

## 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.

**23 February 1988**

**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.

**16 May 1989**

**87. BTEC Payments to Mr Dunbar**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

In the 'Letters to the Editor' section of the Sunday Territorian dated 23 April 1989 you stated that Mr B. Dunbar 'has received more than \$500 000 of BTEC funds to assist him in fulfilling the scope of his agreed program, as well as \$130 000 in low-interest BTEC loans'.

What were the -

- (a) various purposes under which these amounts were provided;
- (b) exact amounts involved;
- (c) works required from Mr Dunbar in respect of each of (a) and (b) above;
- (d) full details of the extent of the works carried out in respect of each of the above by Mr Dunbar as at 23 April 1989; and
- (e) details of outstanding works or moneys on behalf of Mr Dunbar or the Northern Territory government.

**22 August 1989**

**90. Loans Converted to Grants**

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Which organisations have, in the past 12 months, had loans from the Northern Territory government changed to grants.

In each case, what was the amount.

92.

**Liquor Licences**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for TOURISM

1. What were, by type, the number of liquor licences extant as at 31 December 1988 for each year since the Liquor Commission was established in 1979 in -
  - (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Alice Springs;
  - (c) Katherine;
  - (d) Tennant Creek;
  - (e) balance of the Southern region; and
  - (f) balance of the Northern region.
2. Are holders of Special Licences required to provide a return detailing sales under the Special Licence.
3. How many applications for new liquor licences have been -
  - (a) approved; and
  - (b) rejected,by the commission in each year since its establishment.
4. How many applications for renewal of liquor licences have been rejected by the commission in each year since its establishment.
5. In each year since the Liquor Commission was established, how many applications to have liquor licence conditions changed to provide for takeaway sales have been -
  - (a) approved; and
  - (b) rejected.
6. How many applications for -
  - (a) new licences;
  - (b) licence renewal; and
  - (c) changes to licence conditions,were opposed by commercial or community interest. Of the opposed proposals how many were ultimately granted, in each year since the commission was established.

7. What was the volume of beer, wine and spirits respectively sold in -
- (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Alice Springs;
  - (c) Katherine;
  - (d) Tennant Creek;
  - (e) the balance of the Northern region; and
  - (f) the balance of the Southern region,
- for each year since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979.
8. What has been the annual amount collected by the Northern Territory government in liquor licence and related licence fees since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979.
9. What was the wholesale value of beer, wine and spirits respectively purchased by licensees in -
- (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Alice Springs;
  - (c) Katherine;
  - (d) Tennant Creek;
  - (e) balance of the Southern region; and
  - (f) balance of the Northern region,
- for each year since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979.
10. How many liquor licences have been suspended or cancelled for breaches of licence conditions in -
- (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Alice Springs;
  - (c) Katherine;
  - (d) Tennant Creek;
  - (e) balance of the Southern region; and
  - (f) balance of the Northern region,
- for each year since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979 and what were their reasons for the suspension or cancellations.

11. How many prosecutions of licensees were -
- (a) commenced; and
  - (b) successful,
- for the offences of serving alcohol to minors or to intoxicated persons in each year since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979.
12. What was the per capita consumption by Territory residents of beer, wine and spirits respectively in -
- (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Alice Springs;
  - (c) Katherine;
  - (d) Tennant Creek;
  - (e) balance of the Southern region; and
  - (f) balance of the Northern region,
- for each year since the establishment of the Liquor Commission in 1979.

**97. Emergency Evacuations from Titjikala (Maryvale)  
and Atitjere (Harts Range)**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. How many evacuations from each of these communities were there during the years 1986-87 and 1987-88.
2. What means was employed for these evacuations.
3. In how many of these evacuations were private vehicles from the community used.
4. At what rate were the owners of these vehicles reimbursed.

**10 October 1989**

**101. Brucellosis and Tuberculosis - Tarlton Downs**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

1. On what date this year was a TB reactor found on Tarlton Downs Station.
2. When was the station notified that they had a confirmed case of TB.
3. What was the cause of the delay.

4. When was the station sent documentation to sign authorising the de-stock.
5. What was the cause of the delay.
6. Will the station owners be compensated for losses incurred due to the fall in prices, loss of condition and/or loss of production.

**103. General Practitioners in the NT**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. Does the Northern Territory government survey the availability of general medical practitioners in the Northern Territory.
2. If so, how many GPs work in the Northern Territory.
3. How many GPs working in the NT are -
  - (a) in private practice;
  - (b) publicly employed; and
  - (c) employed by community-based medical services.
4. In the case of questions 3(b) and 3(c), what are the employing agencies.
5. Of these GPs, how many live in -
  - (a) Darwin;
  - (b) Katherine;
  - (c) Tennant Creek;
  - (d) Alice Springs;
  - (e) Gove;
  - (f) Jabiru;
  - (g) Alyangula; and
  - (h) elsewhere.
6. In the case of question 5(h), where are they resident and by whom are they employed.

**21 November 1989**

**104. Cooperative Housing Development Program**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

1. Which 'older areas in Darwin and Alice Springs' are being considered for the cooperative housing development announced by the minister in a media release, dated 19 September 1989.
2. Is it envisaged that the government will buy back the property.
3. How will the proposed \$165 000 be spent.

**105. Appointment of Assistant Secretary,  
Department of Lands and Housing**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

1. Was Mr Les Williams appointed as Assistant Secretary, Department of Lands and Housing in June 1988.
2. Was this appointment aborted.
3. Was an out-of-court settlement paid by the government to Mr Williams; if so, was the amount of the out-of-court settlement \$27 500.
4. Can the minister confirm that the out-of-court settlement was \$27 500.

**106. Water Supply at Ulbanyali**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What arrangements have been made for a water supply for families living at Ulbanyali in the vicinity of Kings Canyon who now have to cart water for several miles from Lila.

**107. Water Reticulation Pipes - Alice Springs**

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. Is it a fact, as reported some months ago, that leaking water reticulation pipes in Alice Springs are causing a costly and wasteful loss of water in the town. If so -
  - (a) what has been done or is planned to be done to detect these leaks;
  - (b) what has or is planned to be done to fix these leaks; and

- (c) if the answer to (a) is nothing, would the government consider seeking advice from ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation) on how the leaks might be detected.

**108. Patients Assistance Travel Scheme**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. Which applicants under the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) have had their applications refused during -
  - (a) 1987-88; and
  - (b) 1988-89.
2. For what reasons were these applicants refused.

22 August 1989

95. **Treasury Employee, Costs of Disciplinary  
Action Incurred by Government**

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

An employee of the NT Treasury has been subject to the following Public Service action since September 1988 -

- ° On or about 6 September 1988 - Disciplinary action commenced in accordance with section 53 of Public Service Act. This action was not proceeded with
- ° On or about 5 October 1988 - NCOM Controller recommended the employee be terminated
- ° On or about 13 October 1988 - Under Treasurer recommended to PSC that action be taken under section 49 of the act to retire employee on inefficiency grounds
  - Employee suspended from duty on full pay
- ° On or about 14 October 1988 - PSC writes to employee advising section 49 action proposed. Asks for comment
- ° On or about 19-30 October 1988 - Submissions made by union on employee's behalf
- ° On or about 31 October 1988 - Employee's services terminated
- ° On or about 31 October 1988 - Appeal lodged under Public Service Regulation 18
  - Appeal tribunal formed
- ° On or about 1 December 1988 - 1st tribunal hearing
- ° On or about 19 December 1988 - Tribunal advised PSC that -
  - ° Treasury has inappropriately used discipline process

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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- and recommended they review their procedures
  - ° employee referred to CMO
- ° On or about 23 December 1988 - 2nd tribunal hearing
- ° On or about 29 December 1988 - 3rd tribunal hearing
- ° On or about 10 January 1989 - PSC sought clarification from tribunal on a number of matters
- ° On or about 12 January 1989 - CMO examination gave employee clean bill of health
- ° On or about 20 January 1989 - Tribunal responds
- ° On or about late January 1989 - Tribunal reports to PSC -
  - ° allegations against employee presented in a biased misleading way
  - ° there were serious defects in procedures followed
  - ° the employee was denied natural justice
  - ° DOLAS negligent in advice given to Treasury on case
  - ° recommended officer be redeployed to another department for 3 months
- ° On or about 27 January 1989 - PSC ignores recommendation and advice and terminates employee
- ° On or about 30 January 1989 - Union, on behalf of officer, lodges claim on PSC seeking reinstatement and payment of \$250 000 compensation for unfair dismissal

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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- ° On or about early February 1989 - Dispute notification lodged
- ° On or about 16 February 1989 - Dispute before Commissioner Cross in Sydney. PSC engaged QC
- ° On or about 6 March 1989 - Further Commission hearing with QC
- ° On or about 26 June 1989 - Commissioner hands down decision awarding ACOA jurisdiction on reinstatement
- ° On or about 17 July 1989 - At date of this question, the Public Service Commission has appealed to Full Bench of Industrial Relations Commission

How much money has been spent by the Department of Labour and Administrative Services and the Northern Territory Treasury in the following areas since September 1988 in presenting the matter -

- (a) salary and allowances of the employee during suspension;
- (b) salary and administration costs of all NTPS employees involved;
- (c) Appeal Tribunal costs;
- (d) legal costs including Queens Counsel (QC) fees; and
- (e) air fares, travel and accommodation costs for senior staff in his department.

ANSWER

The question relates to the retirement of a Treasury employee on the grounds of inefficiency, not disciplinary action as stated in the title to the question. After an unsuccessful appeal to the PSC, the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association appealed against the retirement to the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) on the grounds of unfair dismissal. The Territory government held that the IRC had no jurisdiction in the matter and this issue is not yet resolved. An appeal against Commissioner Cross' decision to hear the case will be held in Sydney in October.

Costs, therefore, are not yet finalised. Also, the answers to the questions raised can in most instances be only best estimates as they involve individual officers recollections of time spent on the case.

The answers are as follows:

- (a) The employee was not officially suspended from duty, but the delegate of the Public Service Commissioner absented him from the work place on full pay.

The employee earns an annual salary of \$27 640 as a Computer Systems Officer Grade 1. He was absent from duty on full pay for 14 weeks, at a cost of \$7418.

- (b) The matter involved NTPS staff from the employees own department and the Department of Labour and Administrative Services. It was not an additional cost as personnel management of all kinds is part of the normal functions of the employees concerned. The notional estimated cost calculated on the number of hours spent by individuals on the case is \$8000. This is inclusive of appearances before the tribunal and the commission but exclusive of work done in employees own time.

- (c) The Appeal Tribunal consisted of 3 NTPS employees one of whom was nominated by the union. Salary costs of the employees were met by their home departments. However, based on the amount of time spent in preparation, hearings, discussion etc by 3 senior officers the cost was in the order of \$2100.

It should be noted that as in (b) work undertaken in members' own time is excluded.

- (d) Legal costs to date inclusive of Queens Counsel fees are \$8850.

- (e) Air fares, travel and accommodation costs for 2 senior officers to attend the Industrial Relations Commission hearing in Sydney were \$2843. Their salaries are included in (b).

**10 October 1989**

**100. Investnorth dealings with Sheraton Company**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

1. What recurring costs does Investnorth pay in respect of -
  - (a) Sheraton Darwin;
  - (b) Sheraton Alice Springs; and
  - (c) Sheraton Ayers Rock.
2. On what basis is the return to the Sheraton Company from these publicly-owned facilities calculated.
3. What was the initial capital cost of each property.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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4. Has Investnorth commenced legal action against White Industries because of construction defects with the Sheraton Ayers Rock Hotel.
5. Will the minister table the agreement between Investnorth and the Sheraton Company. If not, why not.
6. What has been the cost of the repairs to flood damage sustained at Sheraton Ayers Rock Hotel in 1989 and under what headings have these costs been incurred.

ANSWER

1. Investnorth Management Pty Ltd does not pay any costs in respect of these hotels. It acts as agent for the government in ensuring that obligations in the documentation are met.
2. In each case Sheraton manages these properties under an agreement with the owner.

These are basically standard documents of the kind they use around the world.

Under the agreements they are entitled to a 2-level fee. Firstly, a small percentage of the gross revenue received from hotel customers. Secondly, as and when it is achieved, a percentage of the gross operating profit of the property as an incentive.

The relevant percentages in all such agreements is a matter of commercial confidence given the competitive nature of the industry.

3. The initial capital costs, including machinery, fixtures and fittings, were -

Sheraton Darwin	\$34.5m
Sheraton Alice Springs	\$34.2m
Sheraton Ayers Rock	\$42.2m

4. The matter is in the hands of senior legal counsel engaged by the company. Specialist technical advice has been prepared by consulting engineers.
5. I presume this question refers to the management agreements between the respective owners and Sheraton. As stated, these are commercially confidential documents.

The government has no direct contractual relationship with Sheraton.

6. The cost of repairs for flood damage is covered by insurance with the TIO and the claim has been accepted.

Estimated repair costs subject to insurance claim total \$1.6m.

10 October 1989

102.

**Aboriginal Health Workers**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

How many Aboriginal Health Workers were employed in the following communities in -

- (a) 1981;
- (b) 1985; and
- (c) 1989.

Barunga-Wugularr	Borroloola
Daguragu	Lajamanu
Yugul Mangi	Mataranka
Pine Creek	Angurugu
Milyakburra	Galiwinku
Gapuwiyak	Milingimbi
Numbulwar	Ramingining
Umbakumba	Yirrkala Dhanbul
Kardu Numida	Belyuen
Pularumpi	Milikapiti
Naiyu Nambiyu	Nguiu
Peppimenarti	Gunbalanya
Jabiru	Maningrida
Minjilang	Warruwi
Amoonguna	Aputula
Areyonga	Kaltukatjara
Ikuntji	Imanpa
Iwupataka	Papunya
Pmara Jutunta	Santa Teresa
Wallace Rock Hole	Yuendumu
Urapuntja	Ntarria
Walunguru	Ali Curung
Alpururulam	Elliott

ANSWER

Attached is a schedule setting out details as requested.

A question mark appears for those communities in the Alice Springs and Barkly Regions where numbers for 1981 are not available.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER NUMBERS  
1981; 1985; 1989

ALICE SPRINGS AND BARKLY REGION

Aboriginal Name	COMMUNITY	European Name	1981	1985		1989	
				Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Ali Curung		Warrabri	?	4	1	4	
(homelands)		Canteen Creek	?		1		2
		Murray Downs	?		1		1
		Epenarra	?				2
Alpurrurulam		Lake Nash	?		2		3
Amoonguna			?		1		1
Aputula		Finke	?	3		2*	
Areyonga			?		3		2
Elliott			?	5		4	
Ikuntji		Haasts Bluff	?		2	0	
Iwupataka		Jay Creek	?		1	0	
Kaltukatjara		Docker River	?	5			4
Natarria		Hermannsburg	?	4		4	
Papunya			—	6	—	2	2
			?	27	12	16	17

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ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER NUMBERS  
1981; 1985; 1989

**ALICE SPRINGS AND BARKLY REGION**

Aboriginal Name	COMMUNITY European Name	1981	1985		1989	
			Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
	Carried Forward		27	12	16	17
Pmara Jutunta	Ti Tree	?	2		3	
Homelands:	Napperby	?		2		3
	Neutral Junction	?		1		1
	Stirling	?		2		1
	Ti Tree New Camp	?		1		1
	Ti Tree Station	?		1		1
Santa Teresa		?	5		7	
Wallace Rock Hole		?	0			1*
Yuendumu			<u>6</u>		<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>
		<u>?</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>27</u>

\*Plus AHW Positions funded by DEET 1989-90

Aputula = 1  
Wallace Rock Hole = 1

COMMUNITIES DIRECTLY FUNDED BY DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Imanpa Mt Ebenezer  
Urapuntja Utopia  
Walunguru Kintore (Pintubi)

**ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER NUMBERS**  
1981; 1985; 1989

**DARWIN REGION**

Aboriginal Name	COMMUNITY European Name	1981		1985		1989	
		Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Belyuen	Delissaville	2		3		3	
Gunbalanya	Oenpelli	4		4		4*	
Jabiru		0		0		0	
Maningrida		5		9		9*	
Milikapiti	Snake Bay	5		5		5*	
Minjilang	Croker Island	3		1	3	1	2
Nauiyu Nambiyu	Daly River	2	3		2	1	2 1
Nguiu	Bathurst Island	11		11		9	1
Peppimenarti		1		1			2
Pularumpi	Garden Point	4		4		4	
Wadeye (Kardu Numida - Council)	Port Keats	9		10		10	
Warruwi	Goulburn Island	3		2	2		4
	TOTAL	<u>49</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>12</u>

\*Plus AHW Positions funded by DEET, 1989-90

Gunbalanya = 2  
Maningrida = 2  
Milikapiti = 1

**ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER NUMBERS**  
1981; 1985; 1989

**EAST ARNHAM REGION**

Aboriginal Name	COMMUNITY European Name	1981	1985	1989	
				Full Time	Part Time
Angurugu		5	6	3	6 1
Galiwinku	Elcho Island	9	10	4	6
Gapuwiyak	Lake Evella	2	3	3	1
Milyakburra	Bickerton Island	0	0	0	
Milingimbi		9	9	4	3 2
Numbulwar		2	3	3	1
Ramingining		1	3	4*	
Umbakumba		5	5		2 2
Yirrkala Dhanbul		5	4		1*
		<u>38</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>1</u> <u>26</u>

\*Plus AHW Positions funded by DEET, 1989-90

Gapuwiyak = 1  
Numbulwar = 2  
Ramingining = 1  
Yirrkala = 1

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ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER NUMBERS**  
1981; 1985; 1989

**KATHERINE REGION**

Aboriginal Name	COMMUNITY European Name	1981	1985		1989 Full Time	1989 Part Time
			Full Time	Part Time		
Barunga-Wugularr		3	3		3*	
Borrooloola		4	4		5	
Dagaragu/Kalkaringi	Wattie Creek	5	4		4	
Lajamanu	Hooker Creek	5	4		4	
Jilkminggan	Mataranka	0	0	2	0	1*
Pine Creek		1	1		1	
Yugul Mangi (Ngukurr)	Roper River	5	4		6	
		<u>23</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>23*</u>	<u>1*</u>

\*Plus AHW Positions funded by DEET, 1989-90

Barunga = 2  
Jilkminggan = 1

Crimes Compensation Payment

Mr BELL to ATTORNFY-GENERAL

I refer the Attorney-General to his undertaking given during the last sittings of this Assembly to repay the sum of \$7000 that he slashed from the crimes compensation payment to a sexual assault victim known only as Diana. Why then, as late as last week, was this victim of the Attorney-General's appalling interference still waiting for her repayment? How can the Attorney-General possibly justify this delay in light of his open public concession that the full compensation should be paid? How long must this woman wait for the Attorney-General to give her just payment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, approvals and directions regarding that payment were made some time ago. I will certainly make inquiries as to whether there is any truth in the accusations made by the member for MacDonnell.

Habitation Review by Australian Electoral Office

Mr SETTER to CHIEF MINISTER

Can the Chief Minister advise the House of the results of the recent Northern Territory habitation review conducted by the Commonwealth Electoral Office and of its possible implications for the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in view of recent speculation in the media about the results of the habitation review and the effect it may have on the numbers in this Assembly, I am pleased to be able to put this matter to rest. At a meeting of the Executive Council last Friday, the Administrator was advised by my government to direct the Distribution Committee to redive the Northern Territory into proposed electoral divisions. The job of the Distribution Committee will be to propose new boundaries for electoral divisions, taking into account the findings of the habitation review recently completed by the Australian Electoral Office.

At the last redistribution in 1986, 69 985 voters were enrolled in the Northern Territory. The quota for each of the 25 electorates was then set at 2799 voters with tolerances of plus or minus 20% allowing for upper and lower limits of 3359 and 2240 voters respectively. The habitation review completed this year resulted in more than 25 000 enrolment transactions, reflecting the Territory's high mobility and the updated rolls will form the basis of the next redistribution. There are now 72 642 electors on the Northern Territory rolls, an increase of 2657 on the 1986 figure.

After giving this matter serious consideration, the government has determined that the electoral redistribution will not encompass the creation of new seats. The number of seats in this Assembly will remain at 25. The government must reflect the will of the people in this regard and I do not believe that Territorians will wear one more politician while the Northern Territory and Australian economies are in their current state. However, a redistribution is necessary. With 72 642 electors now eligible to vote, the quota for each of the 25 seats has risen to 2906, with upper and lower tolerances respectively set at 3487 and 2325 electors, and 5 seats have been found on this basis to exceed the allowed tolerance. Port Darwin, Flynn,

Stuart and Braitting are all below the minimum number of electors by between 12 and 125 electors. The electorate of Palmerston is 913 electors above the upper tolerance. Almost every other electorate has an enrolment substantially above or below the quota, although within the 20% tolerance. It is clear that very significant changes to existing boundaries are necessary. However, I repeat that the redistribution will be carried out on the basis of 25 seats.

#### Litigation by White Industries

Mr SMITH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Can he confirm that White Industries is suing the Northern Territory government for \$20m in a dispute arising from the construction of the Yulara resort project, and will he inform the House of the stage the legal proceedings have reached?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can inform the honourable member that White Industries has issued a writ of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory against the Northern Territory of Australia, the Conservation Commission, the Territory Loans Management Corporation, the Territory Insurance Office and the Yulara Development Company. The dispute involves costs of construction in relation to Yulara. I would like to inform honourable members that the writ is being vigorously defended by the Northern Territory government and senior counsel have been briefed. I do not think it would be proper to say any more on the matter.

#### Secondary Student Enrolments in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Demographic figures circulating in Alice Springs indicate that there are 200 fewer secondary students likely to be enrolled next year. Can the minister confirm those figures and can he give a reason why the figures are dropping?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I know that there is considerable movement in relation to student population throughout the Northern Territory and Alice Springs does have particular difficulty in that regard. I do not have the details with me but I am happy to provide the information to the honourable member at a later stage during these sittings.

#### Federal Government Competition with Local Businesses

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

In the last few weeks, I have been approached by a considerable number of constituents in my electorate over the actions of a federal government department competing with Territory businesses in the provision of goods and services. I ask the minister to advise concerning the impact that this quasi-commercial operation will have on local business houses.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the answer in simple terms is that such action will have a devastating effect on local businesses, particularly at a time when things are tough enough in private enterprise as it is. All Territorians should be demanding an explanation from the federal representative, Mr Warren Snowdon. When I raised the matter in the middle of last week, Mr Snowdon avoided the question totally. He has much to answer for. He needs to come back to Territorians with a plausible explanation as to why a federal government department is involved in direct competition with the private sector in an area in which it has no need nor entitlement to be.

When this issue was raised, it was revealed that the federal Department of Administrative Services was circulating its shopping list among almost anybody who had the slightest bit to do with federal funding. The shopping list principally involves motor vehicles but extends also to white goods and fruit and vegetables, some of which involve local companies. In the main, what was involved was supplies direct from manufacturers interstate. Its excuse for such action is that it would build its bulk and give it better buying power next year or a little rake off from the top. Quite unashamedly, it announced in its circulated letter to the various groups - Aboriginal councils, St John Ambulance, town councils etc - that it would be including what it called a marginal fee with this period contract figure for all of its supply items.

What we have seen is motor vehicle orders going direct to Melbourne suppliers. In fact, the only action that most local businesses get is to prepare motor vehicles for collection by these various authorities and bodies, motor vehicles at virtually no cost. Thus, there is an imposition on local businesses rather than the opportunity to compete on fair grounds. Of course, in some cases, the absolutely outrageous situation exists where vehicles could be supplied more cheaply through local businesses. In one case, there was a difference of \$800 between the federal department's shopping list and the local supply price. That quite ridiculous situation has come about as a result of this totally unacceptable entry into the marketplace by the Department of Administrative Services.

The federal member has a responsibility to answer to the Northern Territory community. Jobs are being affected. It is not simply a matter of salesmen. It is a matter of the total package presented by local retailers of the sales and the follow-up service. It affects mechanics and apprentices in the workshop and various other people who participate in the industry.

Mr Collins: The multiplier effect.

Mr FINCH: Of course, it is the multiplier effect. It applies not only to motor vehicles, but also to fridges and all types of other goods.

The member for the Northern Territory argues that many of these purchases are made through local suppliers. In his press release, I believe that he mentioned Le Cornu Furniture Centre as one of the furniture suppliers. Apart from whether the department should be involved in this exercise or not in the first place, the question is at what cost it is involved. Are the local retailers who obtain a small share of the action being asked to supply at the bulk price which applies in Melbourne? Are they being asked to reduce their margins so that they can fit into the scheme? Are they being asked to share the profit margins with the distributors from down south? What is the value of this federal program to local businesses? I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that it has no value.

The negative effect on local industry is something that must be addressed by the federal member. Through this Assembly and through the media during the last year, the federal member has been asked 6 or 8 questions about the effectiveness of federal government expenditure in terms of benefits to Territorians and the negative effects of some of its actions. He has not answered any of those questions. It is now up to the community of the Northern Territory, through the media, to demand a reasonable answer from its federal member in the House of Representatives.

#### Beaufort Hotel - Breach of Contract Lawsuit

Mr SMITH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr Speaker, can the honourable minister inform the House of the situation in relation to the government's defence of the \$20m-plus lawsuit launched by the owners of the Beaufort Hotel in Darwin against the Northern Territory government for alleged breach of contract? Can the honourable minister confirm that a Department of Law team is based in Sydney to fight the case and can he confirm that the cost to the taxpayer has reached \$1m?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this is a matter that is before the courts. The case has been vigorously defended by the Northern Territory government, the Darwin City Council and a number of other parties. I do not intend to reflect on the conduct of the court case. I certainly do not intend to reflect on where we are and what we are doing. Is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that we should not defend such a claim? Is he suggesting that we should blindly write out a cheque? Obviously, that is what he would do because he has no intestinal fortitude for anything.

We are defending the matter. Experienced legal counsel are working on the matter for us and, at the end of the day, we will know just who pays what costs. I can assure taxpayers that one of the things that the Territory government will be doing is claiming legal costs at the end of the day. We have good advice which leads us to believe that we will probably be successful. I do not think that it is proper even to discuss the contents of these matters and I do not intend to. We will defend the matter vigorously and, I hope, successfully. What a ridiculous question!

#### National Aboriginal Education Policy

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Recently, the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training announced his new national Aboriginal education policy with \$33m for new initiatives throughout Australia. Has the minister been advised how much of that money is earmarked for the Territory and, if so, is he satisfied with that allocation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. Indeed, it is opportune that we discuss this matter during the course of these sittings. I will be calling on my colleagues and members opposite to support the government in its efforts to try to attract more Commonwealth money for the provision of educational services to Aboriginal communities. Honourable members would be aware that the national Aboriginal education policy was

recently announced by the federal government. We were supportive of the direction it was taking because it was placing more emphasis on the need for providing services to traditional Aboriginal people. I am very pleased about that. There is also more emphasis being placed on consultation and the need for governments to work together to ensure coordination so that, when a school is constructed, housing is built at the same time.

My major concern is that the Northern Territory will not have a great share of the \$33m that is distributed for Aboriginal education throughout Australia. At the moment, officers are talking about that issue. We are looking initially at receiving some \$4m or \$5m. Considering that the Northern Territory has some 1.6 million square kilometres and that two-thirds of the Aboriginals are non-English-speaking, I think it is disgraceful that we are only to be given some \$4m to \$5m initially. We should be looking at trying to increase the ante.

There is no doubt that, in the Northern Territory, there are real concerns about the provision of education to Aboriginal people. When we talk about the overall Australian situation, no state or territory has similar problems to those we have in the Northern Territory and it is very important ...

Mr Bell: Tom, that is nonsense.

Mr HARRIS: I would be pleased to have you get up and deny that fact. Mr Speaker, members of the opposition know that we are providing education to Aboriginal people throughout the 1.6 million square kilometres from Lajamanu right down to Santa Teresa and over to Kintore, right out in the bush areas. They know that. It is very difficult ...

Mr Ede: South Australia is doing it.

Mr Bell: Western Australia.

Mr HARRIS: ... and we have to work together.

Mr Ede: South Australia.

Mr HARRIS: South Australia! When you talk about housing in South Australia, you are talking basically about 10 communities. In the Northern Territory, we have over 100 Aboriginal schools plus outstations and, as I said, they are scattered across the Territory. Mr Speaker, I am surprised at the opposition. All I am trying to do is to get its support ...

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will allow the Minister for Education to answer the question in silence.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I am surprised at the opposition's objections to my reply. All I am trying to do is to gain a fair share of an amount of money that has been set aside for Aboriginal education in Australia - some \$33m. If we get \$5m out of the \$33m, I do not believe that that is a fair deal for Territorians, and I am sorry that the opposition feels that way.

We will continue to press for more funding for the Northern Territory. When we talk about the differences in the past between the Commonwealth and the Territory, it has been on the basis that the Commonwealth has been trying to drag us down the line. It has built schools and we have not been able to

provide housing. At least with this new education policy, which has indeed changed markedly from mark I, and as a result of discussions between the Commonwealth and this government, we are now looking at dollars being provided to the Northern Territory so that we are able to coordinate the development of schools so that not only are schools able to be built, but housing is able to be provided also. I urge members to support the government in its efforts to obtain for Territorians a greater percentage share of the \$33m. The situation in the Territory is different. There is no question about that, and we need all the support we can get.

Economic Planning Advisory Council

Mr PALMER to CHIEF MINISTER

Following his attendance at the recent Economic Planning Advisory Council meeting in Melbourne, can the Chief Minister advise on the state of the national economy and its effect on the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, last Friday, I attended the meeting of EPAC in Melbourne. The forum is one of the highest forums established by the federal government to discuss the state of the nation with various parties. Participants in EPAC include 3 of the states of Australia and the Northern Territory on a rotational basis, the ACTU, representatives of national welfare organisations and representatives of business, the professions and local government. It is quite a significant forum. Usually, the Treasurer, Mr Keating, attends the EPAC meetings and briefs the council on the state of the nation but, on this occasion, he was absent overseas. Having listened to the Prime Minister's wrap-up of where we are at, delivered on the Treasurer's behalf, I can understand why he was overseas.

The regrettable fact is that the condition of the Australian economy is a matter of grave concern to us all, and I can provide little good news to honourable members as a result of the Prime Minister's statement. I will illustrate the mess that the Australian economy is in as a result of the Australian federal government's management policies. I say 'as a result of the federal government's management policies' because, quite clearly, if the economy was in good shape, it would be shouting from the rooftops that it was all a result of its economic policies. Why shouldn't it wear the odium if the country is in a bad state?

Let me compare a few economic indicators as they were at the end of June 1987 when the present federal government was last re-elected along with the present Northern Territory member of the House of Representatives. These are the most recent statistics. On the balance of payments on current account for the year ended 30 June 1987, there was a deficit of \$13 000m. The deficit in the quarter ended September this year was close to \$6000m in only 3 months. The Consumer Price Index in 1987-88 was increasing at an annual rate of 7.3%. The recently announced figure for the September quarter for 1989 had the CPI increasing at 8% per annum. The average new housing loan interest rate from a savings bank in the June quarter 1987 was 15.5%. In the September quarter of 1989, it has increased to 17% and is showing no signs whatsoever of declining. Australia's net foreign debt at June 1987 was \$82 000m. In June 1989, it has risen to \$108 000m and undoubtedly has increased since then.

Honourable members will be aware of a recent forecast by a private organisation that, unless some dramatic steps are taken, Australia's foreign

debt could indeed rise to something like \$500 000m by the turn of the century. I am sure that prediction is disputed fairly hotly and will continue to be. I point it out to honourable members as something which has been flagged to the Australian people by at least one bank which has been involved in such matters, so that we might all take heed.

None of this is good news for the Northern Territory. The only so-called good news - and I use the term 'good news' with some reservation - is that the unemployment rate in Australia has risen from 5.9% in August 1989 to 6.3% in October 1989. It is rather amazing that an increased unemployment figure should be heralded as some sort of good news, but it is good news for those who are keen to see evidence of the Australian economy slowing down. This particular statistic was seized on by the federal government recently as solitary evidence of the fact that its economic policies are actually working. There are economic policies which aim to wind this country back. The only figure that looked good to it was a rise in unemployment. With success like that, who needs failures?

That is about all I need to say in respect of the federal government's economic management performance. Hopefully for all Australians, we are seeing the last stages of the final term of the federal Labor government and we will not have to put up with it for too much longer. I fear, however, that the news on the Territory scene is not very encouraging, stemming from the federal situation.

Whilst Territory government policies have done much over the last few years to cushion the effects of federal funding cuts, the Territory is not complacent about the following statistics which I place on the record. The situation in the Territory is not good. However, whilst the national CPI is increasing at 8% per annum, the Territory figure is under 6%. It has been below the national rate for 4 years. Employment growth in the Territory over the year to June 1989 was 6.7%, double the rate of employment growth elsewhere in Australia. As the Minister for Industries and Development often points out, the Northern Territory's contribution to Australia's exports is around 10 times the national average per head of population. No one can accuse the Northern Territory of not pulling its weight on the balance of payments front. However, the Northern Territory has a long way to go before we are out of the economic woods. Our population rate is yet to recover to the levels of the early 1980s after declining temporarily during 1988. The rate of housing and non-residential construction is still depressingly low even though I welcome the recent observations from the Master Builders Association that healthy signs are starting to reappear in the construction industry in the Territory.

The Territory's problems have been greatly magnified by the Prime Minister's mishandling of the pilots' dispute which is having a devastating effect on the Territory's tourist industry. The Northern Territory government has done its best to help the industry but it is still suffering greatly, despite the fact that the Prime Minister does not seem to believe that we have a problem any longer. He tells us all that the dispute is over. The next time the Prime Minister or his local representative, Mr Snowdon, tells us of the economic magic being performed in Canberra, he should bear in mind the plight of people like the citizens of Alice Springs who are involved in the tourist industry, directly or indirectly. No doubt, they will take the opportunity to give the Prime Minister a message at the next federal election.

Finally, I remind the House yet again that the fundamental cause of the Territory's particular economic ills is the 4 consecutive years of savage cutbacks in the Northern Territory's general revenue assistance from Canberra.

Do not believe for a moment that our federal member has done anything of significance to arrest that decline. He stands condemned not for Australia's general economic mismanagement - I would not go so far as to lay that blame at his feet - but for doing so little to protect the people who elected him and put him where he is.

Minister for Education's Comments on Student Standards

Mr EDE to Minister for EDUCATION

I refer the minister to the ongoing debate in the timetabling of English and maths and to his contribution which featured on the front page of the NT News dated Saturday 4 November. After insulting the President of the Sanderson School Council, the honourable minister said: 'The reason for the new guidelines is that the secondary colleges are worried about standards of students from junior colleges'. Last Thursday, the Chairman of the Casuarina College Council phoned the minister, who was appearing on the Gerry Gannon show on ABC radio, and challenged him regarding those remarks. The minister agreed that he had no documentary evidence and that his comments were all based on hearsay. I ask the honourable minister whether he will apologise to students, parents and teachers for the damage caused to schools as a result of the ill-feeling his statements have generated between junior high schools and secondary colleges.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the whole issue in relation to timetabling and the curriculum review which has been carried out is a beat-up. I am disappointed ...

Members interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: Will you listen?

Mr Speaker, I have made it very clear that, as far as the government is concerned, all we are looking at is ensuring that students have access to appropriate education throughout the year. We are also trying to ensure that our system is accountable. There has been great demand for accountability from the public, not only in the Northern Territory but throughout Australia and, indeed, the world. We have tried to introduce a system that will cater for the concerns of those people. The process has been carried out in an appropriate manner, calling for a great deal of comment in relation to proposals. Whether we like it or not, the reality is that there has been concern expressed about the standards of students who go on to further education.

Mr Smith: By whom?

Mr Ede: Hearsay!

Mr HARRIS: You can say what you like but the same thing occurred during the course of the debate on Year 10 examinations. There were teachers who were in favour of the examinations. They would not put their views on paper. They would not come out and publicly support the examinations.

Mr Ede: Why not?

Mr HARRIS: Yes, why not? That is a good question to ask. Why don't you ask them?

Mr Smith: They do not exist. That is why.

Mr Ede: They only exist in your imagination.

Mr HARRIS: Actually, I have a couple of letters from teachers supporting the Year 10 examinations.

Members interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: It is a pity that the member for Stuart did not refer to the other callers who rang during the talkback section of the Gerry Gannon program that morning. I am sure the community would like to recall the remarks expressed by other parents of students attending Sanderson High School.

Mr Speaker, I have never attacked Sanderson High School as being a school that is not of value. Like other government schools in the Northern Territory, it has some very good programs. I have made that very clear and I am quite willing to discuss those matters with the various people involved. All we were concerned about was that students, whether they be middle to low achievers or gifted children, should have access to continuity throughout the school period. There is no question that Sanderson High allows for that. I spoke with the chairman of the school council yesterday and it is clear that the school encourages continuity of access.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: We hear members opposite interjecting. They should listen. The public will see through all the nonsense they are screaming about. I have been very patient. I have spoken to people about the issue and I am quite happy to go on talkback and rehash it.

Australia's Ministers for Education are working towards national curriculum goals. They are working towards a set of standards. It is very important to develop standards throughout our school system and to ensure that access is available to maintain the levels. Students move throughout the Northern Territory and we have people moving here from various states. Mobility happens to be a problem in the Northern Territory and members opposite should be aware of that. Indeed, through the AEC, we are chairing a working party on that very issue. We are playing our role in that regard.

Can I just explain the situation in relation to Sanderson High? Yesterday, I met with the chairman of the school council, Mr Vandenberg, and the school principal Warren Bury. We had a very sensible discussion. Both agreed, as I agree, that there were faults on both sides of the fence. The simple fact is that the government is responsible for the curriculum. We all know that. There is no question about it. I made that very clear during the course of my review of council regulations at the time when I spoke to all the councils about the curriculum and responsibility.

The Board of Studies review was a routine review. It was looking at a whole range of issues. Some 23 issues were being looked at. The board asked for feedback, particularly in respect of the time allocation models and continuity. Schools have replied to that. A number of schools raised that particular issue. I guess that where it started to come unstuck was in the tone of the letters written from both sides of the fence and the response that was received from the Sanderson council as well. That has been acknowledged by Mr Vandenberg and I have acknowledged that there are some problems in relation to those issues. At this time, after discussions with Sanderson High School, it is acknowledged that it does in fact meet the time requirements ...

Mr Ede: Nobody doubted it.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, we should have a look at what they have in fact said. The school has met the time requirements and it has also met the requirement as far as continuity of access is concerned. There is no argument about that, and the school's timetable will not be upset. I have mentioned this on many occasions. The school's timetable will not be upset as a result of this review.

What has been said is nonsense. It is interesting to note that, in his column in the Sunday Territorian, the Leader of the Opposition put forward some inaccuracies. I do not know if he wrote the column himself, but we had the Leader of the Opposition, who paints himself as the white knight, as the person who will present the facts to the community, making this particular statement in relation to Sanderson High School in the Sunday newspaper. During the course of the column, he said that the school is so successful that it produces prize-winning maths students. That is true, and it happens at other schools as well. Nightcliff and some of the other schools have also produced prize-winning mathematics whiz-kids, and that is good. He went on to say that the school had 'Year 10 results way above the average'. I have indicated in this House that I will not use the results of the examinations actually to compare one school with another. I gave that undertaking at the start, and all I will say in relation to that statement is that he is wrong.

The other point I would make in relation to his column concerns the part where he talks about 'the brawls with the Council of Government ...

Mr Smith: Okay, I will withdraw the word 'way'. Will you settle for above the average?

Mr HARRIS: I am just saying that you are supposed to have written this and you are ...

Mr Smith: Will you settle for above the average?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has a very high disapproval rating and it will go up at a rate of knots if he keeps carrying on with this. I do not know if he wrote it himself because I would expect the Leader of the Opposition to check his facts. In reference to myself, the column stated: 'He brawls with the Council of Government School Organisations, he attacks individual schools and he will not even talk with the Teachers Federation'.

Recently, I opened the COGSO half-yearly conference at Batchelor. I have spoken to the executive of COGSO. In the near future, I am to have lunch with Richard Creswick, who is the Chairman of COGSO, and I will be addressing a COGSO meeting in the near future. As far as COGSO is concerned, we have a great deal of input at the moment.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: I have not attacked an individual school. I support the government school system and I support the schools that we have.

Mr Smith: Did you defend Sanderson High school against Harvey Fewings?

Mr HARRIS: I have defended the Sanderson High School timetable and the results that come from Sanderson High School.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that I will not talk to the Teachers Federation. Can I say that I came to an agreement some months ago, and he should know that because he has a ready line to the Teachers Federation. I have agreed to talk with the Northern Territory Teachers Federation in relation to the Year 10 examination results. I have been doing all this.

I do not know if the Leader of the Opposition wrote this column, but I would say to him that he should perhaps check the facts, because the public wants to know what the facts are. People do not want to be misled, and I believe that the Opposition Leader is in fact doing that.

May I close by saying that it is unfortunate that the situation has blown up the way it has, because the ...

Mr Ede: But you did it.

Mr HARRIS: No, that is not what I did.

Mr Speaker, as has been acknowledged, there have been faults on both sides of the fence and I am quite happy to talk about the issue. At the moment, the situation is that the principal of Sanderson High School and the chairman of the council have spoken with me. We have agreed about what I require and what the government wants in relation to the school's timetabling, and we believe that the matter can and will be negotiated. I hope that parents of students attending Sanderson High School acknowledge that we will not affect their timetable. Their timetable will continue. All I ask and all the government asks is that there is access to continuity, and that will continue.

Mr Bailey: Can you give assurances that the principal will not be transferred?

Mr HARRIS: What has that go to do with the price of eggs? Come on!

Expenses for Government Employees at Trade Expos

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Before we get carried away with euphoria of the honourable minister's personal statements about the success of recent trade expositions in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, I would like to give the minister the opportunity to put to rest the rumours of unusual personal expenses that some senior public servants may have incurred. Did the government employees on these trade expos have expense accounts according to rank and what were these expense accounts expected to pay for, or was carte blanche the order of the day?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I intend to make a ministerial statement later this morning. If the member for Koolpinyah would like me to address those very negative aspects of what has probably been the greatest success story that the Northern Territory has had for some considerable time, I will do so. I do not believe that it will detract from the statement itself and I am therefore quite happy to include the answers ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Just put the rumours to rest.

Me COULTER: The rumours? Rumours can be created about anything, Mr Speaker. If the honourable member has any evidence or if there is any public servant whom she wishes to name or provide me with assistance in identifying in order to investigate the matter further, I would be only too happy to do so in order to put to rest the rumours that she claims are around. If it is okay with the member for Koolpinyah, I will handle it in that manner.

#### Allegations Relating to Renegotiation of Commercial Leases

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr Speaker, a front page article in the Sunday Territorian reported that supermarket operators and other shopkeepers were being forced by property owners to pay tens of thousands of dollars in goodwill money to enable them to renegotiate their leases. Could the minister advise if this matter has previously been brought to his attention and whether the government intends to address the issue?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I saw the article in the Sunday Territorian and I heard the interview conducted on the Gerry Gannon program yesterday morning. First and foremost, I advise the member that I have not been advised previously of such practices in Darwin or elsewhere in the Northern Territory. However, those allegations naturally caused me to carry out some investigations and examine possible legislative answers to such a situation. I am advised by officers in Consumer Affairs and a tenancy officer within my department that they have never had these matters brought to their attention before. Our officers were in contact with the President of the Real Estate Institute yesterday who also advised that he had not previously heard of this practice. The institute was quite surprised to hear about this on the weekend. The comments made by the president on the Gerry Gannon program yesterday were based on the premise that the allegations were in fact correct. The institute advised that it had no information or evidence of any such practices existing in Darwin.

Since that time, there has been some debate around town and, from discussions that occurred last evening, there seems to be some indication that there may be some truth in the allegations.

Mr Smith: There is a great deal of truth.

Mr HATTON: The Leader of the Opposition claims to have specific knowledge in respect of this. It would certainly assist our inquiries if he could make specific names available to us. I am advised by the Department of Law that such payments could have taxation implications. This is verbal advice at this stage, but early indications are that there are no records of any returns having been submitted to the Northern Territory Commissioner of Taxes in respect of such payments which, I am advised, are subject to stamp duty. There may be some taxation issues that would need specific examination and could lead to prosecution for possible tax avoidance.

I preface all this by saying that that is if the allegations are correct. We have preliminary information at this stage, but we are carrying out comprehensive investigations into the allegations. We have been examining the legislative options available to us should it be appropriate to ban such practices. Later today or tomorrow, I propose to seek a meeting with organisations such as the Retail Traders Association, representatives of the small shopkeepers, and representatives of building owners in Darwin in order

to hear both sides of the story and to try to learn the facts of the matter. If the allegations can be substantiated and when formal written advice is available from the Department of Law and my department, the government will examine the possibility of making some legislative amendments in relation to this matter.

#### Obligations on Operators of Air Services

Mr LEO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What obligations are on holders of exclusive rights to provide air services within the Northern Territory to service the communities for which they hold the exclusive service rights? If there are obligations, what are the penalties for failing to honour those obligations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I assume that the honourable member is referring to not only commuter but intra-Territory services for which the Northern Territory government has control. We are well aware of the impact on services throughout the Territory resulting from the horrific national pilots' dispute. All aircraft owners and charter operators are under incredible stress at the moment in trying to meet the demands. Under the licence provisions for commuter and intra-Territory services, there are specific requirements for frequency of service. The holders of those licences have no choice but to meet them. Certainly, as far as the scene within the Territory is concerned in terms of Ansett NT, they have not been met to quite a significant level. Any other operator who meets the provisions of CAA etc is able to apply for and meet that non-achieved demand or level of service. Throughout the dispute, there has been mixed success in that regard. Gove and Groote Eylandt, for example, did not do too badly through Air North and, in recent times, the introduction of F27 services. There have been additional provisions involving a Queensland company in the Gove-Groote sector, which is not too badly off.

Mr Smith: What about Yulara?

Mr FINCH: I will come to that.

As of this week, Ansett NT is operating 3 BAE 146s to that eastern sector and, for all intents and purposes, the situation is back to what it was before the dispute. In the Katherine and Tennant Creek areas, where the loadings are much lighter, there have been no jet services throughout the entire dispute. However, some of the small charter firms have been operating with the cooperation of Ansett in taking bookings for the Darwin to Katherine and the Alice Springs to Tennant Creek routes. That has provided at least a reasonable service in those areas, given the circumstances.

Services to Yulara, where the principal demand relates to tourism, are of great concern to all Territorians. As one would expect, throughout the first 3 months or so of the dispute, there has been a downturn in the number of tourists coming to the Centre with the intention of travelling to Yulara. Ansett has not provided a jet service to Yulara and has left the door open, by way of encouragement, to any smaller operator wishing to provide such a service. I understand that the demand from tourists wishing to travel to Yulara via Alice Springs has been minimal. One would hope that the demand will begin to build up again from now on.

At least there are more regular services to and from Alice Springs itself. Given the unpredictability in respect of being able to get out of places such as Yulara, people have not been prepared to fly there during their holidays. The law of supply and demand has been operating. I am advised that Ansett NT intends to provide some jet services to Yulara after 27 November. Australian Airlines recently provided a 737 service under this arrangement and I understand that it intends to run a weekly service for the time being.

As the small operators have attempted to provide services to meet overall demand, this has resulted in lesser services in some areas. Some communities have expressed concern that they have not been serviced or are under threat of not being serviced. We have written to licence holders demanding an explanation of why service requirements are not being met. If it is found that services are not being provided to small communities, it will be possible for other operators to provide such services during the dispute. At this stage, I have the ability to give approval for that to occur only whilst the dispute continues. If I were to attempt to extend that ability, legal questions could arise.

My prediction is that air services in Australia will never be the same again. I do not believe that services will ever return to pre-dispute levels. It is a shame that this dispute got out of control. A number of parties have been involved and, as I said during the last sittings, one of the principal players responsible for the depths which the dispute has reached is the Prime Minister himself. He jumped in too quickly and too aggressively, without leaving room for the normal negotiations between the 2 parties. There was a simple solution. It might have taken a few weeks to reach it, but it would not have taken 4 months. In fact, I believe that we will never achieve a full resolution of this matter. With deregulation next year, the ballpark will change altogether and we will see a threat overall to servicing of remote areas including Western Australia, the Northern Territory and north Queensland. We will be under threat from poor services and higher air fares.

The federal government has known for years that it should untie the hands of Australian Airlines to enable it to compete with Ansett, otherwise we will not see anything like civility and balance in future air services. I doubt whether, even by the middle of next year, we will see a return to much more than 80% of the previous level of air services throughout Australia. In the Territory at the moment, we have approximately 50% to 60% of the service levels which applied before the dispute. Of course, that is denied by the federal government. It keeps quoting loading figures and it talks about meeting demand. Of course people will not travel. Of course people will not arrange conferences. Only this morning, I became aware of a conference that was scheduled to be held in Darwin next March and which has now been cancelled because the organisers cannot obtain guarantees of air services. The organisers do not believe that they can go to the expense of arranging a conference for some 300 or 400 people when this whole issue is unresolved.

The Prime Minister has participated strongly in this exercise. It is time for him to find some solutions. In the meantime, there is much to be answered for. I understand that he is paying some hundreds of millions of dollars to 1 of the 2 airlines by way of compensation. Those figures will have to come out sooner or later. There is much more work to be done to resurrect the entire industry and, as I said before, it will never be the same again.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Crimes Compensation Payment

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will respond to a question asked by the member for MacDonnell at the beginning of question time. I would like to inform the honourable member that, as I stated, instructions have been given for the repayment. Cheques have been processed and I have just received advice that the cheques have been delivered to the respective solicitors.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Expenses for Government Employees at Trade Expos

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I will answer the question asked during question time by the member for Koolpinyah. I am informed that expenditure by public servants of an official nature whilst overseas is clearly covered by the determinations issued by the Public Service Commissioner. These relate to rank, as the honourable member pointed out in her question. I understand that all public moneys which are so expended are fully accountable on return and are verified in accordance with procedures laid down both in terms of advances paid and reimbursement sought. Such reimbursements and claims are also subject to later scrutiny by audit authorities.

Secretary of Department of Education

Mr EDE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Yesterday afternoon a senior education officer, acting on instructions from the secretary of his department, deliberately countermanded the minister's decision on Sanderson High announced in this Assembly yesterday morning. The secretary informed school principals: (1) that the minister had been briefed and, regardless of what he actually said in this Assembly, he should have said that the secretary reserves the right to determine that some students shall do maths and English continuously; (2) that the minister should have said that there will be no major changes to the Sanderson High School program and not that there will be no changes; and (3) that, regardless of what the minister said in this Assembly, as far as the secretary was concerned, the matter of programming at Sanderson High School had not been resolved. Does the minister accept he has no option but to require the immediate resignation of the secretary of his department and has he taken the necessary steps this morning to obtain the resignation of the secretary of his department?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, at the outset, can I indicate to honourable members that I will definitely look into the issue that has been raised by the member for Stuart. However, can I make it very clear that I gave the answer in the House yesterday because I had spent a great deal of time talking with different people and speaking with the Chairman of the Sanderson High School Council and also the Principal of the Sanderson High School. After discussing the school timetable, it was found out that the school in fact could comply with the requirements of the department without amending its timetable. In fact, there has been a beat-up. The reality is that some people wanted this to become a major issue. That really concerns me because, as minister, I have been trying to resolve the issue in a responsible manner. I believe that that has been done.

The opposition spokesman raced out of this Assembly yesterday after I gave my answer in question time. He went on talkback radio and said: 'Great win for the people! The government has reversed its decision in relation to Sanderson High School. Get out there and do the same and the government will buckle under pressure'. That is irresponsible behaviour from the opposition spokesman on education when I am trying to resolve this issue responsibly and quietly. He then started ringing principals. Really, Mr Speaker! I was very upset about the actions of the member for Stuart. We had a very sensitive issue. It was blown out of all proportion and it has been resolved. I believe that the directions are very clear. I will follow up the issues that have been raised by the member for Stuart in relation to the matter. However, I repeat that, following my discussions with the school principal and the chairman of the school council, I believe that there is a process which meets my requirements and allows the approved curriculum to be taught. That is a requirement which applies to all schools so that there is continuity of programs throughout the system.

Mr Ede: Have some gumption.

Mr HARRIS: Do you want to see the issue resolved or not? Are you interested in the results for the kids or not?

Mr Ede: He is turning around everything that you say.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, as I said, I believe I have answered the question in relation to Sanderson High School and its vertical timetabling. I will investigate the issues the member for Stuart has raised.

Mr Smith: You have known about that since yesterday.

Mr HARRIS: What is this 'known about it since yesterday'?

Mr Smith: The Chief Minister received a phone call about it last night.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to censure the Minister for Education.

Leave granted.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the question paper and that the radio cease broadcasting.

Mr Smith: You are worried about this one, aren't you?

Mr COULTER: We do it every time, no matter what.

Education Ministry

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Does the Chief Minister understand that the conflict between his Minister for Education and his departmental head poses a threat to the administration of education and, obviously, the future of children in the Northern Territory? Does he recall that, yesterday in this House, the minister failed to support his departmental head and that government members failed to support the minister in the censure motion that followed? Does he understand that the Territory education system cannot function if schools do not know who is the boss? When will he take control of this problem and decide who should go, the departmental head, the minister or both?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the Secretary of the Department of Education is a very outstanding officer of the Northern Territory government. He certainly has my support. He has the support of his minister and he has the support of the government.

Mr Smith: You would not have known that from yesterday's debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members that question time is broadcast and, if we are to maintain a level of dignity outside the Chamber, we must have some dignity within the Chamber.

Mr PERRON: In responding to the motion yesterday, the minister responded to the substance of the motion. As he said, he did not see any specific need to further refer to the Secretary of the Department of Education. I support the line that the minister took. There was nothing to defend. The Leader of the Opposition says that members on this side of the House did not support our minister in his defence.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr PERRON: What we were trying to do was to avoid the sort of letters that the Leader of the Opposition writes to me from time to time saying that we do not have enough time to do business in this Assembly and should sit for more days. My response to his latest letter, which he will receive shortly, states that, if he and his colleagues stopped wasting the time of this House with frivolous and unsupported censure motions and so-called matters of public importance, perhaps the Assembly could get down to some business instead of the politicisation of the education system which we are seeing as a result of the irresponsible actions of members opposite, who are far more interested in a headline about education than about the actual workings of the education system. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. It was for that reason that the government moved yesterday to gag debate after 2 speakers had spoken on the motion. We will do that again whenever we believe that the opposition is wasting the time of this Assembly.

Gap Neighbourhood Centre

Mr FLOREANI to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Gap Neighbourhood Centre in Alice Springs has been operating for 6 years and is an integral part of the lives of Aboriginal women and children in the Gap area of Alice Springs. It appears that the centre may have to

close at the end of December as a result of a lack of funding. Is the minister aware of this and, if so, does he propose to do anything about it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of the circumstances confronting the Gap Neighbourhood Centre. The centre has novel ways of bringing matters to the attention of ministers. I was in Alice Springs last week to brief myself on a number of matters relating to my portfolio. Whilst I was approaching to attend discussions at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, I was waylaid in the passageway by a group of people who claimed to be representing the Gap Neighbourhood Centre, along with a reporter and a microphone. That was their method of seeking to meet with me to discuss their concerns. They had never approached me to make an appointment to discuss the matter while I was in Alice Springs. Naturally, in those circumstances, it was rather difficult to hold meaningful talks.

However, I have investigated the circumstances confronting the Gap Neighbourhood Centre. It has found itself in a difficult situation because, for a number of years, it has chosen to seek funding directly through Commonwealth grants-in-aid. The Commonwealth has decided to pull the financial pin on it. Having had the financial pin pulled by the Commonwealth, it has turned around, after we are well down the road in the determination of grants-in-aid for the Northern Territory, and said: 'The federal government will not fund us any longer. You must fund us'. I understand the concern but we also have obligations to a wide range of community organisations that we are financing. The Department of Health and Community Services provides some \$20m in grants-in-aid to approximately 200 organisations throughout the Northern Territory. We probably receive applications for up to twice that amount of funding. We have to make hard decisions in terms of priorities regionally and functionally throughout the Northern Territory.

The Gap Neighbourhood Centre has developed a range of services. It was funding itself through a children's services allocation from the Commonwealth. It has changed the nature of its functions yet, as I understand it, continues to seek funding under the children's services funding. Because it had changed its functions, the Commonwealth decided that it no longer met its criteria. It applied to the Northern Territory government for funding. Because of its priority setting and functions, and the late nature of the application, there were difficulties. We did not have much extra money this year because the federal government reduced funding to us in real terms. We have had to make quite difficult decisions in relation to meeting services throughout the Territory. In the first run through, its application was unsuccessful. The reality is that, if it were to receive funding, others would miss out. The decision was taken on the basis of a breakdown of the funding that is to be made available throughout the Territory.

During that rather novel form of consultation, I told the Gap Neighbourhood Centre people that, if they presented me with a comprehensive submission, I would look at it. That submission should indicate what the centre is doing, the services it is seeking to provide and the anticipated outcome to the community of the provision of those services so that I can make an assessment of what it is doing in comparison with what is done by other groups in Alice Springs. I need to satisfy myself that it is not duplicating other services and that what it is doing is worth while.

If I receive that submission, I will review it in the context of the first budget review which will be commencing over the next month or so. As we have

virtually no money, I will have to look very carefully at what we may be able to do. I cannot give any guarantees to that organisation, but I am prepared to look at a proper submission from it because, so far as the Northern Territory government is concerned, it is a first submission for funding. It is not funding for an ongoing service. It has chosen continuously to fund itself by direct contact with the Commonwealth government. I will not repeat its comments with respect to the Northern Territory government's funding. It needs to develop a submission to justify its case against other priorities. Our first obligation is to the continuation of services in the Northern Territory.

The minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation, and Ethnic Affairs advises that the Gap Neighbourhood Centre received a cheque for an amount in the order of \$10 000 to assist towards the centre's funding. I think that the total amount requested for annual funding this year was in the order of \$24 000. I do not know the implications of that information, but it has just been provided to me.

Yulara - Use of Commonwealth State Housing  
Agreement Funds

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

I refer the minister to comments made by the member for MacDonnell on the ABC Morning Program today in which he claimed there are irregularities in the use of Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funds at Yulara and, further, that the Territory government had refused to give him any information about the use of those funds. Can the minister advise whether or not there is any truth in those claims?

ANSWER

As usual, there is very little truth in the claims of the member for MacDonnell. If he had bothered to remain in this Chamber after the luncheon adjournment yesterday, he would have heard me address the questions of housing at Yulara. He would have heard me demolish a number of other inaccuracies contained in his contribution to the debate on the Chief Minister's statement about the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Perhaps that is why he was not prepared to be in the Chamber at that time. However, for the benefit of the member for MacDonnell and in the hope that he ...

Mr Bell: I have managed to master the loudspeaker system, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: In the hope that he will cease his totally inaccurate claims, I will briefly provide him with some information about housing at Yulara. To put it very simply, Mr Speaker, the provision of housing at Yulara is no different to the provision of Housing Commission accommodation elsewhere in the Territory. The housing has been provided in direct response to demand from Territorians employed in the tourist industry. Since 1985, a total of 456 accommodation units have been constructed with public funds at Yulara. These units are managed by the Yulara Development Corporation on behalf of the Housing Commission and the units have been constructed as part of an active public housing program which saw the construction of more than 3000 dwellings throughout the Territory during the same period. A total of \$37.4m was allocated for construction of these accommodation units at Yulara and this includes units in the current program.

The funding has been provided through 3 sources. In 1985, the funding was provided by semi-government borrowings which were not related to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The funds provided from 1986 onwards have been provided through nominated loan funds, which are covered by the CSHA, and internally generated funds from the Housing Commission, which are a combination of CSHA and non-CSHA funds.

As I explained to the House yesterday, all funds expended by the Territory government under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement must be acquitted annually with the federal government. If the member for MacDonnell took the time to look into what the CSHA is about, which I presume he would take the time to do as the opposition housing spokesman, he would see that the acquittal process is part of that agreement. It always has been. Logically, if the acquittal process was not undertaken, the agreement would be broken and the Commonwealth would get quite upset.

Mr Bell: And they are.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, this is absolutely unbelievable! This man purports to represent the opposition on housing matters. He does not know what is in the agreement and he does not understand that acquittals are being processed. He claims that there have been no acquittals, that nobody knows what has happened or how the money has been expended. As I explained yesterday, all of the Territory government acquittals have been accepted by the federal government. Given that this acquittal process exists and that Territory government accounts have been accepted by the federal government, I am at a loss to understand how the member for MacDonnell can claim that there are irregularities in funding the public housing at Yulara and that no one knows how that funding has been expended.

Another furphy which has been raised in relation to Yulara is that accommodation which was constructed with public funds has been converted to tourist accommodation. This information was passed on to the federal Minister for Housing and Aged Care when he visited Alice Springs a few months ago. I wonder who told him that one. Once again, it was a totally baseless allegation. In fact, 68 maisonettes were recently converted by the Yulara Development Corporation into low to middle priced tourist accommodation. These were part of the original staff accommodation at Yulara and have never been owned by the Housing Commission.

The final point that I wish to make is that all of this information has been provided by the federal minister at his request. A letter about the maisonettes was sent to the federal minister on 11 September this year, signed by the Minister for Education who was acting on my behalf. I sent a further letter to the federal minister on 19 October giving the rest of the information that I mentioned today. Mr Speaker, I table copies of those letters.

I can only hope that this will put to an end the scurrilous and misinformed allegations by the member for MacDonnell that there are irregularities in the use of public housing funds at Yulara. It is important that everyone understands that there is an acquittal process that has been followed. It has been followed since we have entered the CSHA. It is part of the agreement. I have explained that in this House on previous occasions. The member for MacDonnell does not want to know. He makes unsubstantiated allegations, and those he made on radio this morning were absolutely disgraceful for a man who is supposed to know what is going on. The trouble is that he works on the basis of the same theory that the federal member has:

throw the muck around and a bit will stick. That is an approach that they have developed. That sort of action is beneath contempt, and I did not think that the member for MacDonnell would behave in such a manner.

If he has any problems about any particular instance, he can raise them. He can ask his questions. He can point to a particular instance and say that he believes something is wrong or ask me what is happening. However, simply to throw mud, especially when the information is available and the agreement sets out exactly what has happened, is beneath contempt. All honourable members and the community should be aware of what the processes are and to what level the member for MacDonnell has stooped in his public statements on this matter. I certainly hope that I have clarified the matter once and for all.

#### NT Secondary Correspondence School

Mr BAILEY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Unfortunately, the minister was not present in the House last night during the adjournment debate. Can he comment on the information given to the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School at a meeting earlier this week at that school that its status will be changed from a school to a TAFE institution for next year? In the context of the organisation of his department, can he explain why a decision which affects the status of all staff is made 3 weeks before the end of the school year? Why have staff not been given the opportunity to apply for transfer if they do not want to change their status from the NT Teaching Service to TAFE? It is my understanding that all positions will be changed. Does that mean that those positions will be advertised at the beginning of next year so that other teachers are able to apply? They are changing working conditions ...

Mr Manzie: Is this a statement or a question?

Mr BAILEY: Can the honourable minister explain the organisational procedures that he follows, and the consultation in his department in pursuing this sort of action?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, from the lead-up to the question, I presume that the member for Wanguri raised this matter during the course of the adjournment debate last night. Is that correct?

Mr Bailey: Yes.

Mr HARRIS: I am happy to respond to a matter raised during the adjournment debate, and I will do so during the course of these sittings.

#### Department of Administrative Services Period Contracts

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

On ABC radio yesterday morning, the honourable minister was accused by the federal member for the Territory, Warren Snowdon, of conducting a campaign for a new federal member because he demanded questions on a number of outstanding issues relating to the Northern Territory. At that time, he stated also that local businesses had ample opportunity to participate in the tendering process for the Department of Administrative Services period contracts. Is that correct or not?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in his outburst yesterday in response to some very serious questions that have been asked over a period of approximately 2 years, the federal member sought to denigrate the questions by suggesting that I was launching a campaign to unseat him. No doubt he will be unseated, but let me get back to the core of the questions. Either the honourable federal member does not understand the questions or he continues deliberately to avoid the answers. He answered comprehensively some 7 questions through the media yesterday. One response was absolutely incorrect. It was misleading and totally untrue. I refer to the answer in relation to road funding. The federal member said that, following his lobbying in relation to the cutback in road funding for the Territory versus a federal increase of 10% - and I am aware that he has been lobbying in relation to the Victoria Highway for a long time without achieving any results ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am sure that your hearing is as good as mine. The question related to the quasi-commercial operations of a Commonwealth government department. There was nothing in the question relating to road funding. It is a repeat of a question that was asked on Tuesday. None of the answer is related to the question.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the minister to direct his answer to the question asked by the member for Ludmilla.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I will do precisely that. The first part of the question from the member for Ludmilla asked whether or not I was launching a new campaign with my questions and accusations of the federal member. It is not a new campaign. I will demonstrate that, in fact, it is a very old campaign. These are old questions which have still gone unanswered. Maybe the member for Nhulunbuy is not interested in road funding for the Northern Territory but, when the federal member falsely claims in writing that the Territory government received an extra 10% this year, he does so in answer to questions that have been outstanding since August this year. The federal member himself acknowledges that he has been lobbying in relation to the Victoria Highway, following my prompting, since August this year.

In regard to the capital works program, I asked what portions of the \$462m beat-up the Territory can expect this year in terms of cash. Is it less than \$50m, as I predict, or is it not? That question has been outstanding since the Wanguri by-election but has been conveniently forgotten by the federal member.

In regard to last year's cash expenditure and capital works program within the Northern Territory, my question was why it was cut from \$52m to \$39m. Where is the answer? It has been outstanding since August. It is not a new campaign. Why was the Australian Construction Services cut back by 70-odd people? Why don't Territory consultants receive a fair share? That is a question that is 2 years old. We have asked that question since October 1987. The federal member has had plenty of time to answer it, but he seeks to avoid it. What he said yesterday is that work is carried out within Darwin and Adelaide for Territory projects. How much is carried out in Darwin and by whom? How many of the residual staff are left in the decimated ACS Darwin office which was cut back by 70-odd people? How much goes to the Territory consultants? Except for the odd, small scrap, there is nothing. It is all done by consultants in Adelaide and Perth.

What about the answer in relation to the administrative services purchasing? There is no answer yet. I must confess that this is a recent question, but the federal member's response is that these arrangements have been in place for ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! As the Minister for Transport and Works should well know, ministers can be asked questions about areas of the public service for which they are responsible. Whatever the aspirations and ambitions of the member for Leanyer may be, he is not the minister responsible for the federal Department of Administrative Services.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I would ask the Minister for Transport and Works to keep his answer as short and direct as possible.

MR FINCH: Mr Speaker, I am not the only one who is demanding these answers. Territorians are demanding these answers and I will not harp on it any longer. I will leave it to the federal member. He has between now and the election to come up with some constructive answers. In the meantime, car companies here are losing thousands of dollars worth of business, as are other small businesses. No doubt, they will let the federal member know personally.

Mr Speaker, in regard to the second part of the question ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I will read the question which the minister was asked on Tuesday 21 November. It appears on page 2A of the Daily Hansard. If this was a new question, I would not give a damn. I will read the question so that there can be no doubt in any member's mind ...

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr LEO: The point of order is that the question has already been asked once during these sittings. It has been repeated today and the answer is being repeated again today. That is clearly against the intention of standing orders. If you will indulge me, Mr Speaker, I will give you the number of the specific standing order which applies. Members cannot repeat questions and this is a repeat question with a repeat answer.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. As far as I am aware, honourable members have the opportunity of asking a question as many times as they like in this House.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the second part of the question asked whether Territory businesses were getting a chance to bid on federal contracts. They are, but it is not the point. The point is that those contracts should be limited to federal departments, not to all and sundry in the community as direct private enterprise competition against the private sector by a taxpayer-funded department.

#### Education Ministry

Mr EDE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Mr Speaker, last night on the ABC 7.30 Report, the minister announced that he did not have an agreement with Sanderson High School in relation to its timetable. That directly contradicts statements which he made in this House on 3 different occasions during Tuesday's question time. It would therefore appear that he has capitulated to the policy line adopted by the secretary of his department.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to standing order 112 which sets out the general rules in relation to the asking of questions. Obviously, the member for Stuart has transgressed those rules in a number of ways. He is putting arguments, instances and imputations. He is using ironical expressions.

Mr Ede: Sit down!

Mr PALMER: He has contravened standing order 112.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Stuart to keep the preamble to his question as short as possible.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I feel that I should reiterate the preamble because the honourable minister may have forgotten it. However, hoping that his memory is better than that of the member for Karama, I ask the minister what possible confidence any school can have in any undertaking which the minister may give it in the future, following his failure to back up the undertakings that he gave Sanderson High School?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it almost appears that the member for Stuart has inside information about confidential meetings between myself and members of the Sanderson High School Council.

Mr Ede: Come on. The 7.30 Report last night.

Mr HARRIS: I make it very clear to honourable members that the issue between Sanderson High School and myself is in fact being discussed. It has been discussed for some time and it will continue to be discussed. The member for Stuart does not want to resolve this issue. Look at him. He is just trying to pick points.

Mr Ede: I am just trying to find some sense in your answer.

Mr HARRIS: I am just trying to indicate to you, Mr Speaker, and to members of the public that I am acting responsibly. I am taking a bit of stick at the moment. I am quite prepared to take it if it will benefit the kids out there in the community and if it will benefit the parents and others. I do not care if the member for Stuart raises this 27 times every day. I am going to talk with the Sanderson High School Council. I am talking with the chairman of the council and also the principal of the school.

Mr Ede: But you give them undertakings and then go back on them.

Mr HARRIS: He again raises the issue of undertakings. The reality is that I am discussing those matters with the council. I am not going to be dragged into debate by the member for Stuart who is trying to smear everyone. He is not interested in resolving issues and that has been made very clear during the last couple of days.

Mr Ede: That is outrageous, Tom, and you know it.

Mr HARRIS: He is a disgrace to this parliament. He has performed in a disgraceful manner and he stands condemned.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I request that the honourable minister be directed to withdraw the phrase 'disgrace' applied to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: As I asked the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the word 'disgraceful', I ask the minister to do so now.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the remark. Can I just say, Mr Speaker, that the issue ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr HARRIS: I withdraw the remark.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister must withdraw unreservedly.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister for Education withdrew the remark. There is no point of order.

Mr HARRIS: Goodness me! They are really edgy at the moment. I am surprised. They jump up and make these outlandish statements.

Can I just make a final point and try to get the member for Stuart to realise that this is a sensitive issue which has to be addressed responsibly. You are the one who is trying to beat it up. You are the one who is trying to make this ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister well knows that he must direct his comments through the Chair, not directly at my colleague.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I ask the Minister for Education to direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, can I just say that I believe that the whole issue of the Sanderson High School timetable has been blown out of all proportion. There is no question in relation to access to continuity at the Sanderson High School. It already happens and there is no problem. There is also no problem about the approved curriculum. There should be no reason at all why the timetable should have to change. I have made that very clear.

Mr Ede: You said the school's timetable will not be upset

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I reiterate the points that I have made. The member for Stuart is nitpicking. If the whole matter blows up, he stands condemned because it will be as a result of his mouthings in this Assembly and the actions that he has taken.

Darwin to Alice Springs Railway

Mr PALMER to CHIEF MINISTER

The Chief Minister recently attended meetings in Tokyo in relation to the Darwin to Alice Springs railway. Can he advise the House on the outcome of those meetings?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in previous statements that I have made in this Assembly on the railway, I have confirmed this government's commitment to this project. That commitment stands. The government, the vast majority of Territorians - and I would hope the opposition as well - want to see the railway built, and built as soon as possible. I do not need to explain to honourable members that the railway is a very difficult and complex project. In a strict commercial sense, it is ahead of its time. The government strategy has been to bring forward a project which will have a great benefit to Territorians and which will serve as a major catalyst for substantial growth and development rather than to simply wait for however long it takes for the project to be judged a commercial proposition by prospective investors. The focus of the government's approach through Railnorth has been to explore ways in which to achieve the project in the shortest possible time, in particular through the expertise which the private sector participants in Railnorth have. The company has been very active in this regard. It has made contact with a range of organisations within Japan and elsewhere and the level of interest in our railway project continues to be very high.

I felt that it was time for me as Chief Minister to meet with the principals of our Japanese Railnorth partners to assess progress and to agree on the next steps. In that regard, the visit was productive and worth while. The Japanese partners have confirmed their strong commitment to the railway and their continued willingness to use their contacts and their expertise to bring this giant project to fruition. In particular, the visit gave me an opportunity to agree with our Japanese partners on the direction which the company should take over the next few months and the areas which need to be progressed. The visit also provided an opportunity for all parties to outline the main issues which need to be overcome before a start could be made on this project.

The Japanese partners indicated to me their view that the project could not be put together at this time without government financial support. They have not indicated how much support might be required but this is something which I expect will emerge over coming months. I have made no commitment of government funds to the project and will not do so until and unless I am confident that the government funding is necessary and affordable. In the event that government funds are required, an approach will be made to the federal government for assistance. After all, it promised Territorians that it would fund the project 100% just a few years ago.

There is no doubt in my mind that the railway will be built. The contribution it will make to the Northern Territory will be enormous. No other section of the national rail network in Australia has been expected to cover the capital costs of construction as well as its operational costs. If it had, the line to Alice Springs or the national line to Western Australia would never have been constructed. It is hardly surprising that the project is taking a long time to develop and to negotiate. We intend to continue the present course because it seems to us that it provides the best prospects for

the earliest possible commencement of the project. I will continue to keep honourable members of this House informed of progress.

Air Services to Yulara

Mr BELL to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I direct the honourable minister's attention to the Yulara resort pilots' dispute fax sheet day 99. It commences by saying: 'Day 99 and still not 1 Ansett flight into Ayers Rock'. I remind the Minister for Transport and Works that he has the responsibility for the RPT or Regular Passenger Transport route between Alice Springs and Yulara. I remind the honourable minister that he sets the licence conditions and that he issued the licence. I remind the honourable ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! A reasonable preamble is acceptable when putting a question but, if the honourable member wants to make a statement, he could use the adjournment debate or other avenues that are open to him. Could he put his question to the honourable minister?

Mr Bell: You do not think that airline flights to Yulara are an important issue?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell made a point earlier about members making their remarks through the Chair. I remind him of that now and ask that he put his question.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I apologise humbly, but I was being seriously provoked.

I remind the Minister for Transport and Works that he knows that the licensee has not flown that leg for 98 days. I remind the honourable minister that he knows the licensee is flying from other gateway ports into the Territory. Given the extent of the financial exposure of the people of the Northern Territory in the Yulara project and given the real distress that is being expressed by workers and employers at Yulara, will he use his authority to ensure that regular, scheduled flights between Alice Springs and Yulara commence forthwith?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I certainly do not need reminding about all those matters by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Ede: Then why don't you act?

Mr Bell: It has taken 98 days.

Mr FINCH: The member for Stuart asks why I do not act. Why has it then taken 98 days for the member for MacDonnell even to think of raising the issue? What a slow thinker, Mr Speaker. Let me tell him what I told him during the last sittings. Perhaps he would like to refer to the Parliamentary Record for the last sittings. Let me remind him of what this government, myself included, has done about helping to return air services, not just to Yulara but throughout the Northern Territory.

Right from day 1, this government set about using great initiative to get air services returned to Territorians through a number of methods, but in relation to Ansett NT ...

Mr Ede: How many to Yulara?

Mr FINCH: If the honourable member will have the patience that was afforded to the member for MacDonnell during his most lengthy questioning, I will give the answer.

This government set about encouraging Ansett to return services as quickly as possible. In the absence of its being able to service any of its licensed routes, it was also encouraged to assist the smaller operators in carrying out those services, and Ansett did do that. It was taking bookings. It was helping with the loading and off-loading etc of commuter-type light aircraft to service those routes of the Northern Territory for which they had responsibility.

Certainly, I have been disappointed, as have my colleagues, that jet services have yet to return to Yulara. Accordingly, last week, I suppose in exasperation, the Territory government, through the Chief Minister, served notice on Ansett NT that it was in breach of its licence requirements.

Mr Bell: You did not issue a press release about that.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, this government is not about doing its business on the front pages of the newspaper.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, aren't they in good humour this morning! Let me tell you about the constructive work of this government in relation to the return of air services. We arranged for Australian Airlines to have access to Yulara once a week. Our encouragement of Ansett has led to a commitment for Yulara of, I believe, 3 services per week. It was supposed to start on 27 November. I believe that there may be some adjustment to that commencement date, but that was the commitment given to us for the return of air services, through Ansett NT, to Yulara. That is what this government has done. It did not take us 98 days to get round to doing it.

Let us talk about the contribution from the Prime Minister in this whole dispute, and of our federal member who grandstands about 2 extra flights into Alice Springs ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister has been asked a question which, for once, falls within his competence. It relates to part of his portfolio activities. It is a specific question concerning the activities of the Northern Territory government in getting the livelihood of people at Yulara restored to them, and it might be helpful if the honourable minister addressed that question rather than spraying all over the place in his normal manner.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Smith: Why not?

Mr SPEAKER: Because of the nature of the question asked by the member for MacDonnell. It was far-reaching and I believe the Minister for Transport and Works is answering in accordance with the requirements of the question asked by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, one of the critical components of getting air services and passengers back into Yulara is the return to normality of the interstate domestic airline service. The principal responsibility for the hindrance to that occurring has to fall on the shoulders of the Prime Minister himself. Mr Fix-it from day 1, what were the results of his actions as compared to those of the Northern Territory government? He created an atmosphere of total mistrust, of non-promotion of a resolution to the problem. The consequences of that will be far-reaching and long lasting. Unfortunately, it is my humble prediction that Australian airline services will never be the same again, thanks to Bob Hawke among other people.

It is no use having shuttle services in and out from Alice Springs to Yulara if you do not have any tourists who are prepared to book to come into Alice Springs from elsewhere. Obviously, that defies logic. However, the member for MacDonnell would have had Ansett flying 8 or 10 flights per day in and out of Yulara with no connection from anywhere else in Australia. What a load of nonsense! One of the reasons that Ansett has given for discontinuing that service was lack of demand. People are not prepared to travel, tourists particularly. Only business people travel now because they have to. The whole face of the aviation industry in Australia has been irreversibly changed.

Mr Coulter: Dismantled.

Mr FINCH: It is totally dismantled. It will never return to normality again. There is the answer to the honourable member's question. He might like to digest it and do his best, through the federal member, Warren Snowdon, to get the Prime Minister to come to his senses and back out of areas that he has no business being in, 98 days later.

#### Land near Berrimah Agricultural Research Centre

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Can the minister tell me how he has disposed of the land at the front of the Berrimah research station which was sold for a private school that went broke and did not fulfil its covenants? He has indicated in a previous answer that the land is now his concern. Is there any chance of handing the land back to the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to try to counteract the deleterious effects of decisions to sell off the Katherine experiment station, the Upper Adelaide River experiment station and part of the Berrimah experiment station?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, off the top of my head, I cannot give any specific details. I know that the lease covenants certainly were not complied with and I know that action was being taken for the return of the land. In relation to the requirements of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the member would have to address a question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You have the land.

Mr MANZIE: The land is under the control of the government. In this area, the Department of Lands and Housing is only a service department. We do not make decisions as to who is going to ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, may I redirect my question to the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member may redirect the question. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries.

Mr REED: The suggestion that the Katherine Experiment Farm has been sold off is not quite correct. The department still undertakes extensive research work in the area to which the honourable member referred.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did not mention that. The CSIRO ...

Mr REED: If the honourable member meant the CSIRO Research Station, perhaps that is what she should have said.

In respect of the Berrimah Agricultural Research Centre, the work that was being undertaken in those areas is now being undertaken at other research stations. I do not think the research undertaken by the department has been deleteriously affected by the change of ownership of that land.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What has happened to the land?

#### Trade Development Zone - ACTU Support

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, is the honourable minister aware of moves by the Australian Council of Trade Unions to withdraw its support from Darwin's Trade Development Zone as advocated by the local union organiser, Peter Tullgren?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. Honourable members will remember that ACTU representatives were in the Northern Territory a week ago as part of the monitoring committee to look at the Trade Development Zone. A week earlier, Peter Tullgren took the opportunity to raise certain allegations about the Trade Development Zone. Indeed, he said that he would send home the 50 Chinese specialist workers who are working within the zone. It must have been very disturbing for those 50 Chinese people working in the zone to read on the front page of the newspaper that their futures were grim and that, according to Mr Tullgren, they would be sent home. However, honourable members would be getting used to Mr Tullgren's outbursts. On 16 May this year, he claimed that he had done a deal with Senator Rae and that all immigration visas would be cancelled and nobody could come into the zone. In January this year, he claimed that he was about to shut down the zone because of working conditions there. He referred to 'sweatshop labour'. I am not sure if any honourable members have visited factories in the rag trade in Sydney or Melbourne and have seen the conditions there compared to those at the zone. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that the air-conditioned factories at the zone are a model that the rest of Australia could do well to follow.

I am surprised that public statements made by Mr Tullgren continue to be regarded with any degree of credibility whatsoever but, apparently, they are. He always gets it wrong. It is hardly coincidental that he began a week of attacks on working conditions in certain factories at the Trade Development Zone a week before the scheduled meeting in Darwin of the monitoring committee. This committee is comprised of representatives of the ACTU, the

Commonwealth Departments of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, and Employment, Education and Training and the Trade Development Zone Authority. It met last week to review progress on the tripartite negotiated arrangement concluded in September under which skilled workers are brought to the zone from overseas to fill gaps that cannot be supplied from the Australian work force and to train local workers in these skills. I quote now from the statement released after the committee met last Thursday:

Committee Chairman, Mr McEnery of the Department of Employment, Education and Training, said that, at its meeting, the monitoring committee reviewed the development of training programs tabled by clothing and textile companies to enhance the skills of all employees and was satisfied that adequate pre-employment training was being conducted under the job training program to meet the requirements of the immigration tripartite negotiated arrangement. Significant progress has also been made in developing structured entry and post-entry levels in training initiatives. In response to concerns on occupational health and safety issues expressed by the ACTU, he went on to say that it was agreed that they should be addressed in the normal course, directly with the companies.

Mr Speaker, compare those words with the forecasts of Mr Tullgren, who claimed that the Chinese workers would probably be packed up and sent home after a major ACTU inquiry into sweatshop working conditions, and that third-world working conditions were being imported into Australia. Again, Mr Tullgren has been left stranded like a beached whale. I could think of no more apt description of him than that.

Honourable members should recall the threats discussed by Mr Tullgren earlier this year about imminent moves by the federal Minister for Immigration to ban entry to skilled Chinese workers. This was promptly denied by the minister. Mr Tullgren is the Assistant Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers Union, a union largely unwanted by textile workers at the zone, who actually prefer the more specialised attention of the Federated Textile and Allied Workers Union. Mr Tullgren is also well known as a de facto Labor Party spokesman, a role which he plays from time to time. He is a delegate to the ALP's national executive and, in 1989, the opposition spearhead for attacks on the Trade Development Zone generally.

Mr Tullgren represents the deeply-entrenched, old-time union suspicion and resentment of all matters Asian. You would have thought that the anti-Asian feelings once rampant in the Australian trade union movement would have died out in 1989, but we heard them in this Assembly from the Leader of the Opposition who virtually described the people out there as white trash. That is how he described them. It is ironic that he claims skilled Chinese workers are bringing third-world working conditions to Australia. In 1989, it is Australia that is much closer to the third world than Hong Kong, one of the world's most vibrant and buoyant economies. These workers are also bringing back into the Australian work force skills that have been lost in the last 30 years as the Australian textile industry languished and almost disappeared.

I might add that, in the Trade Development Zone, with the help of the federal government, we have relocated people from Tasmania following the collapse of their textile industry. The Leader of the Opposition claims that that is not the type of industry that we want in the Northern Territory. Let him tell that to those people from Tasmania who were relocated here, people whom he claims are being paid below the average wage. He did not seem to understand that, in order to have an average wage, somebody has to be paid less than the average.

These workers are bringing skills back into Australia and I am proud of every one of them. In the process, they are helping to create hundreds and, shortly, thousands of new jobs for Territorians. For every new job created in the Trade Development Zone, 2 or 3 other jobs are created in the Territory work force generally. As far as I am concerned, this is part of the best good news story for 1989 in the Northern Territory. Mr Tullgren is an old-style union bully seeking to damage that scenario for his own political ends. I think he should get lost.

Ambulance Service at Palmerston

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Can the minister confirm that last Friday a seriously injured Palmerston man had to wait between 15 and 30 minutes for an ambulance to come to his assistance from Darwin? Can he also confirm that the ambulance service was forced to dispatch a fire brigade unit because, in the first instance, no ambulance was immediately available. Further, can he confirm that St John Ambulance is funded to operate only one rostered shift per day at Palmerston and that, last week, even that shift was not available on several occasions?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of the incident referred to by the Leader of the Opposition which occurred last Friday. I have had the matter investigated to ascertain the facts. I am advised that St John Ambulance was contacted at 12.29 pm last Friday in relation to an accident at Palmerston. I do not know the details of the accident. At 12.31, an ambulance was dispatched from Darwin and it arrived at 12.45 pm, I understand, to attend the patient.

The ambulance service at Palmerston is provided on an 8 hours per day shift from 2.00 pm until 10.00 pm. Other services are provided on a call basis from the Casuarina ambulance station. I am advised that this is an arrangement that was proposed by St John Ambulance as a means of providing ambulance services. I am not prepared to say anything more than that until I have the details. I am not prepared to comment on matters that I have not yet had confirmed.

I understand that the average call out time for answering calls under optimal conditions in Palmerston is 12 minutes. That relates to response times in equivalent cities in Australia of between 15 minutes and 18 minutes under optimal conditions. I refer to places such as Bendigo in Victoria, Tamworth in New South Wales, Cairns in Queensland and Karratha in Western Australia. There is always a great difficulty in determining what is an appropriate response in the provision of emergency services. One would like to see responses within a couple of minutes if that were physically possible. Services seek to provide that sort of response. Our contract with St John Ambulance is that it provide an effective and efficient ambulance service in the Northern Territory. Its allocation and organisation of resources is carried out by St John Ambulance, and I have faith in its ability to develop and provide such services.

With respect to the particular incident referred to, because I was aware of the circumstances and some concerns, I made the effort to find out whether there had been any untoward occurrences in relation to it. I understand that it is the result of the time limits which I have told the honourable member about.

Mr Smith: The problem is that you do not have a full-time service in Palmerston.

Mr HATTON: There is not a 24-hour service in Palmerston. That is correct. It is not correct to say that a full-time, 24-hour ambulance service is not available to the citizens of Palmerston. The issue that arises is that of the appropriateness of response times to incidents.

Excisions Legislation

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer to a Sunday Territorian column written by the Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Yunupingu. He said that the Northern Territory government was reneging on its word in relation to the excisions on pastoral properties legislation. Has the Chief Minister in fact reneged on his word?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, certainly my attention was drawn to that column, which concerned me but I guess did not surprise me. The Chairman of the Northern Land Council's claims are totally untrue and seek to heap on the Territory government the failings of other parties in this excisions program, particularly the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The facts are these, Mr Speaker, and it is important that honourable members bear them in mind because the excisions process in the Northern Territory is of very great significance to the Northern Territory, particularly to Aboriginal people. On 7 September, the Prime Minister and I signed a Memorandum of Agreement on the granting of community living areas on Northern Territory pastoral properties. That memorandum committed both the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth to a course of action and required early legislative action from both of us. Honourable members will recall that the Territory government introduced the Community Living Areas Bill in the October sittings and this House passed that bill during the same sittings. Last week, we introduced amendments to the Crown Lands Act dealing with certain access issues associated with the excisions program. We have indicated our intention to seek passage of that bill during the course of this week.

The Commonwealth, for its part, was required to amend the Land Rights Act to provide for the scheduling of certain parts of existing claims on stock routes and reserves. That legislation is currently before the Senate. A very important provision under the Memorandum of Agreement is that the Commonwealth has agreed to commence the amendments to section 50 of the Land Rights Act, passed through the parliament in June 1987, to remove stock routes and stock reserves from future land claims. In fact, my understanding is that section 50 is to be amended prior to its commencement.

Mr Speaker, a great deal has been achieved since the Prime Minister and I signed that Memorandum of Agreement in September. It is totally incorrect to claim, as Mr Yunupingu has done, that the whole process has been delayed and that the Northern Territory is not honouring its word. I note that Mr Yunupingu went on to say that perhaps he could be proved wrong. I am sure that that is the case. There are still steps to be taken before all of the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement are in place. The Commonwealth is clearly lagging behind the Northern Territory in processing the necessary legislation. More importantly, it is a matter of great concern that the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has failed to undertake a meaningful and responsible program of consultation with pastoralists. The consequence is that pastoralists are suspicious of the Commonwealth's intentions and genuinely concerned about the consequences of some of the actions the federal minister is proposing to take, as indicated by some aspects of the schedule to the bill now before the federal parliament. The most important of these is the federal minister's apparent determination to proceed to schedule areas on stock routes and reserves without first resolving matters of great concern to pastoralists.

I have to say that, in this regard, the federal minister is ignoring the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement, which very carefully indicated under what circumstances scheduling would or would not take place. I have pointed out repeatedly to the federal minister that this approach would inevitably provoke a suspicious and resentful attitude among pastoralists. I regret to say that this appears to be happening.

I am not here as an apologist for the federal minister in any way. It is a matter of considerable disappointment and regret that he has failed to properly implement the Memorandum of Agreement. In so doing, he has eroded much of the goodwill which has been established following the outcome of negotiations between the Prime Minister and myself. As for the Chairman of the Northern Land Council, it would seem that he is unable to comprehend what is taking place, even in relation to these issues which should be of great concern to him. I hope that he is being briefed daily on this matter by the bureaucracy which supports him, as events unfold in Canberra on a day-by-day basis.

#### Ambulance Service at Palmerston

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Is the minister aware that the Deputy Chief Minister and member for Palmerston was informed in April of this year of the problems caused by the lack of a full-time ambulance service in Palmerston? Is he further aware that his colleague was told at that time that extra funded shifts were vital to maintain standard services to Palmerston? Is he aware that his colleague, the member for Palmerston, has not even bothered to reply to the letter raising those serious concerns?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I must add some information to my previous answer because it was incomplete. I have further been advised that, whilst that ambulance left at 12.31 pm and arrived at 12.43 pm, a paramedical vehicle was also sent to the accident scene to provide support. That vehicle left at 12.32 pm and arrived at 12.44 pm, a response time in both cases of 12 minutes. I point that out in order to fully clarify the situation.

In respect of correspondence to the local member, the Deputy Chief Minister, I understand that he has had some discussion as recently as last week ...

Mr Coulter: On 7 April after receiving a letter on 4 April.

Mr HATTON: ... with the gentleman who raised these concerns with him. The Deputy Chief Minister has not failed to respond to those. In fact, he met with the gentleman who raised the concerns and spoke to him about them.

Mr Smith: He hasn't met the concerns, though, has he?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is raising a concern about the ambulance service. I ask him to take the time to talk to St John Ambulance about this.

Advertisement by Small Business

Mr SETTER to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, it has come to my attention that an advertisement, entitled 'Christmas Party Tax', appeared recently in a southern newspaper. The advertisement apparently was placed by a small business and drew attention to the difficulties small businesses face under the impost of the federal government's tax regime. Can the Chief Minister advise if he is aware of this advertisement and if a similar situation exists for small businesses operating in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of this advertisement which may be of some interest to honourable members. The situation certainly applies to small businesses in the Northern Territory as well. I would like to read this short advertisement to honourable members. It has a large heading: 'Christmas Party Tax'. It was placed in a southern newspaper:

Yes Mr Hawke, Mr Keating and the rest of the Labor government, there is a Santa Claus - but not where you work. Once each year, my business takes out my 16 hard-working men and women and their partners for a Christmas party. To us, it has become more than just a good night out. It symbolises the end of the year. It is a thank-you to our partners for the unsung part they play in our success. It is also a thank-you from the business to those who work so hard year in and year out.

For the past few years, the business has paid a tax on our Christmas party to Canberra. It is considered a fringe benefit. Of all the new taxes imposed on this small business and its proprietors, and there have been many - an increase of 48.2% to 1988 since Labor came to power - none galls me as much as Labor's Christmas party tax. To me, it symbolises Labor's lack of understanding of how successful small businesses operate. It strikes at the very heart of the camaraderie and goodwill and spirit that must be present for a small business to succeed. It is an insult to those of us who work in small business. I challenge you, Mr Hawke, Mr Keating and the whole Labor government, to publish your justification for the Christmas party tax.

Yours sincerely,  
Grahame Hawkins

Mr Speaker, I am sure that many people in Territory business feel much the same as Mr Hawkins feels. Within the next few months, of course, they will have an opportunity to express their displeasure at taxes such as this, when the next federal election is held.

Clearing on Pastoral Leases

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Can the minister tell me whether there is any obligation on holders of pastoral leases to notify relevant government departments of any plans for extensive clearing on their leases and, if not, why not? If so, what is the response of his department to reports - and I do not know whether they are

based on fact or rumour - that there are plans at Douglas Station to undertake extensive clearing operations in the order of 30 000 ha?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unable to answer that question but I will certainly obtain details and provide them to the honourable member as soon as possible.

Malak House

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Yesterday, I forwarded to the minister a statement containing serious allegations about conditions at Malak House. Can the minister confirm that, on arrival at Malak House, whether on remand or otherwise, new inmates spend up to 3 days in a security room clothed only in their underpants? I ask the honourable minister whether he approves of this practice and, if so, on what grounds?

ANSWER

The first part of the honourable member's question indicated that he had written to me on this matter. I have not received that letter.

Mr Ede: It was hand delivered.

Mr REED: I can advise the honourable member that there may have been some recent instances of increased numbers of inmates at Malak House, principally as a consequence of a training course for officers of the Wildman River Wilderness Camp which led to the temporary transfer of detainees from Wildman River to Malak House. I think that the training program finishes this week and that, consequently, detainees from Wildman River will return there from Malak House. However, I will take note of the honourable member's concerns and provide a more detailed response later.

Air Services to Yulara

Mr BELL to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I refer the minister to his extraordinary comments and those of the former Minister for Tourism, the member for Araluen, particularly the claim that there was no demand for air services to Yulara. Can the honourable minister now confirm that he will join myself and the Minister for Tourism in our efforts to get air services to Yulara restored to their pre-dispute levels?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can answer that question in 2 parts. The first part is that, for the last 100 days, I have been joining with the Minister for Tourism in an effort to restore services to Yulara and to other Territory locations as well. The member for MacDonnell, the local member for Yulara, entered into this at day 101. I am amazed at his lack of interest until this late stage. The reality is that the Minister for Tourism and myself have been able to achieve some results. There now will be 4 BEA 146 flights in and out of Yulara each day - my apologies, each week.

Mr Bell: It is Thursday, Fred.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the interjection by the member for MacDonnell just goes to show ...

Mr Bell: It's not what you said on television on Thursday night either.

Mr FINCH: In fact, the lobbying and constructive support for Yulara over the last 3 months by the Minister for Tourism and myself has come up with some results. A fortnight ago, the Chief Minister gave formal notice to Ansett that it was in breach of its licence conditions. The honourable member failed to hear the whole involvement of this government in restoring air services. It goes back to day 1.

Mr Bell: It is a bit hard to hear when you were not saying anything.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, on day 1, this government lobbied Ansett Airlines to have services restored and, where they were not restored, to cooperate with having other operators fly the routes. As the honourable member would know from what I said last week, we were able to get some services in and out of Gove and Groote Eylandt. The charter operator who had been flying indirectly in and out of Yulara for some time opted to move to the east coast where he saw more lucrative fields, and that is his commercial decision. Nonetheless, it was the Northern Territory government's position that any operator who wanted to run to and from Yulara or any other part of the Northern Territory across licensed routes was free to do so. What we did not count on was that the Prime Minister himself intervened in this whole matter to such an extent that, 3½ months later, we are still waiting for a resolution of this dispute ...

Mr Bell: Blame the feds, go on. It is always their fault.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, 2 parties were involved in the disputation from day 1 and the Prime Minister, without any reasoning at all, came in boots and all on day 1 and involved himself in the matter frustrating any possible reasonable attempts made by the 2 parties to get back together.

I do not condone the actions of the airlines or the pilots, but I certainly do not condone the action of the conciliator, Prime Minister Hawke, in getting involved. As I said last Thursday, the sooner he backs out of the way and allows people to use their own resources to come to a resolution, the better. But, for the honourable member to stand up in this House and suddenly grandstand 3½ months later, is shameful of him. It is just as shameful as it was when, some 4 weeks ago, the federal member, Warren Snowdon, stood up in Alice Springs and said: 'Look what I have done. I have brought 2 Australian airline flights into Alice Springs'. Mr Speaker, the background to that is very clear. When I pursued the matter, Australian Airlines had not even heard from Warren Snowdon about lobbying for extra services. He waltzes through the corridors of Canberra saying that he has access to this person and that person and that he is very influential. He has not been at all influential in this dispute, by any means, nor will the member for MacDonnell be. I ask the honourable member to be constructive. The work that this government has been doing has led to a return of flights, to the pleasure of those operators in Yulara who have had a tough time, and that is no thanks to their local member.

As outlined last week, this government will continue its efforts, and we have sought from Ansett and from Australian Airlines an undertaking on the services that will be in place for the next 3 or 4 months and, where services are not met, whether they be to Tennant Creek, Katherine, further out to Gove and Groote Eylandt, or anywhere else in the Northern Territory, including commuter runs to Aboriginal settlements, this government ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Minister for Transport and Works seems unable to give a simple answer to a simple question. He insists on using the House's question time for the purpose of making speeches. This matter has been debated ad nauseam. He was asked a very simple question about whether or not he would care to join with the member for MacDonnell in promoting further flights to Ayers Rock. The minister has done nothing but repeat speeches that have been made ad nauseam in this House. We have only 2 more question times left for this year, and the minister seems determined to waste question time. Mr Speaker, I ask that you direct him to be prompt in his reply.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. However, I ask the Minister for Transport and Works to complete his answer.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that one has to repeat answers to repeat questions. The Territory government has been doing very well in returning air services to the Territory. It will continue to do well. As I was saying, the Territory government has made it clear to Ansett, Australian Airlines and to other commuter operators that, where pre-dispute service levels are not being met, we will encourage, allow and expect their cooperation with any other operator using any other acceptable CAA-approved aircraft to make up the difference in those levels. That is the constructive work being done by this government. We will not tolerate latter-day harping by the member for MacDonnell who stands condemned for his lack of involvement.

#### Mosquitoes in Northern Suburbs

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

The minister will be aware of the annual infestation of mosquitoes in the northern suburbs coming from both Leanyer and Meckitt Swamps. Can the minister advise what programs his department has in place to eradicate the problem, especially in relation the salt marsh mosquito, *Aedes vigilax*.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as everybody in the far northern suburbs knows only too well - and I am continually having this brought to my attention by the CLP members representing the community in that area - there have been problems with mosquito control recently, largely as a result of weather and wind conditions which frustrated attempts to destroy larvae or wrigglers. However, I am pleased to report that the latest breeding cycle brought on by high tides about 2 weeks ago has been interrupted by some very swift and efficient work by the Medical Entomology Branch of the Department of Health and Community Services. This unit was set up some years ago to control, among other things, the huge mosquito problem which used to plague residents of Darwin's northern suburbs. I know there are complaints about mosquitoes from time to time and I suspect that that will always be the case because of the environmental uncertainties associated with control programs. If there are high winds and adverse weather conditions, the spraying programs are not as effective as we would like. That is generally when we have an upsurge of mosquitoes in an area. That is when debates about fogging occur in the community and there are even fanciful discussions about building dams over bomb sites.

I can assure honourable members that the situation today is much better that it was 10 years ago. The Medical Entomology Branch must take a very large credit for this. In cooperation with Darwin City Council, the branch has eliminated the threat proposed by breeding sites which once existed

throughout the town area, particularly around East Point, Rapid Creek, Nightcliff, Casuarina and the Botanical Gardens.

Branch staff mounted operations again last week following inspections that revealed extensive hatching of larvae of salt marsh mosquitoes, *Aedes vigilax*, in Holmes Jungle and Meckitt and Leanyer Swamps following very high tides on 14 and 15 November. The spraying operation, which was conducted using helicopters, covered more than 80 ha at Holmes Jungle and Meckitt Swamp and smaller pockets of larvae infestation in bomb craters in Leanyer Swamp and around the sewage ponds. Inspections after the weekend spraying revealed a better than 99% kill rate in Holmes Jungle and Leanyer Swamp and a 90% kill rate in Meckitt Swamp. The lower kill rate was due to thick vegetation and water movement, but this was considered adequate because this area is farthest from suburban homes. Most people living near the Leanyer Swamp would not even have been aware that this operation took place. It was unnecessary to spray near homes.

The insecticide use on the weekend cannot harm fish or other mosquito predators and it does not persist in the environment for more than 24 hours. The salt marsh mosquito is a persistent biter during the day and the evening and many people living in the northern suburbs today would not be familiar with the severity of the regular swarms of these mosquitoes several years ago. Problems such as the big swarm which occurred several weeks ago are now a rarity. This is due to larvae spraying campaigns and also to the construction of an extensive drainage network under the supervision of health authorities which has largely nullified the mosquito breeding problem close to the northern suburbs homes.

However, salt marsh mosquitoes can disperse up to 300 km from their breeding sites and therefore the potential for occasional infestation is still there. The situation is being studied to see if the mosquito problem can be handled effectively. A working group of the recently established joint Northern Territory government and Darwin City Council task force on mosquitoes, which comprises officers from the Department of Health and Community Services and the Darwin City Council, is meeting regularly and working towards preparation of a comprehensive statement on current control and monitoring procedures and on proposals for future management. That report is due at the end of the month and, until it is complete, I think it is premature to discuss the possibility of other approaches such as the salt-water lake which has been suggested.

Outside the controlled areas that were sprayed at the weekend, mosquitoes are still breeding, as some of Darwin's rural residents may now be discovering. Parts of Howard Springs close to Howard Swamp could be subject to increased mosquito activity this week and I urge Howard Springs residents to protect themselves and their children with mosquito repellents and clothing which covers as much of their bodies as possible if they venture outdoors during the evening or early morning.

Malak House

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Could the minister advise whether he has received the letter which was delivered by hand to his officer yesterday and which contained serious allegations about conditions at Malak House? Could the minister also confirm that inmates spend up to 3 days in a security situation, clothed only in their underpants?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I have not seen the letter.

Mr Smith: It was delivered by hand yesterday.

Mr REED: It may well have arrived in my office, Mr Speaker. I have indicated to the honourable member that, as soon as I am able, I will provide an answer in relation to the matters which he has raised.

#### Closure of BHP Gold Mines Ltd Darwin Office

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Can the minister confirm whether the Darwin office of BHP Gold Mines Ltd is to be closed, whether or not Darwin staff are being retrenched and whether or not this is a direct result of the federal government's decision not to proceed with the Coronation Hill goldmine?

Mr Ede: The answer to the question is no.

ANSWER

In fact, in response to the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the answer is yes. It is a very sad day when such a closure occurs. Politicians may stand in forums such as this Legislative Assembly and talk about whether mining will proceed at Coronation Hill or not, but the fact is that what hurts most is the loss of jobs. We talk about wealth creation and the potential of Coronation Hill in terms of the \$100m-worth of minerals that it contains but, when it comes down to the wire, a decision not to mine led to the loss of jobs, the closure of offices, hardship and stress, and people leaving town. All that occurs for no reason whatsoever. We should be proceeding with the proposed mine and, as Australians, we should be proud of that. Instead, we have nothing but hardship and the loss of jobs.

It is all very well for politicians such as the federal member for the Northern Territory, Mr Snowdon, to gloat about the Coronation Hill fiasco. He sees the fact that mining is not proceeding as a personal triumph and counts it as a political victory. Meanwhile, Territorians who know or care nothing about political gains and power plays are out of work with Christmas just around the corner. I confirm with regret that BHP Gold Mines Ltd is shutting down operations at its Winnellie office and that at least half a dozen workers were affected immediately. Among them is the office manager who, I understand, has worked on this project for the past 7 years. She is a single mum who purchased a house in Darwin just a couple of months ago.

The BHP decision is related directly to the lack of progress on the Coronation Hill project and it is difficult to blame the company in these circumstances. The mining industry is patient, but not that patient. It is entirely unreasonable to expect any company to invest many millions of dollars and in fact BHP Gold Mines ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! As I pointed out earlier, we have only 2 more sessions of question time during these sittings. The minister has answered the question adequately. He was asked whether the Darwin office of BHP Gold Mines Ltd would be closed and, if so, whether that closure related to the federal government's decision on Coronation Hill. The minister has answered yes to both questions and I fail to see why he should ramble on.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy to complete his answer to the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I believe that I am answering the question.

Members interjecting.

Mr COULTER: I also believe that, by interjecting and calling frivolous points of order, the opposition is simply using up the remaining period of question time during parliamentary sittings this year.

BHP has spent \$12m on the Coronation Hill project.

Mr LEO: You were not asked how much it spent.

Mr COULTER: I am telling you what it means. It means jobs. Most of that money was spent in the Northern Territory. It meant jobs for Northern Territorians, jobs for 14 Aboriginal people working out there. Jobs, jobs, jobs - that is what it was about. All that has now been lost. The office has been closed because of political expediency and the fact that the federal government does not want to make a decision in respect of one of Australia's best known mineral reserves. That is what it is about, and hardship has been created through the loss of those jobs just before the Christmas period. As I said, it is people in those jobs, people who have invested in the Northern Territory themselves, who are thrown out of work. They do not have anything to do with the political power plays that Mr Warren Snowdon, the federal member, keeps on talking about. That is what it is about, and it is a shame. Shame on the federal government for having caused such hardship and stress.

#### Gurungu Council and TCHIP

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

Why has the Gurungu Council at Elliott been treated differently in relation to money for housing and town camps to Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs and Julalikari Council in Tennant Creek? I understand that it has been the philosophy of the minister that Aboriginal people should be allowed to make their own decisions. Why can't he accept this one?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am rather surprised that the member for Arafura, the shadow minister for local government, would ask this question, given that I am aware that he knows the answer. The government took a decision some time ago to enter into an agreement with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to provide town camp housing and infrastructure to urban communities. That agreement, made between the Minister for Lands and Housing and the federal government, provided for \$18m of Territory funds and \$12m of Commonwealth funds, over a period of 3 years, be allocated to improve town camp housing and infrastructure. At that time, the Territory government took the view that, other than in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek where large organisations existed in municipal areas, the appropriate body to deliver those services was community government. The form of government that the shadow minister and I represent sorely wants to provide those services to their constituents in places like Borroloola and Elliott.

That decision was taken by this government, not because we did not want those responsibilities in the hands of Aboriginal people but because they should be in the hands of the people fully instituted in those communities and best equipped to deliver those services. The councils at both Borrooloola and Elliott have a majority of Aboriginal members, but they are not solely Aboriginal. They are representative of those communities. Basically, the numbers in the council reflect the numbers of Aboriginal people compared to other than Aboriginal people in those 2 communities.

Both community government councils sought to have the responsibility for the administration of TCHIP. The other organisations were formed under Commonwealth legislation - legislation that I and ministers before me have sought to have rescinded, legislation that was put in place before we had effective local government in Aboriginal communities. That legislation was put in place by the Commonwealth but was to be rescinded when we had effective local government here. While we have made approaches to successive ministers of the Commonwealth to have that legislation rescinded, they have refused. They have said that there may still be communities which want to use it. There has been a deliberate attempt, on the part of the Commonwealth and the Northern Land Council, to ensure that, where we have community government established, they form these other bodies under Commonwealth legislation which claim to be legitimate councils.

I have proof that, through its lawyers, the Northern Land Council was the body that established Gurungu Council and the council at Borrooloola, and yet the honourable member opposite, who purports to represent local government, believes that these bodies are the more appropriate bodies to establish and handle TCHIP in those communities. Gurungu was established on a \$35 000 grant from the Commonwealth minister. The group at Borrooloola was established under the same method using the federal legislation and the land councils as vehicles. They have set out deliberately to thwart the legitimate interests of the local governments in those areas. In respect of Elliott, they have taken proposals to the council at the last minute and sought to have the council accede to their wishes at a moment's notice. That is not appropriate. There have been claims made against the Community Government Council at Elliott. I have had them investigated and found them to be untrue. In fact, the Community Government Council at Elliott will provide the services under TCHIP. They will provide whatever services are required to the Aboriginal people at Elliott. However, it must be remembered that the land on which they are going is privately owned. It is owned by the Aboriginal people who can say that they do not want it to provide the services. If they do that, the council would be hard pressed to provide the services that it should provide for those people.

When the Elliott and Borrooloola councils were established, they took the town camps under their wing as places that should be maintained and supported by them. It is really up to the people to support their local government. If they do not support their local government, the local government cannot support them. There have been complaints that members of the Gurungu Council have tried to undermine the legitimate members of local government in that community by speaking to them outside council and trying to have them express a view that is contrary to what they express in council. I am not prepared to let that happen. The government's decision stands and community government will be responsible for TCHIP in those 2 communities.

Sheratons and Yulara - Exposure of Government Funds Due to Pilots' Dispute

Mr FLOREANI to TREASURER

During the August sittings, the Minister for Industries and Development stated that the pilots' strike had increased the Territory taxpayers' subsidy to the Sheratons by \$200 000 per week. Would the Treasurer advise the Assembly of the maximum exposure to date that the government is likely to face in relation to both the Sheratons and Yulara as a result of the pilots' dispute?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have such information before me at this time. The effects of the pilots' dispute on the Northern Territory are indeed very severe and, from a budgetary point of view, we will be making a comprehensive assessment of its effects on our revenue and expenditure patterns, and how they may have varied since the dispute began. However, that exercise is not expected to be completed until the end of December. In the meantime, I will see whether I can provide the honourable member with some information.

Malak House

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Can the honourable minister confirm that teenagers held at Malak House have been kept in solitary confinement for up to 2 days and, in 1 case reported to me, for up to 4 days, despite the fact that departmental regulations provide for a 12-hour maximum solitary confinement period?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this question relates to the matters raised by the member for Arnhem. I have indicated that I have not seen the letter referred to by that honourable member. I would imagine that my staff are currently pursuing the matter and I will obtain an answer for the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Arnhem as soon as possible.

Todd River - Reported Environmental Problems

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

There have been a number of recent reports about river red gums dying along the Todd and various other environmental problems. A few weeks ago, a suggestion was even floated suggesting that a Todd River authority needed to be established to properly manage the river environment. Could the minister tell the Assembly what is actually occurring and what he is doing about the Todd River situation?

ANSWER

There is no doubt that there has been concern about river red gums in Alice Springs. The whole Todd River environment has long been a matter of concern within the community and to a number of members of this House, including the member for Sadadeen, the member for Araluen and other Alice Springs members who on many occasions have raised issues associated with the Todd. The situation is quite complex and recently there have been calls for the formation of a Todd River authority in Alice Springs.

I took the opportunity recently to visit Alice Springs to brief myself on matters associated with my new portfolios and, during that visit, I met with representatives of a number of authorities which have responsibilities relating to various aspects of the Todd River. The problem is not so much a lack of control or legislation as a lack of coordination between the various governments, departments and authorities which currently have a say in the management of the river and its resources. I doubt that another statutory authority is needed, with the expense and additional bureaucracy that would entail. Perhaps some kind of interdepartmental committee, including representation from the Alice Springs Town Council, may be an appropriate solution. I am preparing a report for the Chief Minister who will be responsible for any decisions associated with interdepartmental activities. I will be making recommendations on an appropriate mechanism to coordinate activities relating to the Todd River.

The deaths of river red gums are commonly attributed to sandmining and erosion in the river bed, exposing their root systems. There is also strong evidence that the rising watertable of the town basin is to blame. In addition, some dieback would be due to the trees approaching the end of their natural life span. There is a need to set clear objectives for river management. For example, the roles of the river as a flood safety valve and as a tourist attraction need to be defined. How important is the river as a source of sand for local construction? The current debate on the value or otherwise of introducing couch and buffel grass perhaps fails to recognise that, while the profile of the riverbed in the vicinity of Alice Springs has changed dramatically with flooding over recent years, scientific records show that the cross-sectional area has changed very little. There is evidence that the grass has a negligible effect on the water flow during a significant flood. However, there does seem to be a case for considering a revised management regime in relation to the introduced grasses. There is also the question of the proposed flood mitigation dam and its likely effect on the river environment. I have asked the Conservation Commission to examine the situation and I expect to receive expert advice soon.

The final decision will be a matter for the Chief Minister because it will involve a number of departmental authorities. Sandmining is under the control of the Department of Mines and Energy. Water controls are the province of the Power and Water Authority. In fact, within the old town boundaries, the river has reserve status under the management of the Alice Springs Town Council. At the Telegraph Station Site, the river is under the control of the Conservation Commission. The problem is one of bringing all those authorities and functions together. The fire management regime used in controlling grasses sometimes creates problems by killing off the young river red gum saplings. That leads to a lack of regrowth to replace some of the older trees which are dying off. We are certainly addressing the problems and the matter will be before the Chief Minister in the very near future.

#### Backpacker Accommodation

Mr COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

My question relates to the considerable publicity which has been given to backpacker accommodation and the 5 m<sup>2</sup> rule which relates to such buildings. I ask the minister whether it is a hard and fast rule or will fire ratings of buildings and escape routes be taken into account in determining the safety of buildings? Could the minister also inform me of the government's policy in terms of the application of this rule to caravans? A caravan measuring 9 m by 2.4 m, the dimensions of a 6-berther, only has an area of about 2.4 m<sup>2</sup> per person.

ANSWER

I have some information in relation to this matter which, as the member for Sadadeen rightly observed, has been the subject of considerable interest, particularly in central Australia. There are no codes relating specifically to caravans in respect of floor areas per person. Similarly, that is the case for single dwelling houses under the Northern Territory Building Code. These types of dwellings are not subject to the provisions of part V of the Building Act and are excluded from the fire safety provisions of the Northern Territory Building Code. This is because the dwelling house is usually owned or rented by a single family unit in which family members are responsible or generally considered to be responsible for each other's actions. This is also the case with caravans which, in the main, are owned or rented and used by related family units.

Nevertheless, section 11B of the Caravan Parks Act enables the regulation of numbers of persons who may live in a caravan other than in a caravan park or camping area if the chief inspector considers that the number of persons is excessive. I thought that was a little odd. It seems to indicate that there is a bottom line where the caravan parks inspector could rule that a caravan outside a caravan park or camping area was overloaded with people.

The fire safety codes are designed to provide fire protection generally for people who are working or living together for limited periods and who are unrelated to each other and are not responsible for each other's actions. Clearly, circumstances in low-budget, transient accommodation should, as far as possible, be such that a person who goes to sleep in such accommodation should be reasonably able to do so in the knowledge that he will be safe during the night from fire or that, if there is a fire, he will become aware of it and have reasonable time and opportunity to escape.

The current Building Code and the proposed building code for Australia require 15 m<sup>2</sup> per person for hostel-type accommodation. This is also the case with guest house accommodation. Code 20 was adopted on 29 August 1989 by the Darwin Planning Authority after negotiations with the Department of Health and Community Services. The model used for this code was Cairns City Council by-laws which reflect the International Youth Hostels' standard floor areas and cubic capacities allowable which are 4.65 m<sup>2</sup> per person floor space and 12.5 m<sup>3</sup> dormitory space per person.

A meeting was held in Darwin in September between the Department of Lands and Housing, the Northern Territory Fire Service and the Department of Health and Community Services to review the public safety issues relating to backpacker accommodation. Having regard to Code 20 and the requirements of the Northern Territory health regulations which requires 14.1 m<sup>3</sup> per person for health reasons, as well as a ceiling height of 2.4 m required by the Building Code, it was identified that a floor area of 5.8 m<sup>2</sup> per person was required to meet these regulations. The Northern Territory Fire Service accommodated this process by accepting that, if certain other provisions were provided, such as single station smoke detectors for premises accommodating less than 20 persons, and hose-reel firefighting equipment, that a floor area of 5 m<sup>2</sup> per person was a compromise well below that of the 15 m<sup>2</sup> required under the Northern Territory Building Code. It is possible for developers to seek a variation of the Building Code requirements through the Building Act by making application to the Building Controller and each application will be considered on its merits. However, there is a requirement for a standard and 5 m<sup>2</sup> per person in this type of accommodation is a standard that was agreed to by the 3 relevant Territory government departments.

Drawing a parallel between a caravan and a converted house in which there may be up to 70 people accommodated for the night is not really appropriate. While there may be circumstances where caravans may be used to provide accommodation to individuals on a low-cost basis, in the most cases they are rented by persons from the same family who are hiring the caravan as a single family unit dwelling place for a period of time as opposed to a backpacker situation where a person, more often than not, is accommodated with people with whom he is not acquainted and whose actions during the night hours he cannot control.

There was a fair bit of scaremongering by some arms of the media in Alice Springs about the fact that a 5 m<sup>2</sup> flat rule for backpacker accommodation would close down a number of establishments. Indeed, across the Territory, a number of establishments have closed down, and probably reasonably so. However, the 5 m<sup>2</sup> rule is primarily one which is to apply to accommodation which was not purpose built hostel accommodation and it applies specifically to houses that are converted. In many cases, these are houses of more than one storey and are not in a situation of a purpose built facility where additional egress facilities have been incorporated into the building and, in many cases, appropriate fire safety equipment has been fully installed. The rule that has been adopted will not result in the widespread closure of accommodation in the Territory.

Cuts to 1989-90 Budget

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Can the Chief Minister confirm that government departments have been asked to make cuts in their 1989-90 budgets, including \$2m cuts for the police department and up to \$4m in the Department of Health and Community Services?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I cannot confirm that they have been asked to make those cuts at all.

Cost Savings in Property Management

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

I refer him to a question that I asked late last year about cost saving measures to be introduced in respect of property management in the public service. Can he advise me whether those measures were put in place and what savings have been made as a result?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this is a very good question. Attempts were made in 1987 to examine property management and identify savings which could be made in that area. The cleaning contract has already saved quite significant sums for the government and has the potential to save more. The new cleaning contracts do not necessarily require cleaning on a daily basis. Cleaning is done at a nominated frequency depending on the use of the building and the necessity for cleaning. The savings that we are currently making are in the order of \$112 000 or \$113 000 a year.

In relation to power management, obviously we are saving money in this building at present because we have cut down on air-conditioning. The Properties Division has an energy management program which identified buildings that were not cost efficient in the use of power. By the use of timing devices, we are currently saving, on costs of about 12 months ago, \$238 000 per annum. That is a continuing program and we are working through all buildings on a priority basis. In time, that process will bring about enormous cost savings on government buildings. The Government Printing Office is an example where significant savings have been achieved. Through more careful management of its power resource, the Government Printing Office has been able to make very significant savings. That is not the only example. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to make further savings in energy management, cleaning costs and other areas of property management.

Public Service Incentives

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

My question is in 3 parts. It refers to the package of conditions brought down yesterday. Why did the Chief Minister refer to the \$15 pay rise to public servants as an 'incentive' when it is not a cent more than their entitlement under national wage agreements and when Northern Territory public servants have been among the last public servants in Australia to receive it? Secondly, when will the Chief Minister provide a simple, clear and accurate costing of the components of the package? Thirdly, will the Chief Minister

assure this House that the incentives for the FOILS, Fares Out of Isolated Localities Scheme, will be in place in time for teachers and public servants wishing to use the FOILS fares over the Christmas vacation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there are 3 parts to the question. I consider the first one to be somewhat pedantic. I comment merely that the Leader of the Opposition feels that word that I used in my statement yesterday was probably an inappropriate choice. I guess he is entitled to that opinion.

The second part of this question related to the cost of the benefits. I do not know when I can provide him with a detailed listing of the costs. I am sure that the 15 300-odd public servants who will partake of those benefits are less concerned with their overall cost to government than with the fact that the government has moved to recognise their special needs in so many respects.

In response to the third part of the question, I advise that each of the respective schemes is to be in operation as soon as is practical. The implementation has been left to the Public Service Commissioner who, I understand, has a fair amount of action to undertake in terms of amending various rules, regulations and so forth, in order to bring some of the schemes into operation. I cannot give the Leader of the Opposition an exact assurance as to when these ...

Mr McCarthy interjecting.

Mr PERRON: I note the interjection from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government that the accommodation component of TA which will now be payable for those public servants who partake of FOILS benefits is to be available forthwith.

#### Education Policy

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

The minister was accused recently of not being in charge of education. He was told by the member for Stuart that he must exert his authority over his department and that his secretary must implement the policy of the government without question and with complete obedience. In fact, the member for Stuart went so far as to say that, if the secretary did not do that, he should be sacked forthwith. Will the minister seek the support of the member for Stuart, which will logically be forthcoming on the basis of his recent statements, in getting the message across to all members of the Department of Education, including all teachers, that their job is to implement government policy without question? In the process, he might like to undertake to point out the inconsistencies of the member for Stuart in his attitude toward the external exams and his opposition to the government in that matter.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Sadadeen for his question. I have tried always to seek the support of the member for Stuart in relation to government policy and on the formulation of government policy. Quite often, as honourable members would be aware, the member for Stuart gives a completely negative response to many of the documents which put government policy in place. I should start by saying that there never has been any question

regarding the secretary and the implementation of government policy. He has always carried that out to perfection, and he will continue to do so.

It is indeed unfortunate that the member for Stuart has been hell-bent on trying to destroy the positive policies of this government in relation to education. It is interesting to note that a matter of public importance will be discussed later today and I hope that the media and others will be present to listen to that debate. We can go through a whole range of issues where the member for Stuart has been negative in relation to the university, to the Year 10 assessment ...

Mr Ede: The university? What a load of rubbish.

Mr HARRIS: Here he is now! Mr Speaker, I can go through a whole range of issues that have benefited Territory people. I can remember problems with the member for Stuart over the secondary college split. There are real concerns relating to Aboriginal education which are being addressed by this government yet the member for Stuart carps and carries on and does not look responsibly at the issues. I have tried repeatedly to get him on side. At one stage recently, I thought that he was coming around because he took part in one section of my review. I was very glad to see him sitting down and listening to how the review was operating.

Mr Ede: What? You could not get anybody to stay. You begged me to stay because nobody else would hang around.

Mr HARRIS: Here we go again, Mr Speaker!

Matters relating to Aboriginal education such as avoidance problems, the inability of a brother and sister to sit in the same room, skin groupings etc are very real problems which need to be addressed. I hope that the member for Stuart and other members who have predominantly Aboriginal electorates will have a great deal of input. I will continue to seek the support of the member for Stuart. I agree with what the member for Sadadeen said the other day. Departmental personnel and teachers should be supporting and implementing government policy. We give plenty of notice and opportunity for comment in relation to policy. Once policy is determined by the government, it is their job to carry it out. That is very clear. The secretary does it and the teachers teach according to the policy of government.

I am trying to get the member for Stuart to adopt a responsible attitude to education issues. I hope that he is able encourage teachers and others to implement government policy. Unfortunately, I do not hold much hope, but I guess I can always live in hope. There is to be a matter of public importance discussion later today in relation to education. I will be outlining a wide range of areas where this government has provided opportunities for students to progress through the education system. These are very positive policies. I hope that the media and others will stay for that debate and listen to the nonsense that is put forward by the member for Stuart. I hope that he learns to become involved and to have positive input into the very vital area of education.

#### Vandalism in Conservation Commission Parks

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Mr Speaker, I understand that there is some concern about vandalism in Conservation Commission parks and reserves in central Australia. Could the minister tell us what he and the commissioner are doing about it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there have been some concerns in the central Australian area in particular. Some Alice Springs tour operators and local citizens have reported an increase in vandalism in some parks and reserves. It is a very difficult problem to resolve. We want the natural attractions and Aboriginal art at these sites to be open to the public and we cannot possibly provide full-time security at all points of interest. We have increased ranger patrols at susceptible sites and we are carrying out a thorough investigation to assess damage at Kuyunba, N'Dhala Gorge, Chambers Pillar and Rainbow Valley. The commission has also begun a public awareness program utilising television, radio and newspaper advertisements to seek community assistance. I believe that an appeal to the public is the best course of action. After all, these vandals destroy their own heritage. If they realise that, perhaps they will reconsider their actions.

Another initiative the commission has taken is to seek advice from the Psychology Unit of the Northern Territory University hopefully to shed some light on the best way of appealing for public understanding and assistance and the most appropriate design and wording for signs at those parks and reserves which have received the attention of vandals. The type of vandalism that has been concerning us is the engraving or carving of initials and names into features such as Chambers Pillar, the possible removal of slabs of rock bearing Aboriginal art, the use of spray-pack paints on rock, and people damaging Aboriginal petroglyph sites by walking over them.

As members of the community, we must all play our part in promoting protection and respect for those parts of our heritage that we want people to see and enjoy so that they can gain the benefits which flow from an understanding of our environment. Unfortunately, if these practices are allowed to continue, and if the community does not stand up and make it unacceptable, as it has done in the case of litter control, an unfortunate consequence is likely to be the forced closure of some areas to public access. I desperately hope that we never have to take such action.

Darwin Bus Service Strike

Mr LEO to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

My question assumes that the minister is aware that the Darwin Bus Service strike is now in its third day. What he may not be aware of is that people trying to get to work, students trying to get to exams and shoppers trying to get to supermarkets have been stranded for those 3 days. Can the minister confirm that the strike is not over a large pay claim or award conditions but over a tiny and easily remedied management practice? Is it not a fact that the current practice penalises drivers for shortfalls in the daily take when the accounts demonstrate that the quarterly take is consistently higher than ticket sales would indicate? Was not an agreed solution suddenly dumped by management yesterday prolonging the strike with all its inconvenience and will the minister instruct management to accept the agreement hammered out in the commission?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the honourable member is in part correct. I am very much aware of the deleterious effect that the strike has had over the last 3 days, particularly on students who are doing their final exams, on pensioners and on others in the community who have no other form of transportation. I am aware

that it is over a very trivial matter. It is not over a major wages claim but over a minor matter of procedure which has been in place for some 7 or 8 years ...

Mr Smith: On a trial basis.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it has been in place on a trial basis, if you like, for 7 or 8 years. Part of the requirements of this accountability of the bus drivers' take is not unique to the Northern Territory nor would one expect it to be. It is a practice that occurs in every state in Australia, on every public transport system with the exception of the ACT where tickets are not even issued. I am sure that is not a situation that honourable members would suggest ought to be the procedure for any area of government involving collection of public money.

In fact, the system in use here is probably easier for bus drivers to operate than some of the systems elsewhere. Let me briefly explain that system, which has recently been tightened in a security sense, in the interests of the drivers as much as anyone else. On completion of their shifts, drivers clock off on the computerised system, which has a record of all of the individual components of their day's work. That, of course, is part of the balancing procedure. Instead of tying up their money bags with string or whatever, drivers now have their own individual seals which they use to seal their bags before depositing them in a night safe. This is not dissimilar to a bank's night safe. The supervisor endorses the fact that the driver has clocked off and that the bag has been deposited in the safe. Of course, the supervisor does not even have access to that night security system.

On the following morning, accompanied by supervisory staff, the security firm removes the contents from the night safe, places them in a delivery system, again with a seal, for transportation to the security company's counting facilities. The bags are not even opened by the security firm until it has checked that the seal numbers are the same as those endorsed by the supervisor. All of that security is provided. To that stage, nobody can touch the bags bearing the seals with the drivers' numbers. The contents of the bags are counted individually and advice concerning the count is forwarded to the depot by 3 pm or 4 pm that afternoon for pasting on the board ...

Mr Smith: Why don't you count it on the spot?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition will listen for a while, he will hear the system ...

Mr Smith: Why don't you count it on the spot?

Mr FINCH: There are many reasons for not counting it on the spot. One reason is on advice from the Auditor-General and another, of course, is to comply with the opposite role requirement of the Receiver of Territory Moneys. A system has been introduced in part as a follow-on from the Auditor-General and a requirement of the Under Treasurer. All of these things need to be done properly.

Let me get back to where I was with the advice on the individual driver number's take for the day - and that is a preliminary figure. There is no balance against his card-in because there are factors such as discredited tickets that have to be taken into account. All of that advice goes up on the board at 3 or 4 o'clock the same afternoon. In effect, this the driver's

receipt from his previous shift run. It is all done under absolute security, in the interest of the driver, in the interest of the Northern Territory government and the taxpayer, and I see no problem with that system. If there is a problem with it, then constructive suggestions as to how that system might be modified or improved ought to be proposed. However, to hold the travelling public to ransom instead of going to the Industrial Relations Commission and having it fixed ...

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, these drivers are normally very rational, and I do not understand what this dispute is about. It is a very minor matter ...

Mr Smith: Why don't you understand?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I understand ...

Mr Smith: Why don't you try to sort it out?

Mr FINCH: ... the details, but I cannot understand why they are continuing to hold the travelling public to ransom over what is a trivial matter, as the member for Nhulunbuy said before he was joined by the crowing of the Leader of the Opposition. I do not understand it at all, and it is up to the drivers to get themselves back to work until this matter is resolved by the Industrial Relations Commission.

Mr Smith: It was all hammered out yesterday. What are they to backtrack from?

Mr FINCH: Wrong.

Mr Smith: That is not wrong.

Mr FINCH: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition does not know what he is talking about. There is no agreement.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Crow, crow, crow. What a mob of galahs.

Mr Speaker, no agreement was reached yesterday. In fact, the driver who was interviewed on television last night unfortunately did not have it right either. No agreement came out of the commission. We need to go back to the commission now and have the matter resolved, and the department will go along with the finding of the commission. There is no problem there. In the meantime, all those people are without bus transport as a result of a dispute over such a minor, trivial matter. I do not understand it.

#### BTEC

Mr EDE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

The minister will be aware that the Cattle Council of Australia, supported by industry groups in the Northern Territory, has made a submission to the National BTEC Committee to extend the deadline for the completion of BTEC to the end of 1992, thereby giving pastoralists a further cattle season in which to comply. Does the minister agree that such an extension offers a golden opportunity for the industry to extract a much needed financial benefit and

could, in fact, mean the difference between economic survival or otherwise for many producers in the Top End? Will the minister give an undertaking to give his wholehearted support for this move when it comes before the committee of ministers? If so, will he now treat sympathetically any application to place a moratorium on the current round of shoot-outs for 1 year to allow pastoralists and others the benefit of that extra season to attempt to muster stock and obtain an economic return from them?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there are 2 parts to the honourable member's question. First of all, there is an application to extend the deadline for the BTEC program until the end of 1992. That matter is being discussed in various committees, not only in the Northern Territory but throughout Australia. It will have the support of the Northern Territory BTEC Committee which, as the honourable member would be aware, has membership from the Buffalo Industry Council and the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. These matters are considered very carefully and, if there is benefit to the industry in the Northern Territory, they receive full support as this one will.

In relation to the cessation of activities under the current BTEC program, what the honourable member is asking is that the decision in relation to the extension to 1992 be pre-empted and that we take action now that could be deleterious to the industry in the event that the submission is not approved. That might be the way that the member for Stuart operates his business, but we are not in the habit of pre-empting decisions to be made by a national body. We will await the outcome of the meeting. If there is any benefit for the Northern Territory cattle and buffalo industries from that decision, they will certainly be taken up by the Northern Territory BTEC Committee of which I am the chairman. As always, we will aim to provide the greatest benefits to the producers in the Northern Territory.

#### Recycling of Waste Materials

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

There has been a lot of interest recently in the difficulties relating to the economic collection of waste materials in the Northern Territory for recycling. Could the minister advise what he is doing to encourage and promote such recycling?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, community and government interest in recycling is increasing as is evidenced by the recent formation of the Total Recycling Advisory Community Committee, known as TRACC. That includes community, industry and government representatives. Recycling programs are already in place. Government departments and statutory authorities are taking steps towards recycling their own material but, to date, this has been in piecemeal fashion with some departments and authorities further advanced than others. Therefore, the government has decided to formulate a policy on recycling that will apply to all areas of the Northern Territory government. This will coordinate the efforts now being made and hopefully will result in some economies of scale as far as the purchase of recycled paper is concerned. One of the major impediments to wider use of recycled paper products is the cost premium. There is no doubt that we could do more, and we will be looking at other possibilities for more economical use of resources, but any additional cost associated with these initiatives will pose problems.

Currently, about 10 000 m<sup>2</sup> of material is recycled annually in the Northern Territory. This comprises paper, glass, aluminium cans, cooking and sump oil, iron, plastic and film processing materials. My own office has introduced recycled paper for several applications and is under instructions to reduce paper usage as much as possible. Other areas of government are taking similar steps.

I appreciate the steps taken by some honourable members yesterday in recycling envelopes that delivered papers to them. I can assure honourable members that those envelopes are being recycled properly. When you start the process of considering recycling and environmental consciousness, it is amazing how many people take up the issue. That is a classic example of how individual consciences and consciousness can come into play in little ways, all of which assist in the process of recycling.

A recent Conservation Commission study indicated that about 54% of waste in the Northern Territory could be recycled using current technology. Major problems with recycling in the Northern Territory are the cost of collection and transport to southern recycling centres. The recycling of many materials is thus not economically viable. Possible solutions to this could include a high degree of community involvement, concentrating on materials that can support an economic program and encouraging recycling within the Territory where possible. For example, organic waste can be composted for resale as soil conditioners and fertilisers. Community involvement could be encouraged. For example, householders could think about separating their own rubbish so that the recyclable material can be made available to central depots. That is a way in which individuals can involve themselves actively in the process of increasing the proportion of material that can be recycled.

I know that many schools and governments are actively involved in recycling programs, and they should be actively supported. The Conservation Commission Environment Unit is investigating strategies which can be implemented throughout the Northern Territory to actively increase recycling of materials and to look at alternative uses that can make recycling economic. We do not want to get into a situation in which we have a totally uneconomic process of recycling for the sake of recycling and utilising government moneys to support that. We have to look for appropriate uses of recycled materials and carry out the process as economically as possible.

#### Allegations Relating to Renegotiation of Commercial Leases

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

I refer the honourable minister to the problem of standover landlords demanding up-front cash payments from commercial tenants in lease renewal renegotiations. The honourable minister has now been given first-hand and conclusive evidence that the practice exists. He indicated last week that, in fact, the government would move on this issue during this week. Will the minister give commercial tenants an absolute guarantee that he will legislate to provide protection before the end of these sittings or does he intend to leave these tenants at the mercy of unscrupulous landlords until next year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I said last week that I would carry out a full examination of the situation and look for a considered response to the circumstances. I would be interested to see what evidence the Leader of the Opposition is using to support his claim that I have given an unlimited guarantee to introduce

legislation. I said that, if there was an appropriate solution, I would take action. I advise honourable members that, since the matter was raised, I have had discussions with shop owners who are lessees. They outlined a series of concerns, some of which referred to specific up-front payments. I have also had discussions with lessors as to the circumstances and the claims which they make in justification of what they refer to as premium payments paid for extensive leases. I have also had discussions with the President of the Real Estate Institute and the Confederation of Industry and Commerce. I had extensive briefings from the Department of Law. I can advise honourable members that I have been advised by the Department of Law, the Confederation of Industry and Commerce and the Real Estate Institute not to engage in a knee-jerk legislative reaction but rather to develop a considered proposal over the Christmas period.

On the advice of all people involved and in the interests of a balanced approach, I will not be bringing legislation forward during these sittings. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we do not simply jump in and enact legislation without considering the consequences across the community. There are quite a number of legal problems associated with finding solutions. There are possible solutions, but they all potentially have unintended consequences. We leave the knee-jerk reactions and unintended consequences to the Labor Party. We will address the matter in a proper and considered way and we will take advice from the very people whom the Leader of the Opposition originally spoke with in relation to this subject.

#### Alice Springs Flood Mitigation Dam

Mr FLOREANI to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Many months have elapsed since the minister last reported on the flood mitigation dam for Alice Springs. Can he advise of the latest position in relation to progress on this project?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the government is still negotiating in relation to the flood mitigation dam. I cannot release any details in addition to those which I have provided at other sittings. I have indicated that I would not comment further on the dam. I can assure the honourable member that the matter is proceeding quite well. Discussions have been taking place between all of the government departments involved and, of course, the traditional owners have been consulted recently. Discussions have also been taking place between the various landowners within the region. The matter is proceeding. The government is aware of the situation regarding flood mitigation for Alice Springs. The Chief Minister is committed to the project. He has allocated some \$15m which has \$1m in cash put aside for that project. I hope that the dam can be commenced in the very near future.

#### Darwin Airport

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Can the minister confirm that construction of the Darwin Airport terminal will commence on time as promised by the federal member, Mr Warren Snowdon?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it will not. Two days ago, Senator Tambling received a response to a question that he asked of the Public Works Committee. The response alarmed me: 'It is anticipated that evaluation of tenders for the major contract', and this relates to Darwin, 'will be completed early in the new year and that site works on this contract will commence by the end of January 1990'. All honourable members will be well aware of the sorry saga of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports.

Mr Bailey: Work has already started there.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the member for Wanguri is not only new to this place but, obviously, has not been following what has been going on in the real world. It started 6 years ago. In relation to the tower on which work has recommenced, work was commenced at the end of 1984. This saga has involved about 3 Territory transport ministers and about 10 federal transport ministers. Honourable members will well recall the visit by the then minister, Mr Peter Morris, when he was castigated by the entire community.

Let me come back to the promises. The member for Wanguri ought to be sensitive because I happen to have with me a message to the Wanguri electorate from Warren Snowdon and Senator Bob Collins: 'What we promise, we deliver'. The question is when. Darwin Airport and numerous other items are mentioned. Some of the claims made by the federal member and Senator Collins have been proven to be totally false and they ought to be ashamed of themselves. Let me talk about the promises of Warren Snowdon and Bob Collins. I am not talking only about the 1984 or the 1987 federal election promises. I am talking about even their recent promises. Two days ago, the federal member had the audacity to stand up in the federal parliament and say: 'I take great pride in the fact that I, along with my colleague, Senator Bob Collins, have been able to push this project through the organs of government. We have been able to achieve something quite outstanding, given the fiscal constraint of the government'. I am not sure which organ he is referring to. This is a very serious matter. He often claims that he is able to push things through in Canberra, but what worries me is how long it takes.

The announcement that the contract will not be let until January means that, even under the fast track system that is to be utilised, construction of the terminal building - not site works, not putting up fences and more signs, and finishing off works and sewerage - will be delayed. What is important to Territorians, to the business community and to this side of the House is a visible sign that that terminal building is back on track again, the same terminal building which led Bob Hawke to sit on a bulldozer in mid to late 1984 ...

Mr Hatton: It was an election campaign.

Mr FINCH: ... when he splashed off his big campaign: 'You can trust only a Labor government'.

Let me come back to 23 February this year, when the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition ridiculed me in this House for tabling a draft FAC timetable. They ridiculed me! Do honourable members remember that? Bob Collins ridiculed me. Warren Snowdon ridiculed me. The big problem is that I knew what timetabling was about. What I did not know is that not even that timetable would be met. Very quickly, they ran to the media and said: 'Oops! A draft does not mean anything. What really will

happen is that construction will begin by the end of the year'. Of course, they changed that to November, in concert with an FAC officer who found himself in something of a hot seat in the Territory. At the same time, they ridiculed the private sector for showing an interest in this matter.

Mr Ede: Go and talk to the workers who are out there now.

Mr Bailey: And say that they are doing nothing important.

Mr Ede: Go on. Tell them they are not working.

Mr FINCH: For the benefit of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am well aware that there are some ancillary works. This program says: 'construction on the terminal by February 1990'. The amendment pushed down our throats by Warren Snowdon and Bob Collins referred to November. In fact, I think they said 1 November 1989.

Mr Speaker, do you recall when they grandstanded about the transfer on 1 April? 1 April was not an appropriate day. Eventually, after promising transfer on 19 August last year, they promised transfer by the end of the next month. They then promised transfer by 1 April - April Fools Day. Then, Bob Collins and Warren Snowdon appeared on television. The journalist asked: 'How can the people of the Territory believe this?' They replied: 'Fred Finch does not know what he is talking about'. They said that the construction work on the terminal building, the symbolic recommencement of work itself, would happen in November.

Mr Speaker, as it is now, mid-April would be the earliest date. The FAC has been doing its darnedest. It could not obtain transfer for 8 months. It had to go through the nonsense of the PWC even though it had all been done 8 years earlier. It had to comply with the bureaucratic processes of the federal government. It is no wonder that it has taken this long.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister has answered the question ad nauseam. In his deluded opinion, the building will not start this year. I do not know why he has to subject this House to any more of his ranting, and I respectfully ask, Mr Speaker, that you request him to conclude his answer forthwith.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I ask the honourable Minister for Transport and Works to make his point in answer to the question. I point out that we have only 10 minutes of question time left.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I always know when I have made the point. It is when the member for Nhulunbuy calls a point of order.

In conclusion, the Labor representatives in the federal parliament, whom we are unfortunate to have at the moment - and they will not be there for long - are unable to deliver. If one does credit them with an ability to deliver, it is a question of when. I will, however, commend the FAC which, in the face of a great deal of red tape, has given a commitment to get on with the job. It is doing what it can - the ancillary works, the site works, the re-erection of signs, the completion of old works - but it cannot get on with the real work on the terminals here or in Alice Springs until 6 months after the date promised by Warren Snowdon and Bob Collins. It was an election promise in 1984. It was an election promise in 1987. It will be a federal election promise in 1990.

Canine Parasite Eradication Research

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

In view of the excellent initial research done by officers of his department on the eradication of internal and external parasites from canine populations with the use of Ivomectrin and Avomec, could the minister indicate whether the research is continuing in the Northern Territory and, if not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, some work is continuing in relation to that program in the Northern Territory. Whilst I am not totally familiar with the current standing of that research, I am aware that consideration is being given at present to the conducting of some field work in an Aboriginal community to control parasites in dogs ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That has been done and it was successful.

Mr REED: Yes, it has been done. What I am saying is that the work is continuing and consideration is presently being given to conducting further work in other communities. At this stage I can say only that the work is continuing but I will make some further inquiries and advise the honourable member of the outcome. As she indicated, it has been a very successful program. I can assure her that some work is still under way and, as I say, there are intentions to ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The drug has to be declared.

Mr REED: That is right. There are intentions to continue the program in other communities.

Mosquitoes in the Northern Suburbs

Mr BAILEY to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

I refer the minister to the mosquito problem in the northern suburbs. Is he aware that the government's own expert advice is that fogging offers no effective long-term solution to the problem? Is he aware that the report of the government's Coastal Management Committee recommends physical control through drainage, tidal bunds and fresh or salt-water lakes? Does he agree with the member for Leanyer that these are pie-in-the-sky solutions or does he think that these works would bring more benefit to the community than the construction of a new Parliament House?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I greatly appreciate this question. It is interesting to see the incompetence of the honourable member reflected in some of his questions.

The Minister for Transport and Works does support drainage works in the area referred to. In fact, the minister's electorate is Leanyer, which is in the northern suburbs. The member for Karama, another northern suburbs electorate, is also a member of this government as was the previous member for Wanguri. For quite a number of years, CLP members have engaged in a major campaign to alleviate the mosquito problem in the northern suburbs and there have been dramatic improvements in the suppression of the mosquito problem in

the northern suburbs as a consequence of their diligent and continuing work in that regard.

Nobody denies the fact that fogging does not provide a permanent solution to the mosquito infestations that occur. It is not the solution to the problem in the long term. Other measures being implemented include the drainage works that are under way to remove ponding, and specific insecticide spraying to kill larvae, to which I referred to in this House yesterday. However, when circumstances affect such measures - for example, adverse weather conditions during spraying - why shouldn't fogging be considered as an additional short-term measure? We should also be prepared to consider those areas where appropriate fogging opportunities are available to alleviate the immediate problems of the populace. That is where the issue of fogging should be properly addressed.

As to the concept of building a lake, I suggest that the member for Wanguri be the first to push the bombs out of the way when he starts to excavate. The area to which he has referred is the site of an old bombing range. He might find that a bit dicey, given that the military have not yet removed the explosives from the area. You will know, Mr Speaker, that the government has been working very hard for some time to get the military to clear that site completely so that other works can proceed in the area. It is not a simple matter of building a lake there. There are many issues to address and, unfortunately, Johnny-come-latelies jump in where angels and wiser men fear to tread.

Mr Bailey: Read your own reports over the years.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it is true that you seek to remove ponding. What you do not seek to do is blow up workers when you are doing it.

#### Commonwealth State Housing Agreement - Negotiations

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

I refer the minister to his negotiations with the federal Minister for Housing in relation to the new arrangements for funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. I ask whether the minister sought the assistance of the Territory's 2 federal Labor representatives in those negotiations. If so, what was the result?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I wrote to both Senator Bob Collins and the Territory's federal member of the House of Representatives, Warren Snowdon, on 27 July this year. My reason for doing so was that I had learned that the federal Minister for Housing, Hon Peter Staples, was to visit Alice Springs during August. I hoped that, in view of this government's very serious concerns in relation to the proposed changes to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, both Mr Snowdon and Senator Collins may have been able to use whatever influence they had to assist the Territory's case.

I point out that the reason given for Mr Staples' visit to Alice Springs was to address community groups about the revised CSHA. At the time he was in Alice Springs, officers from his department were meeting in Adelaide with officers from every other state and territory in Australia to thrash out details of the CSHA. Honourable members may appreciate the irony of that. On the one hand, we have the minister telling people in the community about the

contents of the new agreement and, at the same time, officers of his own department and state departments are working out what the agreement is going to be. Unfortunately, that was typical of the federal government's attitude towards the negotiations.

In due course, both Mr Snowdon and Senator Collins responded to my letter. Mr Snowdon's response contained the astonishing claim that he had been advised by the federal minister that the state and Northern Territory governments had been fully consulted on the new CSHA and that the Chief Minister, along with state premiers, had agreed to the new arrangement at the 1989 Premiers' Conference. From the Chief Minister's statement to the Assembly last week, honourable members will be aware of just how false that assertion was.

However, Senator Collins' letter contained an even more interesting claim. He said:

As you would know from the recent publicity surrounding this issue, the federal member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, and myself, have held discussions with the federal minister and have been assured by him that the Territory will not be disadvantaged in any way in terms of its housing needs by any proposal from the Commonwealth government. I can assure you we will continue to actively monitor the situation to ensure that this does not occur.

There was a strong commitment from Senator Collins that 'the Territory will not be disadvantaged in any way in terms of its housing needs'. Honourable members would appreciate that the Territory government is likely to be very seriously disadvantaged by the federal government's proposed changes to the CSHA. The main point of concern is the severe cut in funding that we will receive as a result of the move towards per capita funding. Overall, the Territory stands to lose nearly \$100m over the next 4 years. That is a most severe disadvantage. In comparison with the amount which we received in 1988-89, we stand to lose \$44m a year. Not only will this cause severe disadvantage to the Territory's housing program, the flow-on effects to the Territory economy obviously could be disastrous. I would therefore like to know just how Senator Collins intends to keep his promise. I assume that he is not suggesting that these massive cuts to our funding should not be classed as a disadvantage. Not even the Labor Party could be so naive.

If we are to believe Senator Collins, and I have no reason not to even after the comments of the Minister for Transport and Works describing how the Senator's claims have not always been followed up, there can only be 2 explanations. Either the Territory's housing funds are not to be slashed or the federal government intends to make up the shortfall. It is pretty simple. I have to admit that I have serious doubts about our housing funding being maintained because the federal minister has made it very clear that he will not be changing his position. In that case, Senator Collins must have some information about our future funding levels which this government has not been informed of.

Senator Collins' promise is unequivocal. He says that the Territory will not be disadvantaged and that he and Warren Snowdon will be working to ensure this does not happen. I call on him to explain how he intends to keep that promise. The time has come. It is crunch time, Mr Speaker. The Senator and the federal member have to be called to account for the promises and undertakings they have given to Territorians for the past 4 or 5 years. Those promises have been accepted in good faith by the media and by the general public. But, the time has come. One must account for one's promises. We on

this side of the House have a record which is the envy of all governments around Australia. Commitments that we have given in the context of elections have been followed through continuously by members on this side of the House since we have held government. It is a record of which we can be very proud. We do not make claims on this side of the House unless we can carry them through.

Mr Smith: What about the shared equity scheme?

Mr MANZIE: I would suggest that you go back and read the Hansard because, obviously, you cannot remember what is said in this House.

Mr Smith: Where is it? Where is the shared equity coming from?

Mr MANZIE: If the honourable member reads the record he will find that I tabled a document. I said quite clearly that it was a matter for discussion and comment. We have not heard a peep, not one constructive peep!

Mr Smith: After 3 years, you still have not fulfilled your election promise.

Mr MANZIE: How much interest has the Leader of the Opposition taken? The discussion paper has been available for comment and we have not heard a squeak from him. He should read the Hansard and find out what is all about.

The 2 federal members have had the trust of the Territory community. People trusted those federal elected members. They expected them to fight for the Territory and they believed that any commitments they gave were fair dinkum and could be believed. We have had examples today of the disgraceful performance of the federal Labor government in relation to the airports and the claims made by our federal members which have been shown to be completely and utterly untrue. We have another example here. Our federal members have given a commitment in writing that the Territory will not be disadvantaged in its housing funding yet we have seen that the federal government is removing \$100m. The time has come for those federal members to explain to the community why they think they can give clear undertakings and then do something quite different. The time has come for the community to make decisions about the seats of those members and it will do so on the basis of the facts.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Land Clearing on Douglas Station

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah requested information from me regarding land clearing on Douglas Station. Section 48 of the Crown Lands Act requires pastoral lessees to notify me prior to commencing any land clearing for agricultural development. I have received written advice from the General Manager of Tipperary Station stating that a total area of approximately 30 000 ha of land adjacent to the western boundary of Douglas Station is to be cleared for improved pasture development. However, not all this land is expected to be cleared in the first year and chaining is the first step in the preparation of this land for the planting of improved pasture. This work has commenced and is being carried out under the direction of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. The Conservation Commission is producing a clearing plan which takes into account heritage, sacred sites, flora and fauna aspects.

Mr Speaker, I have had the advantage of observing the results of the work carried out at Tipperary. If this work comes up to half that standard, it will be absolutely outstanding because the work there is beyond what anyone could expect.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Land and Business Agents Act

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): The member for MacDonnell had a query regarding the Land and Business Agents Act. He asked me to provide information regarding claims against the Fidelity Guarantee Fund which operates under that act. The fund is established for the purposes of claims by persons who suffered pecuniary loss due to misappropriation of trust moneys by a licensed agent, the administration of the act and, with the consent of the minister, for educational schemes. There has been only one claim made. It was made in 1980 and involved payment of money as a deposit on a house. It was dismissed as the deposit was paid to a person who was not a licensed agent. In the past year, \$18 404 has been expended for educational schemes, \$10 946 for seminars conducted by the Real Estate Institute and \$7458 for lectures conducted by the University of the Northern Territory. At present, the fund stands at \$1.9m. Hopefully, we will see a few more educational programs.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Darwin Bus Service Strike

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I was asked a question this morning regarding the Darwin Bus Service. I wish to clarify one aspect of my answer to the question in regard to an alleged deal made in the Industrial Relations Commission yesterday. There was no deal nor any conclusion to the hearing yesterday. In fact, it was adjourned. I can advise that, in a conciliation meeting yesterday afternoon, in an attempt to come to an agreement, a proposition was put forward that receipts for bags would be issued and that there would be no liability by the drivers at all for a trial period of 2 months. That is totally unacceptable to the bus service and to the government. In fact, it would be in contravention of the Treasurer's requirements for control of moneys.

That proposition from the drivers was rejected. Following a meeting this morning, the drivers decided that they would not return to work. A commission hearing began at 10.30 am. The department is asking for a direction for the drivers to return to work on the basis that the system would be monitored and receipts issued for the lodgment of bags. The department is also inviting Commissioner Cross to examine the system. If he has any concern with security, there is an undertaking that the situation will be rectified.

The count is done on the same day and the balance of the tickets is done 5 days later. The drivers put in any misused tickets. That has to be fully balanced for each driver. The full assessment of shortfall and excess is not done until 3 months later. The driver has advice on the day. This system is in place with Buslink which is still operating. Its drivers do not have any difficulty with the system. I re-emphasise that it is a minor matter and, hopefully, it will be resolved in the commission today.

Directions to Departments to Reduce Spending

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Will the Treasurer confirm that Treasury has asked heads of departments to identify areas for cuts in recurrent expenditure this financial year? Can he confirm that, among the departments affected, are both police and Health and Community Services? Is he aware of deep concern within the Police Association that the government is continually burdening the force with fresh responsibilities without providing the resources to carry out those responsibilities, and can he now assure the association that there will be no cuts to the police budget and that the government will properly resource the force to meet the responsibilities being placed on it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not aware of any particular circulars issued by Treasury asking departments and authorities of the ...

Mr Smith: I am not talking about circulars.

Mr PERRON: ... Northern Territory government to make cuts in their approved allocations as processed by this Assembly during the budget session. I guess that answers the honourable member's question. Departments have not been asked to reduce their spending from the allocations made to them.

Ghan Services

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for TOURISM

During the pilot's dispute, there has been only 1 Ghan train arriving in Alice Springs. Has the minister done anything about trying to have the railways provide extra services as an opportunity to expand business? Secondly, is the minister aware that a package allowing people to put their cars on the train and to travel on the train at very reasonable rates is being removed at a time when it should be expanded? People should be made aware that one could do that, particularly people who drive to the Centre and do not want to drive back. Will the minister examine those matters?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Sádadeen for his question. In fact, Australian National Railways only recently cancelled the second of the 2 weekly services into central Australia. Indeed, the 2 services played a vital role in central Australia during the height of the pilots' dispute and now things are starting slowly but surely to return to normal. It made a valuable contribution. Australian National Railways has advised that bookings for the trips have dropped off dramatically. As a result, it has ceased the second service until the tourist season starts in April of next year.

I was aware that the package deal which discounted the cost of a car being transported to Adelaide against the cost of a passenger fare. Its removal is to be regretted. On behalf of Territorians, I will take that up with Australian National Railways. I advise the honourable member that people coming into the Territory can still apply for that discount on their travel component that is advertised and offered by the Northern Territory through our tourist bureau offices in Adelaide.

Training Course for Drivers of Vehicles Carrying  
Dangerous Goods

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

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory Work Health Authority recently developed a course for training drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods. I understand that the national Advisory Committee on the Transport of Dangerous Goods has shown some considerable interest in this. Can the minister advise whether or not there is a problem with this course?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this is a very good question. During these sittings, I outlined the range of activities of the Work Health Authority and the very good work it is doing in conjunction with industry in the Northern Territory to ensure that workplaces are safe. The course to which the honourable member refers was developed by the Work Health Authority in the Northern Territory over the last few years in close cooperation with the transport industry. The Northern Territory Fire Service was also involved in the preparation of the course. The course normally runs over a period of 2 days and covers aspects of safe handling and hazardous properties of a wide selection of chemicals and materials transported in bulk on Territory roads. It covers personal protection, spill combat, product segregation and safe transfer procedures for materials such as petroleum fuels, cyanide, ammonium nitrate, hydrogen peroxide and sulphuric acid - all of which are important to the mining industry - as well as a large range of other commercial chemicals in day-to-day use in the Territory. Of course, the member for Stuart knows a great deal about the transport of cyanide. After all, he transported it around in his pocket for a day or two on one occasion.

Mr Ede: No way in the world!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, candidates for the course undergo technical training in the use of chemical fire extinguishers and self-contained breathing apparatus which is mandatory equipment with certain cargo. Standardised sets of exam questions are used to ensure that a uniformly high standard of competency is demonstrated by drivers qualifying for the Northern Territory Dangerous Goods Drivers Authorisation Certificate.

The good news about this course is that, after evaluating different procedures used in the states, territories and larger transport industries for accreditation of drivers transporting dangerous goods, the Advisory Committee on Transport of Dangerous Goods has now adopted the Northern Territory Work Health Authority training system and course outline as the basis for uniform training for the whole of Australia. This will now be the standard to be used by all states and territories awarding statutory licences for dangerous goods drivers.

Once again, I think that is a demonstration of the very good work being done by the Work Health Authority in the Northern Territory. Its efforts to bring about the safe handling of goods in the Northern Territory and safe practices in the workplace are second to none in Australia. In fact, as I indicated last week, they go far beyond this course which now has national accreditation. The authority is providing the service that it was set up to provide, not only in terms of policing practices but also as a leader in workplace safety in Australia.

Police Workloads

Mr TIPILOURA to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Is the minister aware of serious concerns among police officers about their mounting workloads? Does he recognise that the government's decision to extend police powers in areas such as domestic violence puts more and more pressure on police? What does the minister intend to do to help police officers perform all the new jobs which the government has given to them?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased that the honourable member has indicated his concern for the very significant workload which police in the Northern Territory carry on behalf of our community. The police have a job which is constantly becoming more complex and more demanding and I guess this has always been the case. As we sit in this Assembly so regularly, we pass laws which we expect that police force to become familiar with and to administer on our behalf in order that society might be a little better for it. I acknowledge that police in the Northern Territory have a heavy workload. A great deal is expected of them and they perform it very well. Indeed, they perform it brilliantly.

During the 11 years in which it has had the authority, this government has ensured that the Northern Territory Police Force has been well-resourced in terms of equipment and training. That is still our attitude. Our Police Commissioner is a most competent officer who is very highly regarded by his peers throughout Australia. He is doing an excellent job of changing the police force internally in ways he believes are appropriate in the context of modern crime trends and modern police administration practices. Of course, we have a very close relationship and the Northern Territory government will continue to ensure that the Northern Territory Police Force has the resources it needs to carry out its job.

In saying that, it is quite obvious that we cannot have the ideal situation wherein perhaps every citizen is protected by a police officer almost within calling distance or in which we can have patrols in all of our towns 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or where we can afford to put the numbers of detectives on to serious crime that we might like to. We all have to live within budgetary constraints. Over the last few years, the dollar amounts that we have received in order to do the job have been reducing and that has caused very great agony to the government in determining how the respective burdens of these reductions in funds should be spread across government services. The police are not immune from having to live within budget, as any other area of government activity is not immune, but they continue to receive our total confidence and support and, I hope, that of all honourable members.

Overpayment to School Nursing Sisters

Mr TUXWORTH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he confirm whether at least one and possibly all of the sisters attached to high schools in the southern region have been overpaid substantially in their salary over a period of at least 12 months? Can he confirm whether this overpayment was a result of a clerical error in the salary section? Can he confirm whether steps are being taken to recover this money by the department and would the minister be prepared to consider waiving the requirement to repay the money, given that any overpayment was not attributable to the sisters themselves?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not able to confirm the matters raised by the member for Barkly. I will endeavour to obtain information during the course of question time and provide him with an answer.

Live Broadcasts of Southern Horse Races

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for RACING and GAMING

The minister will be aware of the continued high level of interest in the racing industry in the Northern Territory as evidenced by the recent report of the TAB which indicated ever-increasing amounts of turnover. Much of that turnover is attributed to interest in southern racing. What steps has he taken to ensure live broadcasts of southern races will be continued in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can confirm that much planning has been carried out by the TAB. My predecessor, the member for Araluen, and myself have been lobbied continuously by those who have an interest in betting and those who have an interest in racing itself. The current services provided to the Territory are somewhat limited and have become particularly so since the ABC limited its coverage on Saturdays. It is fair to say that race broadcasts are essential from a racing follower's point of view. Many people put it to me that, if they are not able to follow the race itself, racing has nowhere near the same appeal and, of course, that has an impact on the TAB.

For those reasons, the TAB set about obtaining its own broadcasting service. Interstate TABs own various radio stations and have their own broadcast system in place. All TABs, however, have a problem in providing race broadcasts to country areas. With the vast area it has to cover, the Northern Territory has similar difficulties. With support from Minister for Industries and Development and from my department, the TAB has pursued the utilisation of a spare radio channel on the Imparja satellite transponder to which the government can gain access by virtue of the on-payment of the Commonwealth annual grant to the Territory government for the purchase of satellite services from Imparja.

In January 1988, the Northern Territory TAB lodged an expression of interest in the provision of new or improved broadcasting of television services with the federal Department of Transport and Communications. What we were looking for was a limited broadcast licence. If granted, such a licence would provide a service via satellite. It would be limited to broadcasting of racing and other related information such as dividends, turf talks, scratchings etc. The time between racing broadcasts would simply be filled with music. No advertising or sponsorship would be available through that limited broadcast licence and the TAB would therefore not be competing with other radio stations.

With a federal election in the wind and following the very reasonable and well-argued case put by Territory officers, I have the greatest confidence that the proposal will be accepted, hopefully in the near future. One would expect that, immediately such approval is gained, we would be able to see an appropriate service put in place. Of course, that would allow existing radio stations to re-prioritise their broadcasting schedules to suit the broader community. Given that there is a federal election in the wind, I have the greatest confidence that our well-argued case will be agreed to.

Mrs Shirley Blackman

Mr BELL to TREASURER

I remind the Chief Minister of the plight of Alice Springs chiropractor, Mrs Shirley Blackman. Mrs Blackman was registered as a chiropractor in the Territory and her registration was withdrawn. I remind the Treasurer that she claimed losses of \$16 000. She was advised that the Department of Health and Community Services recommended \$10 000, but the Treasurer offered less than \$2000. To add insult to injury, she was told to obtain further qualifications in South Australia to ensure Northern Territory registration. She did that and was then told that she still would not be registered. My questions without notice to the Treasurer and the Chief Minister are as follows. Will the Chief Minister confirm that compensation of at least \$10 000 was recommended for Mrs Blackman? Will he confirm that that compensation in fact will be paid? Further, will the Chief Minister confirm that he will consider further compensation to Mrs Blackman because of the inaccurate and misleading information from his government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can confirm that a recommendation was made for a payment of \$10 000 in this case. In answer to the second question, I cannot confirm whether that amount will be paid. I understand that an offer has been made to the woman concerned and that we are awaiting further advice from her in that regard.

Mr Bell: How much was the offer?

Mr PERRON: I do not think it is appropriate to reveal the personal details in this Assembly.

Mr Bell: \$1600, wasn't it?

Mr PERRON: Even if the honourable member proposes to reveal personal matters, I do not. In answer to his third question, which contained a facetious remark about the attitude of the Northern Territory government ...

Mr Bell: That is woeful, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member, by way of interjection, claimed that the Northern Territory government was releasing misleading information. Of course, he did not provide any evidence of such misleading information.

Mr Bell: Obviously, you did not hear the adjournment debate last night.

Mr PERRON: We are pretty used to hearing allegations from the opposition without any substantiation whatsoever. The honourable member is simply carrying on a practice which his colleagues have indulged in for a very long time in this Assembly and I reject the inferences in his last question.

#### Trade Development Zone

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

The minister will have heard that a northern suburbs ALP candidate says that he has written to 2 federal ministers about Darwin's Trade Development Zone and the desire of the ALP in the Territory to turn the zone into a centre

for Australian high technology research and development. My question is this. Has this focus for the TDZ been examined by the government and is there merit in such a role for the zone?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. I do not wish to strip flesh from the bones of an eager beaver simply because he is a hopeful ALP candidate. It is interesting to note the apparent change of attitude to the Trade Development Zone by the Labor Party. However, it must be said that this particular vision of the Trade Development Zone is seriously flawed. The charge for a high-tech research and development frontier for Australia was led by the federal Minister for Science and Technology, Barry Jones, earlier this decade. Like General Custer, Barry Jones bit the dust. The federal government has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in the process and hundreds of small research and development companies launched with great hope went to the wall. There were many complex reasons for that, which I will not go into now, but the upshot was that the political career of Mr Jones ended up virtually in ruins. High-tech industries are also high-risk industries which gobble up research funds without any sort of ...

Mr Bailey: What about South Australia and the submarine contract?

Mr COULTER: Let us have a look at some of the states then. Let us have a look at WA Incorporated. Let us have a look at VDEC. What is high-tech about VDEC? The member for Wanguri now wants to express his vast knowledge on the subject of the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Leo: Go back to the script.

Mr COULTER: Get him to be a little more quiet and stop him from interjecting.

The fact is that VDEC went into high-tech industries and lost hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on things like cosmetics and computers. Australia's recent history is full of the failures of such ventures.

Mr Bailey: You are against high-tech?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I am certainly not against the principle of hosting Australian high-tech industries in the Darwin Trade Development Zone and, of course, the zone will always welcome applications from these or any Australian companies producing goods for export. They would receive the same package of incentives and entitlements as any of the successful zone tenants now operating. The reality, however, is that the zone will not receive a flood of applications from Australian high-tech industries, with or without the help or wishes of the Labor Party in the Territory, and with or without the revelations from the Bible according to Barry Jones.

In the decade of the 1990s, the Trade Development Zone will undergo spectacular growth based on production of goods in Darwin, with guaranteed export markets. Honourable members will be aware, from news and events of the past 2 to 3 weeks, that interest in investment in the zone, particularly from Hong Kong and China, is exceptionally high. The zone has moved into the highly desirable position of being able to choose from a range of proposals which promise virtually instant production performance. This is just what the Northern Territory needs at this time. It can be argued that Australia

urgently needs innovative performance extending the leading edge of technology, and even that this should be supported financially by the federal government. I support that wholeheartedly. However, the Northern Territory has more pragmatic needs at this stage of its development. We need to build up our manufacturing sector base substantially in the decade ahead. We need to create more jobs for Territorians. We need to generate more business for the Territory's existing business sector.

The Trade Development Zone is the flagship for just that sort of goal and it is doing the job superbly. It is not the time to depart from the successful approach and to wander down theoretical byways. The Labor Party in the Territory seems to have a problem with Asian investment in the zone. I do not know why, because it means new jobs and new business for the Territory, new opportunities which are not forthcoming from Canberra or anywhere else in Australia.

I note also that the Labor candidate has written in similar vein to the federal Industries and Commerce Minister, Senator Button. I have to tell the opposition that Senator Button is a great supporter of the Darwin Trade Development Zone in its current mode. He wrote to me a couple of weeks ago regretting that he had not had a recent chance to visit the zone and to catch up with latest developments, but that he would definitely do so at the earliest opportunity. Senator Button and the federal Immigration Minister, Senator Ray, have no problems at all with the way the Trade Development Zone is creating jobs and business and generating export income for Australia. The Labor Party in the Territory, on the other hand, although it has changed its previous policy of outright condemnation of the zone, still cannot seem to come to grips with reality. Perhaps it is just a matter of the Labor Party being told what to do and what to say by a particular trade union which has a highly visible vested interest.

#### Tourist Program

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for TOURISM

Mr Speaker, I recently wrote to the honourable minister requesting him to consider a tourist program to sell the country to the city in the form of home, station or farm accommodation packages, not only for Northern Territory city people but for interstate and overseas tourists. Is he sympathetic to such a program and, if so, what are his intentions in respect of its implementation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. I have received her letter. She may not be aware that, in fact, 2 pastoral properties in central Australia have already commenced such initiatives. However, their success has been fairly limited. A copy of the honourable member's letter has been sent to the Tourist Commission for further advice and a meeting will be sought with the honourable member.

There is probably great potential for what is essentially a cottage industry to be developed into quite a considerable revenue-raiser for the Northern Territory. Honourable members would probably be aware that the tourist industry in central Australia virtually was started during a severe 7-year drought in the 1950s and early 1960s. As a result of the drought, pastoral properties attempted to raise revenue from other sources. They started to cater for passing motorists and that type of catering developed

into places such as the Curtin Springs roadhouse, other roadhouses and facilities on pastoral properties. As I said, I believe there is great potential in the industry. One of the problems is that people in the cattle industry have to be convinced of the potential and to divert their attentions from their primary concern which, particularly in central Australia - and I might say that I am a little biased about this - is raising some of the best beef in the world.

Loan to Texfern Pty Ltd

Mr EDE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

The minister would be aware that Texfern Pty Ltd, the owners of Middle Creek Station, received a \$100 000 loan convertible in 1992 to a grant under the Buffalo Development Loan Scheme. Is the minister aware that 2 of the directors and shareholders in Texfern Pty Ltd are public servants in his own Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries? Does the minister believe that it is right and proper for public servants to be the beneficiaries of soft loan grant schemes promoted and controlled by this government?

ANSWER

I am aware that Middle Creek Station received a buffalo development loan. Under the conditions of the loan, the applicants, like all applicants, submitted a proposal in an effort to obtain a loan. That fell within the requirements and the conditions set out therein whereby certain parameters have to be met over the life of the loan. I am not familiar with the identity of the owners of the station but I am happy to have the information checked. I have every confidence that, if a loan was granted, it would have been granted within the guidelines set out under the Buffalo Development Loan Scheme and the conditions required of applicants would have been met. It is a very successful scheme which has demonstrated the commitment of this government to the buffalo industry. I am sure that it will serve to establish a domesticated buffalo industry for the benefit of the Northern Territory and the buffalo industry. I will check further details and advise the honourable member.

Transfer of Teacher Librarians to Public Service

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

This morning, I was advised that teacher librarians around the Territory were being told by the office of the member for Wanguri that they would be transferred from the teaching service to the public service under public service conditions. Is this correct? Is the proposal set in concrete and, if so, what is the quid pro quo regarding such a transfer?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, honourable members would be aware that a paper has been distributed to the teachers detailing a proposal of the government to fall in line with the restructuring involving the 3% increase and the necessary productivity trade-offs. In that document, a whole range of issues is outlined. One of them relates to the transfer that the honourable member mentioned. There is no element of compulsion involved. It will be negotiated with the principals of the schools and others to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. There is a whole range of matters in that paper which will be discussed and negotiated over a period of time. What we are trying to do is

to allow those people to receive more money in their pay packets. However, there are productivity implications and the matter will be negotiated over a period of 6 months.

#### Destruction of Trees in Uluru National Park

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

I ask the minister to confirm that a number of mature desert oaks have been destroyed on the road to Ayers Rock within the national park, apparently to make way for construction of a facility within that park. Does the minister have any knowledge of this and can he offer any reasons why the ANPWS would do such a thing?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can. I have had brought to my attention some photographs of a construction about 15 km from Ayers Rock in Uluru National Park. These photographs present a very sorry sight of a string of bulldozed desert oaks. Desert oaks can take well in excess of a century to reach maturity. They are a significant and important feature of the central Australian arid zone area and a very attractive feature. They are hardly in great abundance. One does not see giant forests at this time.

I carried out an investigation to see what the situation was and I have been advised that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service was concerned that, on the receipts from entry fees to Uluru National Park, it was missing out on about 25% of the income because people were ignoring the service's existing entry station. Honourable members will remember also, in 1985 and 1984, the scandalous assaults on the integrity of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission conducted by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, accusing us of inefficiency and incompetence in not adequately collecting entry fees of about the same percentage. We argued at the time that the reason that was occurring was because it had not provided the capital works payments for an entry station where it should have been located at the entrance to the park, rather than where it is currently located. Of course, the ANPWS ignored that in its power push to grab control of the park for the Commonwealth for its own empire-building ends.

Be that as it may, the ANPWS finally decided to build this entry station about 15 km from Ayers Rock on the Yulara side of the turn-off to Docker River and Katatjuta. In doing so, it has built what looks like a very interesting curved structure of brick on a nice level area close to the road so that the cars can pull up conveniently and entry fees can be paid. Anyone who has been in the area will know that the desert oaks are a distinctive feature. With a bit of sensitive planning it would have been possible to find a site where it would not have been necessary to knock over mature desert oaks in the middle of a national park. It seems that the contractor and the ANPWS supervisor did not respond to that sensitivity and they have bowled over a group of these trees to locate the station. Apparently, the entry station is more important than the desert oaks in the national park.

I realise that, with the construction of roads and other facilities in the area, flora does have to be removed at times. However, a little planning can minimise the impact. The construction of the Lasseter Highway and the road to Ayers Rock by the Northern Territory government was designed to minimise damage and avoid trees. Similarly, the construction of roads in the Kings Canyon area was designed absolutely to minimise any destruction of a fine

stand of desert oaks in that area. In this instance, the entry station could have been located anywhere along a distance of the road. However, that was not good enough. The ANPWS found it necessary to knock over trees to locate it where the engineer or the contractor said he would feel comfortable putting it. I think that is an absolute disgrace.

Loan to Texfern Pty Ltd

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

With reference to my last question, I have now provided the Chief Minister with an extract from the Companies Office of the directors of the company that succeeded in gaining the loan. Does the Chief Minister accept that it is completely improper for public servants to be the beneficiaries of loans or grants from the Northern Territory government to fund their commercial activities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, could you clarify that the honourable member asked this question earlier?

Mr Ede: I asked it of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. I am asking the Chief Minister whether or not he thinks it is proper. The minister did not answer the question.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I am not familiar with this matter. A piece of paper appeared on my desk which I thought was destined for somebody else.

Mr Ede: It is a theoretical question. Is it proper or is it not?

Mr PERRON: Could the honourable member ask the question again?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable member for Stuart please repeat his question.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, my question to the Chief Minister is this. Does the Chief Minister accept that it is completely improper for public servants to be the beneficiaries of loans or grants from the Northern Territory government to fund their commercial activities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think it would depend entirely on the circumstances. I understand that the matter to which he is referring relates to what is called a buffalo development loan and, as all honourable members will be aware, the Northern Territory government has a policy of maximising numbers of domesticated buffalo in the Northern Territory prior to the end of BTEC. As part of this campaign, we allocated some \$2m to a series of loans to persons involved in the buffalo domestication industry. Those loans were aimed specifically at trying to maximise the numbers of animals that would be put behind wire and were directed specifically towards those people who have the ability to increase the domestication. When I say the 'ability', I am talking about ability by way of possession of appropriate properties for this to occur. As we all know, among the 15 300-odd public servants who work for the Northern Territory government, quite a few have involvement in businesses. I do not think that that is particularly unusual because, in fact, most people in the private sector who are working for other people are also ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr PERRON: ... entitled to have interests in private business as well. I do not see why - if the Leader of the Opposition would like to shut up for 5 minutes and listen to the answer, he might learn something ...

Mr Smith: Yes?

Mr PERRON: ... instead of constantly interjecting, Mr Speaker.

If the application submitted by these people fitted the criteria required to receive a buffalo domestication loan, I do not see why they should not receive it.

#### Tracy Village Complex Lease

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

The minister will be aware of the longstanding issue of the lease of the Tracy Village complex from the Department of Defence. I believe that lease is due to expire at some time in 1991. Can he advise what action he and the Northern Territory government are taking to ensure the long-term security of tenure of the Tracy Village Club?

ANSWER

The question of secure tenure for the Tracy Village complex is of considerable concern to the Territory government and all Territorians who are either members of the club or have been involved in activities that the club supports. I am sure all honourable members are fully aware of the constant pressure that the former member for Wanguri put on the federal government in attempts to resolve this matter. He made untiring efforts in trying to ensure that the members of the Tracy Village club and the Territory community received some fair play and some honourable attention from the federal government in respect of trying to finalise the lease. The complex was constructed originally as a contractors' village on Department of Defence land following Cyclone Tracy. Since that time, the complex has been extended and run as a very successful social and sporting club. The area is leased by the department to the Darwin City Council which in turn subleases a section of it to other parties, including the Tracy Village club and the nearby Pandanus Caravan Park. In 1982, the club was given approval to extend its facilities but that approval was made only on the basis that the lease would not be extended. In the past, the Department of Defence has been consistent in its attitude that the current tenure would not be extended.

I am very pleased to note that there have been indications recently that the Commonwealth now accepts that some form of lease renewal is inevitable. In fact, I understand that the Minister for Administrative Services, Hon Stewart West, supports rationalisation of tenure over the area but he is yet to resolve the matter with the Minister for Defence, Hon Kim Beazley. It is clear that this matter would be addressed at a local level and I have written to both Mr West and Mr Beazley. I have suggested to the ministers that the most efficient solution to the problem would be for the Commonwealth simply to transfer the areas involved to the Northern Territory government. That would enable us quickly to put into place a secure tenure arrangement. There would be absolutely no problem at all. Most sporting or social clubs throughout the Territory and, for that matter, most commercial operations such as the Pandanus Caravan Park, enjoy security of tenure. Obviously, it is

highly desirable that those same arrangements should apply in this case, particularly in relation to such a successful facility as the Tracy Village club.

It is a deplorable situation. I certainly hope that my suggestion to the federal government receives favourable consideration. We are talking about an area of land which is now part of the northern suburbs. We are not talking about something on the edge although I suppose people in Canberra still believe Darwin is a backwater. They have no idea of the size of the city and the activities of people here. The ALP has been notorious for its neglect of the Northern Territory and for its disdain for the efforts of Territorians. This is merely another example of that indifference. There is absolutely no reason why security of tenure for this club and this area cannot be given. The reason can only be indifference or deliberate and mischievous intention.

Honourable members should also be aware of the previous member for Wanguri's efforts to have rear road access to the Royal Darwin Hospital through the defence area behind Tracy Village. This was required because of the possible problems that heavy rains would cause. This effort has been made for quite some time without any reaction from the Commonwealth. I am very pleased to note that Hon Stewart West is appearing to take a positive attitude to this. I recommend that the federal Defence Minister take a leaf out of his book and put an end to what has been a disgraceful situation over the last 15 years.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR  
Mr Don Dale

Mr SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the presence of a former member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Don Dale. I hope members will join with me in offering Mr Dale a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

#### Industrial Relations Agreement with NT Teachers Federation

Mr BAILEY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Did his department and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation sign an Industrial Relations Commission agreement on 15 November - 2 weeks ago? Did members of his department, in the last week and a half, break that agreement through their actions in restructuring of the NT Secondary Correspondence School? Have they been notified of a breach of this Industrial Relations Commission agreement prior to a dispute?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not aware of any breach or dispute. In response to the question concerning the signing of the agreement, I point out that the Northern Territory Teachers Federation has issued a news release. I will read the first paragraph of that release:

It has come to our attention that, at at least one department briefing session of principals held yesterday in Darwin, it was claimed that the federation had agreed to this departmental proposal. This mischievous claim is untrue.

At the moment, Mike Bradley, the president of the federation is really running for cover because the agreement, in fact, was signed by both himself and the department. The federation claims that that was not the case. The fact is that the federation presented a document to the Industrial Relations Commission on 15 November 1989. I presume that is the document to which the honourable member refers. That document was signed by the federation president, Mr Mike Bradley, and the Commissioner of the Northern Territory Teaching Service, Mr David Hawkes.

The document contained a summary of the government's position on several matters involved in the award restructuring exercise. All matters in 'Teaching in Tomorrow's Territory' were covered in that summary. Mr Bradley not only signed the document, but told the Industrial Relations Commissioner that he had agreed to discuss the items on the agenda through working parties during the next 6 months. Further, he hoped that an agreement would be reached so that the second 3% would be awarded and some form of new structure would be agreed on.

Mr Ede: You are not answering the question. The question is whether the actions of the department in relation to the Secondary Correspondence School breached that agreement. It does not relate to discussions.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I believe that the member for Stuart's question is being answered.

Mr Ede: Wanguri.

Mr HARRIS: Wanguri. I have the member for Stuart on my mind at the moment. He misinforms the public continually ...

Mr Bailey: That is what you have just done.

Mr HARRIS: ... and I hope that the member for Wanguri is not going to start to carry out the same exercise.

Mr Bailey: What a pathetic answer.

Mr HARRIS: The situation is that the agreement in relation to 'Teaching in Tomorrow's Territory' was signed by both Mr Bradley and the department. Over a period of 6 months, there will be indeed a lot of discussion in relation to this issue. I would suggest that anyone who has a query in relation to the actual document should take that query to the Department of Education so that it is answered correctly without any scuttlebutt from the other side of the House trying to sink a negotiated position which, I believe, will offer teachers in the Northern Territory a far better deal than they would get in other places in terms of the total package that we are putting forward. I hope that, during the next 6 months, we will be able to negotiate that position and that teachers will see the benefit of the award restructuring process.

#### Darwin and Katherine Power Stations

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

I understand that the Darwin and Katherine Power Stations are now connected by a privately-owned transmission line. Can the honourable minister tell us whether this provides consumers with any greater benefits in terms of electricity supply?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it certainly does bring about substantial benefits and it is easy to demonstrate that. The transmission line linking Darwin and Katherine was completed more than a month ago by Balfour Beatty Power Construction and, on 10 November, the last of a series of tests to check protection circuits was conducted. Loading tests were then scheduled until mid-December. However, on the Sunday morning of 12 November, one of the generators at the Katherine Power Station developed a major electrical fault, resulting in a requirement to shut down the station from Monday 13 November. This is disappointing indeed because the Katherine Power Station has been built only recently. It is a little over a year old and the generator sets are brand new. However, a major fault has developed in one of the alternators.

Test equipment was immediately removed from the new transmission line and power flowed to Katherine from Darwin on that Sunday afternoon. All Katherine's power has since been supplied from Channel Island Power Station in Darwin since then. The advantage, of course, is that the Power and Water Authority can concentrate on repairing the failed generator in the knowledge that uninterrupted power is still available. The power supply from Darwin is remarkably immune from interruption by storms and is, in fact, a superior method of power delivery. What this all means for consumers in the Katherine region is that all bases are covered. Katherine has had a fairly chequered history in relation to reliable electricity supply. All that is now in the past.

It is also good news for consumers in the Batchelor and Adelaide River areas because part of the Darwin to Katherine transmission system is a substation at Manton with interconnectors to the Woodcutters Mine, Batchelor and Adelaide River. The effect of these interconnections is that the length of the low voltage line to Batchelor and Adelaide River has been reduced considerably. That means that consumers can expect a much-reduced risk of outages because of lightning strikes, tree falls, fruit bats and other line problems. There is no need for Power and Water Authority officers to travel the 70 km of line which they had to travel before to identify faults, sometimes in the middle of the night under severe conditions including lightning strikes and very heavy downpours.

An additional line, which has been recently completed, connects Pine Creek and the Cosmo Howley goldmine, providing further backup to both these systems. It is all part of the government's overall energy strategy to build a reliable power grid with sufficient emergency backup through the main residential and industrial centres of the Top End. The grid will keep on extending to take in existing and new mining operations and, the further it goes and the more power that is generated from gas turbines, the greater the ultimate cost advantages to the Power and Water Authority and the taxpayer.

It was with some regret that, on the very day that the Katherine line was energised, I was not able to switch over the Jabiru transmission line. I believe that there is absolutely nothing to stop that line from proceeding. We have had arguments from Senator Richardson about the environmental impact of the line through the park. It is absolute nonsense. In every national park around the world and in Australia, there are transmission lines. This would have made a big impact on the cost of electricity and the savings that could have been passed on to Northern Territory consumers. It is regrettable that we could not connect the Jabiru transmission line at the same time when the Katherine line was connected. We hope that the alternator at Katherine will be repaired in the very near future. There will be considerable

insurance claims. There may even be some legal challenges in respect of the faulty alternator.

The privately-owned power transmission line that now links Darwin and Katherine is a first for the Northern Territory. It heralds an opportunity for private enterprise to become involved in these types of ventures in the future. We now have 2 privately-owned power stations on the route to Katherine. One is at the Cosmo Howley mine, which is operated by TMOC, and the other is at Pine Creek. The latter was not there 12 months ago, but today is the second largest power station in the Northern Territory. It augurs well for consumption of gas to reduce electricity prices and to guarantee supplies to all industries and all citizens of the Northern Territory at prices better than or equal to those in other states.

#### Costs of Incentive Package for Public Service

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

When will he be able to provide, to use his terms, a detailed listing of the costs involved in his recently-announced incentive package? Why is he unable to provide those costs now? From which division within the budget will the finances, which will be necessary to fund those costs, be provided?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have some information that may or may not keep the honourable member happy about the total costs of the package that has been announced by the government. Firstly, I point out that the package of incentives that we have provided to improve recruitment and retention is separate from the 3% salary increase. I will indicate both figures. The cost of the 3% salary increase is approximately \$15.5m. This should not be included in the package price because, obviously, the 3% would have flowed to employees regardless of the incentives package being developed, provided certain conditions are met.

Mr Smith: The first 3% starts next week. It has been approved.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the total annual costs of the incentive package in 1989 dollars is estimated to be \$2.835m, although many of the costs will not become payable immediately. In a number of cases, there is a period of eligibility prior to the advantage being taken. It should be remembered that these costs will be offset by outcomes of the exercise. This in part answers the final question by the honourable member about where the money will come from.

It may surprise honourable members that the estimated expenditure on interstate recruitment last financial year was \$10m. A further \$1m was spent on local recruitment. If this incentive package can reduce recruitment needs by even one-third, nearly \$4m will be saved, a figure which in fact is greater than the total of the incentive package. Obviously, the government does not know by how much turnover will be reduced. There is a requirement for the Public Service Commissioner to report to Cabinet in 12 months on the success of the package in reducing recruitment requirements and improving retention.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the statement by the member for Sadadeen that my office had been ringing teacher librarians stating that their positions will be transferred to the public service is incorrect.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time, the Chief Minister accused me of 'releasing inaccurate information'. In order to establish my case, I seek leave to table a number of documents in respect of the shabby treatment which the Chief Minister and the Treasurer have extended to Mrs Shirley Blackman. I wish to table a letter from the Registrar of The Chiropractors Registration Board that acknowledges the registration of Mrs Blackman in February 1987. I table a letter from the Chairman of the Board, Dr Keith Fleming, in June 1987, rescinding that registration.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a further 2 letters from the Ombudsman to Mrs Blackman. One letter indicates that the Department of Health and Community Services was prepared to recommend a \$10 000 payment. A further letter from the Ombudsman, dated 6 months later, indicates that the Treasurer was prepared to pay only \$1644. I wish to table an unsigned release sent to Mrs Blackman in the name of the Northern Territory saying that, if she was prepared to accept \$1644, she should release the government from any further obligation. Further, to indicate to the Chief Minister that I was not releasing inaccurate information, I wish to table a copy of Mrs Blackman's registration with the Chiropractors Board of South Australia and a certificate of registration from the Chiropractors Board of South Australia that she was forced to seek because of what I described quite accurately in question time as misleading, inaccurate advice from the Chief Minister's government.

Leave granted.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Overpayment to School Nursing Sisters

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, the member for Barkly asked a question about the salary of a school nursing sister. The person to whom the honourable member was referring has been overpaid by the Alice Springs office since 8 August 1988. Other school sisters have also been overpaid since that date. Overpayment occurred when the Nurses Federation negotiated a new salaries structure with the Public Service Commissioner. This resulted in school nurses receiving a lower allowance as sisters in charge from 8 August 1988. The full allowance has continued to be paid.

Once aware of the overpayment, the salaries section explained the situation to all nurses employed as school sisters. All except the particular person to whom I refer accepted the situation and made arrangements to make the required payment. The Treasurer's Directions dictate recovery of overpayment backdated to 12 months. When overpayments occur for more than 12 months, recovery action occurs only for the last 12 months. This particular person was not asked to repay the full overpayment - that is, she can keep the overpayment from the period of 8 August 1988 until 24 November 1988.

It was explained to this person that she had 3 options for repayment. The first was a lump sum deduction from salary. The second was a cheque to the Receiver of Public Moneys for total overpayment. The third was 10% of gross fortnightly salary and this can be negotiated if necessary. The person was not told that she had to complete the payment by the end of the financial year. The person had been overpaid because of a communication error, but she will benefit by being allowed to retain the overpayment for the period from 8 August 1988 to 24 November 1988.

The salary error was unfortunate. Honourable members will know that we do not have a perfect system. Every care is taken to ensure that mistakes are kept to a minimum and, where errors do occur, all care is taken to fully explain the repayment options to the staff involved.

#### Secondary School Enrolments in Alice Springs

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, during the course of the sittings the member for Sadadeen asked me a question about secondary school enrolments in Alice Springs. In junior secondary, the mean total enrolment level reached a peak in 1984 and it has declined marginally since then. This decline is hard to explain because primary enrolments within Alice Springs have continued to increase slightly over this period. A slight fall in the retention rates into junior secondary has resulted because students in this age group have shown a tendency towards leaving the area. However, more noticeable is the trend of students moving to non-government schools. This trend has been particularly noticeable since 1989 with the opening of the St Phillip's College in Alice Springs.

In the senior secondary area, enrolments have increased in recent years, reaching a peak in 1988. However, despite another increase in retention rates being projected, the enrolment levels are expected to fall in 1990 because of small current class sizes in Years 10 and 11. These declines in the number of secondary school students are expected to be experienced only within the short term and, more generally, over the next 4 years, a 2% or 3% growth is expected.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I have effectively been called a liar by the member for Wanguri this morning. I would like to put on the record that I was telephoned by a teacher librarian this morning. I have met this lady only recently and she is teaching in a Darwin school. She said that she was approached by a lady claiming to be the secretary for the member for Wanguri and told that the story that I put over ...

Mr Bailey: My secretary's name is Andrew.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wanguri will remain silent during the member's personal explanation.

Mr COLLINS: The lady told me that she was approached by a person. That person claimed to be the secretary for the member for Wanguri and gave the information that I gave in a question that I asked of the minister this morning. I asked the minister whether the information was correct.

Mr Bailey: I keep a permanent file on the staff.

Mr COLLINS: If you want a statutory declaration, I will get you one of those too.

Mr Bailey: My secretary is male.

#### ANSWER TO QUESTION Loan to Texfern Pty Ltd

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I wish to supply some more information in relation to a question asked by the member for

Stuart. I can confirm that 2 officers of the department are involved in a company that operates the Middle Creek Buffalo Station. They are Mr K. Small and Mr D. Thompson. In applying for a buffalo development loan, both officers declared their interests and these were considered by the department and myself. Mr Small and Mr Thompson advised the Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development, as it was at the time, of their pecuniary interest in the matter. The secretary has advised that he sees no conflict of interest in relation their application.

The application was assessed on the selection criteria set down for the Buffalo Development Scheme, and I see no difficulty with the involvement at this time. It is encouraging to see people with expertise becoming involved in the industry and it would behove the member for Stuart to support the industry rather than continually criticise it. The more people with expertise that we can get into the industry, the better it will be for the industry in the Northern Territory. The member for Stuart simply wants to rise in this House on every possible occasion to criticise people in the industry who are performers and to support those who purport to be in the industry. The member for Stuart should be ashamed of himself. I believe that the people concerned require and should receive all the support that they can get because they are developing the industry and assisting the Northern Territory.

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