and for companies in various stages of liquidation, through the appropriate legislative avenues.

13. Yulara Development

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

1. What is the nature of the Northern Territory Government contribution to the proposed \$17m Yulara development?
2. How much is it expected the Northern Territory contribution will cost?

ANSWER

1. It is proposed that an additional 60 housing units be constructed at Yulara for the Housing Commission as part of the 1988 program.

In conjunction with this program, and to keep pace with the increasing visitation to the resort, there will need to be some augmentation of the Yulara power station by the Power and Water Authority during 1988-89.

2. The housing cost is estimated at \$5m, as part of the \$17m total program. The balance of that program will be funded by the resort owning company. As it will be invested in revenue producing assets no increase is expected in the level of the general annual support payment made by the government to Yulara.

The cost of power augmentation has not yet been assessed by the Power and Water Authority.

14. Spaceport Facility

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Has a feasibility study been undertaken into a spaceport facility in the Northern Territory? If so:

- (a) who undertook the study; and
- (b) what were the broad results of that feasibility study?

ANSWER

- (a) A feasibility study was conducted by a working party comprising:

Mr Geoff Chard (Chairman) Department of Industries and Development
Mr Ian Prince, Department of Industries and Development
Mr Ian Gordon, Department of Transport and Works
Ms Jane Large, Northern Territory Treasury
Mr Sam Durland, Department of Industries and Development (representing Nortrade)
Ms Barbara Singer, Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory
Mr Ken Ward, Department of Lands and Housing
Mr Graham Bailey, Department of Lands and Housing

In addition, assistance was given to the working party by:

AUSSAT Pty Ltd (Dr Gordon Pike)
CSIRO (Office of Space Science and Applications - Dr Ken McCracken)
Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce
Department of Science

- (b) Having regard to the availability of a suitable area of land required for launching purposes located as near as practicable to the equator, the study focused on a site to the east of Darwin.

The 4 common launch trajectories are the equatorial (equatorwards of east); 28.5° (from due east); 57°; and 108°.

In terms of frequency, the equatorial trajectory is overwhelmingly the most common, and the 108° the least common.

With reference to the preferred site, or any other possible coastal location, the study indicated that the drop zones for the various booster stages involved in launching vehicles into space coincides with centres of population in the cases of the equatorial, 28.5° and 57° trajectories.

Government considered the outcomes of the study and because of the range safety problems have decided against pursuing the prospect of establishing a launch facility in the Territory.

16.

Adult Education

Mr EDE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

1. What were the number of positions of Adult Educator -
 - (a) available; and
 - (b) filledby location in 1986 and 1987 and the expected numbers at each location in 1988?
2. What were the numbers of full time and part time positions providing support services to Adult Educators in each TAFE office in urban centres for the years 1986 and 1987 and what are the projected numbers for 1988?

ANSWER

See following table.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

YEAR	ADULT EDUCATION - STAFFING													
	1986				1987					1988				
LOCATIONS *	B3	B2	B1	SA2	B3	B2	B1	SA2	A4	B3	B2	B1	SA2	A4
Darwin	1°	2°	4°		1°		2°						2°	
Pularumpi		1°		1°		1°					1°			
Milikapiti		1°		1°		1°					1°			
Croker/Warruwi		1°				1°								
Palmerston						1°	1°		1°	1°	1°	1°		1°
Bagot		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°		1°	
Belyuen		1°		1°				1°					1°	
Gunn Point			1°				1°					1°		
Darwin Prison			1°				1°					1°		
Nguiu		MS				MS					MS			
Darwin Rural		1°			1°	1°					1°			
Maningrida		1°		1°		1°		1°					1°	
Oenpelli		1°		V		1°		1°			1°		1°	
Jabiru		1°				1°					1°			
Nhulunbuy	1°	1°	1°	V		1°	1°	3°		1°	1°	2°		1°
Angurugu		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°		V	
Umbakumba		1°		1°										
Alyangula						1°								
Numbulwar		1°				1°					1°			
Yirrkala		1°		V		1°		1°			1°			
Galiwinku		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°		1°	
Milingimbi		1°		V		1°					V			
Gapuwiyak			1°				1°					1°		
Ramingining				1°		1°		1°			1°		V	
Katherine	1°	2°	5°	1°	1°	2°	3°	1°	1°	1°	2°	3°	1°	1°
Kath'n/Warruwi							1°				1°			
Kalano												1°		
Kalkaringi		1°				1°								
Barunga		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°		V	
Ngukurr		1°				1°					1°			
Lajamanu		1°				V					V			
Alice Springs	1°	1°	3°	1°	1°		2°		1°	1°	1°	2°		1°
Finke		1°												
Yuendumu		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°	1°	1°	
Hermannsburg		1°				1°								
Yulara		1°				V								
Tennant Creek				1°	1°	1°		1°	1°	1°	V	2°	1°	1°
Borroloola		1°		1°		1°		1°			1°		1°	
Elliott			1°			1°								
Kintore		1°				1°		V			1°			
Ali Curung				1°		V		1°					1°	
Ti Tree						1°					1°		1°	
Santa Teresa		MS		1°		MS		1°			MS			
Total Positions	4	31	19	20	6	31	15	16	5	5	26	15	16	5

*1988 Locations as at 27 Jan 1988

Explanation

- B3 Band3 Level Senior Education Advisor/Regional Coordinator based in Regional Centre
- B2 Band2 Level Senior Adult Educator or Senior Lecturer
- B1 Band1 Level Adult Educator
- SA2 NTPS Untrained Adult Educator. Normally held by community Aboriginal person.
- A4 NTPS Officer based in Regional Centre for Clerical Support.
- ° Adult Educator at location for all or part of the year
- MS Subsidy paid to Mission Authority to provide Adult Educator at location.
- V Position vacant for majority of year.
- NB 1988 locations of Staff are anticipated.

17. First Home Owners Scheme

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

1. How many grants were made out under the First Home Owners Scheme?
2. How much money was applied for this scheme by the Commonwealth?
3. How much was applied for this scheme by the Northern Territory?
4. What variations have been made by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments to this scheme since its inception in 1983?

ANSWER

The questions are not relevant to the Northern Territory Government. The first Home Owners Scheme commenced 1 October 1983 and was administered by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction.

It is now administered by the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health, corner Litchfield Lane and Knuckey Street, PO Box 2310, Darwin; Telephone 811339. The Northern Territory Government has not been involved in the administration of the scheme.

18. Crown Land - Proposed Development

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

What is the current status of the proposed development referred to in the Determination of grant of Crown Land in the Northern Territory Government Gazette No G45 of 11 November 1987 (P4) which refers to Section 1574 Hundred of Guy?

ANSWER

The former Minister for Lands and Housing approved the grant of a freehold title over section 1574 Hundred of Guy to the Conservation Land Corporation for a hunting and recreation area.

This is one of the more popular hunting and recreation areas close to Darwin. Development will be of a low level and comprise of boundary fencing already in place with perhaps some barbecue areas.

The vesting of the land in the Conservation Land Corporation will enable a formal management plan to be prepared and proper management and control exercised over activities in the area. The present study into the wetlands east of Darwin may have a bearing on further development plans.

Report 'Who Speaks for Katherine?'

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

When did he first see the report 'Who speaks for Katherine?'

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I first saw the report entitled 'Who Speaks for Katherine?' on the day that the Leader of the Opposition and the ABC attacked me. I want to be very accurate about the time because the Leader of the Opposition has been trying to mislead the people of the Northern Territory on a number of matters recently and this is just one of them. I first saw the report on the day that he was working with the ABC to put together an item on the matter on the 7.30 Report.

Tourism Study 'Towards 2000 and Beyond'

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for TOURISM

Can he advise honourable members concerning the study called 'Towards The Year 2000'?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I came under attack during the last Assembly sittings in 1987 because of the government's supposed lack of direction in developing tourism in the Northern Territory. At that time, I answered the member for Stuart's criticism by telling him that we were well advanced with the development of a major study entitled 'Towards the Year 2000'. A study group is currently travelling throughout the Northern Territory and is well advanced in discussions with the entire industry. The aim is to develop a strategy that will not only lead to a review of our policy and direction but address the issue of what infrastructure will be required for the future of tourism in the Northern Territory. This relates particularly to information concerning growth, bed rates, the type of accommodation required - whether it is budget, middle-of-the-range or 5-star - and the expansion in areas which are coming under extreme pressure, such as camping grounds.

In these times of economic hardship, members opposite argue that the Northern Territory economy is in such a state of decline that all is lost. On this side of the Assembly, however, we share a renewed optimism for the future of the Northern Territory. I can say that unequivocally because of a confidential document which landed on my desk this morning and which is about to be circulated among members on this side of the House. It is an update of the tourism infrastructure which is planned or under construction in the Northern Territory and it states that the amount of money planned to be spent on tourism and related infrastructure in the Northern Territory is \$600m. That represents a 50% increase on the amount which I advised this House of in September and October last.

'Towards the Year 2000' includes a major study of the wetlands of the Top End and a major study of the Gulf region. An additional study is looking at a 5-year plan for tourism development. It is a very important initiative because it comes at a time when there is increasing competition in Australia to attract both international and domestic travellers.

One particularly important aspect relates to our image. Not so long ago, everybody automatically thought of the Northern Territory as the outback of Australia. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland all now lay claim to the outback of Australia. The outback now includes Mildura, Broken Hill and western Queensland. In fact, Queensland is rude enough to claim that the Gulf country in the Cape York region is outback Australia. We have not exactly lost the initiative because I think we will always retain the basic identity of being the true outback but it is important to note that interstate governments are initiating massive advertising campaigns to take advantage of what we have created: the image of outback Australia. We are therefore working on developing a new approach and part of the purpose of my forthcoming overseas visit is to promote an image which was very successful in the last marketing exercise: the equity participation of Aboriginal people in tourism and the development of further infrastructure.

I have 4 documents that I will table for the information of honourable members. There is a brochure that has been distributed to every pastoral property in the Northern Territory encouraging them to become involved in tourism. That is one of the images that we will be developing. The opportunities are infinite for members of the pastoral industry to become involved in tourism. There is a brochure aimed at Aboriginal communities explaining in fine detail answers to all the questions that they may have about tourism. It is entitled 'Tourism Awareness'. There is a new guide to Northern Territory Aboriginal tours, arts and crafts entitled 'Come Share Our Culture'. Also, I will table for the information of honourable members the document that has won just about every possible award: 'People of Two Times'. That document dates from 1985.

This study will highlight many of the problems that have already been identified and, more importantly, it will put them in perspective. It will set a direction in which the Northern Territory needs to head to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is developed within the necessary time frame to enable the people of the Northern Territory to benefit greatly from the obvious economic advantages of tourism. I believe that, ultimately, it will become one of the biggest income-generating and employment industries in the Northern Territory.

Report 'Who Speaks for Katherine?'

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Can he confirm that a copy of the report 'Who Speaks for Katherine?' was handed to an officer of his department in October 1987 - 1 month after the report was completed? Can he also confirm that the person who supplied the copy of the report was the Secretary of the Katherine Social Planning Committee and that the person who received it was the secretary of his own department? If he can confirm that, can he tell this House why he did not get to see that copy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have not brought to the Assembly copies of all the so-called interim reports on this matter. I think, Mr Speaker, there are about 6 or 7 of them.

Mr Smith: So you have seen interim reports and done nothing about them?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr DALE: I was handed those reports by the chairperson of that committee a couple of days ago when he came from Katherine to talk to me about this subject because he was so disgusted with the Leader of the Opposition's misrepresentation of the entire issue. It seems that all the Leader of the Opposition has done since last year is to change his hairstyle and downgrade the health and community services portfolio in opposition ranks by taking it away from a very reasonable and responsible member, Mr Lanhupuy.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I have asked a very specific question and the minister is doing his best to avoid it. He should either answer or sit down.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, that simply shows how long it takes to get a totally incompetent person upset.

Transportation of Handicapped Children

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Could he advise what arrangements, if any, have been made this year for the transportation of handicapped schoolchildren within the Darwin area?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Ludmilla has an ongoing interest in handicapped children. Honourable members will no doubt be aware that the member has the Ludmilla Special School within his electorate and that he takes a very specific and constructive interest in that school. The contracts for the transportation of handicapped school children in the Darwin area have now been finalised. 10-year contracts have been let, worth a total of \$272 000 per annum. The contracts were re-let late last year after some rationalisation and reassessment of the tender documents which has resulted in some savings as well as an improvement in the level of the service itself. Contracts have been awarded to 3 companies: Ace Taxi Trucks, Keetleys Tours and Chadwick's Transport and each will be serving specific areas. In addition, there is provision for taxi transport of some specific individual schoolchildren.

The Territory government is very mindful of the need and the right of all Territorians to education and I am sure that the new service will prove to be most acceptable and most efficient. I congratulate the companies which have won the contracts. I understand that they have special new equipment designed to last for at least 15 years. Once again, I compliment the member for Ludmilla on his very positive attitude towards this sector of the community.

Incidents at Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

I preface my question by thanking him for his previous vote of confidence. Is it a fact that a security guard has been assigned to the maternity ward at Darwin Hospital? Is it also a fact that this follows 2 attempts at baby snatching by psychiatric patients from the adjoining ward? Finally, when will he make some lasting arrangements to protect newborn babies and their mothers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there was a second incident of a person from the psychiatric ward wandering into the maternity section of the hospital in the last week or so. I was concerned about the incident and I have instructed the management of the hospital to take all necessary steps to ensure that such an episode does not recur.

Tax Estimates

Mr DONDAS to TREASURER

On Friday 29 January 1988, the Leader of the Opposition was quoted on ABC radio as saying that the latest quarterly accounts showed that Territory taxation is down 7% on estimates in the areas of stamp duty and payroll tax. Can he confirm this situation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Casuarina for his question. It is my sad duty to inform this House that the Leader of the Opposition has got it wrong again. We know the Leader of the Opposition is going through a difficult time with his charisma implants, a new hairstyle and the aggressive nature that we have witnessed for the first time this morning. Probably, this results from the activities of the committee that has been established to advise him. I have to tell him that the advice he is receiving is still not helping his image at all.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister has been asked to address a specific question and has not come within a bull's roar of that at this stage.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would ask the minister to relate his reply to the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I was merely trying to point out that no amount of advice can help the Leader of the Opposition. He is about as organised as a tossed salad and as politically effective as Dennis Thatcher.

Mr Speaker, before we examine how he got it wrong, I would like to quote a comment which the Leader of the Opposition made on ABC radio this morning in his contribution to the economic debate. He said: 'It is no use denying that problems exist'. We should carve that in granite as a testament to great socialist economics. Our gloomy spokesman on economic affairs has absolutely no idea what the problems are or how to address them. How anyone who cannot understand quarterly accounts can purport to offer informed comment on our economy, I don't know. The last time we issued financial statements, he could not tell the difference between an annual and a quarterly account, as the Hansard will show. This time, he can't add up.

For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I will outline the real situation on our stamp duty and payroll tax estimates. Our 1987-88 budget shows provision for an estimated \$18.025m revenue from stamp duty and \$54.5m from payroll tax. Our estimates on each have been revised downwards by \$975 000 and \$400 000 respectively; that is, the expected total revenue from these 2 items of \$72.5m is down by a total of \$1.375m. My calculator indicates this to be a 1.9% reduction and nowhere near the 7% alleged by the Leader of the Opposition.

As always, the quarterly accounts provide only an interesting snapshot of the budget at that particular time. They are not a good indicator of end-of-year results unless they refer to the end of the June quarter and I never use them as an opportunity to express either praise of or concern for the budget's progress. I keep telling the Leader of the Opposition about this but he cannot help himself and insists on making inane statements predicting doom and gloom every time such accounts are released. Even the member for MacDonnell reckons he could do a better job as Leader of the Opposition. The mind boggles, Mr Speaker!

The Leader of the Opposition reminds me more of Walt Disney's sorcerer's apprentice than of a wizard. Obviously, he is recognised as such by the member for MacDonnell. We all know how dangerous a little knowledge was in the hands of the apprentice. I believe that Mickey Mouse starred in that production and Mickey Mouse economics is an apt description of the Leader of the Opposition's financial abilities.

Proposed Anderson Development

Mr HARRIS to CHIEF MINISTER

There has been considerable comment of late concerning the proposed Warren Anderson development. When will he be in a position to release further details on that particular proposal?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question because it gives me the opportunity to make a few basic facts clear. Firstly, the government has received a proposal which has the potential to inject a significant amount of capital works into the Darwin economy.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, in response to the member for Koolpinyah, I would suggest she looks very carefully at what she says about ripping up the Stuart Highway and the multiplier effects for the Darwin economy. It might help a road contractor and an asphalt maker, but what will it do for businesses in Winnellie and Berrimah and many of her subcontractor constituents who are suffering as a consequence of reduced outlays on capital works?

The reality of the situation is that a proposal has been brought to government which provides a very interesting and potentially exciting conceptual structure for this end of the city. If it is responsible and viable, it could provide the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the future structure of this section of the Darwin central business district.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: More office space will not help the situation.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I wish the member for Koolpinyah would button up and listen. She might learn something.

Mr Speaker, at this stage, we have simply received a proposal. The government is giving it serious and priority consideration in terms of the economics, practicality and the appropriateness of the project. No decision has been taken, even in principle, to proceed with this venture. It is, however, being examined very seriously. I am not prepared to be bulldozed into rushing the decision and neither is my government. We will address the

matter seriously and as a matter of urgency. When the full analysis has been completed, I will be in a position to advise the honourable member whether we will proceed with it or not. I will then be in a position to address the many questions that are of obvious concern to the community, particularly matters that the member for Koolpinyah keeps chattering on about across the room.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Aren't you going to tell us when you tell him?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will be happy to advise all honourable members of the situation if a decision is made during the course of these sittings. Otherwise, statements will be made publicly and honourable members will have the normal opportunities to find out exactly what is going on. I can assure all honourable members that we are undertaking a detailed analysis of the cost benefits of the proposal to the government and to the Northern Territory community as a whole before making any final decision.

Tenancy of Howard Springs Community Health Clinic Building

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

I have heard well-founded rumours that the minister has made up his mind concerning the tenancy of the Howard Springs Community Health Clinic building which has been vacant for over 6 months. Can he confirm whether a decision has been made in relation to which private medical practitioner has been successful in gaining the rights of tenancy for that building?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, all honourable members will be aware that the community health centre at Howard Springs was closed because we had to make cutbacks after the federal government made enormous cuts affecting our budget. I said that, despite the closure of the centre, people who lived in the area previously serviced by it would not experience any reduction in the quality of services which they had previously received. Let me say that that is in fact the case up to this time.

I also said at the time that I believed that the closure of the centre should encourage some private practitioners to show an interest in setting up business using the facility. That, in fact, has been the case. Several doctors have put submissions to me concerning the provision of private GP services using the facility and, I might add, some of the submissions have also proposed pharmaceutical and dental services.

I have also received submissions for other uses of that building and I am now looking for other premises in the area to accommodate those services.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Are you going to tell us what they are?

Mr DALE: When the appropriate decisions have been made, I will certainly be letting the Assembly know.

The submissions have all been considered in detail. It is true that it appears that one general practice will be going into that particular facility. Negotiations on the actual details of the deal are being examined at the moment. I anticipate that the general practitioner service will be operational in the Howard Springs area by the end of April.

Traffic Roundabout in Alice Springs

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

At what stage are the plans for the establishment of a traffic roundabout at the major Alice Springs intersection of Stott and Leichhardt Terraces?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, works on that particular intersection are about to commence. A \$270 000 contract has been awarded to an Alice Springs company and work is expected to be completed by May or June this year. Honourable members will be well aware that the intersection has been extremely dangerous and was the scene of a fatal accident late last year. The member for MacDonnell, who resides in Alice Springs, might not be particularly interested in this matter but I certainly applaud the member for Araluen for his interest in road safety matters.

In addition to the work on Stott Terrace, a study is well under way on all intersections and traffic flows in Alice Springs. It is being undertaken by ...

Mr Bell: I wrote a letter about that 9 months ago and I still have not heard anything.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell is again illustrating his lack of attention in this House because the matter was reported on in the November sittings last year. The study will address all of the intersections and dangerous locations in Alice Springs and, I am sure, will lead to some sensible, practical and economic solutions to those problems.

The problem of the intersection referred to by the member for Araluen will be solved by the installation of a roundabout. Honourable members may be aware of the benefits of roundabouts as opposed to more formalised traffic signal arrangements. It is interesting to note that some public relations work carried out in Darwin recently by the Department of Transport and Works has indicated that some sectors of the community are concerned about the use of roundabouts. It seems that some people who are entrenched in their driving habits and have not been exposed previously to the use of roundabouts have some fears about them. These people tend to be older than 45, and perhaps honourable members might like to help allay such fears.

Roundabouts are certainly a cost-effective means of traffic control. They do not have the maintenance costs of traffic lights and they certainly help with traffic flow. Interstate experience and the operation of the few roundabouts which exist in the Darwin area now show that they are a most effective means of solving traffic congestion and, more importantly, dangerous situations which may result in serious or fatal accidents.

Child Protection Workers

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Is it a fact that his department has been unable to provide trained child protection workers to investigate reports of child abuse, except during office hours? Has this been the case since May 1987? Is it a result of his department's failure to negotiate appropriate pay levels for after-hours work?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, welfare workers have of course been very busy working in the area of child abuse and I intend making a ministerial statement regarding that matter during these sittings. It is also the case that there have been negotiations with welfare workers concerning the terms and conditions under which they will operate after-hours services. That matter is still being negotiated with the Public Service Commissioner.

Results of Minister's Overseas Visit

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

He recently undertook an overseas visit, on behalf of the Chief Minister, to Hong Kong and South-east Asia. What positive achievements or new initiatives have developed as a result of that visit?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, since becoming responsible for this portfolio, this was my first trip to Asia on Trade Development Zone business although I have visited Brunei on matters not related to the zone. My recent trip was very useful in assessing the progress of our Trade Development Zone in the Asian region and in observing how the Northern Territory is being represented by our various agents. Honourable members will be aware that the Trade Development Zone has agents in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore-Malaysia and Taipei in Taiwan. I went to all of those places on this trip and participated in seminars for potential investors conducted by the Trade Development Zone Authority. These seminars had been organised over preceding months in advance of my attendance.

In addition to the seminars, we held many meetings with potential investors, some of whom had been to Darwin on more than one occasion during the past year and prior to that to examine the prospects for their establishing businesses here. We also held a series of press conferences at each centre, with the exception of Singapore, where we advised substantial gatherings of the local media. I point out to honourable members that it is not always easy to raise enough interest in places like Hong Kong to get together a decent-sized press gathering. That is because, as a world centre of finance and business, it is a place where there is a great deal of news which, in many cases, is seen as having more importance than information generated by the Northern Territory. However, I was very pleased to see that, as a result of the hard work of our representatives there, we were able to put together a press conference attended by representatives of 10 separate organisations, including radio as well as newspapers, leading to extensive coverage.

It is important to note that every state of Australia is now represented in Hong Kong, which is the centre of the push for Asian investment. With one exception, all states use local Hong Kong agents rather than people from Australia. Australian Embassy staff in Hong Kong advised me that the Northern Territory's profile in Hong Kong, in circles in which investment is chased, is the highest of all the states. The Northern Territory is very highly regarded by the embassy staff because of our policy towards investment here and because of the attitude taken by our representatives in Hong Kong in their many approaches to the embassy, particularly on matters relating to immigration and business migration. During the last couple of years, there have been many contacts between the staff of the Trade Development Zone, particularly its chairman, Ray McHenry, and immigration officers in Hong Kong. I was very

pleased to hear those officials of the Commonwealth government offer unsolicited praise for the way the Northern Territory government has gone about its business.

It appears that, unlike most of the states, the Northern Territory is seeking manufacturing investment in Hong Kong. We are seeking to bring people here to establish either a new business or a branch of their existing business and to create jobs for Australians with the attendant economic spin-offs for the whole of the Northern Territory and, indeed, the nation. It seems that many of the people who are seeking investment in places like Hong Kong, under the Business Migration Scheme, are primarily attempting to sell existing establishments, office blocks, or other forms of real estate. Whilst, I am sure that the states also seek investment in the form of overseas businesses carrying out manufacturing activities in Australia, that is the Northern Territory government's only thrust. We are not up there trying to sell off pieces of the CBD just because that will enable an investor to come here under the Australian Business Migration Plan. I am sure that is what lies behind the positive approach of the staff of the Australian Embassy to the Northern Territory government's thrust. It was certainly very good to hear that praise.

In Bangkok, 125 people attended our major seminar, which was held in the Australian Embassy. It was conducted very professionally by staff of the Trade Development Zone. Videos with a Thai commentary were shown. They depicted the zone in Darwin and the investment opportunities that exist. We also had interpreters present to translate speeches from people such as myself and the chairman of the authority. I am told that it is exceptional to attract 125 manufacturing investors to a seminar in a place like Bangkok. Normally, you are considered to be doing very well if you get 40. People there are very busy. The Thai economy is in really good shape with high levels of growth and high levels of investment from countries such as Japan, which are building vehicle factories, parts factories and so on at a furious pace. Thus, of all people in the Asian region, the Thais do not have many reasons to pack their bags and waste half a day at a seminar organised by some distant government such as that of the Northern Territory.

However, our local representatives in Bangkok have been hand-picked as people with the right connections with industry organisations. I point out that the Asians place an enormous emphasis on their respective industry associations. We have been targeting executives of chambers of commerce and chambers of manufacturers. A very good rapport has been built up and that is what resulted in 125 people attending the seminar.

As a result of that trip, between 35 and 45 new people will be coming to Darwin to have a look at the Trade Development Zone. Normally, such people come for 1 week and receive complete briefings on the government's policy and incentives for developing in the zone. We brief them on the transportation system, the communications systems, the education system and the real estate market. When investors move to the Northern Territory, they know exactly what they are letting themselves in for. They know exactly what our rules are, the nature of Australian wages and conditions and whom they can bring from overseas to assist their factories to become established and to train local workers. They know the cost of accommodation for any executives who may be based here, the costs of car registration and so on.

One group of Asian business people is leaving Darwin today at the end of its visiting program. That brings to a total 217 the number of Asian people who have paid their own way to Darwin to receive briefings on the Trade

Development Zone. Many of those people are in receipt of continuing information in respect of the zone.

I point out to honourable members that the trade zone now involves 80 non-government jobs. There are 4 manufacturers in place as well as the bond store. A couple of manufacturers are talking about expanding their existing establishments and I am sure that that will be the order of the day for the future.

Attracting investors has been a slower process than we had originally hoped that it would be. We are now working on the basis that the average time between the first contact with an interested company and its actual setting up in the zone will be approximately 2 years. It is a long, slow process. Once you become involved in migration procedures, the whole system bogs down to a fair degree.

While I was away, I had the opportunity to meet with the Thai partners in the Northern Territory Thai fishing joint venture which operates from Darwin. It is sending fish products interstate and has even sent trial shipments of fish products to the United States to see whether a market exists there.

In Taipei, I met with 10 members of the Taiwanese fishing organisation that has been licensed to fish Australia's northern waters for the last 9 years. I made it very clear to that organisation that the Northern Territory government would not support a renewal of a licence after October this year, when its current licence expires, unless that licence contains a condition which will lead to the establishment of shore facilities in Darwin. The representatives accepted that as a matter of principle and sought our assistance in negotiations with the Commonwealth to extend the period of the licence. To date, these have been issued for periods of 12 months. As the representatives rightly claimed, it is difficult to expect people to spend considerable money investing onshore in a foreign country when they only have a 12-month period in which to recoup their expenditure. We will be supporting a licence period of at least 3 years but hopefully it will be 5 years. I have reason to believe that the Commonwealth is amenable to that proposal.

I advise honourable members that the trip was very successful. Probably, it should have been my third visit rather than my first since assuming this portfolio. I see very good reasons for my making occasional visits to those areas in the near future. People in Asia place great store by having a government minister address their organisations.

Electrical Connection Fee

Mr LEO to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Has the Power and Water Authority commenced charging a connection fee of \$5000 to consumers who wish to connect 50 kVA and more?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will get back to the honourable member with an answer during the course of these sittings.

Spillage at Ranger Uranium Mine

Mr DONDAS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Is he completely satisfied that the spillage incident at Ranger Uranium Mine on 2 February was contained without damage to the environment and that all safety procedures were followed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Casuarina for his question. Of course, his concern is twofold, arising from his membership of both the Northern Territory government and the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I understand that, in fact, he is the chairman of that committee.

I received a report on the incident at Ranger within 24 hours of its occurrence. In summary, the report said that the incident was minor and of no real concern, that no spillage occurred outside the restricted release zone, that personnel were not exposed to any danger and that no detriment to the environment had occurred. Senator Richardson made great play of the fact that he had demanded a report and so on. As a matter of courtesy, I have forwarded to him the report which I received.

What happened was simply this. On 1 February, Ranger restarted its mill after a 2-month shutdown. As is usual during start-up, froth was produced in one of the processors and it was allowed to flow in controlled fashion into the bunded area under the tanks that run-off was to flow into. The pump returning the liquid to the tank began to cavitate, causing the liquid to build up until it flowed through a crack in the bund. Some of this liquid flowed into a drain which discharges into the retention pond, which is exactly what is supposed to happen in these circumstances. Hardly a big deal, Mr Speaker, for Ranger, the Department of Mines and Energy or the Office of the Supervising Scientist. It was a very big deal, however, for the radical element of the environment movement: Chernobyl Mark II or the beginning of the end of civilisation as we know it. It just proved, they said, that the Coronation Hill project had to be stopped. Curious logic, Mr Speaker! How does a potential goldmine at Coronation Hill relate to an actual mine at Ranger? The mining processes are totally different and, in any case, the safety net worked just as it was supposed to do.

I am no longer surprised by the verbal excesses of the environmental lobby but what does surprise me is the apparent credibility it still retains with the media after so many examples of blatant exaggeration, scaremongering and half truths. If it continues in its present direction, people will be arrested for eating eggs on the grounds that they are consuming unborn chickens. We have come to expect immaturity from the messengers of doom in the Environment Centre, but I wish the media would show a bit more maturity in its reporting of the Environment Centre's outrageous beat-ups.

Sadadeen Secondary College Stage 2

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In view of the likelihood of overcrowding at the Sadadeen Secondary College in 1989, when does the government intend to build stage 2 and have it ready for use?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can advise the honourable member that the second stage of the Sadadeen Secondary College is on the design list. I am currently investigating, as part of the research into the Commonwealth's Green Paper, the further development of the interface between ASCOT - the Alice Springs College of TAFE - and the Sadadeen Secondary College. However, the member for Sadadeen can rest assured that the government of the Northern Territory has the situation well in hand.

Higher Education in the Northern Territory

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Higher education is in the spotlight at the present time and we must make sure that we are united in our efforts to come to grips with the issue; otherwise, Territorians will be disadvantaged. Unfortunately, it appears at present that those involved are moving in different directions. What is the minister doing to ensure that the Territory approach to the federal government regarding this very important issue is a united one?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Port Darwin for his question. My comments this morning relating to public squabbling were directed at the people whom I expect to sit down rationally around a table to discuss matters. They have, in fact, already begun to do this. I was attempting to say that this cannot be achieved through letters to the editor and disruptive activities circumventing the consultation process, such as reports falling off the backs of trucks or being wrapped in brown paper and changing hands in a bar. Mr Speaker, all I am saying is that people in responsible positions should not be seen to be choking themselves to death in public. However, I support rational debate and any public discussion of these matters has my full support. The more of it, the better. I am happy to see it happen.

It is important to note that, some 3½ weeks ago, I instigated a working party made up of those people who are directly involved in the decisions on and in the formulation of various responses to the Green Paper. These people, who come from the University College, the DIT and the Department of Education, have already sat around a table. They have developed their positions. We cannot really expect them to agree, but what I wanted to achieve was a starting point which related to people's known positions, their areas of agreement and their areas of disagreement. This has been achieved. The DIT council met last night. I have spoken to its chairman and I am aware of its direction. I have spoken to Professor Thompson at the University College and I am aware of his position.

Last Friday in Melbourne, I chaired a meeting of the Australian Education Council which involved the education ministers of all states and the federal minister, John Dawkins. There was unanimous agreement at that meeting concerning the general direction and the 5 principles of the Green Paper and it is important to note that direct discussions with the federal minister certainly highlighted areas not sufficiently addressed in the Green Paper. One of these relates to formula funding based on enrolment numbers and the student units which relate to those enrolments. Many things are happening in the area of higher education, including amalgamation, consolidation and other initiatives.

To his credit, John Dawkins gave a very detailed explanation at the ministers' meeting of matters of relevance to amalgamation and consolidation in such places as Tasmania, the Western District of Victoria, South Australia and various outback areas of New South Wales and Queensland. The matter is virtually an open book. In this context, one very important fact is that we have a timetable in place for the development of a submission to the Commonwealth. That has been agreed upon with the federal minister. I have fixed dates for continuing discussions. A further meeting of the Executive Council of the Education Ministers of Australia will take place in Melbourne in April, where the matter will again be raised. My prime objective is this: to achieve a situation that allows every Northern Territory education institution equal rights, on an equitable basis, with such institutions in the rest of Australia. That, of course, includes the appropriate funding.

In this context, I welcome some of the comments made on this morning's Territory Extra by the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education. He said: 'We must have a tertiary institution which not only is, but is perceived to be, equal with anything here in Australia or overseas. We also have to ensure that our education system fits in with the Territory's needs'. That is quite correct although he is about 3 weeks late. He also said that the Green Paper is a window of opportunity. It certainly is, but members opposite have a different interpretation of what that means. They believe it is an opportunity for them to backtrack at a million miles an hour on some of their previous statements on the establishment of the University College of the Northern Territory.

The member for Stuart knows full well that, this year already, enrolments at the University College total 440. We were not anticipating that level of enrolment until 1991. I have to ask the member for Stuart: what do Territorians want, and what do they need? Is their disinterest in the University College so obvious? Of course it is not. They are very encouraged by the quality of the degrees and the various courses at the University College, otherwise they would not be enrolling in the numbers that they are. The 440 enrolments at the University College include about 15 overseas students.

It is also important to note the level of enrolments at the DIT. Enrolments in advanced education courses are: external 199, full-time 826, and part-time 766, giving a total of 1711. Enrolments in the TAFE area are: external 46, full-time 314 and part-time 1855, making a total of 2215, coupled with 55 overseas students. By the way, that enrolment brings revenue to the college of some \$400 000 this year. Total enrolment at DIT is 3981.

There was one further comment that the member for Stuart made this morning on Territory Extra, and I will not be too tough on him because I would like to give him the opportunity to correct it. However, he did make it, and I am rather aghast if it reflects the direction of honourable members opposite because, if it does, we are in all sorts of trouble. He said: 'If we can put together something this year, a package which will allow our tertiary institutions' - and this is the part which counts - 'to be fully funded by the Northern Territory government with both recurrent and capital expenditure, to give us that standard excellence that we all agree on'.

Would the honourable member like to say that he was a bit excited at the time and could not collect his thoughts, and that really he meant the Commonwealth government? Mr Speaker, that remark shows the member's lack of attention to detail in addressing issues of considerable importance. We all know the role that the Commonwealth plays in funding higher education, not only in the Northern Territory but all over Australia.

What I want to highlight is that we have a process in place and a timetable. The member for Stuart is quite correct in saying that the Green Paper presents a window of opportunity. Face-to-face discussions with the federal minister were required to ensure that the directions which we want to consider and discuss in the Territory would be considered in the light, not only of their true merit to the education system in the Northern Territory but in terms of the best possible end result for Northern Territorians. Because of our enrolment figures, the funding formulas contained in the Green Paper will seriously disadvantage the Northern Territory unless there is consideration of special circumstances. That discussion has taken place and certain undertakings have been given by the federal minister.

I welcome the member for Stuart's announcement that he will be travelling to Melbourne or Canberra to catch up with the federal minister. I hope that he does not perform his usual trick of disrupting the whole process with his ranting and raving. I have a direction in place that has been accepted by the federal minister and I will be pursuing it rigorously to ensure that Northern Territorians are not disadvantaged in any way, shape or form in the areas of higher education, TAFE funding and the development of future facilities. It is an area of great concern to me. We have 5 or 6 different options open to us, all beneficial to Territorians and it is just a matter of reaching agreement with the federal government. I am very pleased with the attitude towards the Northern Territory displayed by the federal minister. I hope I can welcome similar comments and constructive criticisms from members opposite.

Effluent Overflow in Ludmilla Creek

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

I refer to the widely reported problem of sewage effluent overflow in Ludmilla Creek in my electorate. Can he assure me that there is no health risk to the people of my electorate, particularly to the children of the Ludmilla Preschool, the primary school and the Montessori school and, secondly, that the problem is being addressed and will be rectified?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Ludmilla for his question. The issue has been of great concern to him and he has made representation to my office on several occasions over the last few days in relation to it. I can assure him that the sewage effluent backup has not gone as far upstream as the Ludmilla school or the area around his own electorate office. Ludmilla Creek appears to have become identified with the well-known creek which people sometimes refer to as a result of the opening of a valve to allow the ingress of stormwater into the sewerage system. The valve is left open during the wet season to allow this excess stormwater to dissipate more readily, mainly to protect some low-lying blocks in the Ludmilla area, particularly in section 4052.

The problem has arisen as a result of the sewerage pipe in that region developing cracks and slips in the joints which allow stormwater to enter the creek. The product that emerges is somewhat diluted as a result of the excessive flow of water but the Leader of the Opposition, who I understand has some expertise in this area, can verify that the material entering the creek included some matter rather more solid than water.

The problem with the pipe is being addressed by the Power and Water Authority which will carry out a process known as 'reveal and seal'. A television camera is placed in the sewerage line and travels along it. It has been suggested that some sympathy should be extended to the monitor in this process as he studies the passage of the television camera through the sewerage network. It is not an easy job. We on this side of the House of course are used to it because we get a fair bit of it thrown at us from the opposition from time to time. The reveal-and-seal process will identify the location of cracks in the joints, after which a special epoxy resin will be used to seal the lines. There is no need to dig up large strips of pipeline to carry out repairs. The procedure will cost in the vicinity of \$700 000 and that has been budgeted for.

The problem need not have been as great if a valve, which was installed to prevent the backup of material during heavy storms, had not been left open for an inordinate length of time. Officers will be paying more attention to the opening and closing of this valve in the future. I can assure the member for Ludmilla that the reveal-and-seal process will begin soon and I sincerely hope that that new name which has been given to the creek will soon be changed.

Incidents at Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Will he confirm that a psychiatric patient from Ward 5 in the Royal Darwin Hospital was recently found on the sixth floor in the Special Care Nursery where premature babies are kept in humidity cribs or on life support systems?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I cannot confirm that at this stage. The honourable member referred to the sixth floor. I assume he is not referring to the recent case where a patient went from Ward 5A to 5B. I shall seek advice on the matter and advise the House during these sittings.

Shared Equity Home Ownership Scheme

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Can he advise on the progress towards implementation of the proposed Shared Equity Home Ownership Scheme?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Shared Equity Home Purchase Scheme is one of the innovations promised by this government. It will provide the opportunity for single-income families to be able to purchase part equity in a house and, in future years, to take up full equity. Such a program has been introduced in other areas of Australia with very limited success. A scheme was presented to Cabinet recently and, after some discussion, it was felt that there needed to be some changes to the scheme. I am concerned to ensure that mistakes which have occurred in southern states should not occur here. I have asked my department to investigate some aspects of the scheme, to examine the problems interstate and to produce a revised version. However, I would like the member for Karama, whose ...

Mr Bell: Why did you promise it at election time?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I can assure the member for MacDonnell and all honourable members in this House that not only will the concept provide assistance to low-income families but that it is a concept of which we are very proud. It will come to fruition. I can assure the member for MacDonnell that, prior to the next election, even constituents in his electorate will be able to participate in the scheme. Instead of deriding the scheme ...

Mr Bell: Not deriding.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will cease interjecting. I warned a number of honourable members yesterday. Today, I will tolerate none. I advise honourable members, as I have in the past, that this part of the parliamentary proceedings is being broadcast throughout the Territory. In fairness to the general public, honourable members should remain silent while questions are being asked and replies are being given.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, instead of deriding the scheme and the time involved in processing it, the honourable member should be concerned about the fact that, when the scheme was rushed into operation in some of the Labor states, it was found to have great problems which caused undue hardship to people who could least afford it. Most sensible people would agree that, before such a scheme is introduced in the Territory, we must ensure that all the pitfalls are covered and that it will not cause problems for the people who participate in it. It should achieve what it sets out to achieve, which is to enable single-income families to purchase at least partial equity in a house and to give them some stake in the Territory. The derisory comments of members opposite typify their attitude because they do not care about ordinary Territorians. They would rather see us rush into some process that causes hardship. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I will not be doing that.

Magistrate's Dismissal of Case

Mr COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Is it legal for a magistrate to dismiss a case when the prosecution is not in court on time, as happened in Alice Springs recently?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I believe that, under standing orders, it is not appropriate for me to give a legal opinion in this House to another member.

Child Protection Workers

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

This is the same question that I asked yesterday and I hope I will get a straight answer. Will he confirm that there has been no after-hours child protection service by trained staff since May 1987, and will he confirm that this means that, at the time when children are most at risk, no trained staff are available?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in late May 1987, the welfare workers ceased providing after-hours welfare services in support of a demand for higher remuneration for participation on the after-hours roster. In July 1987, I approved a basis for negotiation with welfare workers to recommence the service in Darwin and Alice Springs with improved remuneration. The Public Service Commissioner's office has been negotiating with the relevant unions since that time.

Mr Speaker, 2 separate offers have been made to the unions and have been rejected. They have simply failed to respond. In fact, the unions have had an offer from the Public Service Commissioner now for quite some weeks. Probably unfortunately, I have been flagging my intention to take action in relation to the problem of child abuse. I wonder whether the unions' lack of response is an attempt to place pressure on me when I introduce measures to assist some of our children in the Northern Territory.

The service is being carried out by senior public servants. I know that the welfare workers of this Northern Territory government's Department of Health and Community Services are extremely dedicated people, and they are overworked. We are looking forward to negotiating a reasonable settlement to this dispute but, if the unions want to sit on their hands whilst we are waiting to implement measures in respect of child abuse, there is little that I can do to provide the appropriate services to the people of the Northern Territory and, particularly, our kids. Now that he has been given the enormous task of taking on the shadow ministry of health and community services, I would advise the member for MacDonnell to get off his butt. He should not just be sitting around and criticising what is happening in a very delicate area; he should get out and try to negotiate with the unions to resolve the issues.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I think the terms being used by the honourable minister are decidedly ...

Mr Dale: You used it yesterday.

Mr BELL: In answer to that interjection, Mr Speaker, I very rarely use anatomical reference of that sort inside the parliament. In terms of vocabulary, I appreciate that the Minister for Health and Community Services has a fairly severe limitation to a basic 500 words of English, but I would suggest that the half dozen of them that are offensive and unparliamentary should be ruled out of order.

Mr Dale: I have never claimed to be a linguist who sits around doing nothing but study words; I am a doer. I withdraw the term that I used, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I had not ruled on the point of order. I believe that there are probably more descriptive terms which I would regard as being unparliamentary. I do not know that the term used by the honourable minister would, at least in this instance, be regarded as unparliamentary, but possibly there are more refined words that could be used.

Army Worm Infestation

Mr REED to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Can he outline what controls on monitoring procedures have been introduced to combat the recent army worm infestation found in Top End grain crops?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, an outbreak of day-feeding army worm, *Spodoptera exempta*, which honourable members will be familiar with, was reported by several farms in the Katherine district on 28 January. These day-feeding army worms rarely cause extensive economic damage to Northern Territory crops. I am informed that the last serious outbreak occurred in February and March 1973, when quite large numbers of larvae severely damaged crops throughout northern Australia and Papua New Guinea.

The infested properties in the Katherine area have now been sprayed successfully. The spraying recommendations came from the department's entomologists in Darwin. All other crops around Katherine were inspected and all farmers were warned of possible army worm infestation, either directly, by phone or via broadcast rural reports.

The damaged sorghum crops have recovered extremely well from the army worm attack and only minimal yield losses should result. The entomology section has established a chain of pheromone traps which, as honourable members will be aware, are designed to capture only army worm moths. These traps are located on properties from Gunn Point to Daly Waters and should enable the early detection of any future army worm outbreak which will, of course, be responded to promptly.

Norman Lawson Case

Mr TIPILOURA to CHIEF MINISTER

Has he formally rejected a request from Mr Henry Lawson for a coronial inquiry into the suspected death of his son, Norman, and if so, can he explain on what basis?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Arafura for giving me the courtesy of advance notice of this question. The Norman Lawson case is a very tragic one, particularly for the family concerned. To remind honourable members, on Sunday 19 October 1986, Norman Lawson went to the old South Alligator crossing with 4 other persons. On Wednesday 22 October 1986, he was seen to walk away from the river crossing carrying a throw net. Since then he has not been sighted. An extensive police search and investigation has failed to locate Norman Lawson. The latest development is a recently reported sighting of Norman in the Darwin area and that is being investigated by the Darwin CIB. The investigation is being conducted as a missing person inquiry and is not subject to a coronial inquest.

To answer the honourable member's question specifically, the coroner has perused the file and has found that there is insufficient evidence to reach the conclusion that Lawson is deceased. It is not, therefore, within his jurisdiction to conduct an inquiry and that is why there has been no coronial inquiry. The matter has been referred to the coroner and he has said that there is insufficient evidence that young Norman is in fact deceased and therefore he could not conduct an inquiry. The matter is being treated seriously by the police as a missing person inquiry and the latest sightings are being investigated with vigour by our CIB.

Cullen Bay Marina Proposal

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Constituents of mine in Kahlín are concerned about recent activities in the form of drilling surveys being carried out in the area that is proposed to be developed as a marina. I ask the minister, what is the reason for the work presently being carried out, and what is the current position of the Hans Vos marina proposal?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to be able to advise the member for Port Darwin, who has certainly pursued this matter on behalf of his constituents in recent times. The geotechnical survey work carried out in early February was supplementary to work carried out last year to ascertain the condition of the bottom of the harbour in that region, both in terms of the bedrock levels and consistency and, of course, the nature of the deposits above that. Obviously, that work is very important in order to estimate construction details precisely and, therefore, construction costs of the works associated with the Cullen Bay Marina.

Honourable members would be aware that, some 2 years ago, this government determined that it would support the development of a ferry terminal there, which previously was to have been located close to the Legislative Assembly building. When Hans Vos and his colleagues came forward with a proposal for a marina that would provide facilities for private boat owners, yachties and people who wished to live in that environment, his suggestion was that the terminal might be best associated with his development. The government was keen to see him pursue those endeavours and, in negotiations, has determined the most appropriate arrangements for a level of government investment to provide ferry facilities which would cater to charter boats operating in the harbour, now and in the future.

The work at Cullen Bay certainly had no impact on the environment. I suppose people assumed that the project was commencing, but the activity was simply survey work carried out by means of a small boat. The developer is now in a position to refine his estimates of costs and the market value of his proposal. He has received from the government a list of specific lease terms for the total development and that is adequate for him in his discussions with potential investors. We certainly wish him well because the marina would provide a much-needed facility and a most appropriate one for Territorians and tourists. It would also provide a level of construction work which would benefit the community. The ball is now very much in the developer's court; it is up to him to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposal and I look forward to hearing from him in the near future. I understand that he and his colleagues are currently interstate talking to potential investors and I hope that he will be able to proceed very shortly.

Northern Territory Pavilion at Expo

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

Is it a fact that the Northern Territory Cabinet has made a last-minute decision to mount a pavilion at Expo, 10 weeks before Expo starts? Is it a fact that construction of the pavilion will cost in the vicinity of \$300 000 and is it also a fact that, as a result of making the decision at the eleventh hour, all construction and other work on the pavilion will have to be done by companies from outside the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will seek to address this rather convoluted and confusing question in the best way possible and take the opportunity to provide some information to the House in respect of the Brisbane Expo. It is true that Cabinet has taken a decision that the Northern Territory will now participate in the Expo in Brisbane. The government's earlier decision was that, because of the costs involved and the budgetary restraints imposed on the Northern Territory in the last 2 years, we could not afford to go ahead with the presentation at Brisbane Expo. At that time, a number of the states were equally considering their positions in relation to Expo.

Late in January of this year, Sir Lew Edwards, the organiser of the International Expo, wrote to me as Chief Minister requesting that we reconsider our position. He advised that he had kept aside some prime space at the Expo in case we were prepared to reconsider but that we needed to make a quick decision. He advised that, at that stage, all states were now participating in the Expo and also that its success is now well-assured with 7.1 million visitations already having been pre-sold.

Obviously, Expo will provide a significant opportunity for marketing of the Northern Territory both as a tourist destination and as a place for business investment. As a result, Cabinet took the decision to send officers from the Department of Industries and Development and the Tourist Commission to Brisbane to examine the feasibility of the Territory participating in the Expo. The report from that group came to Cabinet last week. It proposed that, for a total of \$500 000, we could mount a creditable and beneficial display at that Expo. Assistance is available from the federal government in the form of a \$100 000 subsidy and Expo organisers have offered to make staff available, at no cost to us, to hand out pamphlets and other information at the display. It will be used as a principal vehicle for marketing the Northern Territory, both for tourism and industry development, and the budget

allows for displays within the period. We are quite confident that the money will be efficiently and effectively used to promote the Northern Territory as a place to visit and a place to invest in.

We were assisted in our decision when our first budget review indicated the success of our strategy of restraint in recreating the financial foundations of our budget which has given us the opportunity to participate in more positive promotion of the Northern Territory. In that regard, I particularly compliment the many people throughout the public service who, over the last year, have gone through quite considerable trauma due to the reorganisation and restraint that has necessarily been imposed on them. Their efforts have greatly assisted us in achieving a balanced situation and have created the opportunity for us to act far more positively in promoting the development of the Northern Territory. I compliment the many people in the public service who, in difficult circumstances, have done a creditable job to assist us in what has been a very difficult and traumatic task. The government is confident it will be a positive initiative.

In respect of the honourable member's final point, I cannot provide details about who will be undertaking the development. The stand will be set up in Brisbane. We have been advised by the people who put forward the proposal that there is sufficient time to develop the stand and to display a very presentable face for the Northern Territory at this Expo. I look forward to its success and to our participation in what will be a very successful Expo.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, over the last 4 years ...

Mr Ede: No spin-offs for Territory business?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, if our government is down there promoting the Northern Territory as a place for investment and as a tourist destination, there will be a direct benefit to the businesses of the Northern Territory and the development of jobs in the Northern Territory. At the moment, I am unable to advise whether or not a specific contract is being let to a Northern Territory firm to construct this particular facility in Brisbane.

Darwin, Katherine and Jabiru Electricity Transmission Link

Mr REED to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Is he able to provide further information regarding the proposed electricity transmission line to link Darwin, Katherine and Jabiru?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am indeed in a position to advise the member for Katherine on developments in relation to the 132 kV transmission lines that are proposed to be constructed - one from Darwin to Katherine and another from Darwin to Jabiru. These are innovative proposals which offer an opportunity to put a power grid across the top half of the Northern Territory from some of the mining corporations developing in the Pine Creek and Cosmo Howley areas and perhaps even to provide reticulated electricity to the Douglas Daly farm region. I have spoken in this Assembly before about the economics of providing a powerline to connect the Katherine region with the Darwin Channel Island Power Station and the various economies that could be achieved as a result of that.

I would like to add that we have had full cooperation from Energy Resources of Australia who have entered into the spirit of the project on the basis of 'let's see what the bottom line is and then we will negotiate'. It has been extremely cooperative in its attempts to see this project become a success.

For the past 12 months, the authority has been pursuing proposals regarding the construction of the 132 kV transmission line interconnectors from Darwin to Jabiru, a distance of 270 km, and to Katherine, a distance of 300 km. Consultants have been appointed to coordinate work necessary for environmental impact statements and the preparation of transmission line and terminal substation technical performance specifications. Should project approvals be obtained, the present schedule is for completion by October 1989.

On 3 October 1987, the authority called for expressions of interest from parties seeking to design, construct, finance and own the interconnectors. By 11 November 1987, the registration closure date, 25 expressions of interest were received. After additional information was directed to the interested parties, 15 formal expressions of interest were registered and on 26 November 1987, 5 pre-qualifiers were issued detailed project performance specifications and invited to submit detailed proposals by 15 February 1988.

Mr Speaker, those processes have been carried out and a Cabinet submission will be made when the proposals have been assessed. We are looking for both legal advice and financial advice on the packages that have been provided to us and this is currently scheduled to be available by the end of March 1988. I will not go into the proposals in great detail because of their confidential nature, but they do offer Territorians a great opportunity to participate in the development of the tower structures for the 2 lines. The initial project proposals were budgeted at about \$62m. I understand that considerable savings can be achieved by having the 2 powerlines considered together.

There are some grey areas in terms of positioning power transmission lines in Kakadu National Park. We have engaged a consultant to work on that proposal and I certainly hope that it gets the go-ahead from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. It is not unusual to have power transmission lines in national parks and I certainly hope that common sense will prevail and that we do not have to put plastic branches on the towers to camouflage them. The need to supply power transmission lines into Jabiru is evident, now that we are developing Jabiru as a hub for Kakadu National Park. The development of the motel unit, and the interest in developing a new 200-bay caravan park indicate the need for increased power supplies. Electricity is presently supplied from the power house at Ranger Mine.

Equally, the rapid growth of Katherine, which was expounded upon by the opposition yesterday in a very negative way, has led to increased demand for electricity. With the new supermarket consuming almost 1 MW and the meatworks coming on stream and consuming about 1.5 MW, there continues to be an increasing demand for power in the region. When we developed the \$33m power station for Katherine, we installed an additional bay to supply another generator on that site. It is hoped that the economies of scale that may be achieved by the development of an interconnector from Channel Island to Katherine will alleviate the need to supply that additional generator and that we will be able to meet the needs via the excess capacity which currently exists at Channel Island Power Station. I, for one, look forward to the development of these 2 very exciting projects within the near future.

Assistance to New South Wales Liberal Party

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he assure the House and the people of the Northern Territory that no persons in the employ of the Northern Territory government or receiving incomes deriving from the Northern Territory coffers, have been sent or will be sent to New South Wales to assist Nick Greiner in his attempt to emulate Robert Askin?

ANSWER

No, I will not.

Incident at Berrimah Police Headquarters

Mr SETTER to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he give any information about an incident that occurred at Berrimah Police Centre earlier today?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question because, in the course of some heated debates in the last 24 hours, there has been some criticism to the effect that the police force has no human face, and people such as the Leader of the Opposition have inferred that the police are somehow engaging in unreasonable practices. In that context, I think it is valuable for all members present to hear of an incident which occurred this morning and which shows the extent to which our police are actively and sensitively involved in assisting members of the community in a multitude of ways.

I am advised that this morning a couple residing at Palmerston suddenly realised that their eagerly-awaited baby had decided to make an entrance into the world with very little warning. In the dash to town, they realised the impossibility of reaching the Royal Darwin Hospital in time and the father-to-be, who was driving the car, became quite distressed. What did he do? He drove immediately to where he thought he would get the best help in the quickest possible time. He went straight to the Berrimah Police Centre. There, in the car park, 2 police officers who were in the process of coming off duty after the midnight shift, assisted the couple to successfully deliver a baby daughter. The officers were Senior Constable Gary Wenck and Constable Fiona Pooley. The baby was delivered safely and the mother and child, both in good health, were taken by ambulance to Royal Darwin Hospital.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the 2 police officers, who were obviously tired after a long and strenuous evening on night shift, for their prompt and considerate assistance. I add my own thanks to those of the parents of the child for this prompt and efficient assistance. It is yet another example of the way in which our police force acts in a wide range of areas to support the community. It also demonstrates how members of the force are regarded by the community as people to turn to when help is needed, contrary to the ill-informed criticism that comes from members opposite from time to time.

Pastoral Leases and Covenants

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Is the government equally vigilant in its administration of all pastoral leases and their covenants, especially in the Top End and, if slackness in fulfilling these covenants by lessees is apparent in some cases, what will he do to make pastoral lessees responsible for their stewardship of government land?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have no knowledge of anything that would indicate that preferential treatment is being given to any particular pastoralist in any area.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Do you want me to tell you which one?

Mr MANZIE: If the honourable member can supply me with information which she thinks may lead me to suspect that there is a possibility that this is happening, I will certainly take up the matter on her behalf and also on behalf of the government. Obviously, within reason, we have a duty to ensure that people do the right thing in relation to their land and in relation to covenants. I think we would also expect the officers concerned with that work to utilise some common sense in not acting immediately according to the letter of the law, but enabling problem situations to be resolved with goodwill on both sides. Most certainly, if the honourable member believes that there is a problem and can provide me with details, I will address it.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Psychiatric Patient at Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, earlier today, I was asked a question by the member for MacDonnell regarding an incident of a psychiatric patient - or 'dangerous person', to use the term I think he used - going to Ward 6 of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Mr Speaker, I have received no report of an incident of that nature involving the special care nursery. However, I would advise the honourable member that, if his informants are going to give him a day-by-day description of every single incident that takes place at the Royal Darwin Hospital so that he may concoct questions ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Minister for Health and Community Services used the term 'concoct', which implies that I am telling lies to the Assembly. I request that he retract that.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I was simply implying that the honourable member is being given information by staff at the hospital, and is using that to put together questions to ask in this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Perhaps I understand the word 'concoct' better than the honourable linguist does. However, I would point out to the honourable member and his informant that, if an unfortunate woman happens to be under some stress and strain that requires her to be in Ward 5A, and if that lady has had a baby at about that time, then I think it absolutely reasonable that such a woman, escorted by a nurse, should be able to go and see her own child. I

hope the member for MacDonnell does not want me to lock that woman away from her child.

TAB Turnover

Mr DONDAS to TREASURER

Can he advise that the immediate TAB turnover increased following linking with the Victorian TAB last year and that the increase has been sustained through 1988?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I certainly can provide that information to the member for Casuarina. May I preface my answer by saying that I am in a position to talk about racing, which is far more than members of the opposition appear to be able to do. Yesterday, I rang the office of the Leader of the Opposition to find out who was the shadow spokesman on racing. Nobody knew who it was and I was told that I would be rung back. Later, we rang again. They were still not sure but it would appear that there has been ...

Mr Leo: I have always been the spokesman. I am over here, Barry.

Mr COULTER: Could somebody tell the Leader of the Opposition's office staff that, please, because they don't know.

Mr Leo: I told you yesterday.

Mr COULTER: It appears that there has been a division. Racing has been kept within one area whilst the member for MacDonnell has kept, say, the casinos. My job would be made considerably easier if I knew, and the Leader of the Opposition might also be happier if he knew, who the shadow spokesman on racing was. He never knows who is behind his back anyway.

Mr Speaker, the TAB turnover has been a very big success story. The TAB was knocked by the opposition which argued that it should not have been set up and had no place in the Northern Territory. The government, however, resolved to bring in the TAB.

The TAB turnover for 1987-88 is now estimated to be \$30m. For the benefit of honourable members, the turnover in 1985-86, when the opposition was canning the TAB, was \$18.6m. In 1986-87, it was \$22.6m. The TAB budgeted for a turnover of \$25.8m this year, a 14% increase on the previous year's. However, turnover is now expected to reach \$30m, which will be a 33% increase over the 1986-87 figure.

The increase can be attributed to 4 factors. As the member for Casuarina mentioned, the first is the linking of win/place pools with the Victorian TAB. Sky Channel has made a fantastic success of racing right throughout Australia. The interest that is now shown in racing as a result of the advent of Sky Channel has helped promote that industry considerably.

With PubTAB, we have come a long way in 3 years. Three years ago this Legislative Assembly had legislation outlawing alcohol on betting premises. Today, we have betting premises in hotels. PubTAB has been an outstanding success. Whilst the shadow spokesman on racing wants to talk to me about that, the facts cannot be denied. The turnover and the amount of money available to racing has increased greatly since the advent of PubTAB. I guess

the opposition will knock that too. I will deal with that when members opposite knock it, as they have knocked every other government initiative.

The flow-on from major promotional campaigns from 1987 has also had a dramatic effect on racing in the Northern Territory. The extra increase from PubTAB has not reduced the turnover at agencies and that is interesting. I guess that is one of the issues which the shadow spokesman will raise when he gets ...

Mr Leo: What has it done to the oncourse bookies, mate?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the honourable member asks what it has done to oncourse bookies or what it has done to the people attending race clubs. When the TAB legislation was introduced, the member for Fannie Bay, who was then the responsible minister, brought into this Assembly an article which predicted exactly what would happen to racing crowds in Australia on the basis of what had occurred in North America: the crowds would diminish. At Flemington, one of the biggest racecourses in Australia, less than 5000 people attended a recent meeting. Reduced oncourse attendances happen to be a fact of life but the opposition has no understanding of the facts of life. Racing will continue, though, and the major carnivals will be the drawcard. The money that is contributed via PubTAB and so on will assist racing throughout Australia.

The contributions from TAB to the Racecourse Development Fund, which is 1.5% of turnover, will increase to \$450 000 this year against the original budget of \$387 000. It is estimated that the TAB's net profit will be around \$1.2m and this will result in the doubling of the TAB contribution to Consolidated Revenue this year. The contribution to the Industry Assistance Fund will be \$600 000. I accept that there has been a downturn in receipts from bookmakers' turnover tax, but I suggest that that is simply a fact of life. I would like to point out to the shadow spokesman on racing that Pioneer Park in Alice Springs now has an Adelaide-based bookmaker who flies there each weekend. That is an example of confidence in Northern Territory racing and I congratulate the person concerned. We have heard opposition members whingeing about TAB before. I have demonstrated to this side of the House that the TAB has been very successful in the Northern Territory.

Assistance to New South Wales Liberal Party

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

How many people in the employ of the Northern Territory government have been sent to New South Wales to assist the New South Wales Liberal Party in the forthcoming New South Wales election, for how long have those people been sent and what is the cost to the Northern Territory taxpayer of sending those people to New South Wales?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, let us put this into its proper context. It is true that, during election campaigns right around this country, political parties assist each other in fighting such campaigns. That has never been regarded as an improper course of action. It was not regarded as improper by members opposite when, during the last Northern Territory election campaign, they brought in Premier Bannon and his staff, federal ministers and their staff ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question has been asked and the Chief Minister will be heard in silence while he gives his reply.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the point that I am making is that assistance provided by political colleagues around the country is not an abnormal practice and it has never been regarded as an improper practice. The Leader of the Opposition took advantage of such assistance during his campaign last year. The member for Barkly and his group took advantage of people on the government payroll when fighting his election campaign last year. If I believe it will be of assistance to us ...

Mr Smith: Who is us?

Mr HATTON: The Northern Territory. If we decide that it is appropriate to follow what has been a common practice around this nation - providing assistance to political colleagues - I will do so. I was asked specifically in the first instance if I would give a guarantee that we would not do so and I said no.

Mr Speaker, I do not propose to answer the details of the honourable member's question.

Mr Leo: You do not intend to answer any part of it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am prepared to consider putting assistance into election campaigns elsewhere if I believe it is appropriate. I do not apologise for it.

Government Consultancies

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

How many consultancies does Mr Graeme Lewis have with the Northern Territory government and what is the purpose of those consultancies?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, to my knowledge, Mr Graeme Lewis has no consultancies with the Northern Territory government.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
LNG Plant at Alice Springs

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in Tuesday evening's adjournment debate, the member for MacDonnell asked some questions about the LNG plant to be established at Alice Springs. In particular, he was interested in the supply of LNG to Yulara. I would like to provide the information that the honourable member was seeking.

A contract was signed on 16 April 1987 between Energy Equity Corporation Ltd and the Power and Water Authority for the purchase of supplying regasified LNG at Yulara. Energy Equity Corporation Ltd will purchase gas from the Power and Water Authority to be supplied from the Palm Valley to Alice Springs gas pipeline, liquified at the Brewer Estate and delivered by road transport to the Power and Water Authority power generation facility.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am quite sure the Clerk will correct me on this if I am wrong. I am certainly interested in the minister's answer but I believe that, whilst ministers are given a certain latitude to answer questions that have been asked in question time at some other stage, this does not apply in relation to questions raised in adjournment debates, as this one was. I believe that the minister's answer could be supplied in the adjournment debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The question is a legitimate one and the minister is entitled to supply an answer.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell said that he was interested in what the story was. I congratulate him for having the foresight to be interested in this particular matter because it is on the leading edge of technology and of great interest to Northern Territorians, particularly those who live in his electorate. If members listen, they will learn about some of the things I have put in place.

As I said, the regasified LNG will be available at Yulara and it will be delivered by road. One of the particularly exciting things about this aspect of the project is that the vehicle transferring the LNG to Yulara will also be running on LNG. In fact, as the LNG is being vaporised in the truck, the truck will be specially modified so that it can run on LNG. This has great potential for Northern Territory road transportation. The member for Barkly has been talking about this issue for some considerable time and I am sure he shares my interest in this very exciting project.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move a motion of dissent against your ruling.

Mr Speaker, speaking to the motion of dissent, what we have here is an unparalleled attempt by the Minister for Mines and Energy to extend the concept of question time as it has been used traditionally in this House and, I am sure, in other parliaments. I have never previously seen a situation in this House where a minister has risen in question time to provide information in relation to a question that was asked in an adjournment debate on a previous day. Mr Speaker, if you examine the logic of that, we might as well forget question time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am advised by the Clerk that a motion of dissent from a Speaker's ruling must be moved at once. Otherwise, it must be put on notice.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I move dissent against that ruling.

Mr Speaker, the position you have put to us is ludicrous. It has always been the practice of members on this side of the House to treat motions of dissent very carefully. We certainly do not treat them lightly. Mr Speaker, what you have just said in your ruling is that, when I put a matter to you 30 seconds or 45 seconds after it occurred, it was too late. I cannot accept that that is an undue delay. Mr Speaker, your ruling prevents us exercising our right to issue a challenge to yourself on the substantive question that was put to you in relation to whether the Minister for Mines and Energy can use question time to answer a question that arose during an adjournment debate. Mr Speaker, to argue ...

Mr Coulter: It is a success story; that is what you are worried about.

Mr SMITH: We are quite happy to hear the answer.

Mr Speaker, to argue, as you have done, that a time lapse of 30 or 40 seconds makes it too late to put forward a dissent motion is absolutely ludicrous. We needed time to investigate what the standing order said. Do not forget, Mr Speaker, that the minister has done something which has never been done before in the history of this House. Before moving dissent motions, we need sufficient time to check the record to ensure that there is a point to argue. Mr Speaker, for you to say that 30 seconds is too long a period of time to take to do that is to debase the position you occupy in terms of ruling this House impartially and fairly. That is the basis of the dissent motion that we have put, Mr Speaker. Your ruling is not impartial and it is not fair because it deprives us of the opportunity to move a motion of dissent on a previous ruling which relates to a substantial matter that has never been addressed in this House before. That is why we are moving this dissent motion.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I would like the opportunity to put in context the seriousness of a dissent motion. I would also like to destroy the Leader of the Opposition's ridiculous motion of dissent. Mr Speaker, what we are actually debating is your ruling on the impartiality or fairness of a direction given to you by standing orders.

Let me make this point. If, as the member for MacDonnell stated in his speech in the adjournment debate, members opposite were seriously interested in hearing the answer to the question, they could simply have allowed the Minister for Mines and Energy to continue and to let question time proceed. The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition's argument is shown by the way he is debating this dissent motion in question time, which is broadcast live, when he could be asking questions. That makes a mockery of what he says.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House have no doubt about your impartiality and fairness in directing the proceedings of this House.

The hypocrisy and stupidity of the Leader of the Opposition's motion of dissent is demonstrated by precedent. A motion of dissent against the Speaker's ruling is one of the most serious motions that can be moved in a parliament under the Westminster system of government. It is more serious than a censure motion against the government because it calls into question the whole operation of the House. If the basis of the opposition's original point of order is that it is being denied fair use of question time, and that this side of the House is using questions asked in the adjournment debate to influence the time spent in answering questions without notice, it is wrong. The minister was answering a question which was fairly asked and which warranted an answer. As the Minister for Mines and Energy has said, the question deserved an answer.

This motion of dissent is nothing more than a silly game being played by the Leader of the Opposition in an effort to improve his standing and show that he is more aggressive. That is fair enough from his point of view but the course of action that he has taken is absolutely stupid. He has taken that course of action, to my mind, without any serious consideration of the seriousness of a motion of dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

There is no doubt in my mind that we will now debate the motion of dissent quite fully. I would suggest that there will be very little time left for answering questions in this House. Mr Speaker, this side of the House has no doubt at all concerning your impartiality and the fairness with which you rule this House in the interests of ensuring that fair and equitable debate takes place. The Leader of the Opposition has not only acted out of character but in a manner that puts in question the ability of the opposition to represent the people of the Northern Territory. I have no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition has no idea of the seriousness of his motion of dissent. Mr Speaker, we will vote against, object to and, as far as I am concerned, destroy any attempt by members opposite to pass a motion of dissent against the Chair.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will not take long because it will not take long to destroy the argument put forward by the Leader of Government Business. It is based on the concept that any minister can stand up here at any time, without a question being asked in question time, and make a ministerial statement on any subject which has been raised in any debate during a sitting of this parliament. That is absolutely ridiculous.

We have provision for ministerial statements ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! With respect, the point before the Chair at the moment is a question of dissent from your ruling. It has nothing at all to do with the original debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would just like to say a few words on this matter without inflaming the situation and perhaps to bring the discussion back within the bounds of reason without the hype and yelling and screaming. It is a pity that we are perhaps proving to the people of the Northern Territory, in this morning's broadcast of question time, that we are probably not competent to run the place.

Mr Coulter: Speak for yourself.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am speaking for you too because if you could hear what is going on you would be bloody ashamed of it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make a couple of points, the first one being that it is quite common for ministers to rise and answer questions on issues of current public importance, before, during and at the end of question time. Over the years, it has been done most commonly at the end of question time so as not to interfere with the proceedings of question time itself, because ministers are referring to matters that have been raised on another day. It is not common for questions raised in adjournment debates a day or 2 before to be discussed in question time as the Minister for Mines and Energy did this morning, unless they relate to a matter of current public importance.

I would also say that the matter raised by the minister is a very important issue, one that deserves worthy debate in this Chamber with 4 or 5 speakers on each side, not a few throwaway lines from the minister in question time. I invite him to re-present the information as a ministerial statement so that everybody can have a chew on it, because it is very important to the future of our economy.

The Leader of the Opposition is reflecting his frustration or exasperation and perhaps was a little quick to draw and shoot this morning. I must say that I have some sympathy with him in the sense that he moved a motion of dissent from your ruling and you then continued by inviting the minister to respond to the question. That perhaps was a rather cursory way to treat this very serious motion of dissent.

Mr Speaker, I think it probably would not be a bad idea if we all went for a tea break and came back in 5 minutes and started again. If the day is going to continue like this, we might as well not proceed.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak to the motion of dissent from your ruling that the first attempt to put a motion of dissent was not in accordance with standing orders in that it had not been made forthwith. I understand I have described the situation correctly, despite the toing-and-froing and histrionics we have seen from members opposite.

Mr Speaker, I refer to standing order 82, 'Dissent from Ruling'. I will read that standing order for the benefit of honourable members and others who may be witnessing the events this morning:

If any objection is taken to any ruling or decision of the Speaker, such objection must be taken at once and a motion of dissent, to be submitted in writing, moved which, if seconded, shall be proposed to the Assembly and debate thereon shall proceed forthwith.

Mr Speaker, the issue is whether or not your ruling on the first attempt to put a motion of dissent was in accordance with standing orders. The standing order quite clearly says 'at once'. The words 'at once' mean what they say. They mean 'immediately'. The Leader of the Opposition did not act immediately; he debated with one of his colleagues what action he should

take. That is my assumption; they were huddled together. Whilst the honourable minister was proceeding with his answer to the question, the Leader of the Opposition rose and moved a motion of dissent.

Mr Speaker, I fully support your ruling on the matter. You are bound by the standing orders of this Chamber, which are prepared and submitted by the members of this Chamber. You are not solely responsible for the form and contents of the standing orders; this House is. It is your responsibility to enforce those rules and you have done so fairly and properly.

Mr Speaker, this whole exercise by the Leader of the Opposition can only be described as petulant. Childish petulance has led him to carry on in this way and to waste the time of this House, as he does from time to time. Every time something goes wrong, he continues to exercise ...

Mr Smith: If you don't want a question time, we won't bother coming.

Mr HATTON: There he goes again, Mr Speaker, just as he and his colleagues continually do, breaching standing orders by interjecting and talking over the top of the member who is speaking.

Mr Speaker, it is a fact that members opposite, particularly the member for MacDonnell, regularly use the adjournment debate to ask a multitude of questions of members on the government benches.

Mr Bell: That is my right.

Mr Leo: You have the whole day to make ministerial statements.

Mr HATTON: Listen to them, Mr Speaker. That is the honourable member's right. I do not deny him that right but it is also appropriate under standing orders for ministers to use question time to answer questions which have been put to them. Mr Speaker, the member for Barkly has quite rightly indicated that, in the past, question time has been used to answer questions that have been asked on the previous evening.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Chief Minister is no longer addressing the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. He is addressing the matter of your ruling on my point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the Chief Minister to relate his comments to the motion.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I apologise if I have done that. I was merely trying, by way of explanation, to emphasise the point that both your rulings were quite proper and in accordance with the standing orders. This serves only to exemplify the extreme petulance which is so readily displayed by the Leader of the Opposition whenever he is frustrated in the little games he would like to play in this House.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are 2 issues at stake here. To respond to the Chief Minister's comments about standing order 82, his insistence on a particular interpretation of the phrase 'at once' is to ignore the question of the conduct of the Assembly's business. I also draw the attention of honourable members to standing orders 113 and 258.

I believe that, in the context of the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, 2 issues need to be considered: the original ruling about

the statement being made by the Minister for Mines and Energy and the question of whether the dissent ruling 'at once' is appropriate. I speak in support of the Leader of the Opposition's dissent motion. His motion of dissent from the original ruling was appropriate because, as standing order 113 says, 'an answer shall be relevant to the question'. Let me say, parenthetically, that I appreciated the answer that the honourable minister was giving but ...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Members opposite have been insisting that the debate be totally and specifically relevant and you have supported that, Mr Speaker. I ask that you rule that the member for MacDonnell is not addressing the motion before the House.

Mr BELL: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, as I said at the outset of my remarks, there are 2 procedural issues that have become inextricably interwoven. One of them is the issue of the appropriateness of a motion of dissent in these terms. In fact, that is the second point. The original point at issue was the appropriateness of the comments being made by the Minister for Mines and Energy. I do not believe that it is appropriate to insist that this particular debate be restricted to the second of those points. As I said, it is important for the good conduct of business in this House ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What is the point of the order?

Mr BELL: With respect, Mr Speaker, I am speaking to the point of order raised by the the Chief Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: I will rule on it.

Mr BELL: I want to finish my comments on the point of order if I might. Mr Speaker. I believe you have to rule against the point or order called by the Chief Minister because these 2 issues have become inextricably interwoven and deserve a full and frank debate in this Assembly. The fact of the matter is that if the Minister for Mines and Energy ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am ruling now on the point of order. My advice is that I can pull any member up if I am convinced one way or the other. There is a point of order raised by the Chief Minister and the member for MacDonnell must confine his remarks to the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, in the context of an Assembly that sits for 30 days per year and has a 6-man opposition which does the government like a dinner day after day, I can understand the government being sensitive about this. As far as I am concerned, the dissent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition was quite appropriate.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I despair. The member for MacDonnell is himself a member of the Standing Orders Committee and I would have hoped that he understood standing orders. When his contributions and those of his leader show their lack of understanding of the detail of the standing orders of this House, I can only wish that Senator Bob Collins were back here as Opposition Leader. Certainly, when he held that position, there was no doubt in the minds of members on this side of the Assembly concerning his knowledge and comprehension of the operation of the House. The span of attention and concentration of members of the opposition has been clearly demonstrated to be lacking. The initial 35-second delay, which members of the opposition would interpret as being 'at once', also clearly illustrates that.

Mr Speaker, we are discussing the basic question of whether you have correctly and impartially interpreted the standing orders relating to a motion of dissent. All members on this side of the House have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that you have done so and it is time we got on with the job.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in closing the debate I think all members of the parliament owe an expression of thanks to the member for Barkly. I think that sometimes we get carried away with things in here but, certainly, members on this side of the House have been expressing our frustration over what appears to be an increasing use of question time by ministers to make ministerial statements. What happened today was a new government initiative in making ministerial statements on questions asked 2 days ago. The next initiative I expect from the government is for a minister to rise and answer a question that was asked 2 or 3 years ago in this House which, Mr Speaker, would be equally legitimate according to your ruling.

The dissent motion before the House relates simply to the interpretation of the words 'at once'. What I would put to you, Mr Speaker, is that it is in the interests of the procedures of this House that the words 'at once' not be interpreted literally. Does 'at once' mean within 1 second? That is the sort of question that arises. What does 'at once' mean? Is it within 1 second, within 5 seconds or within 10 or 15 seconds? The point of view that I have put in this debate is that the motion of dissent was put at once to you, Mr Speaker. It was put within a period of 30 seconds, after it had been written out, which is, of course, a requirement. Moving dissent is not simply a matter of rising to one's feet and saying, 'I wish to move dissent'. The motion has first to be written down. The motion was written down and presented to you and I would think that any reasonable person, either in the Chamber or listening on radio, would interpret a period of 30 seconds as a reasonable time for that to occur and as being, practically, within the meaning of 'at once'.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the ruling of the Speaker that the Leader of the Opposition's original motion of dissent was not made at once be dissented from.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

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

Noes 15

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, as I was saying before I was interrupted, the LNG will be stored at Yulara in liquified form and regasified by heating prior to use as a fuel.

Subsequent to the signing of the contract, the detailed design work for the LNG plant has been nearly completed. An agreement has been reached with TMOG Resources Ltd for the use of part of its Brewer Estate site for the LNG plant and a pipeline licence application has been submitted for the 10 km spur line from Palm Valley to the Alice Springs gas pipeline to the Brewer Estate. Land has been acquired at Yulara to house the gas storage facility. The Yulara Corporation advised recently that its requirements for electricity on current peak load, which is 3 MW, will increase to approximately 6.5 MW. Therefore, the use of LNG at Yulara will greatly exceed that envisaged in the original contract. It is a fantastic success story and part of the gas program that the Northern Territory government has entered into.

Next week, I will have one of the senior directors from Equity Corporation in the Northern Territory and it is my intention to organise a full briefing with the member for MacDonnell on how he can obtain further information on the availability of LNG for remote communities within his electorate. I will be endeavouring to contact the member for MacDonnell and to arrange a meeting with the executive from Equity Corporation when he is in Darwin next week, in an attempt to further pursue the utilisation of LNG throughout the Northern Territory.

Teachers Membership of School Councils

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

On radio this morning, the President of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation gave the impression that teachers and Department of Education employees would be precluded from involvement with school councils. Mr Speaker, I believe the Teachers Federation president's comments to be incorrect and irresponsible and my question to the minister is: do the proposed school council regulations preclude teachers and Department of Education employees from becoming involved with school councils?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Port Darwin for his question on what certainly is a topical matter at the moment. In a nutshell, the answer to his question is no. Departmental employees and teachers are not excluded from being members of school councils. I make that point because much of the discussion in the broader community is along the lines that the regulations governing the constitution of school councils exclude teachers or departmental employees. In fact, they limit the total number of teachers and departmental employees to one third of the total numbers on a school council. In fact, there is even better representation than 33.3% because the principal of the school is automatically appointed to the school council, therefore making the percentage in the vicinity of 40%.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the question and the opportunity to clarify the situation for the general public because, as I said, there is considerable misinformation being spread by certain people. Let me start with the consultation process. Discussions were held in all centres of the Northern Territory in 1987 on the issue of devolution. The government has made no secret of the fact that it wishes to ensure that schools are governed by the parents and the wider community. I think that is a very sensible move. It is

also fair to say that there has been a general apathy among parents and the wider community towards becoming involved in the running of schools. Members on this side of the House see such participation as the linchpin of future devolution of full control of schools, including financial aspects. The government's policy is that parents must be given more say and there must be more power for schools to be accountable to their community. I can think of no better group of people to be in charge of school councils.

Under the new regulations, department employees represent one-third of the makeup of school councils, plus the principal. They also have the opportunity to have a secretary or registrar in support. There will be provision for a departmental nominee on school councils although that is not a mandatory requirement. It will occur as a result of discussions between the secretary of the department and the various school council chairpersons. There is no discrimination. Any departmental officer can stand for election at an AGM within the one-third allocation. It is interesting to note that departmental employees, who constitute about 3% to 5% of the population, have access to approximately 40% of the places on school councils. Parents and the wider community, which make up approximately 95% to 97% of our population, have access to approximately 60% of the places on school councils. I would have thought that that was very fair and equitable.

School councils can determine, either in their constitutions or through the AGM election process, what proportion of the one-third consists of teachers or other employees of the Department of Education. No employee is denied the opportunity to stand for election. In my view, teachers get a fair go. They also have full access to staff meetings, departmental committees, panels of various types and professional associations. Mr Speaker, I must stress that it is the wish of this government to work in partnership with teachers and parents and the wider community.

The regulations allow for the cooption of people in the community with special expertise to assist schools. That is a very sensible move. If, in relation to a particular project, a school council requires architectural, financial or banking experience, it has the opportunity to coopt that expertise. Again, that is in line with our policy on devolution.

One comment of the Leader of the Opposition showed that he had no idea of how to read and correctly interpret the regulations. He said that I had the power to exclude even the Chief Minister from membership of a school council.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Port Darwin asked a question of the Minister for Education concerning the right of access of parents to school councils under the new regulations. The Minister for Education is talking about comments I made about the role of MLAs and the minister's power over them.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would ask the minister to relate his remarks to the question.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, I would like to clarify for the Leader of the Opposition that the point that he missed, in paying such a great deal of attention to questions asked within this House, was a reference to comments made by the President of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation on radio this morning and the remarks made by himself ...

Mr Smith: Why are you talking about comments made by me?

Mr HANRAHAN: I am doing so in the context of the question - as well as answering on the issue of teacher and parent representation on school councils.

Mr Speaker, because it has been raised, I will clarify the reasons for the regulation change which allows for the cooption of MLAs and local government representatives onto school councils. I state again that that is not a mandatory requirement. It is up to the school councils themselves to decide whether or not they want local government representatives and or the local MLA.

Mr Smith: And then you have to agree.

Mr HANRAHAN: My approval will be required if the school council takes its opportunity under the AGM election process and has a full number of elected representatives. If a council then wishes to coopt the local government representative and the local MLA, which would take its membership over the number provided for under the regulations, I will allow it to do so. I do not think that that is an unfair course of action.

Mr Speaker, to respond more pertinently to the member for Port Darwin, as a result of the meetings that have been held recently throughout the Northern Territory, under the auspices of the Education Advisory Council, concern has been expressed to me in relation to the correct interpretation of various aspects of the regulations. Since the gazettal of the regulations, I have received advice of concerns from COGSO, secondary schools, school council chairpersons, individual councils and parents and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. I have taken action in that I have extended the date by which Annual General Meetings of school councils are to be held from 15 March to 30 April. This extension will allow all school councils to amend their constitutions and hold their elections in accordance with these regulations. This will also allow further consultations to take place in an area where I have a particular concern and where there will be particular problems. That is in Aboriginal communities and smaller communities which have school councils.

I have indicated to the representatives of COGSO and the various school councils that, after 30 April, I will review any individual problems that arise. I am aware that various school councils have encountered problems. As I said, I have given an undertaking to meet with various representatives of school councils and COGSO after 30 April to ascertain exactly what the problems are and, more pertinently, where the problems are, and to sit down and see if we can solve them.

The Secretary of the Department of Education has clarified the situation that relates to part-time and temporary employees who are not actually involved in the one-third component. This category includes relief teachers, part-time instructors, casual employees and so forth. The secretary of the department has also given an undertaking to the various chairpersons throughout the Northern Territory that he will consult with the particular council concerning the individual departmental employee who will join the school council. As I say, this is not a mandatory requirement, but it is a necessary requirement to make sure that the flow of information and communication is improved.

I stress that this government believes that the parents and the wider community must make up the majority representation on school councils and must become involved if we are to proceed down the path of devolution.

Criminal Compensation for Rape

Mr SMITH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Is the increase in compensation claims under the Crimes Compensation Act due in part to an increase in claims by victims of rape pursuing their entitlements under the act and, as a result, is it true that the Crimes Compensation Act is under review with a view to rape being excluded as an offence for which criminal compensation can be claimed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in response to the question of whether the criminal compensation area is under review, the answer is yes. In reply to the question of rape being excluded as an offence for which criminal compensation can be claimed, the answer is no.

Freighters in Darwin Harbour

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What is the status of the 3 freighters which have been lying at anchor in Darwin Harbour for several months?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am asked quite often about those 3 vessels. I can indicate to this House that they are not the first 3 vessels of the Northern Territory government's own shipping line. The response I often give is that the port is so busy these days that the ships are waiting to be processed. I need to talk at some time about how busy the port is.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Talk about how long it takes to process a ship.

Mr FINCH: In reply to that interjection, Darwin has an excellent record in the rapid processing of ships. In fact, ships very rarely have to anchor in the harbour and wait to come alongside. As well, cargoes are moved away to their destinations extremely rapidly after unloading. That is in contrast to the current situation in Sydney where the container loader system is causing delays of 2 to 4 weeks in the dispatching of cargo.

In respect of the specific question, those vessels have been there since November. They are Philippines-registered vessels crewed by Filipinos. The problem is that their ownership is in dispute. The dispute pertains to the purchase price of the vessels. The parties to the dispute are the Bank of Brazil and some Scottish companies. Temporary managers of the dispute have been appointed by the Supreme Court and local solicitors are handling that matter. In the meantime, Burns Philp is supplying all stores, fuel and water. The vessels were not carrying cargo when they arrived. At the moment, no payment is being made to the Port Authority but there is some spin-off to the local community through the provision of stores.

Mr Speaker, I hope that the day will come when we will have a significant flow of traffic in the port. The Port Authority is working very hard to encourage additional freight, particularly by offering land bridging from the South-east Asian region to other parts of Australia and, in the interim, using backloading on road trains. When the rail system is in place, that will provide further advantages.

Mines Safety Control Act

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

I remind him of an undertaking he gave in the Assembly last year when he assured me that he intended to amend the Mines Safety Control Act by redefining 'mine' within the act so that employees employed by mining companies but not necessarily working on a mine site may be covered by the Work Health Act as opposed to the Mines Safety Control Act. When does the minister intend to proceed with that amendment to the Mines Safety Control Act?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to provide an accurate response off the top of my head. I will provide the information to the honourable member during the course of these sittings.

Psychiatric Patient

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Impressions may have been gained from comments made by members of the opposition yesterday that the person involved in an incident where a nurse was injured with a star picket at Berry Springs last weekend has been wandering around the maternity ward for months. Is this correct?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I would suggest that that was probably the main aim of the matter of public importance raised yesterday by the opposition. I have made inquiries into the matter so that I could absolutely assure the people of the Northern Territory that what the opposition was leading them to believe was not the case. There have been no reports of this person ever having entered the maternity ward and no evidence whatsoever to suggest that he has ever done so.

The person concerned was not permitted to leave the psychiatric ward without an escort. The visit to Berry Springs was an essential part of the treatment of the patient. The patient is now in Ward 9 where an assessment will be made of his current condition and where the trigger for his latest emotional outburst will be sought. I hope that allays any fears that this person was roaming around the corridors of the maternity ward.

Violent Videos and Films

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

What are he and the government actually doing, as opposed to simply talking about doing, to restrict drastically the flood of vicious, violent videos and films into the Territory, in line with the restrictions wanted by decent, responsible members of the public?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I find the tenor of the question rather strange. If the honourable member had a look at the legislation that she herself was involved in passing through this House, she would have a full comprehension of the restrictions and the requirements set out in the act.

I would notify the honourable member that I am presently preparing for the Australian Censorship Ministers' Conference which is to be held in March. I am also in the processes of looking at the provisions of exemptions which were made in the legislation that we passed in this House 2 years ago regarding the display of R-rated videos as well as X-rated videos. I will be notifying people in the video industry of the government's decision in relation to the removal of that exemption by the end of June.

A great deal of concern is being expressed around the country in relation to the classification of videos. The concern is being directed away from X-rated videos into the area of R-rated videos. There have been a number of instances where some sort of connection has been suggested between R-rated violent videos and incidents of extreme violence occurring in specific areas of Australia. I believe that the Censorship Ministers' Conference will be dealing with that particular issue. I am certainly very concerned about the fact that, in a number of instances, young members of our community have unrestricted access to material of this type. I was recently made aware of a report that suggested that the incidence of violence depicted in R-rated video material, in comparison with X-rated material, showed it to be very violent. The report suggested that there was a connection between the behaviour of some young people and the content of these videos.

To return to the member's question regarding the classification legislation that was passed in this House, a process in which she was involved, that legislation lays out restrictions very clearly and concisely. Obviously, the government is moving along in conjunction with those laws. If the honourable member believes that they should be changed, it is within her prerogative to introduce a private member's bill to suggest changes. If she is aware of any instances in which she considers that the government is not complying with the legislation, I would be interested to hear of them.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Mines Safety Control Act

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, during the course of this question time, the member for Nhulunbuy asked me if I could provide information on what we are doing about the redefinition of a 'mine'. I have had the opportunity to get across the subject since the question was asked.

On 24 November last year, I referred to a possible amendment to the definition of 'mine site'. I was responding to a claim made then by the member for Nhulunbuy that the definition of 'mine' in the Mines Safety Control Act meant that all employees of a mine, including clerks, typists and the like, were subject to the safety provisions of that act as opposed to the Work Health Act or some other safety regime.

As I understood it, the honourable member's reference was to requirements under the Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Act, for all workers working on a mine, even in offices, to be x-rayed annually. I can advise the honourable member that that particular requirement was rectified on 23 December by means of Regulations 1987 No 53 of the Mines Safety Control Act, which empowers the Chief Government Mining Engineer to designate areas of silicosis risk and the Chief Medical Officer to denote the frequency of x-rays. In addition, the Mines Safety Control Act is currently under review and will be circulated to industry for comment next month.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, in question time on Thursday 25 February 1988, when the Minister for Mines and Energy was answering a question which had been raised by the member for MacDonnell during the previous day's adjournment debate, a point of order was raised by the member for Nhulunbuy seeking my ruling on whether it was appropriate to answer such a question during question time. My reply was to the effect that the question which the member for MacDonnell had raised the previous day was a legitimate question and the minister was entitled to supply an answer.

It has long been a practice for ministers to receive a call during and at the end of question time to answer questions asked of them during previous sittings either during question time or during the course of an adjournment debate. This has been done with the indulgence of the Chair and thus in Hansard the parenthetical words 'by leave' have been included in some such cases despite no leave having been sought.

I have always considered that question time is the most appropriate time for members from both the opposition and the government backbench to obtain information from ministers. It is also an appropriate time for ministers to provide information previously sought by members although I will not countenance answers which are more in the nature of ministerial statements than direct answers to questions previously asked. I heard the question asked by the member for MacDonnell on Wednesday 24 February and, in view of the practice of this Assembly, I was perfectly satisfied that it was appropriate for the Minister for Mines and Energy to answer the question asked as and when he did.

Entry to Darwin Prison

Mr SMITH to MEMBER for MacDONNELL

Did you or did you not attempt to enter Darwin Prison yesterday as stated by the Minister for Health and Community Services on ABC Radio this morning?

ANSWER

I must confess that my breakfast this morning was ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Unless there is business before the House on which the Leader of the Opposition is seeking information, he is not at liberty to ask a question of a member of his backbench.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, standing order 110 clearly states: 'Questions may be put to a member, not being a minister, relating to any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly, of which the member has charge'. Mr Speaker, quite clearly, my question relates to the business of the Assembly. I am sure that the members opposite will prove that later in this question time if this particular point of order is upheld.

Secondly, it is clearly the business of the member concerned because he was not only the member concerned in the incident, but he also has responsibilities recognised by this House as the shadow minister for health and community services. In our view, it is quite appropriate for this question to be asked of the member for MacDonnell, the shadow minister for health and community services.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I wish to address this point of order, not for the purpose of prolonging the debate and further absorbing the time of the House but because I think it is important for honourable members to note standing order 110. It refers quite clearly to 'any bill, motion, or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly, of which the member has charge'. I would submit that the reference to any 'public matter connected with the business of the Assembly' would refer to something on the Notice Paper.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I would point out to you that there is precedent for this situation. During the time I have been a member of this Assembly, I have been asked a question by an honourable member opposite. That question did not relate to a bill. I will try to recall the question. Meanwhile, I suggest that the matter could be deferred whilst a ruling is obtained and discussed again later in question time. As I recall it, I was asked whether certain of my actions related to the Labor Party's policy on uranium. At that stage, I was the shadow spokesperson on mines and energy. The question was allowed and I answered it.

Mr BELL: In speaking to the point of order, I would like to reply to the contribution made by the Chief Minister. He is very good at reading and quite correctly read standing order 110. It refers to public matters before this Assembly. The Chief Minister is well aware that there has been fulsome debate on the public issue of the care of Ward 9 patients and that representations on the issue have been made to me as a member of this Assembly. I have no doubt that it is an appropriate matter to be addressed in question time. It is a public matter before this Assembly and there can be no doubt about that.

Mr Coulter: Of which the member has charge?

Mr BELL: In answer to the Treasurer's interjection, I point out that, with respect to the business of this House, I have charge on behalf of the opposition for matters relating to health and community services. I have no doubt that the matter upon which the Leader of the Opposition has sought to elicit information from me falls within the ambit of standing order 110.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am advised that the member for MacDonnell has no business on the Notice Paper related to the question asked of him. There is therefore a point of order and I must disallow the question.

Proposed Hi-tech City

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Can he advise the Assembly of any details of the proposed hi-tech city which is being studied by the Commonwealth and state governments and can he inform the House concerning the Territory government's attitude towards it?

ANSWER

The project has the strange and possibly bureaucratic name of Multi-function Polis. That is the heading in government agenda papers and conference agenda papers dealing with the subject. A request originating in Japan has led to the federal government initiating a study into the possibility of establishing a city in Australia, comprised of persons coming from outside Australia, with a view to solving many problems and creating a stimulus to the Australian economy. Press releases from the Leader of the Opposition have referred to the Northern Territory's bid for what he has called the hi-tech city.

The Chief Minister and the Treasurer had some discussions in Japan quite some time ago with a Japanese senator representing the relevant Japanese minister. The matter was raised in those discussions to test the Northern Territory government's reaction on a very preliminary basis. The matter was raised formally at the Conference of Ministers for Industries and Technology in Christchurch late last year. The Commonwealth sought the reaction of the states to the establishment and funding of a major feasibility study into this matter. There was some caution in the reaction of various state ministers and myself. It was the first time that we had had input on a formal basis and I believe there was some political trepidation about leaping forward and saying: 'Yes, we will be in the front line in developing such a new city in Australia'. There was, however, concurrence at the meeting that a full feasibility study should be developed. To that end, the states and the Northern Territory are contributing to the feasibility study. The study is expected to cost somewhere between \$2m and \$5m. I am not sure of the actual timetable for its completion.

As I said, the idea was first floated by the Japanese government with the Australian government. The concept is a little vague at the moment, but basically it is for the establishment in Australia of a group of people from foreign governments and from private enterprise who would build a new city based on leisure, recreation, education and high technology research. The idea has developed somewhat from the initial concept of a single metropolis somewhere in Australia to, possibly, one centre with a number of regional sub-centres spread around the country. That, I believe, is the concept which will be developed in the feasibility study. The whole of Australia may share in what could be a very exciting event. If the project goes ahead, it could be a major step in the history of Australia.

Mr Ede: A pity the opposition wasn't running this.

Mr PERRON: If the member for Stuart takes any interest in this matter, which is of major importance, he might care to keep his interjections to ...

Mr Ede: Why don't you make a ministerial statement so that I can?

Mr PERRON: Perhaps the honourable member wants to waste even more of question time than the opposition has done already this morning. If not, I am sure honourable members will be pleased to hear about this matter from time to time as it develops further and, if the opposition has no interest in the matter, so be it. I am sure other Territorians do and certainly my colleagues on this side of the House are taking a keen interest in the matter. The Northern Territory government has contributed \$40 000 towards the feasibility study and that will enable the Territory government to have some input as well as keeping completely up to date with its progress. I will undertake to keep the Assembly informed, from time to time, on the matter.

Leave Loading

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

Is the government's attempt to remove the 17½% leave loading from public servants the spearhead of an attack on the families of working people throughout the Territory, is the government allowing itself to be used by right-wing forces as a front organisation for a nationwide attack on workers' families, will the government explain how on earth this attempt can be justified in light of its attempts to attract workers to holiday in the Territory and will the government withdraw its application to have the leave loading removed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the member has asked me a number of questions. The answer to the first 2 is no. With respect to the third question, I can advise honourable members that, during the course of debates over public service terms and conditions of employment, the trade union movement was advised that the issue of the 17½% leave loading would be submitted to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for determination.

It is a fact that the trade unions were opposed to any moves in respect of the leave loading. I can understand that particular position. It is a matter that has been the subject of considerable and contentious debate in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. The matter will be resolved by the body that should resolve it and that is the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. If the honourable members opposite wish to continue to support ...

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr HATTON: I note the interjection from the member for Nhulunbuy. He has often made the point in this Assembly that, if matters need to be raised in respect of terms and conditions of employment, they should be dealt with through the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission where both parties can present their arguments. That is exactly the process that is being adopted in this particular case. Quite frankly, I have been surprised at the overt reaction of the trade union movement. If the unions believe their case is strong, then they should be confident that they can win the matter before the commission. Their actions seem to indicate that perhaps they do not believe they have a particularly strong case.

Mr Speaker, this has been a contentious issue in the community for some 15 years. The ...

Mr Smith: What it indicates is that the workers of the Northern Territory are concerned about it.

Mr Ede: They want to know why you are trying to screw their rights.

Mr HATTON: ... circumstances surrounding particular matters have been contentious for many years. Whether members opposite like it or not, it is a fact that many people in the community find little justification for the provision of the 17½% loading for workers other than shift-workers. The issue will be finalised through the processes of conciliation and arbitration and we should let the arguments stand on their merits in that jurisdiction. The government's move is not a spearhead for any sort of attack on anybody. It is a matter of principle that is being addressed through the appropriate forum.

Police Administration Amendment Bill

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer to the proposed Police Administration Amendment Bill. Can he confirm that he has received representations not to pass the Police Administration Amendment Bill, in its present form, from no less a personage than the Secretary of the Nightcliff Branch of the Country Liberal Party, Mr Eugene White, and will the Chief Minister accede to his representations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there are people in the community who do not support this particular legislation.

Mr Smith: Only the secretary of your own branch!

Mr HATTON: That applies equally within my own party. I do not propose to debate this particular matter in question time. Since the honourable member has raised the matter, I might add that the bill was discussed at considerable length during the central council meeting of the CLP last weekend. At that central council meeting, the party strongly endorsed the approach which the government is taking.

Gidgee Bush

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

On your behalf as the member for Braitling, Mr Speaker, I ask what action the government has taken to combat the problems caused by what is commonly called gidgee bush?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as you would well know, the problem of gidgee poisoning, particularly in the area north-east of Alice Springs, has plagued a number of properties for many years. It is very pleasing to see the initiatives taken by some of those pastoralists as a result of their frustration with the inability of governments and others to come up with answers to this problem over the years. They have themselves funded a certain amount of research into the problem and seem to be making some considerable progress in finding a solution to it.

The research is being carried out by the University of New England and, naturally enough, the group has sought funding from the Northern Territory government and others to assist with it. The research is directed towards the development of rumen detoxification of fluoroacetic acid in cattle. For the benefit of honourable members to whom that is not perfectly clear, it is the development of bacteria which can be implanted, as it were, in the stomachs of cattle and which will neutralise the effects of gidgee. To date, progress has been very encouraging. In January, the Northern Territory government approved a grant of \$14 000 to the group and I understand that the Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation is expected to provide some funding towards this project next year.

Gidgee poisoning does not affect properties in the Northern Territory only. It also affects some properties in south-western Queensland and severely reduces their productivity. It has caused great hardship to some property owners. I commend those people who have undertaken and funded research themselves. I hope that their target of finding a solution within 3 years is met and I wish them the best of luck. I will be pleased to keep honourable members informed about developments in this matter and to provide further government assistance where possible.

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority

Mr LANHUPUY to CHIEF MINISTER

Has he asked for a report on the operations of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority? If he has, could he advise me whether he intends to make it public?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the matter has been referred to the Minister for Lands and Housing and I refer the question to him.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I advise the House that the review has been completed. The report has been delayed because of numerous legal actions affecting people involved. I will be taking the report to Cabinet for its consideration and Cabinet will decide on what action, if any, is to be taken, including whether or not to release the report publicly.

School Council Regulations

Mr SETTER to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

With regard to the recent change in regulations governing school councils, can he confirm whether these changes apply to school parent associations and parent and citizens associations? If not, will there be any effect on their operations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have heard a number of people suggest that there may be a way of avoiding the new regulations in respect of school councils. I advise people who are thinking along those lines that a number of school councils are holding meetings this week to consider the new regulations. I expect that the councils will realise that the new regulations are sensible and that they reflect the wishes of the majority of the community. Those who do not realise that and who seek to defy the wishes of the government will only shoot themselves in the foot. Continued refusal to adopt the new regulations will ultimately mean that school councils will lose the ability to play a real and positive role in the management of their schools. In such cases, control will revert to the old system under which the department deals directly with the principal.

Milatos Project

Mr TUXWORTH to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, there has been press comment and reports that indicate that the Milatos motel and golf links project includes provision for a casino and gaming floor. I direct this question to the Chief Minister because I understand that, as coordinator of the government's activities in relation to tourism and gaming, he may be across the matter. Does the Northern Territory government still have an agreement with the Diamond Beach Casino operators that guarantees them sole casino rights in Darwin for some years to come? If such an agreement exists, does Mr Milatos have the authority or the approval of the government or the present casino operators to offer such facilities to any new operator who might manage his motel and golf links project?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, whilst it is true that I have been involved in this particular project, the question refers specifically to a range of agreements with the current operators of the Diamond Beach Casino. To ensure the accuracy of the answer, the minister responsible for racing, gaming and liquor will deal with those aspects.

Mr TUXWORTH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! As a matter of clarification, I directed my question to the Chief Minister because his office was quoted in the press as being supportive of the project. I assumed that he was the minister to take the question.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, to assist the honourable member, I will advise that Mr Milatos has approached the Northern Territory government seeking support. I understand that he has lodged applications for a direct land sale in respect of the development of a tourism-related hotel development in conjunction with the upgrading of the public golf course at Palmerston Park. There have been discussions, over some considerable time, in relation to the proposal. I have been involved in discussions with Mr Milatos. Because the proposal involves land currently under lease to Darwin City Council, there have also been considerable discussions with the council in terms of the actual development and the various proposals and conditions. As often happens in such matters, the details can evolve and change.

The proposal would involve what is currently known as the Darwin Markets area, part of a public street and the corner of a gully at this end of the public golf course area. The proposal therefore involves the road reserve, land currently under the control of Mr Milatos and land currently under lease to Darwin City Council. The proposal incorporates an offer by Mr Milatos to spend \$2m to upgrade the public golf course to an executive 9-hole course to be controlled and operated by the council as a public golf course.

In the discussions in respect of the hotel proposal itself, Mr Milatos has raised the possibility of obtaining an extension of the existing casino licence to operate a separate gaming room in his hotel. I would refer the question concerning detail of this proposal to the Treasurer in the context of his responsibilities for racing, gaming and liquor.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, as the member for Barkly would be well aware, there is an exclusivity clause in the licence arrangements with the casinos in the north and the south. The southern licence is held by Ford Dynasty Pty Ltd and the other is held by the Aspinall group. I suppose the borders of the 2 regions would meet around Tennant Creek or the Tropic of Capricorn.

I can advise the member for Barkly that, under the exclusivity agreement with the casino operators that considerable discussion has occurred with the current operators in respect of providing alternative venues for casino operations within the Darwin region. Mr Milatos has been involved in discussions with Mr James Osborne of the Aspinall group in relation to having a gaming facility in his proposed establishment in Palmerston Park. This is a commercial decision to be made by the operators. Because of its interest in terms of legislation on gaming and the licensing of premises, the government will be following those negotiations with interest. I can advise the member for Barkly that detailed discussions and negotiations have been entered into by the Aspinall group and Milatos in relation to the provision of a licensed premise within the new development.

Flat Rating System

Mr HARRIS to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A number of local government organisations have expressed an interest in what is termed 'the flat rating system'. Does the Local Government Act provide for flat rating and, if not, will legislation be amended to allow such a system to be introduced?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there is concern among local government bodies that the ability to institute a flat rating system may have been lost to them. Certainly, flat rating was possible under the old Local Government Act. As a result of a challenge to that provision in another state, this ability appears to have been lost. A number of amendments to the Local Government Act are being processed currently. In fact, one of those will be the ability to levy a flat rate in council areas. Those proposed amendments have not yet gone to Cabinet but I hope in time to be able to bring to the Assembly a list of amendments, including that particular provision.

Leave Loading

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

The Chief Minister will agree that, in the unlikely event that he achieves his aim of removing the 17½% leave loading for Territory public servants, other Territory workers would lose the loading together with workers throughout the country. That is because the government's challenge relates to a federal award. I ask whether he has carried out any economic analysis of the effects of a national loss of \$3000m in the spending power of Australian citizens and the effects of this upon the Territory tourism industry and small business?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am somewhat flattered at the compliment that is being paid to this government by the member for Stuart, who seems to assume that we are launching a national campaign of some sort. I know that argument has been expounded by members opposite in order to beat up emotions in relation to this particular case.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that you and other members will be well aware that particular cases throughout Australia need to be determined individually by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Although the trade union movement may seek to develop this case into a full-blown national test case, I have no evidence that other governments or other employers are seeking to develop similar cases.

There are, of course, 2 sides to every economic analysis. If it is true that \$3000m is expended on wages and salaries in the form of the 17½% loading, that is a very significant cost to Australian business. I am only quoting the figures used by the member for Stuart and I cannot confirm them but, if that is the case, the other side of the coin is that removal of the loading would free up \$3000m for investment which would create a few more jobs in this country.

Changes in Aboriginal Affairs Administration

Mr REED to CHIEF MINISTER

What, if any, discussions have taken place with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs concerning proposals for the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the proposals enunciated in his statement 'Foundations for the Future'?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, unfortunately I must advise the House that there have been no discussions with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on this matter. This is of particular concern to the Northern Territory. Whilst the proposed new organisation propounded by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will apply throughout Australia, we must remember that approximately 25% of the Northern Territory population is Aboriginal. These people are a very significant element in our community, which is not the case in New South Wales where the Aboriginal population numbers 45 000 in a total population of 5 million, which is less than 1%. We are talking about nearly a quarter of our population and the minister's proposals will have profound and significant effects on the administration and the role of government in the Northern Territory.

It would seem appropriate, therefore, for the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to take the time at least to fully brief and consult with this government, as he indicated he would do during the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Ministers' Conference in Perth last year. He has done nothing of the sort. In fact, he has been in the Northern Territory for some considerable time, moving around Aboriginal communities and consulting with them. I do not object to that at all. It is quite an appropriate course of action for a minister involved in such a matter. I do, however, believe that he might appropriately take some time to talk to the government of the Northern Territory about the implications of the new structure for government administration throughout the Northern Territory.

I wrote to the Prime Minister on 20 February relaying our concerns and the concerns expressed by Aboriginal people at the hasty introduction of Mr Hand's proposals and the lack of genuine consultation. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government has also written to Mr Hand to express these concerns which include the undue haste to introduce the commission, inequitable representation on the regional councils, the unnecessary bureaucracy introduced by the proposal for zones, boundaries incompatible with Aboriginal community interests, the apparent lack of Aboriginal control of the commission and the interests of traditional people being made subservient to those of non-traditional urban dwellers. Members of this Assembly should be concerned with these developments.

As I have said, the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory comprise about 24% of our population and are not some insignificant minority group to be subjected to centralist social engineering experiments. The fact is that Aboriginal communities have been taking up the Northern Territory community government model as the most appropriate form of community organisation. Nowhere in the minister's proposals do we see any acknowledgement that such far-reaching community development models are being adopted in the Northern Territory. This government continues to receive representations from Aboriginal communities expressing their concern at the Commonwealth's actions and we will continue to represent those concerns to the Commonwealth. The

indecent haste and urgency with which this matter is being handled by the federal minister is doing Northern Territory Aboriginal communities a great disservice.

Mr Smith: He has talked to more of them than you have.

Mr HATTON: His proposals are badly thought out and they are creating significant concern in Aboriginal communities. And, in response to the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition, I would ask him to talk to his own colleagues, including Senator Collins, who also have real concerns about the proposals and have found real concerns among Aboriginal people.

There is no question that the federal minister should sit down with the Northern Territory government to address our real concerns about the implications of his proposals for the Northern Territory, as he undertook to do last year and has failed to do so. I have some serious concerns about the proposal in terms of its impact on the whole concept of federalism in our nation and whether it is actually a tool designed to create a nation within a nation. Our concerns and questions need to be addressed and we need the opportunity to speak with the federal minister.

We have received representations from the Aboriginal Development Commission seeking our support in opposing the minister's intention to disband its organisation, which is providing development finance for Aboriginal communities. The minister's intention is based on the view that it is perhaps inappropriate for the commission to be involved in some matters that could be classified as social issues, when those are also being dealt with by other organisations involved in Aboriginal affairs.

Report on AIDS in Schools

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

When will he release to me, and to other members who may not have already seen it, the government report on AIDS in schools, as promised in a notice in the Sunday Territorian of 21 February, which stated that the report would be sent to all MLAs for comment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will contact the department for a briefing on the report and the undertaking that was given by the Minister for Education and I will ensure that his wishes are carried out. If that is what he said, I will personally deliver a copy of the report to the member for Koolpinyah during the next 15 minutes.

Maldives Airport Facilities

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Has the federal government promised money to the Maldives to upgrade airport facilities there?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not able to confirm absolutely whether the federal government has or has not done so. However, I have received fairly reliable advice that some \$2m has been allocated through the Department of Foreign

Affairs to the Maldives, which is an island nation close to Sri Lanka. Of course, that gesture gives us great heart here in the Northern Territory. In a spirit of communication and dialogue, we have come a long way in terms of the potential development of the airport in Darwin and it is now up to the federal government to make its decision. Following a subsidy of some \$10m to Vanuatu and \$2m to the Maldives, there must be a great chance that the Northern Territory, with its potential to provide great development of the economy in Australia, will receive a reasonable hearing.

In the last 2 weeks, we have forwarded to the federal minister, Senator Evans, a proposal that outlines the basis upon which we believe development should proceed. That includes separation of the land from the terminal building through to McMillans Road, enabling us to put into place a series of developments which would not only be of benefit to the aviation industry but would also help to make the whole proposition viable. We are looking for a direct grant of land or, at the very least, a reasonable lease period, such as 40 years. Previously, we have gone through negotiations to try and make ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister was asked whether federal assistance would be provided towards airport construction or reconstruction in the Maldives. He is now talking about the Darwin Airport which is at least 3000 km away from the Maldives.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the relationship between the granting of federal government funds towards airport construction onshore and offshore is very pertinent. Quite clearly, in asking his question, the member for Karama intended to relate that funding to the local scene which, I would have assumed, was of importance even to members opposite.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I refer you to standing order 109 which says: 'Questions may be put to a minister relating to public affairs' - and this may be considered to be a public affair - 'to proceedings pending in the Assembly, or to any matter of administration for which he is responsible'.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate that the minister and perhaps even the member for Karama are prone to a degree of self-indulgence, but even to contemplate that the Minister for Transport and Works in the Northern Territory is in any way involved in Australia's foreign affairs is to draw a very long bow. Personally, I am eternally grateful for the happy circumstance that he is not so involved. However, what is more important to this House is that the question should clearly have been ruled out of order. It has nothing to do with the Northern Territory or the administration of funding within the Northern Territory. It has nothing to do with any developments within the Northern Territory and it was clearly out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I would remind all honourable ministers to relate their replies to the questions. There is some validity in the point of order raised by the member for Nhulunbuy and I therefore suggest that the member for Karama rephrase his question.

Federal Funding for Airport Facilities

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Has the federal government given money to the Maldives for the upgrading of airport facilities and does he believe that appropriation of that money to the Maldives will affect the probability of redevelopment of Darwin Airport?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Karama has asked for an opinion.

Mr PALMER: Will the moneys appropriated to the Maldives have an effect on the redevelopment of Darwin Airport?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I would hope that, in a meeting next week with the federal minister for Transport and Communications, Senator Evans, I will be able to confirm positively whether that is so or not. Honourable members may not be aware that, unfortunately, the new Minister for Land Transport and Infrastructure Support, Hon Peter Morris, is on sick leave following an appendix operation. Clyde Holding, who formerly held that portfolio, was on leave for most of the time he held it. Since Peter Duncan moved to another portfolio, it has been difficult to find out anything positive.

However, I hope to see Senator Evans and to clear up, once and for all, the extent of any grant or contribution by the federal government to this project. We hope to be able to get on with the job as soon as possible. We have advertised for expressions of interest from contractors, financiers and designers. We would like to be able to commence construction by about July and complete the project by the end of 1989, ahead of the Maldives.

Assistance to New South Wales Liberal Party

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Does he intend that the Northern Territory taxpayer will provide the Liberal Party in New South Wales with any assistance other than the provision of an unspecified number of personnel for an unspecified period of time and at an unspecified cost? If he does intend to provide any extra assistance, what will be the nature of that assistance and under what budget allocation will it be made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable member to put that question on notice so I can find out what the blazes he is talking about.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Changes in Aboriginal Affairs Administration

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): I will take the opportunity to clarify my answer to a previous question in relation to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I advised that there had been no discussions with the minister. I have been advised that the federal minister met, over breakfast in Alice Springs, with the Northern Territory Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to discuss matters of concern to this government. Although that meeting does not affect the substantive point I was making, I apologise if I inadvertently misled the Assembly. I rise simply to correct the matter. It does not detract from my major point that there must be substantial consultations between the federal minister and the Northern Territory government.

Videotape and Transcript

Mr SMITH to SPEAKER

Mr Speaker, have you been able to assure yourself that the videotape and transcript supplied to you by the Chief Minister in his reference to you on the possible breach of privilege were official ABC video and transcript supplied by the ABC or were they supplied from other sources, possibly in breach of the Copyright Act?

ANSWER

I will have further discussions with the Clerk and give the information to the honourable Leader of the Opposition tomorrow.

Assistance to New South Wales Liberal Party

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

What is the total cost to the Northern Territory government of the campaign assistance which the Chief Minister has given to Nick Greiner for the forthcoming New South Wales election and under what budget allocation was this campaign donation made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I must assume from that question that the honourable member is referring to a specific financial donation to the New South Wales Liberal Party.

Mr Leo: As far as I am concerned, any Territory expense in that election is a campaign donation.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the issue of the actual dollar value of the Territory contribution is a matter that I will ask the honourable member to put on notice.

News Report on School Councils

Mr REED to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

Is it his intention, as the acting minister, to sack school councils if they do not comply with new regulations for councils, as was stated in a report on last night's Channel 8 news?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. It gives me an early opportunity to respond to the offensive item which went to air last night on the Channel 8 news. As all honourable members will recall, in question time yesterday, I did not at any stage refer or even hint at any possible dismissal of any school council for any reason whatsoever. In response to a question from the honourable member for Jingili, I said that any school council which did not comply with any new regulations would not be doing itself any favours because it would eventually and ultimately cease to be a legal school council. In that situation, I said, the government would have no option but to revert to the previous system under which the Department of Education dealt directly with the school principal. In other words, by

failing to comply with the new regulations, school councils would surrender their authority to make decisions affecting schools.

That is a far cry from what appeared last night in the news item concerned. Aided and abetted by the member for Stuart, who should know better but cannot help himself, the reporter stated in absolute terms that school councils would be sacked by me if they did not toe the line. The reporter offered his opinion that, as acting minister, I was uncertain about what might happen if school councils rejected the new regulations. He had no reason to form such an opinion as the matter is clear and simple. I went to some lengths in the interview to explain that and to stress that councils would not be summarily dismissed.

Mr Speaker, given the capacity for concern by parents about the future of school councils and given the efforts of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation to facilitate confusion and concern, I am extremely angry about the Channel 8 news item last night. I have lodged a complaint with the station's news editor and I hope that the reporter concerned redresses the matter publicly. I have stressed that I am not being thin-skinned. As honourable members will know, I have been involved in many a controversial issue in my time in politics and I have never lodged a complaint about the way I was handled by the media. I have no previous record of ever lodging a complaint about media reporting in the Territory. This matter, however, went far beyond the bounds of what might reasonably be expected.

Employment for School Leavers

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER FOR LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

What action has the government taken to ensure that school leavers are able to find meaningful employment in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as honourable members would be aware, considerable concern was expressed last year about the ability of the Northern Territory to employ school leavers at the end of 1987. In fact, approximately 1700 students were expected to leave school at the end of last year and there was some uncertainty about how many of them would be able to be employed. On the assessment of my department, it was believed that about 60% of those students would obtain employment on leaving school and the other 40% would gradually be employed over a period, with a number continuing with further education.

As a consequence of the concerns and the obvious need to facilitate the employment of school leavers, the Territory government committed itself to a program of school-leaver employment and traineeships at a cost this year of about \$870 000 and \$1.5m over a period of 4 years given that, obviously, some of the traineeships will continue into other years. At the base grade, we were able to take on 44 positions, 12 of which were part of the Australian Traineeship Scheme whilst the remainder were base-grade positions to be taken in over a period of months for a 4-month duration and then gradually absorbed into the public service.

A number of industry training committees have been established. In retail business, 24 participants were started on 14 February. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, the Tourism Training Committee has been working extremely well in the Beaufort Hotel and the young people who have completed the courses have been excellent participants in the tourism industry; it is considered that

that initiative should continue. We have also put money into tourism training committees in Alice Springs.

Whilst there has been a downturn in the area of manufacturing, the construction industry agreed to take on a further 5 apprentices this year, with support from the Territory government. In connection with that, I agreed with the Masters Builders Association that construction apprentices employed by the Northern Territory government would become available for the association's pool so that the government would not be competing with the construction industry and so that government apprentices will be exposed to other aspects of the industry during the year. The 5 extra apprentices which the industry agreed to take on are in addition to those which it originally agreed to. The automotive industry also agreed to take on an additional 5 apprentices with support from the government. In the area of local government, another industry training committee has been established.

For some years, we have had a group intake scheme for Aboriginal people who were seeking employment in the public service but could not obtain it, basically because they lacked the necessary skills. This year, the group will involve 40 positions, which is 10 more than previously anticipated. I think that program will always be needed but I have changed its emphasis to include training for the private sector and to expand beyond the exclusive Aboriginal intake.

We have established 30 positions in pre-vocational courses. These are for young people who are seeking employment in an area but who lack skills and, therefore, cannot get a job. We have been able to reach an agreement with the Department of Education which will provide off-the-job training which will count towards their apprenticeship training. Mr Speaker, you are probably aware that those pre-vocational courses were previously funded under the Group One-Year Apprenticeship Scheme which was funded by the federal government and cut out last year. The courses were run at the Territory Training Centre and all students who participated in the scheme last year were able to get apprenticeships at the end of their training. It was of concern to me that such an option would not be available to young people this year but we have been able to retain it in conjunction with the Department of Education and there has been a very good response.

The architectural and engineering area has agreed to take on 12 cadetships and, again, we have provided support. I believe we have covered the field very well. We have not gone out to find jobs or to fund employers to take on young people, but we are seeking to train people for future jobs. I believe that that is the way the government should go. We should not try to create jobs which are not really necessary but we should look for young people who, with a little extra training, will not find it very difficult to get a job. That is exactly what we have done with these school-leaver initiatives. I have every confidence that the programs will be successful and able to be expanded in future years.

Cabinet Decision on Higher Education

Mr EDE to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

Would he confirm that Cabinet has made a decision in the last few days to abolish the Darwin Institute of Technology, amalgamating the upper level courses into the University College and incorporating the balance, including all Technical and Further Education courses, into the Department of Education, and is it true that the higher education planning group, which will now have

to implement that decision, contains no representatives of the faculty associations or student bodies?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, if that is an example of the exercise of responsibility by the shadow spokesman in what is probably one of the most serious portfolios that anybody could ever hold, I am astonished. The content of his question is pure fabrication, designed to raise concern in the community. It has no substance whatsoever and it typifies his approach to one of the most delicate portfolio areas that anybody can be entrusted with. It concerns the welfare of our children in the Northern Territory and the role of government authorities in that, and the member for Stuart's approach should be condemned. Of course, Mr Speaker, the answer is no.

Police Administration Amendment Bill

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer him to this morning's interview on Territory Extra where he was asked by the interviewer whether, as has been suggested, some particularly prominent court cases are coming up in which he believes Williams Case will be used as a defence. I refer to his answer which was: 'There are, in fact, a couple of cases'. What are the cases and is it the intention of the government to commence the legislation in such a way that it will apply retrospectively?

ANSWER

Would the honourable member repeat the last part of that question please?

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the Chief Minister has difficulties with this legislation and I am more than happy to repeat my question. What are the cases to which the Chief Minister referred on the Territory Extra this morning? If these cases refer to offences that have already occurred and if it is the intention of the government that the substance of this legislation should apply to them, is it the intention of the government that the commencement date for the legislation will not be, as is normally the case, either the time of its passage or a future time but some time in the past; that is, will it be retrospective legislation?

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, now that I have the question clear, the answer is that it is not intended that it be retrospective legislation. I am not a lawyer any more than the opposition spokesman is a lawyer. I will not seek to interpret how legal counsel will argue cases in court any more than I would ask the shadow spokesman on police matters to seek to interpret how matters should be dealt with within the courts.

The reality is that there are cases before the police at the moment and that they arise regularly because of the very nature and requirements of police investigations ...

Mr Bell: What are the cases? Give us an example.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will give some examples that may indicate the problems that exist as a consequence of the recent High Court decision and the problems that arise ...

Mr Smith: The 1986 High Court decision.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The member on his feet should be heard in silence.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I had not intended to use question time to debate the Police Administration Amendment Bill as the debate will take place tomorrow and I will have plenty of opportunity to do so then. However, I have been asked specific questions on this matter and I will take the opportunity to deal with them now in question time.

Mr Speaker, the fact is that, whilst the judgment in what is known as Williams Case did not change the common law ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! As the Chief Minister said, he has been asked specific questions. There is a bill before the House and the substance of that bill should not be debated. The question related to statements he made on Territory Extra this morning in reference to the legislation. The 2 questions were enunciated quite clearly by my colleague and they should be answered specifically. The substance of the bill should not be debated.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would ask the Chief Minister to relate his reply to the questions.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am seeking to place my answer in context so that the member opposite will not be subject to any confusion when I refer to 2 particular matters which have been cited to me by the police as illustrations of the need for this legislation. Williams Case clarified a grey area in the common law, and that clarification will place an onus ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Chief Minister is continuing to debate a bill before the House. He has not yet attempted to answer the questions put to him by the member for MacDonnell. He has not attempted to specifically answer the 2 questions. The first asked what cases are presently being prosecuted by the police that will be affected by this legislation. The answer should simply name them. The other question asked whether the legislation will apply retrospectively or not. The minister has not attempted to answer those questions; he has attempted to debate the bill.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, one of the questions has been answered already and I am entitled to answer in the way that I believe will most clearly address the question put by the member opposite. I am seeking to do that and I would have done so already if I had not been interrupted continually by spurious points of order.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Chief Minister was attempting to put into context his reply to the member for MacDonnell's fairly detailed question.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am merely trying to outline the fact that the whole purpose of this bill is to counteract the judgment in Williams Case which made a specific declaration on what was a grey area of law and which was recognised by the legal profession as such. The judgment places an obligation on a defence lawyer to raise Williams Case when and if circumstances arise that would enable him to use it as a technical defence. That is a proper obligation on a defence lawyer.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to go into the details of specific arguments which have been dealt with and, undoubtedly, will be dealt with again. I will not name particular cases for obvious reasons. I do not intend to refer publicly to matters that will go before the courts. I do, however, wish to refer - as the Leader of the Opposition has done - to matters that have been sanitised against identification of individuals. I think that is the proper course of action to adopt.

On a Saturday afternoon, an accused person A induced two 7-year-old boys to enter his room at a house in a remote locality. The boys, B and C, upon being induced to enter the room, were threatened by the accused A who held a knife to one of the children's throats and told the youngster C to lie on the floor and cover his head with a sheet. The accused A then instructed B to lie on his stomach and proceeded to have anal intercourse with him. The act having been done, the accused again threatened both boys with the knife, warning them of dire consequences should they report the incident to anyone.

The matter came to police attention late on the Saturday afternoon. The accused's whereabouts were unknown. The accused, incidentally, resided in the house next door to the house of the victims. Information was received late on Saturday night that the accused had returned to the house. Police, knowing that the offender was a bolter, arrested him at midnight. The Criminal Investigation Branch in Darwin was advised at the earliest opportunity and detectives flew to the scene and commenced interviewing the accused at 2 pm, which was the earliest opportunity available. Full and frank admissions were made. The accused was flown out the following morning. He consented to a medical examination and the taking of pubic hair and blood samples. The accused was brought, forthwith, before the next available court hearing on Tuesday at 2 pm. The point is that, technically, the offender should have been brought before the 10 am court hearing in Darwin on the Monday, 1½ days earlier. This was totally impractical and would have made any effective investigation impossible. There was no realistic alternative to the course of action taken.

I refer to another matter, Mr Speaker. Following verbal instruction today from the officer in charge of the CIB, I submit the following. In late January 1988, 4 adult youths were apprehended in Darwin. The time was 0300 hours and they were apprehended whilst interfering with a motor vehicle. The offenders were not arrested at this time; they were conveyed back to the Berrimah Police Centre. They were placed in separate interview rooms. Computer inquiries revealed that the vehicle the youths were travelling in had been reported stolen in Alice Springs. One person was also wanted for questioning in relation to an unlawful entry and a sexual assault plus a number of unlawful entries and stealing incidents in Alice Springs. Another youth was also wanted for questioning in relation to a number of unlawful entries and stealing in Alice Springs. It was also ascertained that the group may have been responsible for interfering with a number of vehicles in the Darwin area, obtaining fuel. An expensive camera, suspected to be stolen, was located in the stolen vehicle. Due to the number of persons and the number of offences, totalling 94, interviews were delayed until detectives commenced duty. During this time, I am advised, the youths were happy to remain at the police station. I must say that, should they have sought to leave, they undoubtedly would have been restrained and technically would have been regarded as under arrest, although without having been charged.

One youth was arrested at 1145 hours, a second at 1520 hours, another at 1600 hours and a fourth at 2257 hours. A further youth was interviewed and then charged at 2308 hours. The delay in arresting these offenders was due to

the need to complete the various interviews. All 4 were refused bail, their rights explained and they appeared in court the next day.

Mr Smith: Who refused bail?

Mr HATTON: The police.

Mr Smith: Did you get a tape of the interviews?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am happy to provide copies of proceedings to the Leader of the Opposition. I do not have copies here, but I will arrange for them to be circulated to members of the House.

Mr Speaker, both of the cases I have described impact directly upon the principles that are addressed in the bill and which relate to the decision in Williams Case. Those sorts of situations are not uncommon and occur regularly as a result of the necessity for police to carry out investigations. Members will note that the matters I have mentioned are not instances of organised crime. They do, however, deal with complex matters which need investigation.

In respect of the second matter I outlined, it is quite clear that people were detained initially as a consequence of interfering with a vehicle. Following on from that, some 90-odd other charges arose as a result of police investigations. In Williams Case, the person was detained originally in connection with 3 offences and a further 26 were later identified. Those 26 were eventually thrown out because the evidence was not acceptable. That is totally consistent ...

Mr Smith: That is not right. That is not what the judgments in Williams Case say. Why don't you get across it?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I have read Williams.

Mr Smith: Well, read it again before the debate tomorrow, please.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the trial judge ruled that that evidence was inadmissible.

Mr Smith: Why? That is the question. Why was it ruled inadmissible.

Mr HATTON: Because the person had not been brought before the court ...

Mr Smith: When he should have been.

Mr HATTON: ... 20-odd hours earlier, rather than being held whilst the police continued to investigate the additional matters.

Mr Speaker, that is precisely the situation. It is right for police to carry out investigations prior to bringing matters before the courts. The member for MacDonnell asked last week if I could provide some examples of cases which would be affected by the legislation. Now that I have done so, I look forward to watching him crawl down Mitchell Street at lunchtime.

Vanderlin Drive Duplication

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What stage has the duplication of Vanderlin Drive reached?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member has a great interest in traffic matters in the northern suburbs and I am pleased to advise him that works costing \$1.1m have commenced on Vanderlin Drive. The works commenced in January and are due to be completed by 18 July. There will be some interference with traffic flows because work will be in progress while traffic continues to utilise Lee Point Road and Vanderlin Drive. The works include a roundabout, and we heard some discussion about roundabouts the other day. A fairly large roundabout is to be installed at the intersection of Vanderlin Drive and Lee Point Road and the traffic lights there will continue to operate whilst that is being constructed.

As a PR exercise, departmental officers recently visited the Casuarina and the Hibiscus shopping centres and displayed the proposed works. Comments from the public were generally supportive, as one would expect. However, concern was expressed by some residents whose properties are adjacent to Vanderlin Drive that the duplicated roadway would be too close to the rear of their properties and that noise from it would be disturbing to them. That will not be the case, Mr Speaker. The noise levels should not alter at all and might even diminish due to a freer flow of traffic. The question of visual impact has also been attended to and an amount has been set aside in the contract to ensure that appropriate planting is undertaken.

I was concerned about some allegations from residents who stated that, when they bought those properties, the sales people stated on behalf of the developer that no roadworks were proposed in the future along Vanderlin Drive. I am having that matter investigated because, if that was in part of the sales pitch and even - as some people suggest - part of the contract, I would be more than concerned.

Some people on the Wulagi side of Vanderlin Drive have also expressed concern that access to and from their area might be interfered with to some extent. These matters have been referred to traffic engineers who have tried to balance such considerations with matters of safety. I believe that the best possible solution for all concerned has now been arrived at.

Mr Speaker, whilst there will be some minor interruption to traffic during the construction period, I believe that progress of the works will be in the general interests of northern suburbs residents, particularly those in VRD Drive and Leanyer Drive, which will experience less traffic.

Insurance Cover for Earthquake Damage

Mr POOLE to TREASURER

This question is addressed to the Treasurer in his capacity as minister responsible for the Territory Insurance Office. Shortly after the earthquake which struck Tennant Creek on 22 January this year, stories emerged which suggested that TIO policy holders were not covered for earthquake damage. Can the Treasurer advise whether or not this is the case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, 10 claims have been received by the TIO for compensation for damage as a result of the earthquake. The total value of these claims is about \$550 000. Of that figure, \$500 000 is estimated to relate to damage to the gas pipeline. The honourable member is correct about immediate rumours

which suggested that TIO policy holders were not covered for earthquake damage. I am happy to tell him that all relevant TIO policies carry an automatic earthquake cover with no additional premium. I understand that the policies of some insurance companies do not include earthquake cover but TIO policies definitely do so.

As a matter of interest, the TIO building in Tennant Creek stood up to the quakes and shakes very well. Being a steel-framed building, the only damage was minor cracks to the plaster.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Cabinet Decision on Higher Education

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, whilst I am on my feet, I will refer to the Cabinet decision in relation to the question which was asked of me earlier by the shadow spokesman on education. For the benefit of all honourable members, I will read from the decision. Cabinet:

(a) directed that all negotiations with the Commonwealth over the future of higher education will be conducted by the NT Minister for Education; (b) authorised nominees of the Minister for Education to enter into preliminary discussions with Commonwealth nominees as a precursor to the formation of the joint planning committee; (c) agreed that negotiations should be conducted on the basis of the preferred options presented in the submission; and (d) directed the minister to report back to Cabinet prior to any commitments or undertakings being entered into with the Commonwealth.

In terms of the available options, I will refer to a recent transcript of statements made by Nan Giese, who seems to have been much more able to come to grips with the third option than has the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In a radio interview, she said: 'The options are described in the paper as 3 basic options. It does not say in any way that they are exhaustive so I do not believe that this paper excludes any options'. She is absolutely correct in relation to the third option and we will be discussing that in more detail later. I hope that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will pay attention today because he may learn something.

Future of Darwin Institute of Technology

Mr EDE to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

Will he investigate whether the Secretary of the Department of Education yesterday went to the DIT and told members of the Darwin Institute of Technology that a decision had been made to abolish the institute, that its upper-level courses were to be incorporated into the University College and that the balance of courses were to be returned to the Department of Education? Following such an investigation, will he report back to this Assembly on the matter?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we have come a long way from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's earlier assertion about an alleged Cabinet decision. He has now come back with something else that he has heard. We saw him duck out to the phone to obtain another rumour. He must have a rumour machine that he can plug into. If question time went for 1½ hours, he would be exhausted from running in and out. We would have to pick him up for his last question.

The shadow spokesman on education's question will be answered during the course of the debate on the first item of general business later today.

Assistance to New South Wales Liberal Party

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Will he extend to other members of the House the same facilities that he has extended to Nick Greiner so that they may be able to support candidates of their choice in the forthcoming New South Wales election?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is a preposterous suggestion.

Mr Smith: Why?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have continually warned members this morning and I finally warn the Leader of the Opposition that another interjection will result in his being named.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Brisbane Expo Exhibit

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, earlier in the sittings the member for Stuart asked a question relating to the Northern Territory government's decision to participate in the Brisbane Expo and whether work on the exhibit would be done in the Northern Territory or in Brisbane. I inform honourable members that planning is at an advanced stage even though the decision was made fairly recently. A model of the Northern Territory's exhibit is currently on display in the committee room and will be there until about 12.30 pm today for any honourable member who may care to look at it. I can advise honourable members that the design of the model and its construction will be undertaken within the Northern Territory.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would very much like to hear a full description of what will happen at Expo. However, as I recall, the question was asked of the Chief Minister. The minister who is presently speaking has never even been asked a question about Expo in Brisbane or the Northern Territory's involvement in it. I do not see how standing orders can be extended for a minister to answer a question that he has never been asked in any context.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the Territory's participation in Expo is within my portfolio responsibility.

Honourable members will be pleased to know that virtually the only work that will be undertaken interstate will be the assembling of the stall, the blowing-up of photographs which the Territory does not have the capacity to undertake and possibly some electrical wiring. The exhibit will be predominantly tourism oriented with an emphasis on Aboriginal culture and industry and development. Incorporated in the display will be a theatrette with seating for 30 people, a shop where 5 products unique to the Northern Territory can be sold and a homestead replica featuring a School of the Air exhibit. When honourable members see the model that is on display, they will indeed see that the Northern Territory's exhibit will do the Territory credit.

It will be unique at the Expo, I am sure. The majority of the work and expenditure will occur in the Northern Territory until the exhibit opens.

Fringe Benefits Tax

Mr DONDAS to TREASURER

Last year, he was a very strong opponent of the fringe benefits tax. Could he advise the House of the Northern Territory government's liabilities in respect of fringe benefits tax this financial year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is indeed a very timely question. We have heard so much about the federal government's balanced budget and, in fact, the surplus that it intends to achieve this year. We all know that one of the major factors in that outcome is that the fringe benefits tax recouped over \$1000m more than was originally estimated. Anybody in Australia could have told the government what that tax would do to various industries, particularly motor vehicle retailers and restaurateurs.

The honourable member has indeed waved a red flag at a bull by mentioning the fringe benefits tax for it is in my opinion that it is the worst tax ever inflicted on the citizens of Australia. It erodes the very principles which have forged and made this country. I could go on about it for the whole morning but I will not. Honourable members should note with cynicism, however, that the federal Treasurer keeps getting delightful surprises about how much revenue the fringe benefits tax is raising for him. In 1986-87, the tax operated for only 9 months. It was estimated that it would raise \$335m. In fact, it produced over \$500m. In 1987-88, estimated revenue is \$750m and I understand that the federal Treasury is excitedly hoping that it will actually collect more than \$1000m. We could perhaps be forgiven for suggesting that the fringe benefits tax is keeping the federal government afloat financially.

To address the honourable member's question specifically, the Territory government's estimated fringe benefits tax liability for 1987-88 is \$7.5m. The biggest component of that is the \$3.8m which the government will pay on recreational air fares. The Territory government paid \$4.6m in the 9-month period of 1986-87, plus a further \$500 000 relating to a back adjustment, following an assessment by the Australian Taxation Office on the tax liability for air fares of compulsory transferees. We paid it reluctantly. We disliked the tax as much as ever we did.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that, in Japan, companies are allowed to deduct their entertainment costs as legitimate tax-free expenses. One only has to have a look at the industries that have been developed as a result of that measure. It helps money to circulate in the economy. If the Leader of the Opposition has any doubt at all about the ability of the Japanese to run their economy, he should look at their surplus and the way that they are travelling the world today looking for investment opportunities. There has been no greater success story than that of the Japanese economy and we could all learn from looking at how it has been able to achieve its success. In Australia, we seem to have a lemming-like tendency to create a suicide pact in which we do exactly the opposite. We close down restaurants and we close down car retailers in order to provide millions of dollars which are drastically needed to keep this federal government afloat.

Vanderlin Drive Duplication

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

This relates to an answer he gave to a previous question. In view of the concerns expressed by residents in his electorate regarding the realignment of Vanderlin Drive and the ensuing noise problems, will he now consider the realignment of Vanderlin Drive where it abuts residences in Karama or will he consider other noise abatement measures?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to reiterate for the honourable member the advice that I gave him last year. There is absolutely no way in the world that one could contemplate bulldozing the very expensive bitumen alongside those houses in Karama. I emphasise again that, in the long term, the road will be duplicated all the way through to the highway. The setback between the road and the property lines was certainly based on normal practice. The road was there long before the houses were orientated and I believe that what is required is simply some landscaping to provide screening. There will not be any realignment of the road.

School Council Regulations

Mr LANHUPUY to MEMBER for STUART

I preface my question by pointing out to the House that the member for Stuart has a motion before the House seeking to disallow the Education (School Councils) Regulation 1988. I refer the member to legal advice he mentioned in debate in this Assembly and I ask whether that advice showed that the Secretary of the Department of Education advised school councils incorrectly concerning the range of employees covered by the regulations. Will he now table that advice for the benefit of members?

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This question is out of order in that it refers to a matter which is not yet before the House.

Mr Smith: It is before the House; it appears on the Notice Paper.

Mr HATTON: Notice has been given but it is not yet before the House.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will speak to the point of order and not to the fact that government members do not want to know the answer to the question. On the Notice Paper, under the heading 'On or Before 17 May 1988 Business of the Assembly', there is an item headed 'Education (School Councils) Regulations - Motion for Disallowance'. It reads: 'Resumption of debate on the motion of Mr Ede (25 February 1988) - That the amendments of the Education (School Councils) Regulations, as contained in Regulations 1988 No 4 and made under the Education Act, be disallowed'.

In prefacing his question, the member for Arnhem made reference to the disallowance motion which I have just read. His question clearly relates to that. It is an item on the Notice Paper. Mr Speaker, I refer you to standing order 110 which states that: 'Questions may be put to a member, not being a minister, relating to any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly, of which the member has charge'. The member for Arnhem's question relates to a matter which is the business of the Assembly and is on the Notice Paper. I moved the motion and I therefore have charge of the business. The question is clearly allowable under standing order 110.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, far be it from me to claim the same knowledge as the Clerk in advising the Chair. However, it is obvious that there is no point of order. Indeed, you have made rulings in this House over the last week which would indicate that the member for Arnhem's question was properly directed. It is the responsibility of the member for Stuart to reply to the question. It relates to a matter that is before the House. Whilst the question does not impinge upon the substance of the motion, it does impinge upon legal matters which relate strictly to the motion. Mr Speaker, it is my belief that you must rule against the Chief Minister's point of order.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I take the point made by the member for Stuart. He does have carriage of a matter that is substantively before the House, and I withdraw the point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Stuart has a motion before the House and may now proceed to answer the question.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have been challenged regarding this legal opinion, both by the Chief Minister, whom I thought would be very eager to obtain a copy, and by the Minister for Education, who is presently elsewhere.

I am quite prepared to table the advice that I have received. It states quite clearly that the letter circulated by the Secretary of the Department of Education to chairmen of school councils and school principals is incorrect at law. I have also received advice which indicates that the department itself obtained legal advice from the Department of Law which supports the advice I received.

Mr Speaker, I now seek leave to table the legal advice which I have received.

Leave granted.

I believe that it is vital for the future of school councils that they have clear advice on the situation regarding temporary, part-time and casual teachers as well as janitors and other people who work for schools and whether such people are, in fact, employees under the definition of the regulations or not. As I said, the letter from the secretary of the department said that such people were not employees and, therefore, were not covered. In fact, the legal opinion which I have just tabled makes it quite clear that such people are employees and, as such, are covered by the one-third restriction.

Mr Speaker, I have tabled my advice in the Assembly. I would ask the government if, in the interests of all members and in the interests of this debate, it will table the advice that it has received from the Department of Law so that all members can know just where it stands and so that all school councils can know where they stand.

Plastic Bag Manufacturer in Trade Development Zone

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Has a manufacturer of plastic bags, located in the Trade Development Zone, approached the government for additional assistance? If so, has such assistance been granted and what is its nature? Lastly, in round figures, how many plastic bags have been produced by the manufacturer?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have information before me that would enable me to answer the honourable member's question at this stage. I will endeavour to obtain such information and advise him during the course of these sittings. I am aware that the principals of the plastic bag manufacturing company located in the Trade Development Zone have been in Darwin during the last few days, negotiating various matters associated with their business, but I really cannot inform the honourable member further without seeking advice.

Private Child Care Centres

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Can he assure me that full heed will be paid to reasonable requests from parents in relation to the care of their children in private child care centres with regard to government competition, staff ratios, toys, staff qualifications and so forth and that primary regard will not be paid only to staff members of the Children's Services Bureau of his department?

ANSWER

As a responsible member of this parliament, I always listen to the constituents of the Northern Territory.

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Videotape and Transcripts

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, earlier today the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question concerning copyright for the transcript and video of the ABC 7.30 Report on February 25 1988. Pursuant to standing orders 87 and 253, the Chief Minister tabled the transcript and the video in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday March 1 1988. This is a proceeding in parliament. Under these circumstances, in my view, the question of copyright in relation to the Speaker's action does not arise.

School Council Regulations

Mr EDE to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

If he agrees that the introduction of the new school council regulations has generated appalling levels of confusion, does he now intend to re-regulate and does he not agree that the only sensible course is to abolish the new regulations entirely?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not sure if the member for Stuart was in the House yesterday but we debated the regulations then. We removed much of the confusion which, in many instances, had been generated by him. The government's intention with the regulations is quite clear now. There were a number of issues that needed to be clarified yesterday. The intention in respect of part-time employees has been clarified. The reference to ministerial veto has now been amended to avoid any misconstruction. We have made it clear that the principal is an ex-officio member. The government has taken considerable measures to provide clarification for the opposition on some of the issues on which it had been confused. The intentions of the Minister for Education, as outlined in the Assembly last week, will be carried out.

School Council Regulations

Mr EDE to ACTING MINISTER for EDUCATION

Mr Speaker, the comments we have just heard do not answer my question. I would like the acting minister to advise when the amended regulations will be brought into place. What is the position of schools that are holding their AGMs tonight? They cannot abide by the old regulations because they are to be changed. They cannot abide by the amended regulations because they have not been put into place yet and they do not know what they are. They do not know whether they should be abiding by the regulations that were in place 6 months ago. It is completely confusing.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is a pity that the member for Stuart did not use his time in the adjournment debate. If he has a question to ask, one would expect him to ask it.

Mr Ede: I ask questions during question time.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, you have to take your hat off to him and his colleagues at the ABC. They have made a pretty good job of confusing this issue and the way they work together is a credit to them. The amendments to the regulations will be attended to as soon as possible. They are being drafted and as soon as that process is complete, the matter will be attended to.

Local Government Elections

Mr REED to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Will those persons living within the recently extended local government boundaries in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs be entitled to vote or

nominate for election to respective councils and, if so, what are the closing dates for both enrolment and nomination?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there has been some confusion about the status of people in areas outside the old boundaries but inside the new boundaries of Alice Springs and Katherine in respect of their eligibility to nominate for election and to vote at the council elections to be held in May. I can assure them that they have that ability. The gazettal notice makes it quite clear that they will be able to enrol and nominate. The rolls close on 25 March, the closing date for nominations is 29 April and the polling date for the council elections is 28 May.

Some confusion has been created unnecessarily because it was said that the councils would take over responsibility for the charging of rates on 1 July and that they would take responsibility following the May elections. Some people thought that, because responsibility for the new areas would not be taken over until that time, people living in them would not be permitted to enrol, vote or nominate for positions on the councils. That is not the case, and that is quite clear from the gazettal notice. I will repeat those dates again for the benefit of those who did not pick them up: the rolls close on 25 March, the nomination date is 29 April and the polling date is 28 May.

Videotape and Transcript

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Who was the person who made the videotape of the ABC 7.30 Report tabled in this Assembly by himself on Tuesday, who was the person who made the transcript of that videotape and who authorised the taping and the production of the transcript?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the tape recording was made in my office on my authorisation and I will deal with the matter later. I have no further specific comment to make at present. Later during the course of this question time, I intend to address in more detail the specific issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I wish to ensure that my comments are both proper and comprehensive because I do not want to mislead the Assembly or fail to answer the question comprehensively.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise a matter of privilege. It is this. Section 48A of the Commonwealth Copyright Act quite clearly sets out restrictions in terms of how members of parliament can take copies of printed material or, as in this case, video material. It says that it can be done '... for the sole purpose of assisting a person who is a member of a parliament in the performance of the person's duties as such a member, by an authorised officer of a library, being a library the principal purpose of which is to provide library services for members of that parliament'.

The Chief Minister has just told this House that the copy of the videotape was made in his office. It was not made in the parliamentary library, which is the only way that it could have been made without breaching copyright. Mr Speaker, I believe that a prima facie case exists that the Chief Minister

has breached the copyright laws of Australia. Such a breach is equivalent to the crime of common theft.

The point of this matter of privilege is that, by tabling in this House material which has been copied illegally under the terms of the Copyright Act, the Chief Minister has bought this House into disrepute.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation on this matter at a later stage.

Leave granted.

Mr SPEAKER: I am not quite sure whether the Leader of the Opposition is asking for this matter to be referred to the Privileges Committee. If that is his request, I will have to consider the matter and advise him at a later date.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that is the response that I expected from you.

Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr FIRMIN to TREASURER

Mr Speaker, in this House last year we had a constant barrage of criticism from the opposition concerning the operations of Hungerford Refrigeration. I ask the Treasurer, in his capacity as minister responsible for the TIO, is he satisfied that Hungerford Refrigeration is proving to the TIO that it is a worthy vehicle for investment of policyholders' funds?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the TIO is indeed happy with the continuing progress of Hungerford Refrigeration in the Trade Development Zone. Sales have been growing steadily and, for the last 3 months, have run at more than \$200 000 per month. That will be a revelation to the Leader of the Opposition, who has not yet managed to find a positive word to say about this company. According to him, the TIO's assistance to Hungerford Refrigeration was a complete waste - 'a financial sinkhole', he called it. I believe that the TIO's actions to assist Hungerford Refrigeration have been completely vindicated.

The board of the TIO has had faith in the advanced technology installed by Hungerford Refrigeration and in the company's enormous potential. That faith is now starting to receive its reward. Difficulties are still being experienced with bad debt problems with some company clients and slow payment of debts, and there are claims and debts from the past still to be settled either by way of negotiation or in court. It is hoped that, in 1988, the Leader of the Opposition will not continue to act as a de facto representative of the interstate companies making claims on Hungerford Refrigeration and that he will allow any such claims to be settled in the usual manner. We have seen the results of his cheap political point-scoring in relation to this matter.

Hungerford Refrigeration has a future in the Northern Territory, particularly in the Trade Development Zone. The fact that sales are now running at \$200 000 a month is an indication that the TIO's faith and confidence in Hungerford Refrigeration has been totally vindicated and that its investment in that company will be rewarding for all policyholders.

Police Administration Amendment Bill

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer to his comment on the ABC radio news this morning that he was prepared to accept amendments to the Police Administration Amendment Bill. Will he please advise the House which amendments he is prepared to accept and in which areas of this complex issue he is prepared to accept amendments?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that particular statement needs to be placed in context. What I said was that, as is the normal practice, the government is receptive to rational argument but not to emotional polemic. That is what I said, although those were not the specific terms I used.

Mr Speaker, that is a natural and reasonable response. It has been the approach adopted by the government. I would remind honourable members that, during the course of a particular debate yesterday, a number of points were made with respect to school council regulations and, as a consequence of the arguments that were presented in the House and the legal opinion that was tabled only yesterday by the member for Stuart, the government was prepared to move ...

Mr Tuxworth: He offered last week.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Barkly went on television last week claiming that the opinion had been tabled. He was wrong then too.

Mr Tuxworth: He tried to table it last week but you would not let him.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart did not try to table it. He indicated that he was prepared to table it if we asked him to. He has always had the opportunity to seek leave to table the opinion or to table the opinion. I would argue that it would not have been received. It was not put forward last week, Mr Speaker, but that is an aside.

My point is that if, during the course of the debate on the Police Administration Amendment Bill, matters arise which ...

Mr Ede: Are you fed up with running this government?

Mr Smith: I'll send you the bill for your ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart is getting a bit carried away with himself. The fact that he addressed a few areas of confusion that needed clarification and that the government acted responsibly by taking those points into account in the interests of the community should not be seen as indicative that the member for Stuart is running this government. That is drawing an extremely long bow.

I repeat that, in respect of any legislation before this House, the government is always prepared to look at rational and responsible amendments that may be proposed as a consequence of community consultation or that may arise in the course of debate in the Assembly. Yet again, I refer honourable members to amendments made to the Work Health legislation during the committee stage, as a consequence of the debate that occurred at that time.

As members of a responsible government, we are prepared at all times to deal with legislation as it is supposed to be dealt with in this House. We do not adopt a dogmatic, fixed approach. We do not consider that it is politically damaging to accept rational amendments. My government has never done that and will not do that. I regard that as a responsible and proper approach for government and in accord with the proper role of this House. I will continue to promote that view.

Police Administration Amendment Bill

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, I would like to nail this down because it is one of the most contentious pieces of legislation that has come before the Assembly for some time. It is being put through at very short notice.

Mr SPEAKER: I suggest the honourable member ask his question.

Mr BELL: Will the government accept amendments in respect of the following issues that were the subject of the so-called committee amendments: first, the right to communicate with a friend or relative - proposed as section 142; secondly, the tape recording of confessions and admissions - proposed as section 143; and, thirdly, the savings clause, proposed as section 143A, which included amongst other matters an affirmation of the right to remain silent?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, these are matters that will be dealt with during the course of the debate. I will reserve my government's position on any matters associated with the bill for the debate later today.

Closure of Rivers to Commercial Netting of Fish

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

In recognition of the value to the Territory economy of recreational barramundi fishing, will the minister consider extending to other rivers in the Territory his recent decision to close the Mary River to commercial netting?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it has been put to me on a number of occasions that the government should extend to other areas of the Territory its recent actions in respect of the Mary River. Honourable members will be aware from recent press announcements that the closure of the Mary River to commercial fishing was confirmed quite recently following evaluation of a report on the monitoring of the Mary River system during the past year or so. The government decided to close the Mary River to commercial fishing indefinitely and to introduce a new buy-back scheme to reduce the netting effort by the commercial industry of barramundi in Northern Territory waters right across the board. Cabinet approved the purchase of 5 more licences, each involving 1000 m of net, from the commercial fishery.

The commercial fishermen argued very strongly that, in the context of attempts to reduce the impact on fish stocks in the river, restrictions should also be placed on recreational fishing. The government accepted that

argument, as did the recreational fishing associations, to their credit. The Mary River system is recognised as the Northern Territory's greatest barramundi-breeding resource and we have now placed a number of restrictions on recreational fishing within it. These apply only to the Mary River system. The first is a prohibition on the use of cast nets. We have also imposed a bag limit of 2 fish per person per day. The normal barramundi bag limit in the Territory is 5 fish per person per day. We have introduced, for the first time in the Northern Territory, a minimum length of 50 cm for barramundi taken from the river by recreational fishermen. Honourable members may consider that a bit large for a minimum-sized barramundi bearing in mind that 50 cm is half a metre. The decision was based on expert advice. Indeed, some of the experts argued that the minimum size should be larger but we were not quite prepared to go along with that. The idea of having a large minimum size is to allow barramundi to reach the stage at which they change sex and become females capable of reproduction.

In relation to the Mary River system only, we have established an area of tidal influence which will be closed to recreational fishermen for the barramundi-breeding period which is currently recognised as extending from 1 October to 31 January inclusive. At the moment, no commercial fishermen in the Northern Territory can fish for barramundi during that period and that has been the case for some time. Within the Mary River system, this now applies to recreational fishermen also.

The honourable member asked whether we would extend some of these new controls on both commercial and recreational fishermen to other rivers. The government has not made a decision on that matter as yet. We believe that there should be some monitoring of other rivers prior to making such decisions, to determine whether there has been such a severe depletion in fish numbers that relief from fishing pressure is required to allow stocks to regenerate. To date, we have not commenced such heavy monitoring systems in the Daly River and Victoria River, the 2 rivers most frequently named as those which might be set aside for recreational fishing by locals and tourists as distinct from commercial fishing. I am happy to keep the situation under constant surveillance. I am a great supporter of the barramundi industry, which brings enormous economic benefits to the Northern Territory. We need to do everything reasonable to protect the resource, without going overboard. As resources permit, the Fisheries Unit in my department will mount monitoring programs of those rivers in order to be able to make judgments on the basis of scientific information rather than emotion.

Pearl Farming Licences

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

What is the current situation in relation to the issue of pearl farming licences in the Northern Territory and have any expressions of interest been received from Aboriginal organisations or groups?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to advise the honourable member that we are currently assessing applications for pearl licences in Northern Territory waters. As honourable members will be aware, the pearling industry has been largely defunct in the Northern Territory for in excess of 20 years and it is believed that there are now sufficient stocks to justify the issue of a number of licences.

The recent calling of applications brought a very good response. We received 21 applications for a maximum of 5 licences to be issued. It may be that less than 5 licences are issued but that will depend on the assessment of the applications which is currently in progress. The assessment panel includes a Commonwealth fisheries officer. The waters to be fished for pearl shell are Commonwealth waters but, under an agreement with the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory is to manage the fishery. Another panel member is a former employee of the Western Australian Fisheries Department. He is very knowledgeable about the pearling industry in Western Australia and, together with officers of my department and the Treasury, is a member of the panel which is assessing the applications.

Whilst I would not normally name applicants for licences, the honourable member specifically asked whether Aboriginal organisations had applied. I am prepared to confirm that that is the case. They will, of course, be assessed along with the other applicants.

Sunday Alcohol Sales

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Does the government support supermarkets selling alcohol on Sundays?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is good to receive a question of that nature from the opposition. I have had the same question put to me on a number of occasions recently by members on this side of the House.

The whole question of liquor, liquor sales and liquor licences is under review at the moment. There have recently been some dramatic changes in the availability of liquor in Queensland where 24-hour liquor sales have been proposed in various locations, for the tourist trade. This was not acceptable to the Bjelke-Petersen government but I understand that it is now being seriously considered. In fact, the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission recently visited Queensland to look at the legislation and proposals for its introduction. What we are doing is not just another review. Whilst I would be the first to admit that the liquor industry and the commission have had more reviews than the Tivoli Theatre, I am fair dinkum about this one.

There are a number of other issues, including the d'Abbs Report, which the member for MacDonnell referred to, and the implementation of some of that report's recommendations. A petition signed by 6000 people has been tabled in this Assembly, indicating that those people would like supermarkets to be able to sell alcohol on Sundays. That is valuable information from the community at large. Of course, I have also had representation from the Australian Hotels Association on the same issue.

The legislation itself is currently under review and we have a full-time officer working on that. I have advised the Cabinet and the party room that I will have a comprehensive and detailed report on the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission before them within 2 months. The sale of alcohol in supermarkets is one of the issues which is being addressed.

Light Vehicle Fleet Management

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Would he explain the rationale behind the proposed introduction of a pilot scheme for light vehicle fleet management?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is part of ongoing research by the Department of Transport and Works to find more cost-effective ways of going about its business. In recent years, major organisations and government departments have examined and, in some cases, implemented private leasing or full-management schemes for their vehicle fleets. The Northern Territory government has a considerable number of vehicles, some 1500 of which are in the small to medium range. That has a significant impact on the Territory budget. The research is another responsible approach by the Department of Transport and Works to determine whether there are some financial gains in having private enterprise either lease vehicles to the government or perform full-management services.

During his very colourful history, the member for Araluen spent a period working for a major motor vehicle leasing company and I appreciate his contributions and comments in regard to this matter. We are about to advertise a package involving 120 small vehicles. We are looking for a variety of submissions either on total full vehicle management or leasing. Information required from tenderers will include an indication of the utilisation of local resources - suppliers, mechanics and so forth - in their schemes. I mention that deliberately because one of the fears expressed is that perhaps some multinational or large national company will come in here. I can assure honourable members that we will be looking for maximum local participation. We have already received a considerable number of expressions of interest from locals.

I am confident that the scheme will work. After 12 months, we will determine exactly what savings are afforded by such a scheme. I will be able to report to the Assembly at that time.

Employment in the Territory

Mr DONDAS to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Can he advise whether the figures bandied around by the Leader of the Opposition last Thursday, which purported to show that 8000 jobs had been lost in the past 6 months, accurately reflect the real labour situation in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am happy to comment on that issue. The member for Stuart said that the figures came from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. That is what concerns me. Quite clearly, there are sets of ABS figures which basically laugh at one another. The Australian Bureau of Statistics would be the first to admit that the figures are based on very flimsy evidence.

Graphs that I have been shown recently indicate that there is a decline in employment figures in the Northern Territory. The graphs indicate that public service employment has declined at a steeper rate than that in the private sector. The problem that I have with the ABS figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr Ede: How do you work your figures out?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I know exactly how many people have left the public service during the last 12 months.

Mr Smith: 700.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, that is not correct. The actual figure is about 500. The Commonwealth Public Service and the Northern Territory Public Service combined constitute approximately one-third of the overall employment figures in the Northern Territory. The other two-thirds relate to the private sector. Even if employment were decreasing at the same rate in both sectors, the maximum fall would be 1500 to 2000 jobs.

Another factor that lends strength to my argument is that, while there has been a downturn in jobs, there has also been an downturn in recipients of social security benefits. Between August and November 1987, there was a reduction of about 700 in the number of people receiving social security benefits. At the same time, there was an increase of about 1600 in numbers of people aged between 15 and 65 in the work force.

Mr Ede: Where did you get those figures from?

Mr McCARTHY: ABS, Mr Speaker.

Mr Smith: ABS!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I told you at the beginning that the figures laugh at one another. That is exactly what I am trying to point out: the ABS figures laugh at one another. The ABS figures indicate a downturn of 7000 to 8000. We know how many positions have been lost in the public service, which constitutes about one-third of the Territory work force. If the downturn is equivalent in the private sector, the maximum number of jobs lost would be 1500. Even if we say the figure could be 2000, that is about as far as we can go. A downturn in social security recipients and an increase in population: it is quite clear that the figures laugh at one another.

Mr Speaker, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has itself pointed out that it has changed the basis of its collection of figures. If one takes a sample of people unemployed in Fannie Bay and another in Palmerston, the figures would be quite different. At Port Keats or Yirrkala, the sample would result in different figures again. Given our very small population and the small samples taken, I have very little confidence in the ABS figures in relation to employment. There is no way that we have a downturn anything like that suggested by the ABS figures which have been bandied around by the Leader of the Opposition. I have no problem in saying that. Given the decline in the public service, I am fully confident that there has not been the sort of downturn in the private sector that is indicated by the ABS figures.

Liquor Act

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

I address my question to the Chief Minister because I assume that he is still the head of the government. Does he believe that citizens should be penalised by the state if they have committed no crime? If he does not believe that, why does his government continue to support the provisions of section 96 of the Liquor Act?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is that, obviously, we do not believe people should be penalised if they have committed no crime. Of course, that begs the issue in respect of section 96 of the Liquor Act. I assume from the content of debates in this House that the honourable member is referring particularly to the confiscation of vehicles or property where a person has been charged with a particular offence. The legal argument is very complex. It may touch upon matters of evidence and a multitude of other circumstances. The reason this government has continued to support the confiscation provision in the Liquor Act is the continuing and very strong representations from Aboriginal communities. I am advised that they believe that it constitutes a deterrent. Obviously, people charged with offences are presumed innocent until proven guilty. While a matter is before the courts, confiscated goods are held but, in the event of a person charged being found not guilty, such goods are returned.

Mr Speaker, I am not a lawyer but the underlying principle is that, if a person commits an offence under the Liquor Act, the property of that person which was used in committing that offence ought to be forfeit as part of the punishment for the offence. The legalities and technical details of that are matters that I would leave in the hands of the court.

Liquor Act

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, my supplementary question is: does the Chief Minister believe that, under the Northern Territory's legal system, the guilt or innocence of individuals should be judged by the courts?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I ask for your ruling. I believe that I am being asked for a legal opinion.

Mr Leo: No, I am asking you for a personal opinion.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I advise the member opposite that I am awaiting your advice in respect of the matter I have referred to you.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I am prepared to rephrase the question if that would help matters.

Mr SPEAKER: I would suggest that that might be advisable.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, is it the Northern Territory government's policy to penalise persons when they have not been convicted by a court for any crime? If that is not the government's policy, why does it insist on the maintenance of section 96 of the Liquor Act? Quite clearly, that section of the act enables the government to penalise persons who have been proven by a court to be entirely innocent.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have already answered the first part of that question. In respect of the second part of that question dealing with section 96 of the Liquor Act and the interpretation of that act which the honourable member is

presupposing in his question, I will refer the matter to the appropriate minister.

Mr Leo: It is a matter of law.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, if it is a matter of law, the honourable member should not be asking the question in this House.

Mr Leo: I am asking whether or not you support it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it is a law of the Northern Territory. As a responsible government, obviously we support all Northern Territory laws.

Mr Speaker, I will refer the details of the Liquor Act and its administration to the relevant minister.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members who may not be as familiar with this legislation as is the member for Nhulunbuy, section 96 of the Liquor Act deals with forfeiture.

Mr Speaker, may I tell you why section 96 is included in the Liquor Act? It is there largely at the insistence of Aboriginal traditional tribal elders. I have had the opportunity of travelling the Territory and discussing this very issue with such people and I can tell honourable members opposite that they are not representing the views of their constituents. I will give one example of the hundreds I could give if I had enough time. I will not name the communities or people involved.

I attended a meeting in one community. The women were on one side of the fence and the men were on the other. The men said: 'This grog-running has to stop. It is causing big problems in our community'. They went on to give details about what was happening and asked us to stop it. The women then had their chance to speak. One of them stood up and came forward. 'You see all these men sitting next to this fence here?', she said. 'They are the biggest grog-runners in this community. They use the council truck. They cover the grog with a load of sand and they bring it into the community'.

Mr Speaker, the confiscation provision is in the act at the insistence of Aboriginal people following widespread consultation right across the Northern Territory. They did not want people to run grog into their communities. They have seen confiscation as a way of stopping it by removing the means of supply. I could give examples of cartons of grog being thrown from a bus as a police car followed behind. Whether or not the people throwing cartons are innocent or guilty, it is fairly obvious to somebody who gets hit with a carton of Vic Bitter that the vehicle is carrying grog. The confiscation provisions were incorporated at the insistence of tribal elders who wanted vehicles carrying grog to be taken from their owners immediately.

Mr Ede: That is absolute rubbish. It assumes that it doesn't matter whether the vehicle owner is guilty or innocent. It just says, 'To hell with them'.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, that is an example of the opposition's hypocrisy.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable minister will withdraw that word.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw it unreservedly.

We have been out to consult with the people. They have pleaded with us: 'Look, alcohol is a problem here. We don't want it here, please'. There have been cases where vehicles have been seized by the elders and taken away and burnt. Alcohol is one of the most serious problems in Aboriginal communities and it was at the insistence of tribal elders that section 96 was included in the Liquor Act.

Mr Speaker, the issue has been under review through the d'Abbs Report in which the forfeiture of vehicles and the effectiveness of dry-area legislation is discussed. Let me tell you, from my personal experience, that this confiscation provision is included at the insistence of Aboriginal people. They requested it when the legislation was first put together and that is why it continues to be in the act.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Plastic Bag Manufacturer in Trade Development Zone

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked me 2 questions about a company in the Trade Development Zone. He asked whether the company had approached the Trade Development Zone Authority for additional assistance and about the nature of that assistance. He also asked if I could provide details of how many plastic bags had been produced by that manufacturer in the Trade Development Zone. I am now in a position to respond to those questions.

I will not go into the history of the matter because it is not strictly relevant to the question but, under the agreement with the Trade Development Zone Authority, the company is eligible for assistance in the training of local employees. I am informed that the company has trained 4 local employees, in accordance with the agreement, and has approached the authority for the agreed reimbursement. This has not yet been finalised as the company has not supplied the required evidence of its expenditure. It is estimated that the amount in question would not exceed \$2000.

I have no information of any other requests for any extension of assistance to the company. However, I should advise the Assembly and the Leader of the Opposition that the partners of the company are currently in dispute and negotiations are being closely monitored by the Trade Development Zone Authority.

On the question of production by the company, to date it has produced approximately 15 000 plastic bags. The majority of this production has been for a sample order to a local firm. The remainder of the factory's production has been used in the company's marketing.

Transport and Works Involvement at Tennant Creek

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Given that his department is the government's principal construction agency, what is the extent of its involvement in Tennant Creek following the series of earthquakes that rocked the town earlier this year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am extremely pleased to report on the most excellent and very responsible role played by the Department of Transport and Works following the series of earthquakes in January in Tennant Creek. There were 4 major quakes on 22 and 23 January, the biggest measuring about 7 on the Richter scale. Officers of the Department of Transport and Works moved quickly and were on site on 23 January, the second day of the quakes. Their role involved assessing damage sustained, advising residents of the extent of that damage and on their options with regard to repairs etc. A phone-in service was available from 24 January and calls from residents were responded to by engineers and building personnel by way of inspection and advice. Also, all public buildings were inspected. In all, 45 Housing Commission homes, 15 private homes and the abattoir were inspected. The department provided structural specialists and support staff for all of those inspections.

Despite the relatively high intensity of the earthquake, which measured 7 on the Richter scale, public buildings and all major office buildings sustained only minimal damage and performed quite well structurally. The damage was limited mainly to cosmetic and minor damage. Inspections of housing and private dwellings by the department revealed only minor damage.

Although the quakes could not be called a natural disaster, they certainly were a very significant event in the minds of local people. One pleasing feature was the excellent response of the Emergency Service, police and local council personnel. Alongside that, was the balanced, rational advice of the Department of Transport and Works which was extremely valuable in reassuring the community. The major problem which residents face at such a time is in understanding the significance of events or the potential problems. Although technical services are very important in such a situation, it is also very important to communicate with the local community to ensure that things are under control.

I understand that the local member was in town at the time. I am not suggesting for one moment that he was responsible for the earthquakes but, true to form and for the sake of much-needed media coverage, he put forward some alarmist views to the NT News. He stated that the damage to homes was probably quite extensive and suggested that all 2-storey buildings in the town had suffered severe structural damage and had been evacuated. Although it is not a matter for major debate, it is sad that the honourable member did not take the opportunity to help console his electorate and to provide some constructive support to the community. His alarmist statements were not in the least bit supportive.

One of the biggest problems with natural disasters, whether they be cyclones in Darwin, bushfires in Victoria or earthquakes in Tennant Creek, is misinformation spread among the public. People are nervous enough anyway. What is required is a very balanced and rational approach. One would certainly hope that there will be no further earthquakes in Tennant Creek and also that, in the event of similar events in any electorate, local members will seek to be supportive and positive rather than alarmist and negative.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, earlier today the Leader of the Opposition, pursuant to standing order 83, raised as a matter of privilege the tabling on 1 March 1988 of a video and transcript of a portion of the ABC 7.30 Report of 25 February 1988. The Leader of the Opposition claimed

that, by copying the video and having a transcript prepared, the Chief Minister had breached the Copyright Act and that, by tabling the video and transcript, the Chief Minister had tended to bring the Assembly into ridicule or contempt. He asked that I refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

It is not the responsibility or the province of presiding officers to interpret or to adjudicate upon actions taken by members which could be governed by statute. That is the province of the judicial process. I do not propose to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

STATEMENT

Letter from Northern Territory Football League

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I received the following letter from the President of the Northern Territory Football League following our message to the team yesterday.

Dear Mr Speaker,

On behalf of the players and management of the Northern Territory Football League team, I wish to express my sincere thanks for the good wishes of honourable members. Today we play the all-Australian amateurs in the semi-final. When our team takes the field, they play for their team, the game and the Northern Territory and all Northern Territorians are in our hearts and in our minds.

Tony Shaw
President

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Given that some of question time has been taken up with various notices, is it possible that you would intercede with the government to allow an extension of question time to allow us to ask the questions that we have not had time to ask?

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The first statement I made related to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition and the second statement took only a few seconds.

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